

Luddenden's links with a Bronte

ONE of the regular visitors to the Lord Nelson Inn at Luddenden in the early 1840s was Patrick Branwell Bronte, brother of the famous sisters, Ann, Charlotte and Emily. At that time he was the stationmaster at Luddenden Foot and the attraction at the inn was twofold—ale and books. In an upper room was one of the earliest lending libraries, started in 1776. What would Branwell find if like Rip van Winkle, he were to return to his old haunts?

One notable change would be the absence of the narrow twisting streets in the heart of the village. Over the last 30 years much of the old property has fallen to the demolisher's hammer, and open weed-grown spaces and a few garages have taken their place.

The inn itself is much the same outside as when it was rebuilt by Gregory Patchett for a private house in 1634 on the site of a former house. About 1745 it became an inn, known as the White Swan and the title was changed to The Lord Nelson to celebrate the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Men of Luddenden have long been proud of their village, nesting in its oasis of trees, surrounded by the steep hillsides of the windswept Pennines. In 1867 they decided to

elect a mayor. The brass Mayoral Chain still exists in the safe keeping of the landlord at the Lord Nelson, but what became of the "floreated badge, enriched with four winged cherubs, eight sunflowers, four shields with scrolls and centred with a coral of unknown value set in Scaelestus gold"? That is one of Luddenden's unsolved mysteries.

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The church of St. Mary, with its attractive park-like burial ground, has an unusual feature. It possesses four fonts. One is in the church; one is filled with plants near the bridge which crosses the stream (it could be mistaken for an ornamental vase); one, dated 1662, beautifully cut from local grit stone, and worthy of an honoured position inside the church, is weathering away on the flat tombstones outside; and the fourth, which looks like a stone seat half hidden in shrubs by the church

entrance, was the font which was taken away to Boggard House at Luddenden Foot during the Commonwealth uprising.

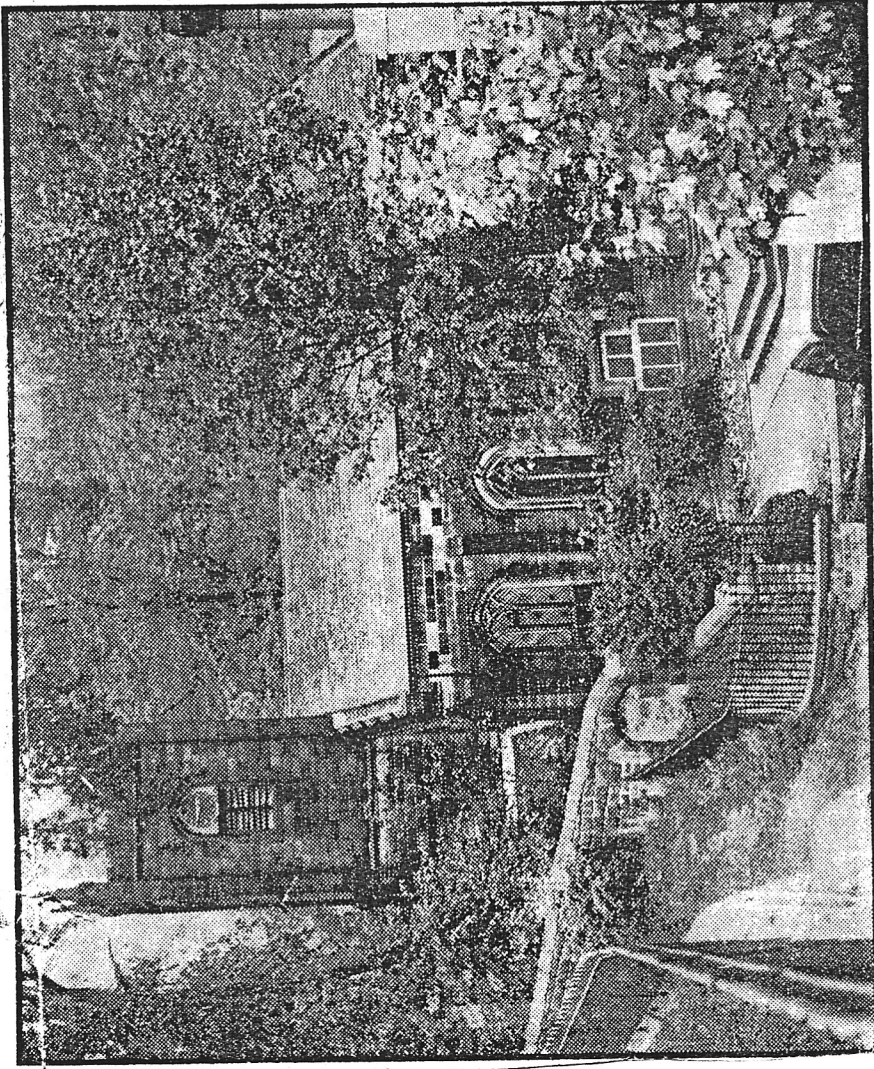
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Tradition has it that during its stay at Boggard House the house became haunted until such time that the font was restored to the church.

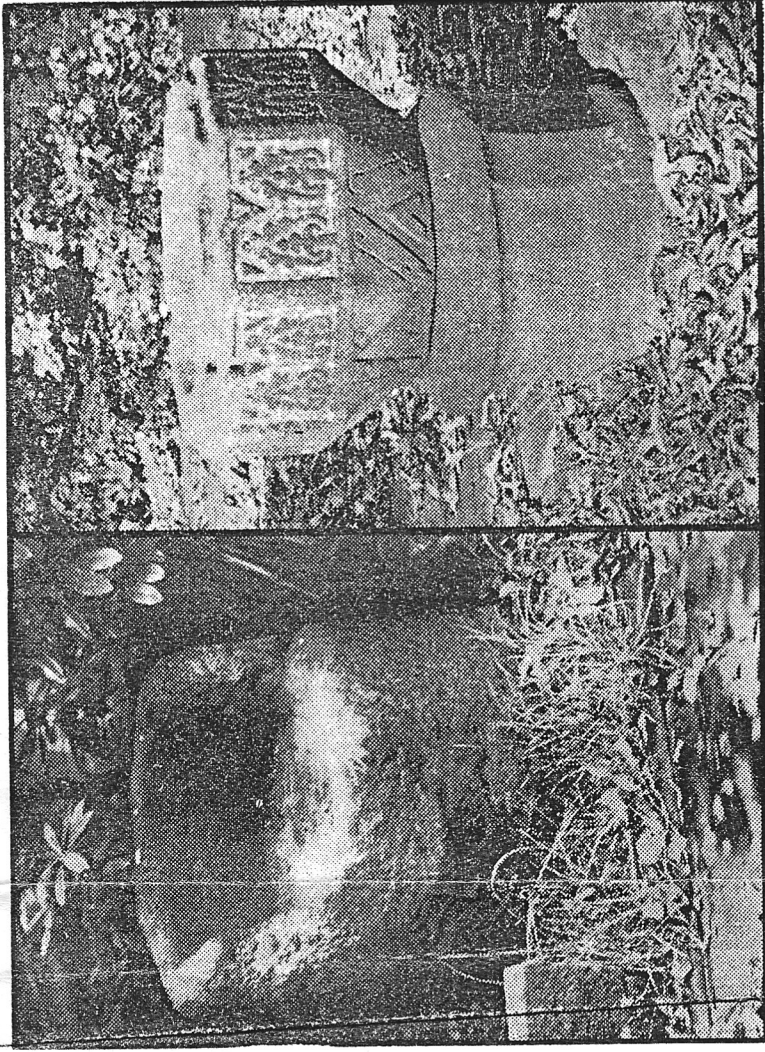
Luddenden had its own Chapel of Ease from 1469, but it was not fully licensed and consecrated until August 4, 1824.

One house Branwell must have noticed on his frequent walks from his station office to the Lord Nelson is Ker-shaw House, a fine example of 17th-century craftsman-ship with its pinnacled gables, double-storey porch and beautiful rose window. Within a few yards one leaps the centuries to the modern council houses, erected during recent years by Sowerby Bridge Urban Council.

Cottage architecture is often an indication of how people live, work and play.



The attractive church of St. Mary, at Luddenden, has some interesting features.



Two of the four fonts at St. Mary's. The one on the left looks like a stone seat.

The weavers' cottages with their long rows of mullioned windows, a notable feature since the days of hand-loom weaving, have now disappeared. The neat modern houses with gardens, TV aerials and electricity, denote a more opulent way of life. The artist may yearn for "Ye Dide," but the folk of Luddenden are in the stream of progress, and about 100 of them, men and women, are busy every day turning out millions of nuts and bolts at the Beauvoir works of C. Lindley and Co. On motor roads all over the world cars are speeding along, firmly fastened together with nuts and bolts made in this Luddenden factory on the site of an old corn mill!

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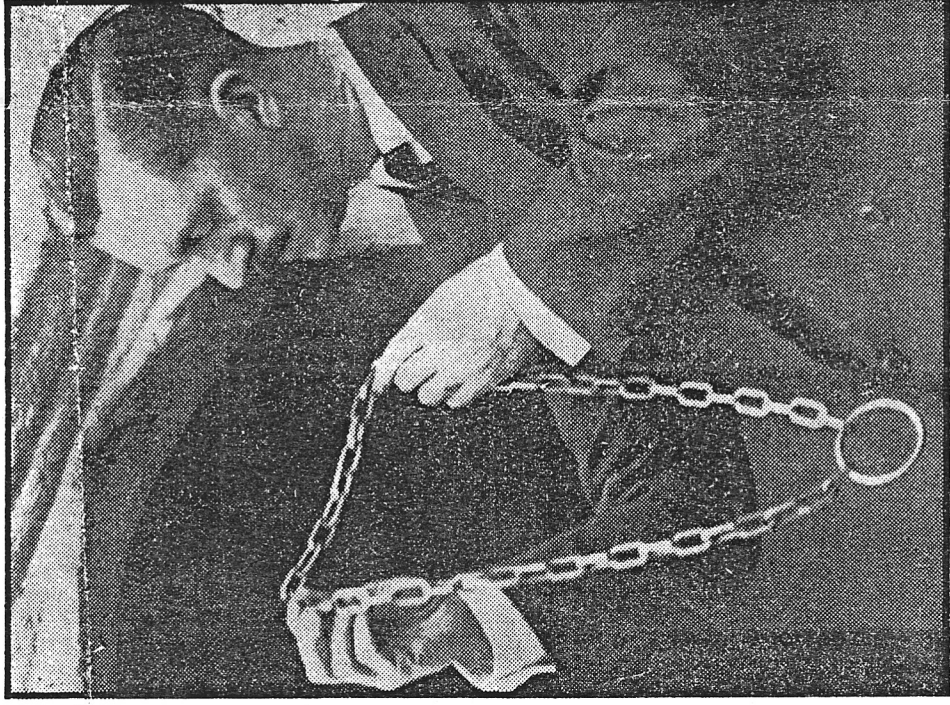
Times change. Marshal and Midgley no longer make pianos in Brook Street, and the shop where Fred Nichol sold his home-made fire-lighters at the turn of the century now sends out a more appetising odour of fish and chips.

The two "lock-ups," temporary prisons in the street behind the Lord Nelson for the miscreants of Warley and Midgley, now house the day school boilers.

One thing lives on in Luddenden and that is the community spirit. The two traditional English village institutions of the church and the inn are symbolically linked together in the Church House which was opened last October by a native of Luddenden and a former Bishop of the Yukon, the Rt. Rev. Tom Greenwood.

Church House, built over 100 years ago, was an inn, The Murgatroyd Arms, until 1939. It became in turn, an air-raid wardens' post during the war, then a community

AND THE VILLAGES—A SERIES BY HILDA M. GLEDHILL



The landlord of the Lord Nelson has Luddenden's original mayoral chain in safe keeping.