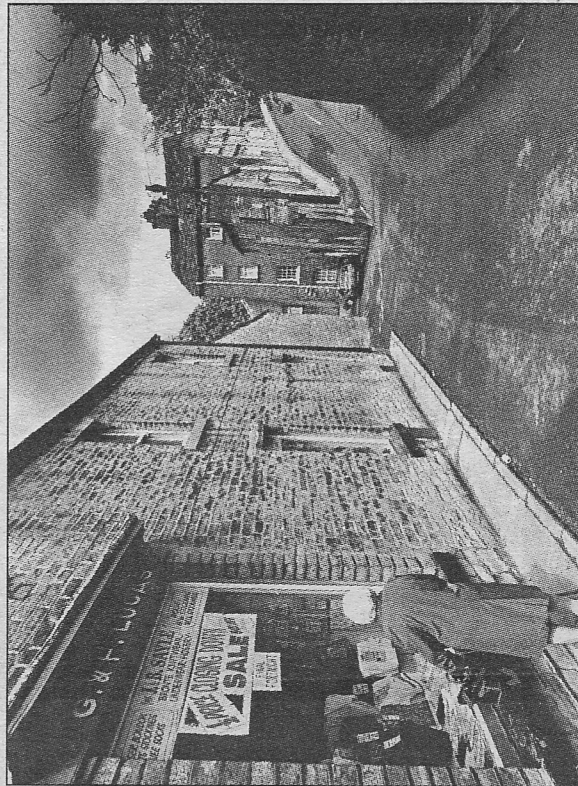
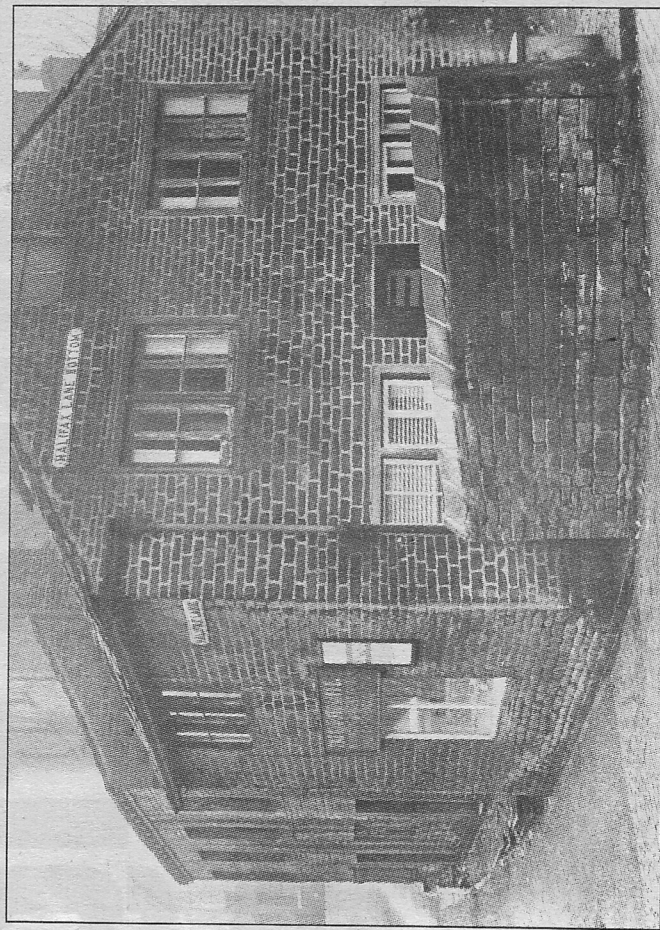


Flashback

By WILLIAM
MARSHALL

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Luddenden once had 27 shops, including the two shown here. Now there are none left.....

The village voice

VIKKI Egerton has written a number of books in her long and eventful life. Her latest will almost certainly be her last.

After a sequence of health problems, culminating in pneumonia, she was told in August that she had inoperable cancer.

Her doughty response was to finish her new book as rapidly as she could and to find a printer who "could pull out all the stops in case I popped my clogs!"

She managed it. Within a few weeks of her diagnosis the book was completed, printed and is now on sale.

"Luddenden Saga" will be her swansong, she admits. But it will remain as her celebration of the valley village where she made her home.

Manchester born and bred, Mrs Egerton - in her eighties - was an "incomden" to Luddenden just over ten years ago. She moved so that she could be nearer a married daughter.

The former lecturer and

prolific writer soon became absorbed by Luddenden life and the village's parish church, St Mary's.

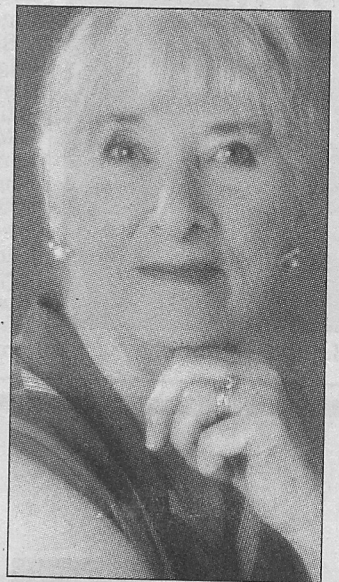
When the Millennium approached, Vikki Egerton devised a multi-media show called "Luddenden Saga", with slides, narration, drama, music and dance, presented at St Mary's in November, 2000.

It was a sellout success and Mrs Egerton was widely urged to publish the material in book form.

She accumulated more information and pictures and, when publication became a race against time, she found firms in Sowerby Bridge, Bradford and Cleckheaton who could "pull out all the stops" and produce what is a very attractively presented book that delves back many centuries in order to tell the story of Luddenden.

Today it might seem as if this quiet village is a place where time had stood still. But far from it. Luddenden has seen enormous upheavals over the centuries.

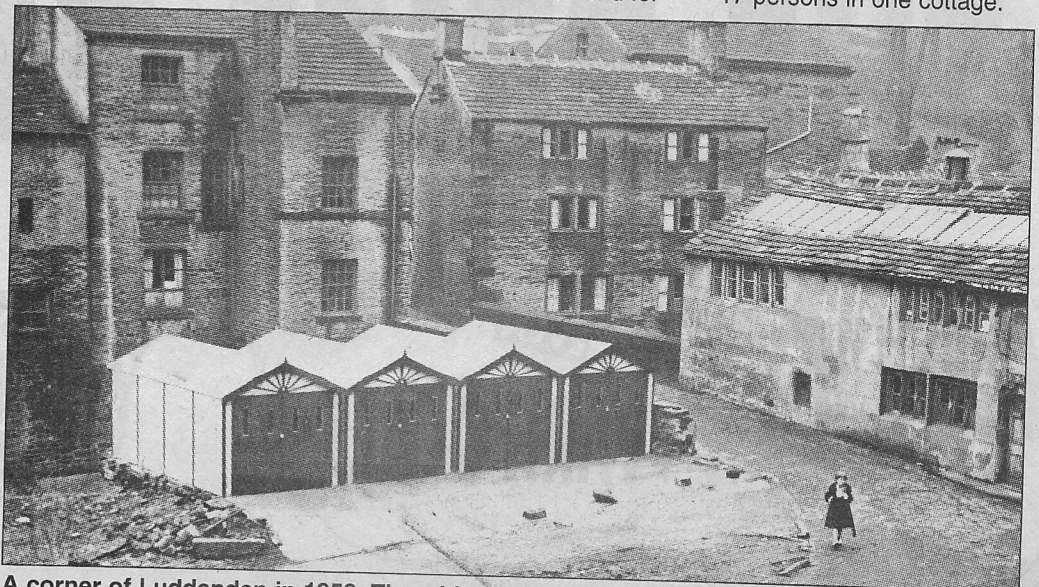
Industry has now entirely departed from Luddenden but at its height, local textile firms, with their demand for



Vikki Egerton - "Luddenden Saga" is a tribute to her adopted village

labour, meant that this small village was once a very busy and crowded place indeed.

At one time, a small area in the vicinity of the church and the Lord Nelson Inn was occupied by 95 people, mainly Irish immigrants working in the local mills who lived 15 - 17 persons in one cottage.



A corner of Luddenden in 1958. The white building on the right, now demolished, was the working men's club

Nowadays Luddenden has no shops. Once there were 27. Now there is one pub. Once there were five.

The survivor is the famous Lord Nelson. It was a centre of culture as well as boozing.

Possessing its own library it was a meeting place for the likes of Branwell Bronte, the Halifax sculptor J.B. Leyland and the poets William Dearden and William Heaton.

The word "Luddenden" means "loud water" and it was the village's ample supply of moving water that attracted industry.

As early as 1375 a corn mill was moved to the village from Warley because Luddenden Brook was a better source of power.

Eventually water-powered textile mills came to Luddenden and from the late 18th century the village had an engineering firm, founded by the Ogden family, which produced spindles for the new wave of mills.

Steam power meant that mills could be built away from the valley bottom - Oats Royd Mill was on a hilltop - but still Luddenden thrived as an industrial centre until the 20th century brought a wave of closures. As late as 1982 Luddenden still had the Beauvoir engineering works, which produced nuts and bolts, but when it closed the village had almost come full circle.

From being a small industrial community with employment for some 2,000 people, it was now a commuter village with little employment, no shops and no school.

A constant factor in Luddenden's saga, however, has been St Mary's Church.

It began in the mid-15th century as a kind of satellite chapel of Halifax Parish Church but was consecrated as a church in its own right in 1624.

St Mary's was added to over the years but it was in such bad condition by 1804 that it was demolished and replaced by the present

church, completed in 1817.

"Luddenden Saga" also includes chapters on such topics as eating habits, education, law and order, transport and some of the notable houses in the district.

There is also a chapter devoted to one of the village's strangest claims to fame, the "Bah't Meat Week" which took place in August, 1975.

This was a TV stunt by Granada Television's "World In Action", designed to show that people can manage without meat.

The TV people chose Luddenden because it was a "real" village without too many commuters or tourists. Maybe it would not qualify today.

Some 93 per cent of the village's 400 residents agreed to take part in the experiment. Meat products were cleared from the shelves of shops and a "Last Supper" of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding was held at Kershaw House before the experiment was under way and Luddenden was declared a meat-free zone.

The political sub-text of the programme was that meat was wasteful and that within 20 years it would become a luxury item.

Most Luddenden people entered into the spirit of things - despite the arrival of a subversive butcher whose van was labelled "Gastronomic Survival Squad".

But if "World in Action" hoped to create a village of vegetarians it was to be disappointed. One year on from the experiment the "Evening Courier" reported that not one convert to vegetarianism could be found in the village.

● "Luddenden Saga" (ISBN 0-9543841-0-5) costs £7.99 and is available from Wade's bookshop, Halifax, the tourist information centres at Halifax Piece Hall and in Hebden Bridge or by phoning 01422 882510.