

FOCUS

TURNES THE SPOTLIGHT ON A VILLAGE'S PROBLEMS

Tourism is the big talking point

LUDDENDEN has been described as many things — quaint, picturesque, characterful . . . and even damp.

But one thing is certain: its future character is in the balance.

Its typical Pennine climate—nine months' winter and three months' bad weather—prompted one resident to suggest turning the whole valley into a much-needed reservoir as the best solution.

But before conservationists burst a blood vessel at the thought of the floodgates being opened, this suggestion has not been aired as an official plan to end Luddenden's problems.

And if anyone thinks the village has no problems, they need only talk to the people living there to hear that they are at odds over the biggest issue they have had to face — tourism.

Close to its HEART

Calderdale Council has Luddenden close to its conservation heart, but its efforts, coupled with those of Luddenden Conservation Society, have created rumblings of disquiet among villagers. Some fear it could

By SUSAN TAYLOR

become another Haworth or Heptonstall, inundated with Sunday drivers for which it has no room.

This is not to say they are inhospitable folk. But to attract tourists to the village, they feel, would mean providing car parks and cream teas, antiques and trinket shops which would conflict with Luddenden's natural evolution.

On the other hand, the village has been saved from decline in recent years only by the influx of town workers who have realised the potential of its old buildings and broken-down cottages as modern homes.

This shot in the arm was much needed to bring youthful interest back to the village and prevent it dying with the last remaining old-timer.

But the main question on conservation now seems to be where should it stop.

Is it the job of a local council or a conservation society to set itself up as a tourist board and plan attractions for visitors to exploit the natural attractions that are there already or to provide facilities for

visitors who will arrive anyway and to protect the interests of the residents?

In Luddenden's case none of these things has happened yet, but the chicken and the egg theory does not seem to apply here.

Unlike Haworth, Luddenden has no famous family to gloat about and exploit, and as one villager put it: "There's nothing to come here for."

That was Mrs Ada Needham, of the one remaining village pub.

Bid has not PAID OFF

Her thoughts are not directed towards selling more beer, pop and crisps to an invasion of townfolk. During her seven years at the Lord Nelson Inn, in the village's main street, she feels she has done her bit towards offering substantial refreshments to her customers, both locals and visitors, but it has not paid off.

"We've tried everything from sandwiches and pies and peas to ploughman's lunches, but it is a waste of time — there just isn't the demand," she said.

Mrs Needham is one of the main questioners of tourism, pointing out that the village has a beautiful churchyard but nothing else to offer the tourist wanting to pass a few spare hours on a sunny day.

Parking is seen by the council as the heaviest pressure on the village. The narrow streets can hardly cope with residents' own cars and few of the older houses have any parking nearby.

Reason for CLEAN-UP

Result... CHAOS

If tourist traffic penetrated these streets the result would be chaos.

Mary and Stephen Sutton are part of Luddenden's new blood, having recently moved into a newly converted cottage at 13, Apple House Terrace.

It shocks them to think their new home was almost pulled down along with other cottages in the terrace and they think the developers who moved in to save them did a worthy job.

Both agree that the conservation society's involvement in new building and development plans for the village is desirable to keep the village's character. "I like it as it is and want to see it stay this way," said Stephen.

But one of the things that has changed, despite this control, is St Mary's churchyard. With the backing of the parochial church council and the conservation society, old gravestones have been lifted to make way for a lawn.

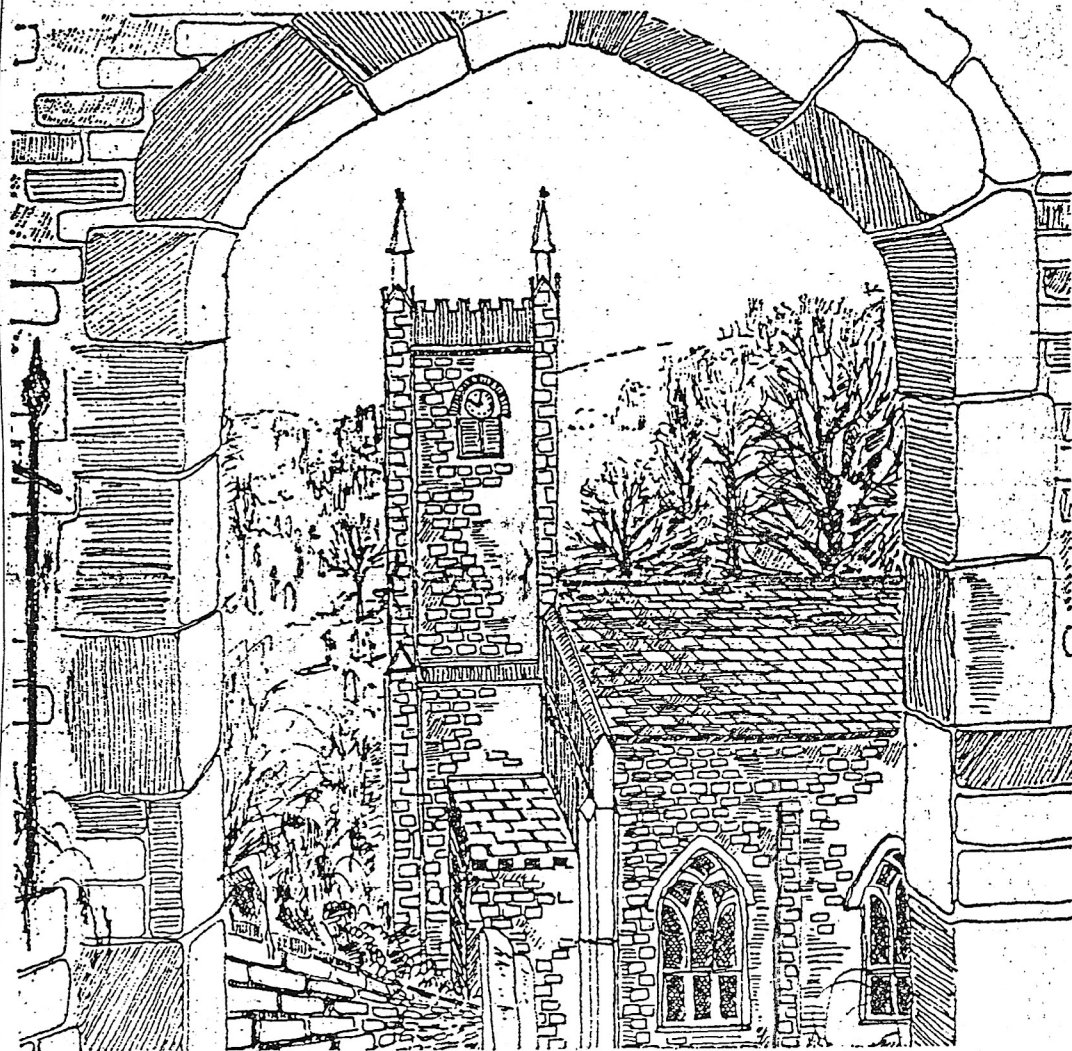
Many villagers, particularly among the older end, see this as anything but conservation and are still questioning the reasoning behind the so-called clean-up.

They could be forgiven for wondering where it will end and worrying that they might be caught up in the novelty of tourism.

But in reply to the critics, the chairman of Luddenden Conservation Society, Mr Rodney Collinge, has invited villagers to society meetings and has asked them to get involved in what's going on around them.

He does not, he says, want to encourage tourists to the detriment of villagers, but the subject will come up for an airing at the next society meeting on Thursday in Church House.

There will inevitably be yet another clash of opinions... and Luddenden's future could depend on the outcome.



Luddenden photo-file

There were once four public houses in Luddenden providing liquid refreshment all day and much of the night to the dusty throats of the quarry workers who trundled down Stocks Lane with their loads. Now there is just one, the Lord Nelson Inn, where customers are catered for by George and Ada Needham.

The Lord Nelson provides a welcome, but it is hardly the image of the country pub that has sprung up as an attraction to country visitors.

Brothers John and Philip Kitchen, of Galpro Food Products, one of the few new industries to move into Luddenden, are pictured with some of their turkebabs destined for the tables of Britain.

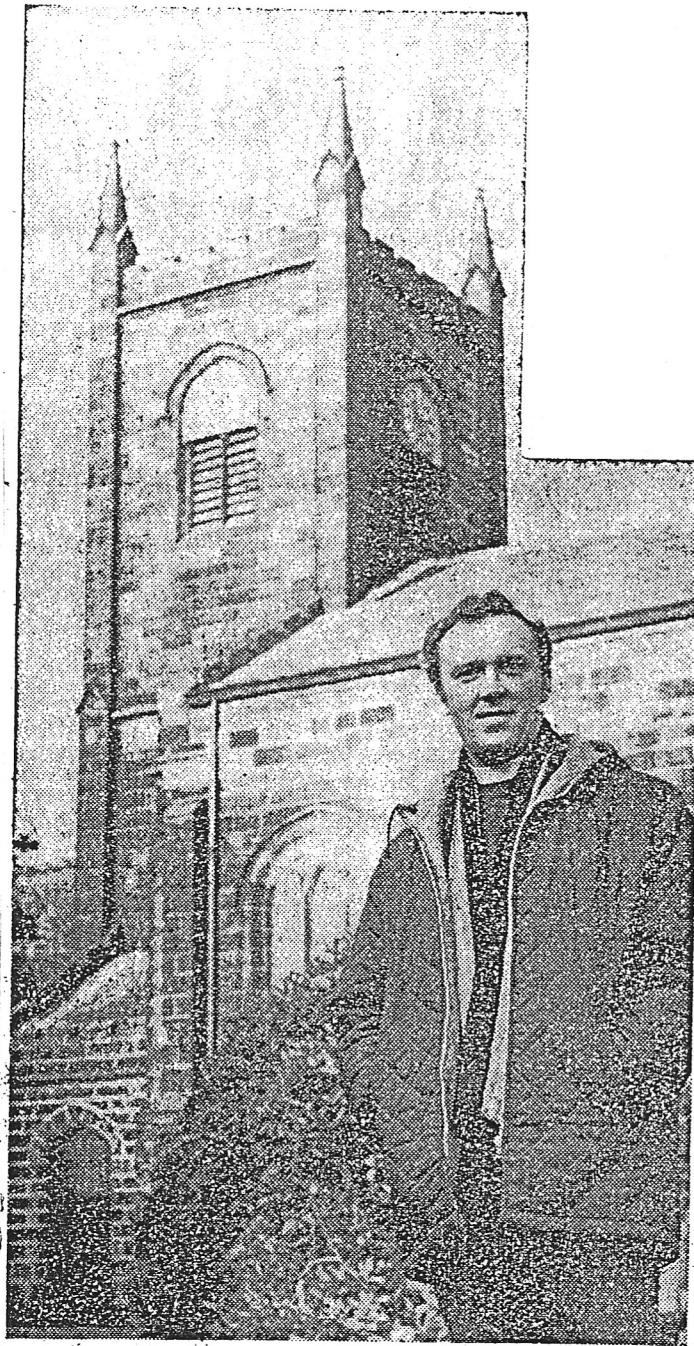
When cars park in the narrow High Street there's little room left for two-way traffic, but the structure of the road junctions means a one-way system is impossible. A seasonal restriction of access to residents, businesses and services is being considered.

Pictured is the village store and sub-post office which provides villagers with the basic essentials.

⊗ Next week: Queensbury — proud hilltop village or big town dormitory?

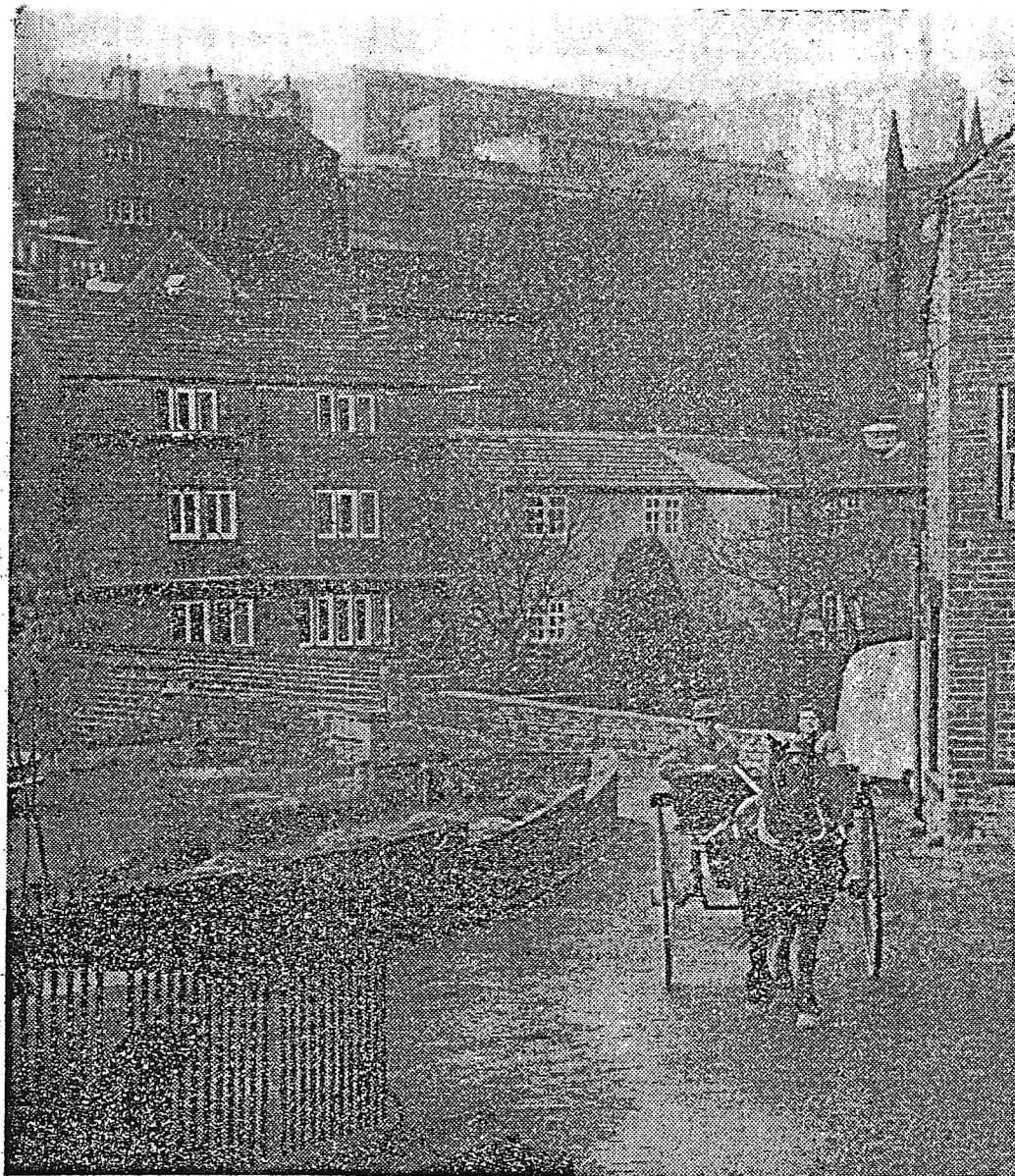


22 Nov 1976



Village life often centres on the church and St Mary's Parish Church, Luddenden, is no exception. Pictured outside the church which was rebuilt in the prosperous 1820s is the vicar, the Rev Philip Mortimer—one of the most familiar faces around.

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1976



The horse and cart is not a familiar sight in Luddenden's High Street these days but when Mr Arnold Wade goes shopping he takes a touch of nostalgia with him. Going along for the ride is Mrs Flora Clarke.



Old Lane (left), and the junction of High Street and Stocks Lane. Drawings by Christine Kerrin, of Calderdale Town Planning Department.