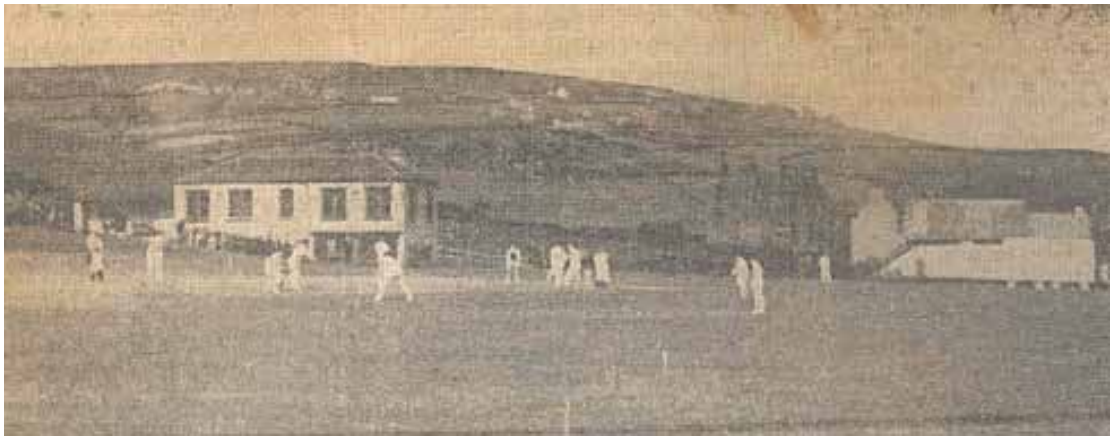
FIRE, FIRST TEAMERS, AND A SCOREBOX FROM NOTTINGHAM!

The Story of Hill Top by Rob Hardie

After forming in 1873, Slaithwaite Cricket Club played on two local fields - Old White Royd and Meal Hill Lane – and then in 1881 they moved to Hill Top. They are still residing there 127 years later.

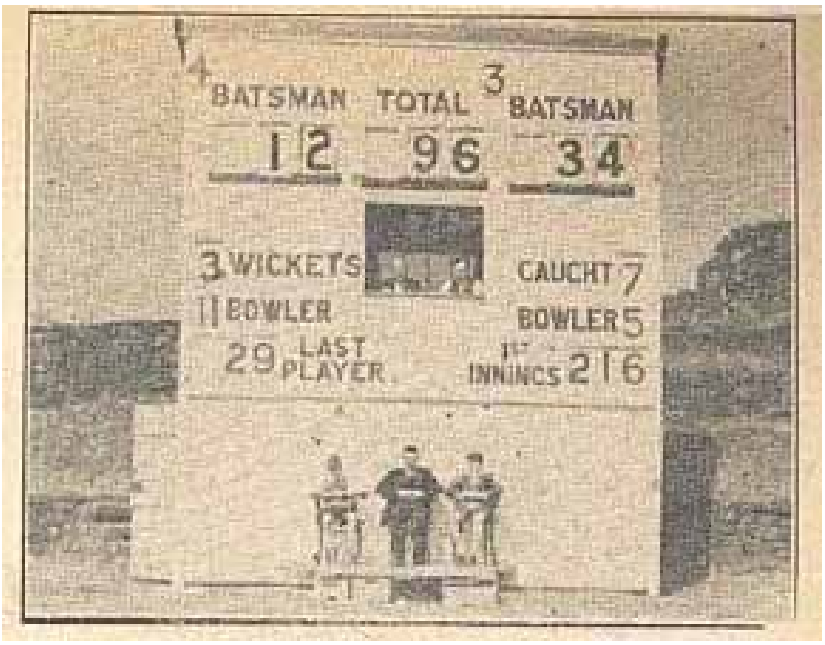
Despite finding a permanent home and having a field to play their home matches on, it took a further 20 years before the club began to develop the land around the playing surface. 1901 saw the first stone of the clubhouse laid, with the bowling green and cricket pavilion following seven years later in 1908.



The picture above is one of the earliest known images of the clubhouse at Hill Top. The photo depicts a match during the club's 1932 season. Clearly visible in the background is the original club building that is still standing at the ground. This main building would be the focal point for future additions to the ground as can be seen at the ground today. At this time the scorer would keep tally on his own rather than have a scorebox - which would eventually arrive 10 years later.

To keep up with other clubs, Slaithwaite decided they needed a scorebox. Thus, in 1945, instead of building their own, they shipped one in from the East Midlands. This, the first scorebox to appear at Hill Top, was given to the club as a present. Sir Julian Cahn presented the box to the family of former club

president Mr James Gartside. This was then given to Slaithwaite in his honour and to preserve his memory. The box's previous home was Sir Cahn's own private cricket ground in Nottingham.



To transport the scorebox (above) up into the hills of West Yorkshire, the structure was broken down into many pieces and then erected at Hill Top, seemingly by local builder Mr F.S. Lawson and his associates.

The building was presented formally on the 11th August 1945 in front of local and county cricket officials and was said to be "a credit to any cricket ground in the country" by Huddersfield District Cricket League president, Mr W.H.Bolt. During his time at the club, West Indian professional Edwin St. Hill kept the box running smoothly when he was not taking to the field for the club.

However, to the horror of everyone at Slaithwaite CC, the box, so generously given to them after the death of a former president, was to last only 40 years. In 1986 a fire swept through the structure, completely gutting the box and causing £20,000 of damage to the ground, practice kit, ground maintenance equipment and fertilisers.

A small temporary scoreboard was then erected until a permanent structure was finally built a year later.

The scorebox that appears at Hill Top was unveiled at a ceremony on May 23rd 1987. The man who officially opened the building was club member Mr Harry Stones. A Slaithwaite loyalist since 1918, Stones was also at the unveiling of the original box in 1945. Unfortunately, a special match to mark the occasion between a SC&BC Select XI and a Holme Valley XI was called off due to rain.

Also still found up at the clubhouse is a dedicated bench presented to the aforementioned Mr Stones. In 1988 the bench was given to him as the club's longest serving supporter and also holder of many roles at the club post-1918.

As well as being a first XI player, Mr Stones occupied the positions of second-team captain, secretary, treasurer, groundsman and vice-chairman. The bench is located outside the pavilion at Hill Top.