

## SLAITHWAITE CC

# DOWN YOUR WAY

### Mills, Moonrakers & Music

Slaithwaite has been pronounced and spelled many different ways over the years (apparently it has had 38 different spellings) but the one that would cause most surprise among Slaithwaite's early settlers is 'Skelthwaite' – the fictional name given to the village in the TV series *Where the Heart is*.



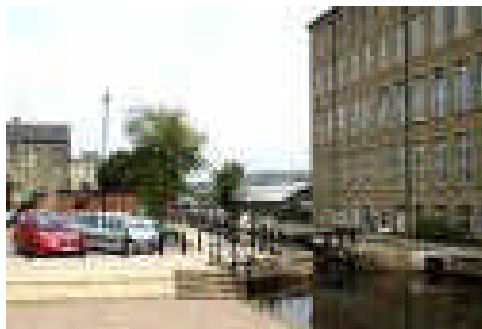
As well as debates over the pronunciation there is also some dispute regarding the meaning of 'Slaithwaite': was it a clearing where timber was felled or a clearing where sloes grow?

Whatever the case, the name is certainly Scandinavian in origin suggesting that the first settlers in the village were from that part of the world. There is, however, evidence that the Romans if not settling in the area, certainly passed through on their way from York to Chester (a Roman road was built near Slaithwaite in AD 79).

Whoever the first settlers were, we do know that there was building in the area in the thirteenth century when Slaithwaite Hall and a corn mill were built (the erection of a corn mill whilst increasing the value of the estate would have needed an enormous capital investment at that time.

To pay for this the locals would have been forced to use the mill to grind their corn). Slaithwaite's inhabitants during this period would have built their homes on the hillsides.

And by the Tudor period (1485-1602), Slaithwaite had developed from an area of scattered hamlets to a village. This expansion included the building of two fulling mills and a new manor house (c. 1500) further down the valley, approximately two miles from the original settlement at Slaithwaite Hall. A chapel-of-ease was also built in the village in 1507.



In 1789 this chapel was replaced by the present day Church of St James, when Slaithwaite was already home to a few small mills. Just thirty-three years later Slaithwaite was described as having 'several large cotton mills and woollen factories in which a great many people are employed'.

The mechanisation of the textile industry had transformed the village – houses (to be close to the workplace) and

mills (to be close to the River Colne to power the machinery) were being built in the valley bottom.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many of the local inhabitants would have worked in one of Slaithwaite's many mills. Often husbands, wives and children would have the same employer and many of the children actually worked alongside their parents. It was a long day, the average working day being about 11 hours, beginning at 6.00 am and continuing until 7.30 pm with only two breaks.

As the nineteenth century came to a close Slaithwaite had become a major textile centre with first class transportation (canal and railway) and could even boast its own docks for loading and unloading goods.

Slaithwaite's fortunes would, however, suffer a setback during the inter-war period (1918-1939): the textile industry began to decline as a result of cheaper cloth being produced in countries such as India and this together with the arrival of the motor car and good railway links led to a decline in the importance of the canal (which was eventually closed in 1944).



Today there are only two working mills left in Slaithwaite. The community, however, continues to thrive: Slaithwaite's Philharmonic Orchestra (founded in 1891) is still going strong and the canal has now become a tourist attraction, Slaithwaite being the only canalside village in Britain.

A full restoration of the Marsden-to-Slaithwaite section has been completed and work is now continuing to the east of the town centre. The area has also attracted new business and industries.

Slaithwaite has modernised and adapted to the demands of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but that is not to say that everything from the past has disappeared or been forgotten.

Each year in February a festival is held to celebrate the Slaithwaite Moonrakers (smugglers who attempted to cover up their activities by claiming they were trying 'to rake the moon out of the canal').





**game between All England XI and United All England XI.**

1873: Batley legend Louis Hall makes Yorkshire bow.

**1883: Lumb Cup and Heavy Woollen Cup born.**

1886: Huddersfield Cricket Association is formed.

**1887-9: Dewsbury Savile C.C. win hat-trick of Heavy Woollen Cup titles.**

1892: 10 Clubs take part in inaugural Huddersfield & District Cricket League competition.

## **Smallpox & SHEARS!**

### **KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF SLAITHWAITE (BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THE CRICKET CLUB)**

**c. 1200** Slaithwaite Hall is built.

**c. 1560** Slaithwaite Manor House is built.

**1789** Church of St James is built. The church also serves Lingards, Linthwaite and Golcar until the 1820s.

**1791** Slaithwaite Free School is founded.



**1794** An Act of Parliament authorises the construction of the 20 mile long Huddersfield Narrow Canal which was to run through Slaithwaite en route to Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester.

**1795** Slaithwaite Reservoir is constructed to supply water to the canal. The building of this is a cause for concern among residents who feared that the reservoir would burst its banks and destroy the village

**1797** The section of the Huddersfield canal running between Huddersfield and Slaithwaite is completed.

**1798** The Slaithwaite to Marsden section of the canal is completed.

**1808** Lord Dartmouth agrees to pay the local apothecary (a kind of pharmacist) ten guineas a year to vaccinate eighty people against smallpox.

**1811** Huddersfield Narrow Canal opens.



**1812** Luddites enter four houses in Slaithwaite and destroy frames and shears.

**1819** There are 393 families living in the village.

**1821** Slaithwaite Free School opens.

**1825** Richard Varley (whose family built and expanded many of Slaithwaite's mills) builds the mineral baths as well as a swimming baths, dance hall and reading room.

**1838** The population of Slaithwaite stands at 2,892.

**1849** The railway arrives in the village.

**1870** Mechanics' Institute is built to provide village with night school and non-sectarian school.