



## Exploring old Slaithwaite

This easy two mile walk complements Mary Freeman's booklet, *Slaithwaite - a Saunter Round the Centre* which is locally available. This walk concentrates on buildings and covers areas of Slaithwaite not described in the booklet.

Slaithwaite's history since the 1400's has been shaped by its remaining in the hands of the Kaye/Dartmouth family. According to the Kayes' own early records, their major concern was to develop the potential water power of the river. When they became lords of the manor of Slaithwaite there was a manorial corn mill already on the river near the bridge. On the other side of the River Colne the area called Lingards, held by Kirkstall Abbey, had no riverside development. Arthur Kaye wanted *Lingarthes* (Lingards) because to own both banks of a river meant undisputed waterpower.

After the dissolution of the monasteries, Abbey lands were for sale to the smartest bidder. By 1544, Arthur Kaye's Court Rolls were headed *Slagthwaite and Lingarthes*.

It was not long before Kaye had made 'both the walk mylnes (fulling mills) at Slagthwaite owt of the Hoole ground'. The Nether or lower Milne was close to the Crimble Brook which was the Golcar boundary. This area on the river side of Spa Mills was known as Waterside. The Upper Milne was far enough upstream of the bridge not to interfere with the waterpower needed by the corn mill there. Upper Mill is still a mill site and a mill name.

Enough early records of the estate and the fulling mills have survived, some still kept in Slaithwaite Manor House, to follow the growth of the woollen industry in the valley, from the upland sheep grazing/weaving farmholds of the fifteenth century to the busy clothing manufactories of the nineteenth.

This walk takes you through places whose *farmhold* names appeared in early estate records; some settlements grew and multiplied to become hamlets. When power mills in the valley undercut the market of the hand weavers they had few options but to walk to the valley, work long hours at machines and walk back at nightfall.

### 1. Start the walk at the crossroads of Carr Lane and Station Road. Walk up Station Road

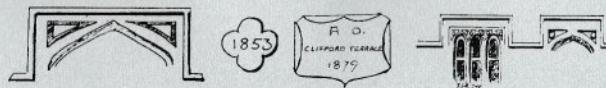
Notice on the right No.24, **A** the former egg-packing station. This was run for many years by a firm called Yorkshire Egg Packers. Eggs delivered from various farms in the area would be *candled* by hand for impurities, graded for size and packed by hand into boxes of 30 dozen. Eggs would come in sometimes with farmyard detritus still clinging to them - one knew the origin of some of them by their condition!

### 2. Turn right into Lewisham Road .



In Lewisham (London) there is a Slaithwaite Road. This exchange of names commemorates a marriage between a local and a London family.

Lewisham Road was once known as *Brasshandle Street* because of its elegance. During the first world war Belgian refugees were housed at No. 12. Notice two buildings **B** and **C** both built in the first half of the 19th century in a Tudor revival style.



### 3. Where Lewisham Road joins Carr Lane keep left. Opposite the Packhorse Hotel take an unmade lane (Kiln Lane) veering left.

Kiln Lane went up to Hill Top before the railway was driven through Slaithwaite. Notice the block of three houses in the middle **D**. The variations in door and window patterns suggest the residents were declaring their independence.

### 4. At the top of Kiln Lane turn right. Continue on the road as it veers uphill and left under the railway viaduct.



There are two horse troughs to the left of the pavement, **E**, now well below the present road level due to continual road surfacing.



Turn around to look at the clock on Brook Mills. This was on the old Water Treatment Works at Bradley, demolished when Yorkshire Water took over. The Victorian Society took it over as a Public Monument. In 1982 Tom Longbottom offered it a place on his mill tower, restored the movement, set it up, winds and cares for it regularly, an appreciated custodian. You are now in Crimble.

### 5. Continue ahead past the Swan Inn, keeping the Inn on your right. Past the Inn cross the road towards the red phone box. To the right of the box between houses join a path which at first turns right then climbs up a flight of steps (which can be slippery) to the allotments.

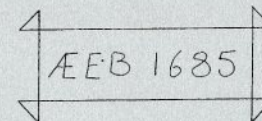
This was one of the short cuts used by workers to get from Hill Top to the mills at Crimble.

At the top there is a small dipping pool, constructed by the allotment holders as a source of water, the overflow water tumbling down the hill to Crimble Brook. The 1840's was a time of bad trade and great hardship here; most families had become dependent on the woollen mills and few had land on which to grow food. Unemployment money to buy food was unheard of. Spade Husbandry Societies were formed, with the support of the landlord, and allotments of about 1/4 acre were set up. There are still some fine allotment gardens up here, but without tenants too many are going back to nature.



### 6. At the top of the steps pass the allotments on your left. Then veer right between walls. When you reach a road turn sharp left away from the road, passing garages on your left, along a track with a wall on your left. Soon you enter a walled lane at the start of the next road where there is an upstanding stone post with a rounded top (an old-style field gatepost). Continue along this lane (which was once a road to Halifax) into Olney Street.

Several old buildings in the fold were pulled down in the early 1900s when Olney Street was driven through. Now pause and look at the long house **F** on the right behind the green; now nos. 15 and 16 Hill Top Fold. This building, *Aeneas Bothomley's House* is listed; that is, it is on a government list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings may not be altered in appearance without planning permission. This one is interesting on both counts; architecturally because it is a 1685 rebuild in stone of an earlier cruck house, using the same ground plan; historically because Slaithwaite's diarist, Robert Meeke, lodged and wrote his diary here between 1689 and his death in 1724.



7. At the end go left along Meal Hill Lane to its junction with Royd Street and Hill Top Road. Turn left for a few yards to see Nos. 13-19 Hill Top Road. **G**  
Look at the datestone 1763 with initials W I H, for Mr Walker and his wife



8. Return to the junction and walk ahead along Royd Street.

Thirty years ago there were four corner shops at the junction of Meal Hill Lane and Royd Street. Now the only one left is Dillingham's. This name over the door covers that of *White Royd Terrace* carved beneath; this first row of houses was built on a field called White Royd.

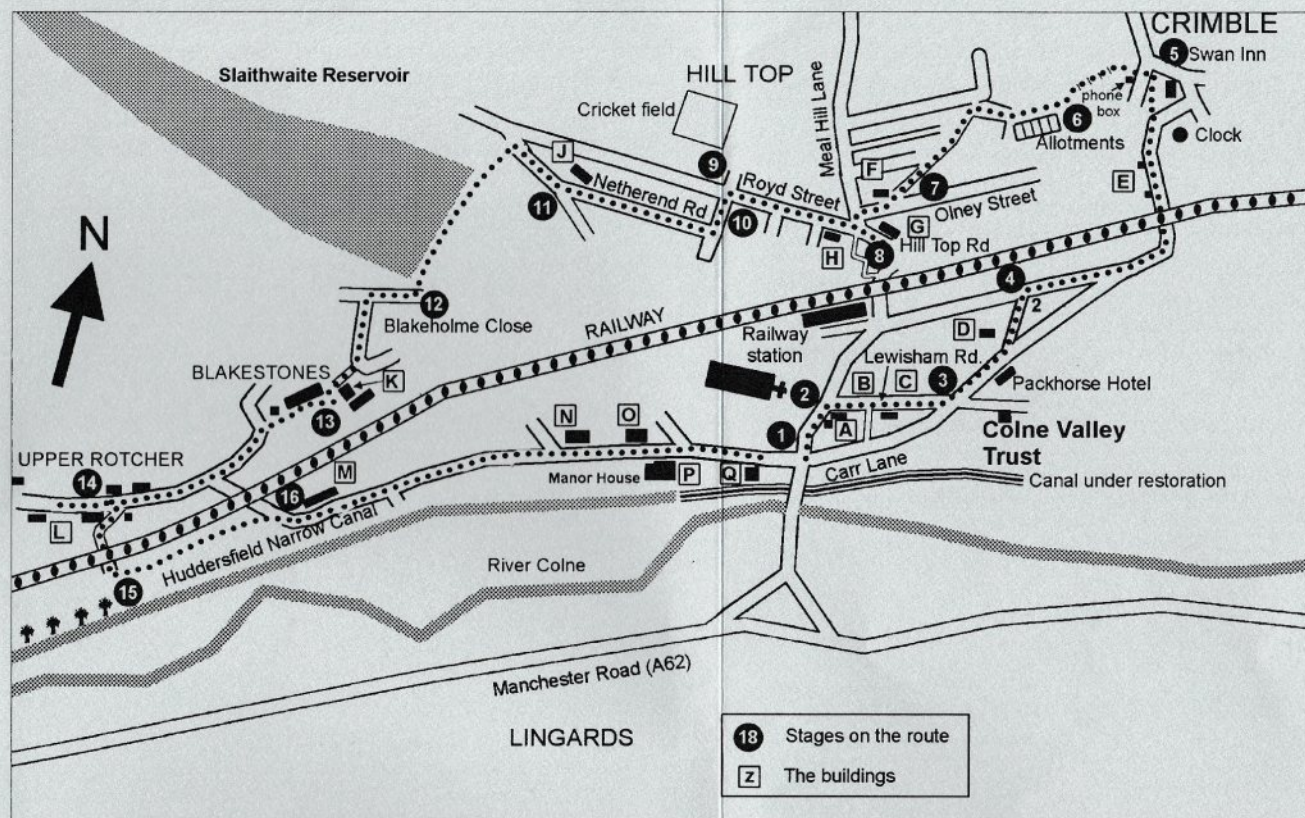


On the left hand side of Royd Street No.8 **H** is another mock Tudor style house like those in Lewisham Road. On the other side of the road at the end of the stone terrace there is a row of houses built for the railway workers, not of stone but of fawn coloured brick, known locally as *Brick Ouses*. You see, across the road, shops with a stone inscription reading Slaithwaite Equitable Industrial Society Ltd Branch No.4; former *Cwop shops*. This is evidence of the extraordinary vigour and growth of the Co-operative Movement in Slaithwaite the 19th century.

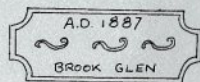
9. At Racton Street corner look right to the entrance of the Slaithwaite Cricket and Bowling Club.

In fine weather, at the weekends, the cricket field there rings with cheers and clapping. The Estate Map of 1837 in Slaithwaite Manor House shows four fields called Cricket Lands, adjoining the White Royd Fields. It is good to think of cricket being enjoyed here for so long!

10. Cross Royd Street to Grove Street, then turn right into Netherend Road.



Near the end of the road on your right is a detached house (Netherend) No.45 **J**, sited at an angle. It is older than the road which was named after it but the name is much older still; it appears in a document of 1460. The land falling away on the left, now with new houses on it, was called Tenterfield. Open as it is to westerly winds blowing down the valley, it was suited to drying wet finished cloth stretched on tenterposts.



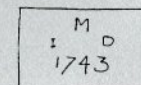
Did you spot this datestone ?

11. Cross the road ahead (Bankgate - beware of traffic) and turn right up the hill. Take a path on your left over a footbridge and across the dam of Slaithwaite reservoir.

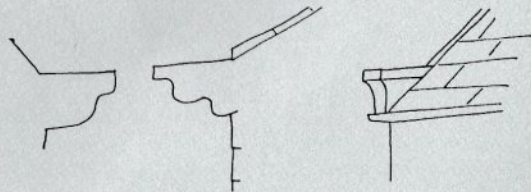
This reservoir was constructed to provide water to the canal; it is also a popular place for Angling Club competitions. Merry Dale Brook runs into it. Looking left you have a grandstand view of Slaithwaite village.

12. On reaching the road turn right, cross over and then turn left into Blakeholme Close. Keep to the right and at the bend take the fenced footpath to the right. Look to your left to see the barn. The path turns left at the end and puts you in front of Blakestones Barn.

This splendid building **K** is listed. It has only recently been converted to a house. Glancing through the large arched doorway you can see the corresponding arch in the other wall of the barn. The great horse wagons, loaded with corn or hay, could enter here, unload and leave through the other arch. At the lower end of the barn is a small doorway with a deep lintel and stone surround; this was the entrance to the cow byre or *mistal*. The date stone reads M I D 1743.



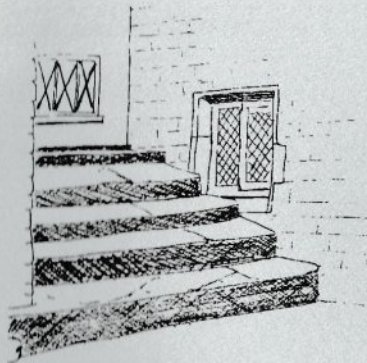
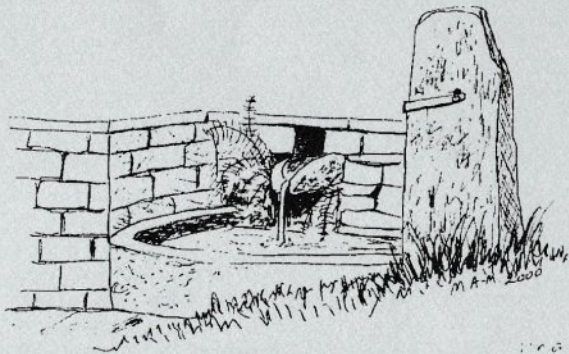
The houses clustered closest to the barn contain two which are as old if not older. Alterations and the coating of white painted cement disguise their true features. The shapes of the projecting stones (called kneelers) at the ends of the eaves are a clear indication of age. The older kneelers tend to be smaller and less elaborate. Houses No. 2, 15 and 16 are listed.



13. Walk on through this lovely old hamlet of Blakestones.

Turn left towards the railway. The road soon forks left to pass under the railway. Ignore this turn but continue ahead to reach Upper Rotcher. **L**

Nearly every building here is listed. Notice a large stone water trough before the first house on the right; a spout of water is trickling in from the higher ground behind. This is typical of the age-old water supply for outlying settlements in this area; a regular supply was essential not only for the household but also for clothmaking and livestock.



Between 10 and 12  
Upper Rotcher.

Roof or steps ?

14. When you reach the gate don't go through to Stones Laithe Farm but note the interesting turnstile, then turn back. Notice another fine stone water trough by the first house, No.10. Turn sharp right past the last house on the right, No.11, and continue down the path and under the railway bridge.

As you walk down towards the railway, look on the right for a little old house with mid-1700's kneelers like those at Blakestones.

If you are surprised to find two railway bridges so close together, remember that when the railway was built over 150 years ago a clear way had to be made for every farm road then in use.

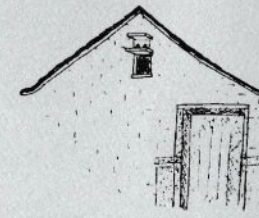
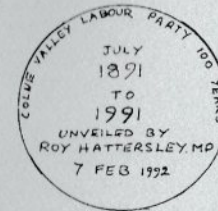
15. Go through the kissing-gate .

The long grassed area is known as Rotcher tip; not only farm carts have used it! There is no tipping now; it is an area of public open space. To the right is Park Lane. (This name is a reference to the park of Slaithwaite Hall, which stands a mile further away towards Marsden and is where the lords of Slaithwaite Manor lived before the Kayes owned the estate).

16. Turn left and walk through the grassy area with the railway on your left back towards the centre of Slaithwaite. You soon arrive at Rotcher Lane. You are now in Lower Rotcher. Continue down this road back to Slaithwaite

The long building second on the left **M** is a two hundred year old farmhouse and barn, much altered in appearance by recent re-windowing.

When another road from the left joins this one , look across the junction to No. 23, **N** which has a plaque beside its front door commemorating the formation of one of the first-ever Labour local parties .



Further down the road, No. 11 **O** (see frontispiece) is listed as a surviving *manufacturing dwelling*. The top storey has a continuous row of thirteen stone-mullioned windows, of which five are now blocked. This long room would have been full of looms from end to end.

In front of the house is a cruck barn which may be medieval.

As you approach the Silent Woman pub, notice the long low roof opposite. At the end of that building turn right down a cobbled way (passing the Dartmouth Estate Office notice) and turn right to look at the front of the long building, the Manor House, **P**. You can view it best from its car parking area. It was built by Slaithwaite landlords, the Kayes, in the sixteenth century.

The sundial on the green is a five-foot cylindrical stone found locally in 1587 and now believed to be a milestone from the Roman road that passed along the valley.

To the left of the Manor House see the small lock-up intended for local felons. It is believed never to have been used!

Now walk down the short lane to the right. As you emerge from it into the public car park you will see straight ahead, to the left of the white building, the back of the Free School founded by Robert Meeke, Slaithwaite's curate – and diarist– in 1721.

The white building was an old inn (the Dartmouth Arms). Go round it to see the front of the school, **Q** rebuilt in 1842. It is now a funeral parlour.

Across the road is the Shoulder of Mutton, now the oldest pub in the village, built about 1800.

Here the tour ends: continue exploring!