

of the Peace for the County of Caernarvon and in 1864, within four years of settling in Llanfairfechan, was High Sheriff. And so the rich Lancashire manufacturer had in a very short time become a country squire. At any rate, he was a country squire when he was in North Wales, staying at what the *Oldham Chronicle* persisted in describing as his "marine residence". In Oldham he continued to be throughout just plain and popular John Platt, a great captain of industry and the munificent benefactor of his native town. In 1865 he was elected M.P. for Oldham and he held the seat until his death.

Within three or four years Llanfairfechan had been transformed in its social life and physical appearance almost completely. The cause of the transformation, in a sense, was the Industrial Revolution, although its effects in Llanfairfechan were very different from what they were in most parts of the country. What the Industrial Revolution brought to Llanfairfechan was not mills, factories and coal mines but the house and estate of a great industrial magnate. The advent of the Platts, together with the growth of the holiday trade and the development of the granite quarries at Penmaenmawr, brought ever increasing prosperity to the parish. New houses and shops were built, some of them given names like "Manchester House" or "Oldham House" by way of compliment to the great man at Bryn-y-Neuadd. Many people in Llanfairfechan found employment on the Bryn-y-Neuadd estate. The Platts were generous and the poor benefited especially.

An interesting picture of Llanfairfechan at this time is given in an account of the festivities in the village on the occasion of the marriage in January, 1868, of John Platt's eldest son, Henry. He was a young man of twenty-six and a captain in the Caernarvonshire militia. His bride was the daughter of Colonel Richard Sykes, a Cheshire gentleman. That January day in 1868 was one of great excitement in Llanfairfechan, especially for the children. Flags were hoisted out from all the principal houses and from 10 o'clock in the morning rock-cannons were fired in rapid succession and the firing continued at intervals throughout the day. All the village made the occasion a holiday. The children of the parish, over 500 of them, assembled at the school at 10 o'clock and formed a procession marshalled by the curate and the schoolmaster. This procession made its way in great spirits along the turnpike road as far as Madryn, a farm belonging to Mr. John Platt mid-way between Llanfairfechan and Aber. There, it was joined by the brass band of the Bethesda Volunteers, fifteen in number, who had just arrived, having, says the *North Wales Chronicle*, called at Aber at the Bulkeley Arms Hotel and refreshed themselves with bread and cheese and a glass each of Mr. Edwards's prime *cwrw da*. At Madryn, a fine ox was placed on a waggon, very tastefully decorated, says the account, by Mr. Eastwood, the head gardener at Bryn-y-Neuadd. The waggon, with the ox, was drawn by six superb grey horses, bedizened with

ribbons of all kinds of colours; and on the waggon were four butchers. The Band of the Bethesda Volunteers, playing popular airs, then led the procession as far as Aber, leaving the school children at Madryn. There, at Aber, they were met by the entire village and there was great cheering and drinking of beer, no doubt especially by the Bethesda Volunteers. The procession then returned to Madryn, being rejoined by the schoolchildren. It was now a quarter of a mile long. From Madryn it made its way through the Grand Lodge, and along the main drive to Bryn-y-Neuadd Hall; but, says the account, there was a little sifting of the crowd at the Grand Lodge, as none who were not privileged were allowed to go to the Hall. Arriving at the Hall, the procession was received by the curate, (the rector was at the wedding in Cheshire), Mr. Lewis the agent, Mr. Richard Luck and Miss Stephens, the housekeeper. Ale was served to the Bethesda Volunteers' band, who by this time were probably a little unsteady, and the housekeeper distributed buns and cakes to the children. The curate called for a round of cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Henry Platt "which were right heartily given". Mr. Luck did the same in English. A round of cheers was also given to Mr. John Platt, the curate and Mr. Lewis the agent.

The procession then toured the village to the accompaniment of much band playing and cheering. At 3 o'clock the children were treated to a tea at the school, whilst the organizers of the festivities regaled themselves at the Castle Hotel and other similar places. "The most pleasant and important part of the day's proceedings", says the account, "was the distribution of the beef to the poor of the two parishes of Llanfairfechan and Aber. The ox was soon cut up into good large pieces and a portion of beef was given to everyone who presented a ticket—about 120 in all". At night, two monster bonfires were lit on the mountains. The only thing that went wrong that glorious day, it appears, was a balloon, which failed to ascend to any very great height. The *North Wales Chronicle* ended its account of the day's festivities with these words: "We are glad to state that good order was maintained throughout the day and that the police officers did their duty well—firmly, but kindly". Doubtless the Bethesda Volunteers that night had required some firm handling before they could be persuaded to make their way home.

Three months later, just before Easter, Captain and Mrs. Platt returned to Llanfairfechan after their honeymoon on the continent. The welcome which the young couple received on arriving at Llanfairfechan station, the schoolchildren massed outside the station entrance, triumphal arches spanning the road to Bryn-y-Neuadd Front Lodge, the carriage drawn by four splendid grey horses, and the cheering procession of tenantry and others which accompanied them all the way to Bryn-y-Neuadd, was so tumultuous that Captain Platt, in reply to an address of welcome read by the rector, said that it might almost make him fancy that he was the Prince of Wales.