

John Platt had bought not only the estate of Bryn-y-Neuadd but also the old mansion and estate of Gorddinog just across the parish boundary in Aber. Gorddinog had once been the home of an old Welsh county family which had died out. Its last occupant was Mrs. Crawley, who had married Mr. Vincent, former rector of Llanfairfechan and subsequently dean of Bangor. In 1868 John Platt decided to pull down the old house and build, close behind its site, a new mansion for his eldest son. The new Gorddinog, a mansion, as one writer described it at the time, "of Elizabethan architecture", was completed in 1869, and Captain Platt and his young wife made their home in it for the rest of their lives. They were clearly much attached to the house and were to make substantial additions to the original building.

John and Alice Platt had a large family. There were seven sons and six daughters. It is interesting to note that of the seven sons only one took any real interest in their father's great business at Oldham. One reason for this may have been the education which they received. Evidently John Platt at first wanted his sons to have an useful and practical education and spurned the social graces and classical education of the older public schools. He sent his two eldest boys to Cheltenham College, where the curriculum was directed mainly towards imparting what was described as "a sound, modern, commercial education, the classics not being studied". From Cheltenham the two boys were sent to Berlin, to the Friedrich Wilhelm Real Schule and from there the second boy went straight into the works at Oldham, working his way through all the departments. Henry, the eldest, instead went on to St. John's College, Cambridge. By this time John Platt was apparently changing in his attitude towards his sons' education. The third son went to Harrow.

It was the second son, Samuel Radcliffe Platt, who became head of the firm after his father's death and remained chairman of the board of directors until his death in 1902. He lived at the Platt family mansion in Werneth Park, Oldham, though he spent much of his time in travel, cruising in his yacht, the "Norseman", a yacht worth £30,000. The other sons, eventually, settled down to the life of country gentlemen. One of them, James Edward, the sixth son, became an eminent figure in the sporting world. Once, when out fox-hunting in Cheshire, he took a fence when the field was in full cry which no other member of the party, who knew the lie of the land, would have dared to take. They all thought he would surely be killed but after an interval he reappeared, badly shaken but unhurt. Thereafter that fence was known as "Platt's Grave".

John Platt died suddenly at Paris, in Maurice's Hotel in the Rue de Rivoli, on May 12th, 1872. He was only 54. He had been on a tour of Italy with his wife and daughter and niece and had been taken ill at Turin. His death was certainly a most grievous loss to the town of Oldham. The loss to Llanfairfechan was no less grievous. At the time of his death, Bryn-y-Neuadd was undergoing extensive

alterations and additions and one of the main reasons for the Italian tour was that Mr. Platt and his family would not, on this account, have been able to reside at Bryn-y-Neuadd during the summer and autumn. Furthermore, by his death Llanfairfechan was deprived of a dock and piers. In 1872 John Platt was already well advanced with a scheme for the construction of a dock at Llanfairfechan, doubtless for the accommodation of his sons' yachts. A house which was apparently connected with this scheme had been built and is standing today. The scheme had to have the approval of Parliament. The Board of Trade had already granted a provisional order and plans of the dock and piers had been deposited with the clerk of the peace of this county. They are still preserved with the County Archives. But following John Platt's death the scheme was abandoned.

Bryn-y-Neuadd had obviously been intended by John Platt as his principal seat and one might have expected that, after his father's death, Henry Platt, the eldest son, would have succeeded to it, Gorddinog becoming a kind of dower house. But Henry Platt remained at Gorddinog. None of the other sons wanted Bryn-y-Neuadd.† Samuel, the second son, lived at Oldham, the third son at Barnby Manor, Nottinghamshire. Bryn-y-Neuadd was eventually given to the youngest son, Sydney, who, when his father died, was only a boy of eleven.

After John Platt's death in 1872 there were no further developments at Bryn-y-Neuadd or on the estate. His family evidently did not share his enthusiasm for the place. The house and the estate were kept up and members of the family stayed there occasionally. But there were a long periods when no member of the family was in residence. John Platt's widow, Alice Platt, preferred Oldham and there she lived to a great age. But in 1884, twelve years after his father's death, Sydney Platt, then a young man of 23, got married and brought his bride home to Bryn-y-Neuadd. The people of Llanfairfechan were full of rejoicing and hoped that the couple would make Bryn-y-Neuadd their permanent residence. When the bride and bridegroom arrived home in Llanfairfechan by the afternoon train on Christmas Eve, 1884, the whole village turned out to meet them in procession. The procession from the station was led by a band followed by the Oddfellows in full regalia and then Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Platt in a carriage drawn by the estate workmen. The feelings of the village were expressed by the estate agent, Captain Lempriere, when he said, at a banquet given a few days later to the tenants, workmen, tradespeople and others, that "now that they had got a new tenant at Bryn-y-Neuadd, he sincerely hoped that she had taken a very long lease". This observation, says the *North Wales Chronicle*, was loudly cheered.

†The Bryn-y-Neuadd Estate was, in fact, unsuccessfully offered for sale in June, 1876, within only four years of John Platt's death.