

unstinted industry of both men, the firm of Hibbert & Platt steadily flourished. Larger premises had to be found, at nearby Mount Pleasant, where 50 men were soon employed. The growth of Hibbert & Platt's business continued dramatically for its machines had found renown in wider Lancashire from where the volume of orders swelled the demands of Oldham. Simultaneously, the firm had attained the position of being able to supply cotton spinners with every type of machine they needed at that time; the firm had become comprehensive. By 1829 the call for larger premises was pressing again and these were found at, not too distant, Greenacres moor, a locality which was becoming widely industrialised. The building acquired was a former cotton mill, around which there was space available for expansion, and it was given the name Hartford Works.

Progress at this new site bounded apace, as anticipated, the adjacent existing buildings were acquired and new buildings were erected to house workshops and foundries as Hibbert & Platt, in order to eliminate its dependence on others for the supply of the multitudinous parts for its product machines, concentrated the manufacture of the parts in its own hands, often, by methods of production it had itself devised and on equipment designed and constructed on its own premises. Textile machinery makers frequently found they had to pioneer methods of mass production well before other branches of the nineteenth century engineering industry found these to be necessary, or those branches of industry with which they are, nowadays, particularly identified even existed – a single Mule comprised hundreds of identical spindles. By 1839 the workforce had approached 400 people when, in that year, it was decided to admit as partners Henry Platt's two elder sons, Joseph and John. These two young men had worked in the business from an early age and though their formal education had been simple, their knowledge of the business and the technical learning it had brought were profound. Resulting from this move the name of the firm was changed to Hibbert, Platt & Sons.

In 1842, a branch line of the Manchester & Leeds Railway had reached Oldham from Manchester. The terminus was sited at Werneth on the first level ground at the head of a steep gradient and immediately in front of the hill which divided some of the western part of the town from the remainder. At that time, Hibbert, Platt & Sons was again sorely confronted with the need to expand its premises – Hartford Works now employed in the order of 500 people – and it was projected to build an entirely new additional works close to the railroad. Meanwhile, the year 1842 was marked for the Platts by two significant events, one most joyous, the other extremely sad: John, the second son of Henry Platt, married Alice Radcliffe and Henry Platt

died. John Platt's bride – whom he married at St James Church, Greenacres, Oldham – was the daughter of Samuel Radcliffe to whom Henry Platt had sold his first carding machine for cotton, before he had left Uppermill. Samuel Radcliffe who, at the time, was a bourgeois cotton spinner had prospered and was, now, one of Oldham's premier mill owners. During the intervening years the two families had been close friends and neighbours, each had its residence close to their factories at Greenacres moor. Henry Platt died in the November of the year at the age of 49. He was buried at Hope Chapel, Oldham, as was his widow eighteen years later. Unremitting hard work had been the denominator to the time Henry Platt had spent in the far from healthy environment of the Oldham of his day and each had taken its toll. Moreover, fate had decided he was not to benefit from the vast new opportunity which was to open up in the following year. Yet, he had prospered, and, above all, he had been so mightily instrumental in giving Oldham its textile machinery maker of standing.

An Order in Council, of 1843, abolished restrictions on the exporting of machinery to foreign countries and Hibbert, Platt & Sons was not slow to take advantage of the opportunities presented. Soon, its machinery – now widely acknowledged to be of a high and unequalled quality – was being sold abroad on an accelerating scale, particularly after the new works, at Werneth, which had been named Hartford New Works, came into operation in 1844. The ability to export its products had on the business of Hibbert, Platt & Sons an impact which can be gauged from figures recorded, jointly for the two works, at the end of 1846. These figures showed the annual rate of usage of cast iron had risen by 113% to just short of 5 000 tons, coal consumption had doubled at 10 000 tons and, whilst the workforce at the original works had remained at 500 people the new works had engaged a force of 400, thus, in the space of two years the total workforce of the firm had risen by 80%. It is not surprising to find contemporary observers referring to "the great works of the firm". Sadly, the colossal success of these two years was marred by two untimely deaths, that of Joseph Platt, in 1845, from consumption, at the early age of 30, and, in the March of 1846, that of Elijah Hibbert, at the age of 45. The deaths of both men served, yet again, as a sharp reminder of the detrimental effect the conditions of an industrial town, of that era, had on those who dwelt and toiled in it. James Platt, the younger of Henry Platt's, now living, two sons (the youngest son, Henry, had died when a boy) took the place of Joseph as a partner in the business and, in due course, his brother John, who was now the senior partner, and he entered into negotiation with the trustees of Elijah Hibbert's estate to acquire Elijah Hibbert's interest in the firm. This move came to