

bolts and screws were but one example of the second string to the bow of the Company's policy, namely to tie the customers to Platt Brothers for spare parts. Eventually, virtually the only items the Company was to bring into its works were the raw materials and it was this approach to self-sufficiency, and the scale of the production capacity it generated, which astonished visitors.

Both Works came to have direct access to the railway after the line had been extended from Werneth into the heart of the town. (Tunnels had been driven through the hill, at Werneth, by the, newly formed, Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company in 1847). The town's new main station had been sited at Mumps from whence, in due course, the line was extended via Shaw, Newhey and Milnrow to Rochdale. At a point shortly after leaving Mumps, for Shaw, sidings had been taken off the line to form Hartford goods yard and from this goods yard a private line continued, across Derker Street, into the Company's Hartford Works. The sets of private railway sidings installed at the Platt Brothers & Company's two works were, by far, the most extensive in Oldham, that at Werneth being virtually a miniature railway in itself. In fact, the siding at Hartford New Works was a loop line which left the main-line, from Middleton Junction, at a point on the gradient, which ran alongside the Works, and re-joined at Werneth Station. From the loop line sidings fanned out all over the Works on which the Company's own stud of 0-4-0 tank locomotives busied themselves shunting in waggons of raw materials and drawing out vans and waggons laden with the Company's product machines. Similar shunting operations, on a somewhat lesser scale, took place, with some more Company owned locomotives, at the original Hartford Works. The Company possessed a fleet of private owner waggons which, together with the locomotives, were serviced by the Company's own maintenance departments (millwrights and joiners). John Platt had been an ardent supporter of railways to connect Oldham with the remainder of the country. The London & North Western Railway Company had brought a line, via Saddleworth, from its main Manchester to Huddersfield line and the Oldham, Ashton & Guide Bridge Railway had connected the town with the south. Platt Brothers & Company had, therefore, obtained ready routes to its customers in Lancashire, Yorkshire and farther afield and, particularly, to the ports on both the west and east coasts of the country. John Platt was a director of the London & North Western Railway and the Chairman of the Oldham, Ashton & Guide Bridge Railway, having followed Elijah Hibbert in that office of the (renamed) company.

The Great Exhibition, at the Crystal Palace, in 1851, and the exhibition in Paris, some four years later, were, for the Company, excellent

shop windows from which much business resulted. At the London exhibition the Company's machines were adjudged to have excelled all others in their class, for which achievement the Company was awarded the Council Medal. At Paris similar success attended the Company's exhibits resulting in the award of the Grand Médaille d'Honneur and, from the Emperor Napoleon III, personal honours for John Platt in his elevation to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honour. Throughout the eighteen-sixties and into the early seventies the Company's machinery enjoyed further success at a number of exhibitions: London, again – Prize Medal, Constantinople – Order of Medjidie (for Gins), Naples – Silver Medal (for Gins), Paris, again, – Gold Medal and Moscow – Gold Medal. The renown of Platt machinery was now as universal in Europe as it had been in Lancashire some thirty years earlier and the successes at these exhibitions served unfailingly to uphold the renown.

John and James Platt had, from the outset of their tenure of the Company, encouraged their workpeople to elevate their social and intellectual interests, as later they came to do for the population of Oldham at large. As early as 1848, they established a library for the use of their workpeople which, initially, was stocked with 500 volumes of sound educational material with the promise to add, each successive year, a further 50 volumes. They also instituted a news room which was supplied with the national and leading provincial newspapers, for the use of which a workman paid one penny per week. But 1851 was to see the first strife between employers and employees in the engineering industry in Oldham. The introduction of the ever increasing number of machine tools caused the skilled workmen to dissent as more and more unskilled labour was recruited to man the machines and, eventually, matters came to a head in a strike which lasted for several months. The Society of Operative Engineers, the trade union representing the skilled men, resolved on a trial of strength with the employers and endeavoured to enter into negotiation with them but the employers countered by forming their own federation – believed by the Union to be a move instigated by John Platt – and, in due course, some employers decided on a lock-out, though Hibbert, Platt & Sons (as the company was still named at the time) did not follow this course as urgent orders for Russia were in hand. Both sides were to experience losses but ultimately the workmen suffered the most and, finally, were forced to succumb. Although some rancour resulted it was not long before it dwindled away when the workmen realised that because trade was flourishing, on a scale never before experienced, plentiful employment was readily available for all grades of labour at good rates of wages. During the strike the news room was