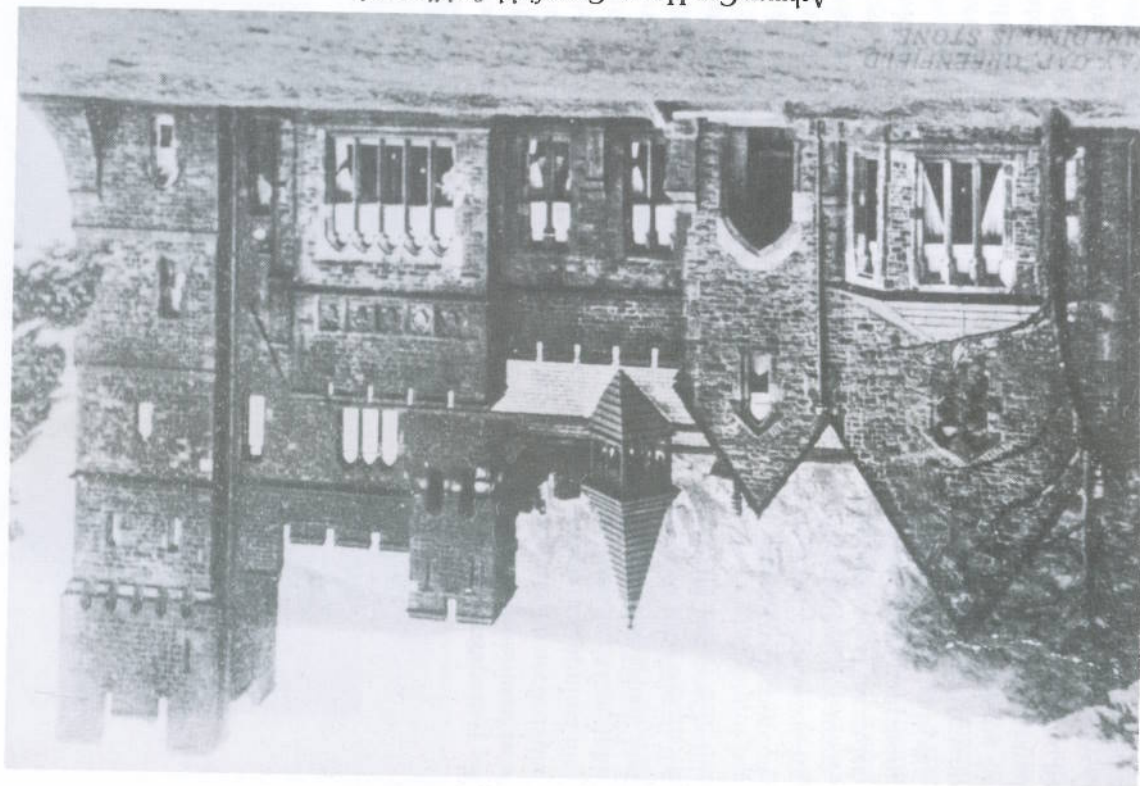




Ashway Gap House, Greenfield, Saddleworth.

fund which, unfortunately, had fallen short of the required total. Periodically, each had lamented the lack of progress towards creating a park. James Platt, when speaking at a dinner, in 1853, expressed his view that the difficulty lay in the fact, that at the time of the Enclosures, the town had had no bona fide municipal authority to gain land for public purposes. On the day Alexandra Park was opened - 28 August 1865 - John Platt is reported to have said "The noblest bequest that had ever been given to Oldham had been opened that day".

In the eighteen-forties, those industrialists who could afford to do so were moving to a place of residence away from the immediate vicinity of their factories. John Platt certainly could afford, as could Samuel Radcliffe - his father-in-law, Josiah Radcliffe and Eli Lees - a cotton spinner and weaver and brother of Asa Lees. In partnership, in 1847, they acquired an area of land in Werneth which had been the estate and site of the ancient manor house of the Oldhams of Oldham. This land they laid out as Werneth Park in which each built a new mansion, the most superior, perhaps, Oldham was ever to see within its boundaries. John and Alice Platt had thirteen children, seven sons and six daughters. By 1851, five of the children had been born, the eldest, Henry, being eight years old and, together with a governess and four servants they were established at the mansion. Ten years later, although the older boys were now away at school, the family and the household comprised John and Alice Platt, seven of their children and fourteen servants. The eldest daughter, Mary, now a young lady of seventeen, divided the two oldest boys: Henry and Samuel. At first, John Platt had strong intentions that his sons were to receive a useful and practical education, whereupon, the two oldest boys were sent to Cheltenham College, where the curriculum was directed towards imparting modern commercial knowledge; the classics were not studied. From thence they proceeded to the Friedrich Wilhelm Real Schule in Berlin. On return to England, Henry went up to St. John's College, Cambridge, whereas Samuel went directly into the works at Oldham. Thereafter, John Platt seems to have changed his ideas, the third son went to Harrow and the other sons, too, were to follow a conventional English education commensurate with the status the family had now achieved. James Platt and his wife, Lucy Mary (nee Schofield) took up residence at Hartford House, on the nearby corner of Grange Avenue and Wellington Road: they had one child, a daughter, Edith.

At the beginning of the eighteen-fifties the brothers took the step which industrialists, as successful as they were now taking, namely, to acquire a country estate. Jointly, they bought the Ashway Gap estate which lay above the Saddleworth village of Greenfield. The house stood in the sheltered Dove Stone Clough but this John Platt