

XIV *The Climax of Platt Brothers & Company (Holdings) Ltd*

In the late nineteen-forties anxiety was abroad in Oldham and in the other towns where the Operating Companies were located that TMM seemed set on a move to house all its textile machinery making operations in the one factory at Barton. Suspicion was heightened when TMM converted the Barton Works into a separate Operating Company and declared its intention to construct a foundry in Trafford Park. Public meetings were held, in all the towns, to voice objection to any such move and the principal reasons advanced were undeniably sound. Families, on the scale involved, did not wish to leave their home towns, and even if they had had housing conditions, as they stood in that post war era, were incapable of accommodating them in the appropriate quarters of western Manchester and Salford. Daily travel, over the distances involved, would be difficult in the extreme and many would not tolerate it for long. Above all, TMM could not afford to lose the skills and know-how vested in so many members of its workforce who would decline to move or soon abandon the travel.

Matters took a brighter turn, at a meeting in Oldham, when William Reid Hall, a director of Platt Brothers & Company Limited, TMM Limited and, most importantly, Platt Brothers & Company (Holdings) Limited, intimated his sympathy with these views. The weight behind W R Hall's action was not lost on the people of Oldham, his appointments apart, many were aware he was the grandson of John Platt's youngest sister, Louisa, and that he and his father, Henry Platt Hall, before him, had been the nearest connection of the Platt family to have participated in the active direction and management of Platt Brothers after Samuel Radcliffe Platt's death in 1902. Moreover, his personal stake in the Company was far from being a negligible one, particularly as it had come to include those shares which had had to be sold towards meeting Eric Platt's death duties. (The Hall principal residence was in the Welsh Borders - Pentrevellyn Hall, Montgomery, and their Oldham residence was at 'Toravon' a house on Newport Street, Werneth). Anxiety was finally allayed when TMM announced it was not going to renew the lease on the Barton factory and had drawn-up plans for a considerable re-building programme at Hartford Works and, on a lesser

scale, at Howard & Bullough's Globe Works and Dobson & Barlow's Works at Bradley Fold. The plans also included for an entirely new, additional, building at Helmsshore for TMM(R).

Meanwhile, because the volume at which the post war orders had been running was slackening and the business which had been expected to arise from the Cripps Plan (a government scheme to re-equip the Lancashire cotton industry) had not materialised (questions were asked in Parliament why this was so) TMM was forced to bring about some retrenchment of its manufacturing capacity. In 1951 the Soho Works of Asa Lees was closed down and its operations absorbed into Hartford Works. Arising from this move, the headquarters of TMM had to be transferred to Hartford Works as well. Just before Christmas 1952, Platt Brothers' East Works was closed and its operations, too, were absorbed in Hartford Works. So ended the original Hartford Works at Greenacres moor.

Whereas the absorption of Asa Lees had not been difficult to achieve, the types of product machine in question had once been made at Hartford Works, the influx of the woollen and worsted carding machinery from the East Works, which, it will be remembered, called for manufacturing facilities never installed at Hartford Works, caused whole departments, including the foundry, to be suitably prepared. Moreover, the workforce transferred with these machines was large, for instance the Drawing Office at Werneth doubled in size. These closures were soon followed by that of Brooks & Doxey leading to yet another line of machinery, some types of which had previously been made at the East Works, being added to the range manufactured at Hartford Works. When the Barton Factory was finally vacated in 1957, the Blowroom machines and cotton Drawframes had been placed with Howard & Bullough, the cotton Cards with Hartford Works and the continuous filament machines had gone to Dobson & Barlow to join the 'Nelson' line of rayon machines.

The foundry at Barton was soon re-opened, as a separate subsidiary company, to make castings for the Operating Companies whose own, out of date, foundries were to be phased out (the Hartford Works foundry was closed in 1959). The foundry at Barton then operated under the name of Howard & Bullough Foundry Limited until, some years later, it was replaced with a new foundry, equipped to the very latest standards, commissioned on the Dobson & Barlow site at Bradley Fold. The new section of Hartford Works was completed in 1957, at a cost of almost one million pounds. The major part, of a total area of some 250 000 square feet, occupied the ground where the sawmills had stood. Gradually, the older multi-storeyed buildings, especially those of the original works of 1844, were demolished. The demolition included the