

The Oldham Chronicle, August 29 1857

MELANCHOLY AND UNTIMELY DEATH

OF

JAMES PLATT, ESQ, M.P.

We have this week to record one of the most distressing circumstances that every happened to the borough of Oldham, in the death of our local Member of Parliament, James Platt, Esq.

Our readers are aware that Mr Platt has, for some time past, had an estate and country residence in Saddleworth, where he has been making very extensive improvements. Ashway Gap is situated about two miles from the station, on the side of one of the Greenfield hills, in one of the most romantic and beautiful of those valleys for which the borders of Yorkshire are remarkable. it is not more than one-half or three-quarters of a mile from the favourite picnic resort of our population Bill's o' Jacks where the terrible and mysterious tragedy occurred in 1831. The residence of Mr. Platt has been recently built on the site of an old farm house, and at the present time a new summer residence is in course of erection, upwards of 100 workers being engaged at the time of the accident on the extensive works in progress. The estate is very extensive, and considers principally of well stocked grouse moors, extending, we believe, over the hills and adjoining the Chew Wells estate

of Mr. Whitehead, of Wharnton Tower.

On Thursday last, Mr. Platt, accompanied by Edward Ashworth, Esq., Edgerton Hall, Bolton; John Comyns Cole, Esq., Belgrave Square, London; Josiah Radcliffe, Esq., Mayor of Oldham; John Radcliffe Esq; John Scholes Hague, Esq.; James Greaves, Jun., Esq, Derker House, and other gentlemen, set out from Oldham to enjoy a day's sport on the moors above Ashway Gap, known as Ashway Gap Moss. They were attended by a party of gamekeepers and others, whose office was to drive the moors for them. They set out on the shooting excursion about nine o'clock, and at about one o'clock they had bagged about four brace of birds, having then had two or three drives. The men engaged in driving the moors were William Bradbury, his brother Samuel Bradbury, John Schofield, Augustus Bradbury, and Wright Wrigley. The first and last mentioned individuals we are informed, had been sent down to the house for lunch, and Bradbury had returned with it leaving Wrigley to follow with dinner which they were to partake of in the shooting box on the moor in order to allow the party more time afterwards for their sport. As it was, however, not far from the time arranged for dinner, the party agreed to proceed with their shooting instead of losing time before dinner. The lunch was therefore left in the shooting box, and, as there was not time for another

drive before dining, a consultation was held and it was agreed that they should spend the intervening time in shooting over their dogs about Ashway Stones, where the shooting box is situated. They were carrying this project into execution when the accident occurred which deprived our highly respected and talented townsman and member of parliament of life. It appears that James Platt Esq., was the first of the party, and followed by Josiah Radcliffe, Esq., at a distance of four or five yards. The gamekeeper, Alfred Kay, was a little in advance of them on one side, and Mr Ashworth, Mr Cole, and others of the party about fifty yards distant. It was at this point about fort-five minutes past one, or, according to others of the party, quarter-past one. Mr. Platt had just crossed a little hollow, Mr Josiah Radcliffe was following at a distance of four or five yards when his foot slipped, and in recovering himself the trigger of the gun, which he was carrying at half-cock, appears to have been caught by his coat or his side, and as he threw himself partly round to recover his position the contents of the left barrel were lodged in the calf of Mr Platt's right leg. The unfortunate gentleman hopped a yard or two, threw his gun above his head, and exclaiming "Oh! oh!" fell to the ground. The wound was a very severe one, the calf being laid open nearly to the bone, and portions of it blown away. The other members of the party immediately ran up, and set about rendering every

assistance in their power with the utmost promptness. The slip of William Bradbury was at once formed into a bandage around the wound, but the blood flowed so freely that it was quickly saturated. They then bound a silk handkerchief above the wound, but that was deemed to be sufficiently effective, a shot belt was bound tightly round the leg, so as to apparently staunch the excessive haemorrhage. Mr Platt also assisted in the efforts made by holding his hands over the wound, so as to compress the parts firmly together. Four of the men now raised the sufferer carefully, and proceeded to convey him to the shooting box, but as this mode was not deemed sufficiently easy, the door of the place was taken off and Mr Platt placed upon it in order that he might be carried with as little delay as possible to the house at Ashway Gap. Messengers had been sent away as soon as the accident occurred to the house, as well as to all the medical men in the neighbourhood for their immediate attendance, and telegraphic messages despatched to Stalybridge and Manchester for the best surgical aid that could be procured. Information was also sent to Oldham for assistance, as well as to convey the sad intelligence to his family and friends. The man was sent with the tidings to Ashway Gap met John Platt, esq. on the hill side, who was on his way to join the party on the top, and the effect of the melancholy news upon him may be readily imagined. Mr Josiah Radcliffe, the innocent cause of

the calamity, was almost beside himself with grief, and it was feared for some time that he would lay violent hands on himself if not prevented by those around him. He took Mr Platt round the neck and bewailed his fate in the most heart-rending tears.

The mournful party at length succeeded in reaching the mansion, which is about three-quarters of a mile from the scene of the accident, and he was placed upon the bed. Mr William Blackburn, surgeon, who resides nearest to Ashway Gap, but still at a distance of two miles, and Mr Irving assistant to Mr A T Thomson, the family surgeon, were at the place before Mr Platt died, and they did all in their power for the poor sufferer. They also stated that the means which had been employed before their arrival were the best that could have been adopted under the circumstances. There was no immediate danger apprehended by the medical men up to a short time before the sufferer breathed his last, but during the temporary absence of Mr Blackburn from the room, the symptoms struck Mr Irving so forcibly that he sent for him into the room, and in ten minutes afterwards the patient was dead. He died a little after half-past two, his brother and other friends being present with him at the time.

Mr Bardbury, surgeon Dobross, Mr Halkyard, and Mr Murray of Oldham, and Dr Hunt

of Stalybridge, afterwards arrived at the place, but although they had made all the haste in their power they were too late of any service. The mother of the deceased and two sisters hastened to the melancholy scene though only to find that he whom they loved was no more. The corpse presented the appearance of a marble statue, calm as if in peaceful sleep; and there can be little doubt that death was caused by the unconquerable haemorrhage, the bed and mattress which the sufferer lay being completely saturated with blood.

The corpse, enclosed in a hastily constructed shell, left Ashway Gap for Werneth Park about midnight, and arrived at Oldham as three o'clock on Friday morning. It were a vain task to attempt to portray the feelings of the people of Oldham when the sad tidings came of the untimely death of one who has ever proved himself a true, generous, noble friend, and scarcely a public institution or private circle in this neighbourhood but will long mourn his loss.

The works of the Messrs Platt were immediately stopped, and the universal tokens of sorrow manifested by the crowds of workpeople connected with the firm show how truly they appreciated the character of the deceased, in the death of whom they lose at once a master and a friend.