

Standish Market Place.

IMPROVEMENT SCHEME COMPLETED.

Mr. J. M. Ainscough's Beneficence

An informal gathering, which was held at Standish District Council Offices, on Tuesday, will have great historical significance in the annals of the township, for in the presence of members of the local authority, Mr. J. M. Ainscough, J.P., of Wigan and Parbold, who is a native of Standish, handed over to the Council the deeds of the land in the Market Place, Standish, so generously given by him to assist in the improvement of his native village.

The row of property which stood in the Market Place and which belonged to Mr. Ainscough has been demolished, the appearance of the old well has been improved, the little old Market House has been restored, the Stocks removed to their original position at the foot of the Ancient Cross, and the whole Market Place laid out with pretty ornamental greensward.

There were present Mr. J. M. Ainscough, J.P., and Mrs. Ainscough, Mrs. Macdonald, Councillor B. Park (Chairman of the Council), Councillor J. T. Baxter (Vice-chairman), Councillors J. Baron, A. E. Naylor, G. W. Mather, M. J. Prendergast, Mrs. Bottomley, E. Ashton, S. Mason and L. Cunningham, Mr. J. H. Richards (Clerk), Mr. A. A. Smith (Surveyor), and Mr. Peter Moss (Contractor).

Mr. W. Almond apologised for non-attendance owing to urgent business.

Councillor Park said they received Mr. and Mrs. Ainscough under happy circumstances, and they gave them a hearty welcome. "It is always a pleasure to see Mr. and Mrs. Ainscough at Standish," he went on, "because we know they have the welfare of the township at heart. (Hear, hear and applause).

MR. AINSCOUGH'S REMINISCENCES.

Mr. Ainscough, who spoke in a reminiscent vein, said: "I am pleased to be in this room again, if only for an hour, and I am pleased, as I am sure you all are, that we have come to the completion of the Market Place Improvement Scheme. The sands of time are running down, and I began to wonder if the work would be carried out in my day. More than fifty years ago the late Mr. Maskell Peace, Town Clerk of Wigan, who was then a member of the Standish Local Board and lived at Ashfield, proposed to the Board that this work should be done, and offered a sum of £500 towards the purchase of the property. For reasons I could never understand this generous offer was declined, and Mr. Peace passed away. My father, who was then living, was very emphatic in his condemnation of what he considered the lack of appreciation shown by the Board at that time. My father was a poor farmer. Although he was for very many years Overseer and Assessor of Taxes for this Township, I don't think he ever earned an income sufficient to render him liable to the payment of income tax, but he was a Radical of the old school of Cobden and Bright, and one who took a deep interest in both national and local government, and was all out for the material improvement of this village. He was full of the old maxims: 'The man who makes two blades of grass to grow where one only grew before is a public benefactor'; 'The man who produces more than he consumes is serving his country, but the one who consumes more than he produces or helps to produce, is a parasite.' After a long life I seem to see the force of these trite sayings more than I did at the time. He also put into my hands to read the life of John Kyrle, 'The Man of Ross,' who did so much for his own district out of a very small income. John Kyrle has been dead for 200 years, but the beautiful walks he laid out, and the avenues of elms he planted are still the pride and glory of the beautiful old town of Ross and the magnet that draws to it many visitors. And so through all the years in which I have been immersed in business this has been with me a dream, and on the break-up of the Standish Estate on the death of the late Squire I found the opportunity to purchase the whole block of houses. During the erection of the Wigan War Memorial I became acquainted with Sir Giles Scott, the architect of the Liverpool Cathedral, and explained to him what I wished to do. He

wonderful improvement at a low cost, and an improvement for which we shall ever feel grateful to Mr. Ainscough. (Applause).

Councillor J. T. Baxter, in seconding, said Mr. Ainscough had established an interesting link with the past, and he was sure he would derive great pleasure in the evening of his life because of the happy work he had accomplished. He was pleased to see Mrs. Ainscough present. She was also from Standish, and it was like a family gathering, and they could not have a better end to the work they had had in hand. (Applause).

Councillor Baron, in supporting, said it was twenty years ago when Mr. Ainscough first mentioned the Market Place Improvement Scheme to him, and he little thought at that time that Mr. Ainscough would be the means of the work being accomplished.

Mr. Ainscough, in reply, said he did not need any thanks; his greatest gratification was to see the work carried out. "You have made a better job of it than I expected," he commented, "and I would have been satisfied with less. Work worth doing at all is worth doing well, and I won't be ashamed of bringing Sir Giles Scott himself to see the work." Mr. Ainscough also thanked Mr. Peter Moss, the contractor, and also the Council for their hospitality.

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During the erection of the Wigan War Memorial I became acquainted with Sir Giles Scott, the architect of the Liverpool Cathedral, and explained to him what I wished to do. He very kindly sent down to me from London the gentleman who made the sketch of the proposed layout which I submitted to you along with my proposal four years ago, which you have so fully and so admirably carried out, and which includes the covering of the well, the restoration of the little old Market House, and the removal of the Stocks to their original position at the foot of the Ancient Cross. It is an added pleasure to me, Mr. Chairman, that you should be the one whose lot it is to receive the deeds of transfer of this property which I now hand over to you. You and I are old friends. You, like me, were not born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Like me you are a native of this place and of that part of it which is commonly known as "The Town." Like me you received your education in the Village School, and made use of the rudiments you obtained there to enable you to accumulate a wide knowledge in after life. As an old member of the Order of Oddfellows, I know all you have done for the promotion of thrift and self-dependence amongst your fellow-workmen, who have at length rewarded you by placing you in the Chair of their governing authority. I am also interested in the fact that you married a grand-daughter of the old Standish veteran, Bibby, whom I well remember. He was with Sir John Moore at Corunna, and with the Duke of Wellington throughout the Peninsular War. He had the Peninsular Medal with I think seven clasps. As a child I have listened to his stories of Corunna, Salamanca, Vittoria and Badajoz. I believe your mother-in-law, his daughter, is still living. Bibby must have been at least twenty years of age at Corunna, probably more. That battle was fought in 1809, so that the two lives of father and daughter cover a period of more than 140 years, and serve to show what a salubrious place Standish is to live in, and how conducive to long life. I thank you, and through you the whole of the members of this Council for the deep interest you have taken in the work, and for the economical and successful way in which it has been carried out. I thank your Clerk, Mr. Richards, for all the help and sympathy I have received from him, and last, but not least, I thank your able Surveyor for his great courtesy to me at all times, and his desire to interpret my wishes and carry them out with success, and at such a small cost to the ratepayers, I believe at a cost of only a fraction of a penny in the £ on the rates. I know that Standish, like other places, is passing through a time of adversity. But I am not pessimistic. These times have come and gone before. Many years ago when I was Churchwarden of Standish and had opportunities of searching the records, I spent a Christmas holiday in going through the accounts of the Overseers of this Parish for the years 1850-55, just 100 years ago. The country was then, as now, slowly recovering from the effects of a long war. Standish at that time contained more hand loom weavers than colliers. It was a time of transition from the hand to the power loom, and there was great destitution. Relief was administered in an uneconomical manner under the old Poor Law of Queen Elizabeth. One of the methods was to supply looms to the people who had sold them to provide sustenance. Sometimes they were lent, at other times hired. The colliers, many of whom were employed at the pits at Red Rock, worked long hours for a very small wage, and the village passed through a period not unlike that through which it is passing now. But better times were at hand. Just 100 years ago the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was opened. This led the way to the gigantic railway system we have now. More coal was needed to develop and supply it. New inventions for the spinning and weaving of cotton were beginning to be adopted, and the factory system replaced the hand loom. These developments all required coal, and Standish again prospered. Coal is now giving place to oil for many purposes, but who can say what may be the result of the increased distribution of electricity throughout the rural districts? History may repeat itself, and the introduction of cheap electricity bring about as great a social revolution as did that of steam a hundred years ago. Lord Crawford tells us that coal pits are to become manufactories. I trust that

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THE TOWNSHIP'S THANKS.

Councillor Park said he had the greatest possible pleasure, on behalf of the Council and the inhabitants of Standish, in offering his most sincere thanks to Mr. Ainscough for handing over to the Council the deeds transferring the plot of land in the Market Place to the local authority. "We all know," went on Councillor Park, "that Mr. Ainscough's chief desire is to leave the township better than he found it, and I am pleased he has lived to see the accomplishment of his ambition with regard to the Market Place. (Hear, hear). It was a valuable change, and I am pleased it has been changed from an idea into reality. Mr. Ainscough resided opposite this spot over fifty years ago, and, singularly enough, I was living in one of the houses which have now been demolished. It is a coincidence that this transformation in the Market Place has been accomplished during my term of office as Chairman of the Council. The work was now almost entirely finished, and, I believe, to the entire satisfaction of all. The money for the scheme had to be borrowed, and it is repayable over the period of twenty years. For the first ten years the cost to the township will be less than a 3d. in the £, and during the second ten years less than a 1d. in the £. It is a truly