

It can be seen that the Company and especially its resident partner wielded huge influence in the Town. Attwood also did not see himself as just an industrialist but also as a local patron and benefactor. He arranged for the Company to make gifts not only of land but also of money towards the building of schools and churches for the different religious denominations attracted to the new Town. He also had built, primarily for the Company's workforce but also for the other residents in the town, the Mechanics Institute in 1857. This was a large and commodious building which contained a "good lecture hall, recreation rooms, library and reading room. The library contained 500 volumes and the reading room was well supplied with daily and weekly papers and several monthly magazines". The rules of the Tow Law literary and Social Institute printed in 1890 show its objects as being an association "for the purpose of affording greater facilities than its members could separately command for the acquisition of general knowledge, the cultivation of their intellectual powers and the recreation of both the mind and bodies of its members".

It was in the Mechanics Institute in February 1863 that the Town honoured Attwood by presenting him with a large full length portrait of himself painted by the London artist Alexander Blaikley. The painting had been paid for by public subscription and was unveiled at a dinner held in his honour. The Durham Chronicle in its report of the dinner in the paper of the 13th February 1863 reported that it was "a very elegant repast provided by Mr Scott of the Crown and Thistle Tow Law and did great credit to that gentleman's establishment". A large number of dignitaries were there and "every ticket for places at dinner was sold and several gentlemen were unable to gain admission. The company present numbered about 150." The speeches in his honour referred to his active involvement in radical politics, the other major interest in his life. During his life he had rallied to the cause of Queen Caroline's rights, been a supporter of his brother Thomas, the radical M.P. for Birmingham, in electoral reform and the chartist cause and had at one time unsuccessfully stood for parliament himself. The main speech in his honour given by Mr John Anson gave an eloquent description of his achievements in Tow Law. He stated that Mr Attwood had "raised a once sterile and uninhabited waste into a busy and populous centre of industry. You have drawn from the otherwise barren soil of this region the riches with which nature has endowed it and which you were the first to turn to account and in so doing you have not merely added materially to the wealth of your country but you have also provided a comfortable and remunerative employment for thousands of your fellow creatures who this day beg that you will accept their grateful and heartfelt acknowledgement of all you have done for them".