

## **Thomas Brassey and his link to Heritage Railways No 4**

### **The Cambrian Heritage Railways**

**The Cambrian Heritage Railways is a company, trust and society based at both Oswestry and Llyncllys in Shropshire.**

The first line to reach Oswestry was the branch line from the main Great Western Railway (GWR) Shrewsbury to Chester line at Gobowen. The two mile branch was constructed by Thomas Brassey under a contract for the Oswestry Branch Railway and opened in 1848. The railway was eventually taken over by the GWR in 1854. The development by others of lines between Oswestry and Newtown, Ellesmere and Whitchurch followed. In 1864 all the individual railway companies were amalgamated to form the Cambrian Railways with headquarters at Oswestry.

The 1960's saw the start of closures of the original Cambrian Railways routes through Oswestry. In 1965 the mainline from Buttington (the junction with the line between Shrewsbury and Welshpool) to Whitchurch was closed. Finally in 1966 passenger services were ended with the closure of the Oswestry to Gobowen Branch. However, that section of line from Gobowen was kept open for stone traffic from Blodwell, until 1988, when the line was officially "mothballed".

As early as 1972 the Cambrian Railways Society (CRS) was formed and through a lease with British Rail for the former Oswestry goods yard was able to establish a museum in the former Cambrian Railways goods shed. In 1998 a wider community group including the CRS, Oswestry Council and local businesses formed the Cambrian Railways Trust (CRT). Unfortunately negotiations with Network Rail for the purchase of the railway between Gobowen and Blodwell fell through, leading to the break up of the group in 2003. The CRT moved to Llyncllys and began to rebuild a section of the trackbed between Llyncllys and Pant. The first trains were run in 2005. At the same time Oswestry Council purchased the semi-derelict Oswestry railway station and established the Oswestry Station Building Trust. Finally in 2009 the three separate organisations joined together once more to form a new trust company, Cambrian Heritage Railways (CHR).

The CHR currently operates trains on a short length of line in Oswestry and on the Llyncllys to Pant section. The long term aim is to reinstate the railway between Gobowen, Llyncllys and Blodwell. The picture below was taken at Oswestry station in November 2016 on the 50th Anniversary Weekend of the last passenger train (1966).

