



# NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our December 2020 Newsletter

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



I first became aware of Thomas Brassey in 2005 when Chester hosted several events to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth. Little did I know then, that 15 years later I would be helping to commemorate the 150th anniversary of his death.

2005 certainly raised awareness of Brassey, not just mine, but in many local organisations and among many local people. It is to be hoped that our efforts in 2020 will have a similar result.

The installation of our interpretation panel outside Chester station at the beginning of this month raised interest from passers-by even before the concrete around its legs had time to set. That's what it's all about!

This Newsletter includes a link to the Press Release about the panel and the socially distanced unveiling ceremony on 8th December. I would simply like to record my personal thanks to everyone who has helped us to achieve this in any way. Starting with those who donated to the initial 'seedcorn fund' organised by Chester Civic Trust, to the generous sum given by the Tyrer Charitable Trust. Thanks also to Network Rail, Transport for Wales and Cheshire West and Chester Council with whom we agreed the location of the panel. Finally, many thanks to Catherine Mechan and Peter Bolt (TBS), Jane Hebblewhite (CW&C) and Iagemakers for the design and production of the panel....and to Ringway, the Council's contractor, who carefully installed the panel at no extra cost to ourselves.



It's been a team effort which has taken a lot longer than expected, but the end result is a credit to the Society as we continue to raise awareness of 'the world's greatest railway builder of his age'. The Press Release can be seen in our News page on our website.

<http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/panelunveil.pdf>

Please continue to stay safe.  
Stephen Langtree

## Chester Cathedral Erasmus Chapel Restoration By Cliveden Restoration



The wall mosaic on the east wall of the St Erasmus Chapel, designed by J R Clayton and executed by A Salviati, was installed as a memorial to Thomas Brassey and his wife in 1879. Donald Insall Associates (Chester) appointed Cliveden Conservation to repair and clean the damaged mosaic. Cliveden Conservation engaged with visitors, enabling them to witness 'conservation in action' and instructed volunteers with light cleaning of the wall mosaics in the north aisle of the Cathedral. A number of people have asked about the restoration and the link below will explain all.

<https://www.clivedenconservation.com/project/chester-cathedral-wall-mosaic/>

## Membership

Membership continues to grow and this month we are pleased to welcome Gary Laiolo from Saughall Massie on the Wirral.

**Don't forget** — you can always offer a "Christmas gift" of Society membership to your friends and family if they share your interest in Victorian railway engineering.

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## BRASSEY HERITAGE LINE RESEARCH



### Thomas Brassey's links to Heritage Railways – No 3

Dave Bebb has researched the third in his series which gives a brief history of The Epping & Ongar railway operating between Ongar, North Weald and Epping Forest, a distance of 6 miles.

For the full article follow the link below:

<http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/eppingongar.pdf>

## More about Birkenhead

I was contacted by Ian Parkinson of Parkinson Inc who are associated with Peel Land & Property Services (constructing the Wirral Waters site). Some of you may have met him at the unveiling of the Blue Plaque to Thomas Brassey at Birkenhead in June 2019.

Despite Covid difficulties, he has now found time to move the Brassey Mural project forward and will be asking the Wirral Met College students to go bigger, using the whole of the old building's red brick boundary wall for the Brassey image. They hope to use the old pump room building for a visitor centre once the Science & Engineering park is up and running.

Ian also asked me for a "time line" of Brassey to enable multiple images to be installed around the West Float site. As mentioned above, the site will be used as a Science Park and he has asked his graphics team to prepare a number of Brassey images as an inspiration to others, as he feels that the Brassey story could inspire new companies.

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due now so Dave Hooley, our membership officer, will be delighted to receive your renewal forms and subs if you haven't already sent them through. The renewal form was included with our Annual Report or use the link to download one. <http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/membership.pdf>

In the New Year we will be starting our serious fund raising for the proposed statue at Chester Station and a Crowd Funding page is currently being worked on, thanks to members Ken Newall and David Bebb. We will certainly let you know when it goes live so that you can forward it through to all your friends and contacts.

I would like to wish everyone a pleasant festive season, whatever you are able to do this year and hope for a much more healthy & social year in 2021.

## And finally — isn't this a great way to celebrate Heritage Railways?

*"Heritage railway decked out with 13,000 Christmas lights"*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-hampshire-55246642>

Peter Bolt  
Secretary TBS