



Welcome to our April 2021 Newsletter

**CHAIRMAN'S NOTES**



Our aim as a Society is to promote the achievements of Thomas Brassey in a variety of different ways. Perhaps the least expensive of these is to give talks and lectures to people who are, at least, receptive and, at best, might become new members.

We are fortunate indeed that our own Secretary, Peter Bolt, is so well experienced and capable of giving such talks. Undaunted by Zoom, Peter has given several talks in the last few months and even has a booking for October 2022! Among these talks was the one on 22nd February for TBS members and guests. The 'virtual attendance' that evening was well over 40 including a number of members from the Brassey family. The talk was very well received and much appreciated as the first opportunity for members of the Society to meet since 2019.

Coincidentally, the Railway & Canal Historical Society (RCHS) also had a talk about Brassey on Saturday 13th March. Entitled "Thomas Brassey & Company: railway contractors" this lecture was given by Peter Cross-Rudkin and gave a fascinating insight into the company and its agents. I particularly remember him saying that Thomas Brassey was not the only large-scale contractor of his day, but was simply better than all the rest!

Brassey cropped up yet again in a talk to Chester U3A Industrial Heritage group later in March. The subject was 'London's Royal Docks' and the speaker was Rob Smith of St Albans who turned out to be quite a fan of Thomas Brassey. It doesn't end there, because in July the U3A is having a lecture about Joseph Bazalgette, designer of London's new sewers in the 1860's, the Metropolitan Mid Level Sewer was built by Brassey in 1861.

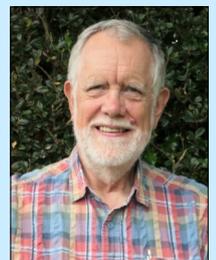
Amid all this excitement, your Committee is still working hard on the statue project and on becoming a registered charity as soon as possible.

I hope you are all keeping safe and well and I look forward to the time when we can organise some real events and outings for Society members.

*Stephen Langtree* MBE

**Our Charity application by Peter Cocker**

When we formed the Thomas Brassey Society (TBS) and had our first (and so far only) Annual General Meeting in November 2019, we agreed a Constitution to govern how we would operate as a society. This has served us well up to now but, subsequent to our emergence from the protective 'umbrella' of the Chester Civic Trust, the lack of charity status has obviously prevented us from claiming Gift Aid on membership fees and donations.



This has become a bigger issue as we look forward to serious fund raising for the proposed statue of Thomas Brassey at Chester Railway Station. This is not just a question of Gift Aid; most potential institutional funders will only provide finance to registered charities.

The TBS Committee has therefore decided that we must become a registered charity – but unfortunately this requires a new Constitution. The Charity Commission has helpfully provided a 'model constitution' which it advises us to stick closely to in order to ease the path to registration.

So, our relatively simple 3-page Constitution needs to be replaced by a much more complex and comprehensive 25-page version. We have tried to keep as close as we can to our existing Constitution in terms of issues such as a voting membership and quorums, but there is no disguising the fact that 25 pages contains a lot more detail!

# NEW W S L E T T E R

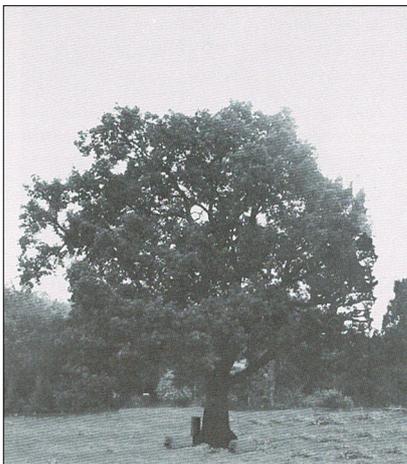
We have included a copy of the proposed 'New Constitution' on the TBS Homepage web-site alongside our existing one, so that you can see what is being proposed. Just click on the link to <http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/constitutionnew.pdf>

The application to the Charity Commission is in progress and we hope to have some further news by the summer. The Charity Commission has warned us, however, that it is currently very busy dealing with charities set up to address issues arising from the current Coronavirus pandemic, so a response from them is likely to take longer than normal.

We will keep you informed of progress with registration through future newsletters. In the meantime we are not making a major effort to attract donations for the prospective Thomas Brassey statue until we can claim Gift Aid.

*Peter Cocker, TBS Committee member.*

## The Brassey Oak Tree and Stones Project



Following an email from Society member Brian Crossley, I was prompted to recall just one of the celebrations in 2007 by the Bulkeley and Ridley Village Events Group. In the early 1840's Brassey inherited the family estate in Bulkeley Cheshire from his uncle and in 1845, to commemorate his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, the family planted an oak tree on estate land and positioned four inscribed stone pillars around it, secured by metal bars. Over the years, due to the growth of the tree and frost damage, the tops of the stones were damaged and they toppled over at the foot of the tree. The Brassey family left the area many years ago and the present generation probably know little or nothing about the stones. The newer members of the TBS may be interested in just one of the important events which took place after Brassey's bicentenary. To read full story click

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

## BRASSEY HERITAGE LINE RESEARCH

**Thomas Brassey's links to Heritage Railways – No 5**  
*by Dave Bebb*



### The Bala Lake Railway

The Bala Lake Railway is a narrow gauge line operating between Llanuwchllyn and Bala (Pen-y-Bont) in Gwynedd, North Wales, a distance of four and a half miles.

The narrow gauge line is built on the track bed of part of the former standard gauge railway between Ruabon and Barmouth.

The section between Ruabon and Dolgellau, a distance of some 48 miles, was originally built by Thomas Brassey under four separate contracts. The contract for the construction between Bala and Dolgellau, on which the Bala Lake Railway runs, was awarded to Brassey in 1866 by the Bala and Dolgellau Railway Company.

Click here <http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/BalaLakelinks.pdf> to read the full article.

# NEWSLETTER



Photo courtesy of Pete Waterman

## MAKING TRACKS UPDATE!

Last year Chester Cathedral was planning a great model railway exhibition called "Making Tracks". This would celebrate Thomas Brassey's achievements and was going to be constructed by Pete Waterman OBE and his team.

Due to Covid the whole project was put on hold BUT thankfully this year the project is "back on track" and the team are "steaming ahead" with the construction (see the photo).

Hopefully, fingers crossed, the event will go ahead, starting on 12 July. With a 50' long track it will be something to behold and is going to be adjacent to the Erasmus Chapel in the Cathedral. The Chapel was, of course, paid for by the Brassey children after their father's death and has recently been restored to its former glory.

The exhibition will run - hopefully - from July to September so put the date in your diary!

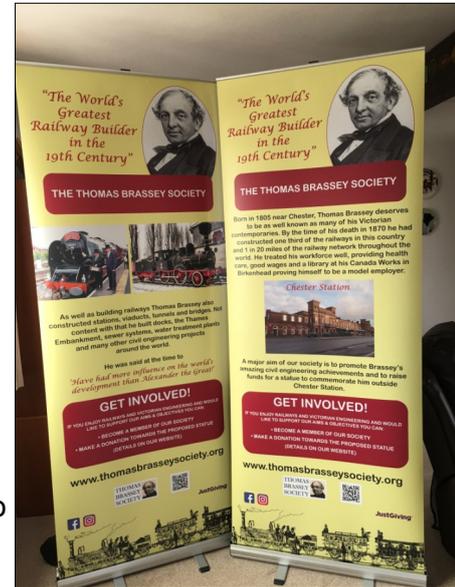
## New TBS Banners

The Society has invested in two pop up vertical banners to promote ourselves at events etc.

The first one that comes to mind is the 'Making Tracks' model railway event in the Chester Cathedral but also at future Heritage Fairs.

**We are asking for your help** in this respect to assist in the Cathedral talking to visitors who come to see the model railway and giving out flyers about the Society.

We will organise this on a rota basis and are appealing primarily to our Chester based members. If you are able to help us please contact me on [petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com](mailto:petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com) or T: 0151 678 9300. We really do need as many people as possible to man our stand during July to September so that the Society can capitalise on this unique opportunity.



## Finally



I am looking for articles for future newsletters either on Brassey or functions you have attended in the past and would like to share with others. Having said that, new member Steve Percy, has sent in a photograph of a Brassey Road, coupling it with the Basingstoke to Winchester line. This seems to be a through route for the Brassey built London and Southampton Railway built 1837, Locke was the Engineer.

I know of a Brassey street name in Chester and Birkenhead, but do you know of any others and which lines would they have been associated with??

Stay well and hopefully we can meet up with some of you during the Chester "Making Tracks" event—depending upon circumstances and Boris of course.

**If your group or society would like a talk about Thomas Brassey — via Zoom currently but hopefully face to face later in the year — please get in touch with me.**

*Peter Bolt  
Secretary*

[www.thomasbrasseysociety.org](http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org)