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Welcome to our February 2021 Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



This first Newsletter of 2021 gives me the opportunity, albeit belatedly, to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

Having successfully completed the installation of our information panel at Chester station on the 150th anniversary of Thomas Brassey's death, we now move on to the bigger task of commissioning a statue. Most of you will realise that this is a long-standing ambition and is already well in hand.

Our immediate task is to appoint an 'art curator' whose initial role will be to write a design brief for the sculpture and help us to choose the best person for the job.

Meanwhile, our fundraising campaign is starting in earnest. We have taken professional advice to identify the most likely sources of money, and we have produced our own 'Case Statement & Funding Prospectus'. We have also launched a Crowd Funding site which is described in more detail in this Newsletter.

Inevitably this keeps the spotlight on Chester, but I hope we can use the next 12 months to foster greater awareness of Brassey in other parts of the UK. This is already happening in Birkenhead where his business was based, but what about the legacy of railway infrastructure he has left elsewhere?

I am thinking particularly of the 'heritage railways' which now run on lines and through stations built by Brassey. Perhaps we can encourage the railway societies to mention Brassey on their websites and in their brochures. Maybe, in due course, we can commission a number of small plaques which will celebrate "*the world's greatest builder of railways*".

If you can help us with any aspect of the foregoing workload; fundraising, promotion etc, please do not hesitate to get in touch. There is plenty to do!

Stephen Langtree MBE

Making Tracks – What's that all about?

Last year, you may recall that the Chester Cathedral was promoting a model railway exhibition called 'Making Tracks' and our Patron, Pete Waterman, was designing a layout that would be erected in the Cathedral, adjacent to the Erasmus Chapel. This project had to be postponed due to Covid but at the moment the layout being built up in Pete's 'Barn' in sections as it is no less than 50 feet long overall. It is all set to be rolled out during July to September this year – all being well. The interesting thing is that Pete has changed his design from last year and it will now be based on the West Coast Main Line and will include a number of Brassey built structures.

Coincidentally a film company, Rare TV, are making a 10 week film series about model railways and contacted Pete wanting to film during the building process. A bonus from this is that the film Director is now very interested in highlighting Brassey and his engineering achievements in the programme.

The Society was asked to work with the Director and provide an insight into the Brassey connections. We have since had a long chat to him and I think it will do our cause no harm at all. The series will be shown on the 'Yesterday' TV channel in the Autumn this year. See below

<https://chestercathedral.com/events/category/general-events/list>

NEWSLETTER

BRASSEY HERITAGE LINE RESEARCH

Thomas Brassey's links to Heritage Railways – No 4

The Cambrian Heritage Railways

The Cambrian Heritage Railways is a company, trust and society based at both Oswestry and Llynclys 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. For more information about this railway go to:

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

Another Brassey loco surfaces in Romania – well, a photo does!

Society member David Allan reports that another Birkenhead built locomotive has been unearthed in Romania, albeit now long gone.

Attached is a photo of Birkenhead built "*Curierulu*" (archaic name for courier) nr.115CFR Locomotive, looking rather magnificent. She was originally LCJE 111b No.56 (LCJE stands for Lemberg Cernauti-Jasey Eisenbahn,) linking Iasi in north-eastern Romania to Lviv in present day Ukraine, factory number 242/1869.



The image shows her hauling the royal carriage of LCJE on the Roman-Pascani-Iasi route on October 7, 1889, for Romania's King Carol 1 when he was travelling to Iasi.

(Photo by B. Brand in Iași, source: The blue trains of Romania's Kings, by Ilie Popescu)

David is Chairman of the UK support group SARUK (synonym for Sibiu Agnita Railway UK) and he has a long standing interest with the 'Friends of the Mocanita' - the Romanian group in the city of Sibiu who are trying to restore the 40 mile narrow gauge line that ran between Sibiu and Agnita. Mocanita means the 'Little Line' or more romantically 'The Little Shepherdess in the Hills'.

He has been helping them in their efforts, particularly with the Romanian government and the complex laws that govern railways in Romania. We are told that there is no history of volunteering in that country and Romanians, who are very poor, don't understand why anyone should work for nothing!

Invitation to join us for a talk about Thomas Brassey

Following a successful talk given to the Mid Wirral Rotary club I have been asked if I would do the same talk for our membership. It will obviously not be in the flesh but by Zoom. I am sure that many of you, over the last year, have down loaded the Zoom App and enjoyed many a get -

together with family and friends.

We are proposing **Monday evening, 22nd February, starting at 7.00 pm** and the presentation will last about 1 hour. We will send the link through to members a little nearer the time and will open the waiting room at 6.50 pm.

Please make a note in your diary and we hope you can join us. If you are not too sure how to download Zoom please get back to me.

This will obviously be our first Members meet-up since November 2019 so we hope as many of you will come along (virtually) as possible.

A word from your Membership Secretary



Thank you to all members, both newly joined and those renewing their membership to the Society, who have paid their subscription for 2021. Your continued support is appreciated.

Please note that membership renewals are now due for 2021 and any member who joined before October 1st 2020 should renew their subscription ASAP. We hope you will decide to continue to support the society as we don't want to lose you. There will hopefully be a lot going on this year which we would love you to join in with. The renewal subscription has not increased and remains at only £10.00.

So ask yourself, "**Have I renewed?**" I am looking forward to hearing from you. Obviously, if you prefer not to continue please let us know so we can update our records. [membership application / renewal form](#)

The official ICE Brassey obituary

People often question if Brassey was a Civil Engineer. The following ICE obituary at the time of his death is proof that he was.

"Mr. Brassey was straightforward, prompt, and honourable to the last degree; he had a frank, hearty address, a cheery voice, and a pleasant smile; he was tall and strong-built, but spare. He left three sons, of whom two are in Parliament, and the youngest in the army. He was elected an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers on the 13th of January, 1852, served on the Council in the year 1853, and died, of bronchitis, at St. Leonard's on Sea, on the 8th of December, 1870, aged sixty-five years."

To read the full obituary click on the link below.

<https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/pdf/10.1680/imotp.1872.22908>

Just Giving Crowd Funding

As part of our Fund Raising activities, we have set up a Crowd Funding page on the website and invite you to make a contribution. Also, would you forward the link to your friends and other societies. All donations will make a difference to reaching our goal. Our target is initially £5,000.00 which will cover start up expenditure and this will increase as we get into the serious fundraising. Remember half the statue cost has been pledged by a Chester Charity. (*Please note: 'Just Giving' recommends that those people with an Apple device should delete all the previous browser history before proceeding.*)

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/thomasbrasseystatue>

And finally – for all you garden model railway buffs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSiJThKnRHs&feature=youtu.be>

Stay well
Peter Bolt
Secretary

www.thomasbrasseysociety.org

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