THE THOMAS BRASSEY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT THE QUEEN HOTEL, CHESTER ON THE 4 JULY 2026

Total number of Member Attendees 41, Non members 4, Start time 11 am.

1 Apologies for Absence

The Secretary reported that the following members had sent their apologies: Andrew Helsby, Simon Sherrard, Clare Bruce, Jeremy Davies, Angela Cliffe, Phil Garratt, Jon Yates, Bill Yates, Wendy Hill, Phil Harris, Mike Lamport, Rex Andrew, Annie Wolley Dodd, Jan Smith, Paul and Claire Bentley

Prior to the start of the official business, Richard Coackley showed a series of pictures, showing what the Society has been doing throughout the year 2025-26. The unveiling of the Brassey statue was the first major event, then members of the Society attended an event at Micheldever (near Winchester) to celebrate Rail 200 as the line going through there to Southampton was an early Brassey line. The statue itself has received two Awards, one from Cheshire West Design Awards (Commended) and the other from Chester Civic Trust which was the Chair's Special Award. The Society was also invited to submit the statue for the PSSA (Sculptor's Association) award, yet to be decided. A large portrait of Thomas has been installed in the Station Tap at Chester Station and another at the new pub in Carlisle station, called the "Scott & Brassey". Members enjoyed a day out on the East Lancs Railway from Bury and a group from our friends in Cruet, France came over and spent a week in the area, visiting Chester station and the statue as well as Chester Castle and others in North Wales. Trustee Ian Walker also organized a very successful Railway History Day in Bromborough on the Wirral. A small team also spent an evening cleaning and waxing the statue which needs to be done on an annual basis.

Stephen Langtree thanked Richard, welcomed everyone and invited all the Trustees to introduce themselves. Stephen also thanked them all for their hard work during the year.

2 Minutes of last year's Annual General Meeting in October 2025

These were accepted as a true and accurate record of proceedings by those attending.

Proposed by: Moir Cocker Seconded by Pauline Macey.

3 Annual Report 2024/25 (Chairman – Stephen Langtree MBE)

The Chair reminded members that the Annual Report had been circulated earlier last month, by email. He said that getting the statue installed had been a huge amount of work with various licences and permissions having to be obtained before they could open up the ground for plinth preparation. He thanked Peter Cocker and John Violet for their efforts in this respect. To see the statue arrive and being put in place, followed by the unveiling, were two days to remember – especially after ten years of intense work by the Trustees. The statue continues to attract a considerable amount of praise and he invited Peter Bolt to read out a short piece from a podcast by Lyn Podmore who is a Heritage Consultant in Chester, praising the design and detail of the statue and the way it celebrates Chester's

industrial heritage which is often overshadowed by the emphasis on the Roman legacy. The Chair felt that this piece was particularly rewarding given Lyn's heritage expertise. He also thanked Ian Walker again for the excellent visits to the East Lancashire Railway and the Railway History Day which was very well supported.

Queries/comments from the floor

Norma Casement – queried whether the Trustees had let Andy Edwards know how much people appreciated the statue and John Violet promised to pass on these comments to him.

Stewart Shuttleworth – reminded members about the Archive Inventory Group who are continuing to work – gathering information about any items relating to Thomas Brassey and his works around the country. He invited anyone who had any information to get in touch with the group via the website.

The Chair then mentioned the very large portrait of Thomas Brassey, currently in storage at the Williamson Art Gallery in Birkenhead. The Trustees are trying to find a suitable venue where this portrait could be on permanent display. The Rail Museum in York could be a possibility but the frame needs to be repaired and the oil painting cleaned. This would cost over £3,200 so Trustees are not going to authorize this until a home has been secured.

4 Statement of Accounts 2024/25 (Treasurer – was Keith Stoops, now Jean Fortune)

Jean apologized for some omissions in the accounts due to her only taking over the role very recently. We still owe the Council £6,000 for digging the hole for the plinth but no invoice has been submitted yet, however, the money can't be used just in case. Insurance for the statue is still a problem however as the Council has refused our offer to gift it to them.

It was proposed that the 2025-6 Accounts be adopted, bearing in mind that the 2024-25 column needed some amendments to bring it fully up to date:

With no further questions, the 2025-26 Accounts were adopted. Proposed by Peter Robson, seconded by Peter Bolt.

5 Election of Trustees 2025

The Chairman explained that under the Constitution, three Trustees needed to stand down. These were: Richard Coackley, Peter Cocker and Peter Bolt. Both Peters offered themselves for re-election but Richard Coackley wished to stand down. The Chair thanked Richard for his tremendous work on behalf of the Society and particularly the superb organization of both the visit to Cruet, France and the Unveiling Day both of which had taken hours of his time but both had proved a huge success.

The Chair then presented Richard with an engraved tankard as a token of the Trustees' appreciation for all his efforts. Richard's energy and expertise will be sadly missed and the Chair said that new Trustees were desperately needed to support the range of activities that the Society would like to take on but currently don't have the capacity to do them. He urged members to consider putting themselves forward.

The remaining Trustees are all willing to continue in their roles on the Committee.

Members unanimously agreed to the re-election of the two Trustees.

6 Membership Fees

The Trustees had reluctantly decided that they needed to increase membership fees to £15 from 1 January 2027, bearing in mind that the Invoice for £6,000 for the statue installation was still outstanding and that currently the Society also has to pay in excess of £1,300 for the Public Liability & Statue insurance. Members attending the meeting agreed the increase. David Hooley advised that we currently had 115 members and asked that people paying by Standing Order make sure they amend them in time for January.

7 Any Other Business

i) Roger Croston – asked about "Making Tracks" in the Cathedral this year but the Society has been told that there are no plans to do it. Roger also showed members a new book called "The Railway that helped to win the Crimean Way" by Antony Dawson and also said that it was 21 years since the Brassey Oak had been moved and some maintenance around the area would be useful.

ii) 27 September is a key date for the Hadlow Road Station group. It is the 160th Anniversary of the Wirral line which was built by Thomas Brassey and Ian Walker is liaising with them about having a portrait of Thomas, similar to the one at Llangollen.

iii) John Whittingham raised the issue again about people were sitting on the plinth around the statue as well as stubbing cigarettes out on it! It would be a good to have a proper bench there and the meeting agreed.

iv) John Violet told the meeting that the Llangollen Railway had purchased the two maquettes, produced by the two competing sculptors. One will be displayed at Llangollen and one at Corwen, the handover will be on 7 November (Brassey's birthday) when there will be a steam locomotive day.

v) Peter Robson asked if Trustees knew how many heritage railways there are and whether the Society had been in contact with them about promoting Brassey. The Chair replied that this was definitely something that the committee was keen on doing and had been in contact with the Severn Valley Railway in the past about it. Ian Walker replied that he had been in touch with Merseyrail about getting a plaque at Birkenhead North station.

vi) John Violet told the meeting that he is in contact with the organisers of the Liverpool-Manchester Railway 200 years celebrations in 2030 to see if we can be involved.

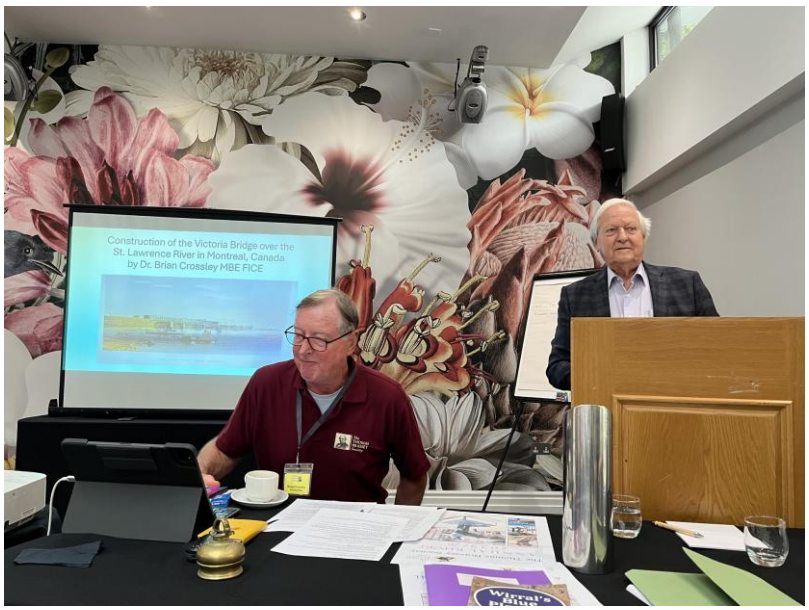
There being no further business, the Chairman again thanked all the Trustees for their hard work during the year as well as those present for attending the meeting which closed at 12 noon.

The AGM was followed by a presentation on the building of the Victoria Bridge in Canada, during the construction of the Grand Trunk Railway by Brian Crossley. Brian had visited the archives in Montreal having found out that they had a large package of documents, purchased in 1967, but which had never been catalogued. He was particularly delighted to find the Record Book of Mr Hodges, the Engineer in charge of bridge construction and showed many diagrams of how the bridge was put together (having been shipped out in

pieces from Canada Works in Birkenhead) and the difficulties encountered by the navvies due to the extreme weather conditions. It certainly put a whole new perspective on the enterprise and Brian was thanked for his fascinating presentation.

Gillian Bolt

9 July 2026





Brian Crossley's presentation on the Victoria Bridge and Richard Coackley receiving his tankard from Steve Langtree.