

The THOMAS BRASSEY Society

PRESS RELEASE

28 May 2025

A statue of the railway contractor, Thomas Brassey, has been unveiled by the HRH The Duke of Gloucester

outside Chester Railway Station on 28 May 2025.

Installing a Statue has been one of the key aims for the Thomas Brassey Society since their formation and today was the culmination of many years of planning and fundraising. So with the sun shining and hundreds gathering for the grand "reveal", it was an emotional day for many members. Prince Richard, The Duke of Gloucester, was a particularly fitting person to unveil the statue as he has had a genuine interest in steam engines and engineering projects for many years and professed himself to be delighted to be unveiling the statue to such a significant contributor to progress during the Victorian era. The Duke then engaged with the watching crowd, chatting to many of them to their evident delight. Pete Waterman was also present and spoke about his pleasure at seeing the project coming to fruition. Designed and sculpted by Andy Edwards, who is known for his wonderful statues of the Beatles at Pier Head and many others, the statue shows Thomas reading a 19th century map whilst standing upon a partly built section of railway line.

Thomas Brassey was born in Aldford near Chester in 1805 and upon leaving school, he started his apprenticeship with a local surveyor. During that time he worked under Thomas Telford, surveying the alignment of the A5 in North Wales. Afterwards he went on to manage Storeton Quarry, on the Wirral, where stone was provided to George Stephenson's Sankey Viaduct on the Liverpool-Manchester Railway. Following this he became a prominent railway builder and during his lifetime he built one third of Britain's railways, three quarters of those in France at the time and one in twenty miles of the world's railways during the 1800's. It is fitting that the statue is located at Chester Station which he built in 1848, but he also built parts of the Chester - Crewe line, Chester - Holyhead line, Chester - Birkenhead and all of the Chester - Shrewsbury line.

He not only built railways across the world but also constructed major civil engineering works such as the Thames Embankment and Birkenhead Docks. He even built a railway at breakneck speed in Crimea to provide the British and French armies with food and ammunition to assist with the fall of Sebastopol in 1855. At his busiest times he was employing as many as 80,000 men, requiring significant managerial skills and he died in 1870 having accomplished a phenomenal amount of construction across Britain and the world.

The Thomas Brassey Society raised donations, both large and small, from many benefactors including the Tyrer Trust, the Couch Trust, the Brassey family, Heap & Partners Ltd, Avanti West Coast, the Community Rail Partnerships, Society members and the general public.

Stephen Langtree MBE, Chair of the Thomas Brassey Society, said ***"It has been a long term aim of the Society to erect a statue outside the magnificent Chester Station – one which Thomas***

Brassey built – and through energetic fundraising and the generous support of many benefactors, our dream of a statue has now become a reality. We hope this results in many more people appreciating his remarkable achievements".

The Society extends special thanks to Solid Ground, who generously supported the event by hosting the pre-unveiling gathering at the Carriage Shed. Their expertise in curating meaningful community events helped make this historic day possible, bringing together Society members, dignitaries, and the public to celebrate Thomas Brassey's remarkable legacy.

Notes to Editor:

Carriage Shed

Carriage Shed is a unique open-air events venue in the heart of Chester, located next to the city's main train station. Originally part of the city's railway infrastructure, the Grade II listed structure has been carefully restored as part of the wider City Place regeneration project, led by Muse in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Events at the Carriage Shed are curated by Solid Ground, Carriage Shed plays a key role in Chester's cultural and community life - hosting everything from artisan markets and food festivals to theatre, live music and corporate events. The space is fully licensed, dog friendly, and designed to support a wide range of public and private events, offering a striking backdrop with architectural character.

https://carriageshed.co.uk/

Solid Ground

Solid Ground is an award-winning placemaking and property marketing agency based in the Northwest. We specialise in bringing places to life through creative strategy, community engagement and activations.

In Chester and across Cheshire, we've worked with developers, local authorities and cultural partners to curate meaningful experiences that connect people to place. Since 2016, we've managed the public realm at Carriage Shed, working alongside Muse and Cheshire West and Chester Council to programme events that support the city's cultural life - from artisan markets and outdoor cinema to national touring acts and local collaborations.

Our wider work across the region includes meanwhile-use strategies, marketing campaigns for landmark developments and place led events that celebrate identity, history and community. Whether it's transforming underused spaces or launching a new destination, our approach is always rooted in storytelling, creativity and impact.

https://www.thissolidground.com/

Press Enquiries

For further information about this event please contact Thomas Brassey Society Communications link, Gillian Bolt on 07855 968524 or email petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com