

Welcome to our December Newsletter



The THOMAS BRASSEY Society

NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



The Thomas Brassey Society is a 'membership organisation', and the past 12 months have shown just how important it is to have your strong support and active engagement.

Our presence in Chester Cathedral during the '*Making Tracks*' model railway exhibition has already been well documented, but it is a prime example of everyone pulling together to promote the achievements of our "local hero" Thomas. So, perhaps now is a good time to urge you all to renew your annual subscription when it becomes due on 1st January! (This does not apply to new members who have joined since 1st October this year.)

Talking of new members, we are very pleased indeed to welcome Doug Haynes as a new Honorary Member of the Society. Doug has spent many decades promoting the achievements of Thomas Brassey and has given lectures to this effect all over the country. Along with Peter Bolt, John Whittingham and Roger Croston, Doug was one of the prime movers in the celebrations which took place in 2005 to mark the bicentenary of Brassey's birth. This included planting an oak sapling at Thomas's birthplace near Chester. The tree is now strong and stands several metres tall.

We are also pleased to announce that Jean Fortune has joined us as a co-opted member of the committee. Jean is the Secretary of the Cheshire Local History Association. Before retirement, she spent many years as a senior member of staff at Cheshire Record Office. She insists that she is not an archivist, but we are sure that her knowledge and contacts will be invaluable to the Society as we spread our wings. More about Jean in the next Newsletter.

Finally a big welcome to recent new members, David Scott and Tim Carley. Plans are afoot for another get together and AGM, probably in April 2022. Full details are expected to emerge soon. In the meantime, thank you again for your support and, on behalf of all your committee, I hope you have a happy and healthy Christmas.

With best wishes,
STEPHEN LANGTREE MBE

MEMBERS' COFFEE MORNING



Please note we are holding a coffee morning for members for a get together and bite to eat, on **Thursday the 13th January 2022** at the Town Crier pub opposite the Chester Station. Your committee are having a short meeting in the morning and we look forward to members joining us at around 11.00 am. We fully appreciate that as we have a national membership, a number of you will be unable to join us. However, we will circulate a report afterwards.

During the coffee morning we will be inviting questions and comments about the society's work which will give a better understanding as to how we are proposing to move forward. We would also like to discuss with you the location of our proposed AGM in April. We hope that those of you who can attend will also be able to join us downstairs for some lunch afterwards.

In order for us complete our arrangements with the Town Crier would you please advise us if you would like to come? (email: petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com)

Note of caution. We would like to think you have all had your Covid jabs and booster for the protection of everyone. If not we would ask you to have a minimum of a lateral flow test within 24 hrs of our meeting. We will obviously notify you of any changes to these arrangements nearer the date depending upon current restrictions.

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MEMBERSHIP

We have had a really good year for membership. Over 60 existing members renewed their subscriptions for 2021. Our presence at the "Making Tracks" in Chester Cathedral allowed us to attract a further 40+ new members, whom we warmly welcome to our Society. The Society currently has a membership of 110, one Patron – Pete Waterman and two honorary members.

In addition to the "Making Tracks" event we attended the Crewe Model Engineering Society event, surprisingly in Crewe. We managed to attract one new member at the event, who is also warmly welcomed, but were encouraged by the interest shown, by many people, in the life and work of Thomas Brassey. Who knows, we may yet gain more membership stemming from this event as we handed out many flyers explaining the purpose of our Society?

Could I take this opportunity to "warm up the membership" to the need to renew their membership on January 1st 2022? The link to the membership form is:
http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/membership.pdf

However I would like to remind everyone that those having joined after October 1st do not have to renew until January 2023. All others I would encourage to renew as soon as possible in the New Year. Whilst on the subject of membership forms and renewals, could I please request that all members consider filling in the Gift Aid section of the renewal form. If this section is filled in and returned, we can apply to HMRC for a payment (a tax refund on our subscription), providing the Gift Aider is a tax payer. It will be at absolutely no additional cost to the member.

We look forwards to meeting as many of you as possible, face to face in 2022, subject to rules and regulations of course!

May I wish the membership very many good wishes for Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

DAVID HOOLEY
Membership Secretary

BRASSEY'S CONTRACT ROAD



I have been asked a number of times about the origins of Brassey's Contract Road near Malpas.

Until recently I had no idea until a cottage that was for sale was drawn to my attention called 'Contract Cottage'. The Estate Agent has done some research and has written into the sale details a possible explanation as to the name 'Brassey's Contract Cottage' and the Contract Road.

Estate Agents details state: "Thomas Brassey was born locally and rose to prominence as a famous Victorian philanthropist, starting as a civil engineering contractor and going on to build much of the world's railways in the 19th Century. He has a plaque at Chester Railway Station and a street named after him in Chester. He signed the contract for the nearby Chester Whitchurch railway, one of his first railway contracts, in the cottage, hence the cottage's name. The men working on the construction of the railway were probably also paid there. The original part of the cottage is thought to have been built in the mid 17th Century and would have been a building of some importance in the period following the Civil War. It originally belonged to the Edge Estate and was purchased by the present owner in 1998."

Check out the link and you will see it is a "snip" at only £495,000.
https://media.onthemarket.com/properties/1174921/doc_0_1.pdf

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CRUET BRIDGE

TTBS support a local community to save Brassey's "Le Pont des Anglais"

In our next newsletter we will be bringing you an update on the campaign to save "Le Pont Victor-Emmanuel", considered to be one of the oldest metal truss frame railway bridges in France. This time last year the Society was approached by the community of Cruet in the Département de la Savoie in South East France about their keen interest in retaining and refurbishing the bridge, also known as "Le Pont des Anglais". We were advised that the bridge was under threat of demolition and they asked for our help.



The bridge was part of the 'Victor Emmanuel Railway' line commissioned in 1856 from Aix-les-Bains to Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, the construction of which was entrusted to Thomas Brassey and engineer George Neumann.

Soon after it was commissioned it contributed to the victory of the Piedmont and Sardinia kingdoms over the Austrian Empire at the Battle of Solferino, securing the unification of Italy.

We wrote to the Département de la Savoie in strong support of retaining and nurturing the structure for future generations rather than demolishing what is still a structurally sound piece of important history of the region.

An update is now being compiled with Cruet on developments since our last briefing at the luncheon at "Making Tracks" in Chester Cathedral. To be continued .....

RICHARD COACKLEY CBE
Vice Chairman

Thomas Brassey & his link to Heritage Railways No 7

The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway (1847-1923) and the East Lancashire (Heritage) Railway (1970-present)

Thomas Brassey was awarded a contract by the newly formed Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (L&YR) in 1847 for the maintenance of 93 miles of their network around Manchester, East Lancashire and South Yorkshire. The extent of the contract and the lines included are not known with any certainty but are likely to have included a number of lines around Manchester, Bolton, Bury and Rochdale.

The former L&YR network has survived largely intact. Some routes around Bury were closed but later reopened as part of the Manchester Metrolink. The East Lancashire Railway preservation group, formed in the 1970s, now operates on two sections, one between Bury and Rawtenstall (part of the East Lancashire Railway Company until 1859) and the other between Bury and Heywood.



The section of the East Lancashire Railway heritage line between Bury and Rawtenstall, by virtue of the fact that it was owned and operated by the East Lancashire Railway Company until 1859, is unlikely to have been included in the Brassey contract of 1847.

East Lancashire Railway former L&YR 0-6-0 Saddle Tank No 51456 stands at Bury (Bolton Street) station, October 2021)

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However, the section between Bury and Heywood was opened by the L&YR in 1848 as an extension of the line from Castleton via Heywood to Bury. There is the possibility that this section was part of that original Brassey maintenance contract.

The question of a direct link between Thomas Brassey and the present operating lines of the East Lancashire Railway requires further investigation. However, the association between Brassey and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company is clear.

The Engineer for the L&YR at the time, John Hawkshaw, in the book "Sir John Hawkshaw (1811-1891) - The Life and Work of an Eminent Victorian Engineer" spoke very highly of him. Of Brassey he said:

"he was proverbially liberal to his agents and those in his employment… he was ever wholly free from ostentation and never lost his original simplicity and modesty of character; and he left behind him a name untarnished by aught unworthy of an honourable man".

The present East Lancashire Railway preserves the engineering achievements of both these great Victorian engineers.

DAVID BEBB
Treasurer



East Lancashire Railway former L&YR 0-6-0 No 52322 enters Bury (Bolton Street) station from the south, October 2021

AND FINALLY ...

Some of you will remember the Christmas train that we showed last year covered in Christmas lights. Continuing with that spirit of Christmas Peter Cocker has come up with this remarkable clip of a train playing a music medley. I think that we should ask Pete Waterman to have a go at one like this next year at the Cathedral, playing favourite hymns! Eat your heart out Pete!
https://fb.watch/9db1bOvFc-/

While I am talking about Christmas trains, if you are out and about with your camera — in the snow — this winter, photographing steam trains (preferably on a line linked to Thomas Brassey), we would be very pleased to feature them in future publications.

With best wishes to you all for the Festive season and New Year.

PETER BOLT
Secretary
www.thomasbrasseysociety.org



Picture courtesy of member Phil Macey.