

The THOMAS BRASSEY Society

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our August 2022 Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



Welcome to another bumper edition of our regular Newsletter.

Before mentioning anything else, may I say how pleased I am that our membership has steadily increased and is, once again, over 100. Perhaps this will be easier to sustain now that we are encouraging you to make a standing order for your £10 subscription on 1st January each year.

That said, we would like to recruit even more new members and, as last year, we have a great opportunity at ***Making Tracks 2*** in Chester Cathedral. It's another model railway extravaganza organised by our patron, Pete Waterman and his team of 'railway nuts'. (Yes, he's got the nuts and we've got the Bolts!)

Seriously, many thanks to Peter Bolt and his wife Gillian who work hard to produce this Newsletter and much else on our behalf, even when they are in the middle of moving house. In fact, the whole committee is very dedicated, and pleased to be meeting in person once again. There are currently eight of us, and as I said at the AGM, we really do need one or two extra committee members, especially as we step up our efforts to commission the Brassey statue at Chester station. So, wherever you live, please let me know if you are willing to help.

I hope you will find plenty of interest in the following pages, and I look forward to seeing many of you at our Summer Lunch in Chester on Saturday 3rd September.

Finally for now, a big "thank you" to those members who are staffing our stall in the cathedral every day alongside the model railway. Our charitable objective is to inform and educate the public about the life and work of Thomas Brassey - 'the World's foremost builder of railways in the 19th century '. You are all doing a brilliant job!
With best wishes,

STEPHEN LANGTREE MBE

Members Summer Lunch

Our members' summer lunch this year will be held at a fine cuisine and good value French restaurant "Chez Jules" in Northgate Street, Chester within a couple of hundred metres of the Making Tracks II exhibition in Chester Cathedral.

It will be held on Saturday, 3rd September 2022, the last day of the MTII exhibition and start at 12 noon. We are delighted to also welcome members' partners and friends.

A typical fixed price menu is shown below although menu changes are made daily in accordance with the best produce in season and therefore your **menu choice will be decided on the day**. The full cost will be, for 2 courses £18.65 or 3 courses £21.95. Individual drinks are in addition.

After lunch we will have a Society update and time for members' questions and suggestions.

Please let us know before 19 August if you and your partner or friend would like to attend our Summer Lunch and, if so, send a £10 deposit for each person—by cheque—to David Bebb at 2 King's Crescent, Chester, CH3 5TH or by BACS transfer to our TBS account, sort code: 01-07-02, Account No 56481608 (adding your surname followed by "lunch030922") plus a confirming email to: dv.bebb@gmail.com.

NEWSLETTER









A Typical Chez Jules Prix Fixe Menu du Jour

Entrees

Broccoli & Spinach soup with croutons
Tartiflette potato, smoked bacon, shallots, Cream, reclochon cheese
Homemade black pudding celeriac remoulade
Smoked mackerel pate, crème fraiche, cucumber
Grilled Goats cheese, honey, lavender, toast

Plats de Resistance

All main courses served with a pan of seasonal vegetables & gratin dauphinois unless stated Otherwise
Demi poulet roti with lemon & herbe or spicy butter, frites, salad, aioli
Pan seared breast of chicken, bacon & spinach herb cream
Pork Belly miso broth, pac choi & rice noodles
Seabass samphire, creamed leeks
Mushroom Wellington, pinenuts, tarragon, mustard mashed potatoes

Desserts

Creme brulee with shortbread biscuit
Blanc mange, with compressed pineapple, pink peppercorn, candied almond, coconut milk
Chocolate brownie with coffee cream
Toffee cheesecake with peanut brittle
Tarte au Citron with raspberries and Chantilly cream

NEWSLETTER

"Thomas Brassey saves Chester Cathedral from conflagration!"

The first week of Making Tracks 11 in Chester Cathedral saw the launch of our children's fictional book "*Awesome Anselm and Tom the Railway Man".*



Richard Coackley, John Whittingham, Canon Jane Brooke with Pete Waterman, then Patricia Faraday

Chester Cathedral's social and news media broadcasts reported:

"A blazingly brilliant new children's book has been launched at Chester Cathedral.

The illustrated tale, written by the Cathedral's Vice Dean, Canon Jane Brooke, tells how Thomas Brassey, one of the world's greatest railway builders, saves the medieval building after a fire breaks out.

'Awesome Anselm and Tom the Railway Man' is the fourth book in a series of fictional stories about the secret creatures that can be found in the spectacular surroundings of Chester Cathedral. They include a mouse, griffin, pig, imp and an elephant with horse's hooves'.

"In this edition, our friends meet Brassey, a colossus of Victorian enterprise in the golden age of rail," said Jane. "*It fits in neatly with Making Tracks 11, our summer model railway event. There is a bust of Thomas Brassey in St Erasmus'Chapel. The book is dedicated to The Thomas Brassey Society who sponsored the publication."*



Twenty keen supporters including Canon Jane, illustrator Patricia Faraday, Chester Cathedral's Very Rev Dean Tim Stratford, volunteers, cathedral staff and visitors to our stand, celebrated the launch.

"We are delighted to support the publication of this new adventure that we hope will inspire children about all the great things they could do in the world, just like Thomas Brassey did", said Richard Coackley, Vice Chairman of The Thomas Brassey Society.



Peter Cocker & TTBS Chair, Stephen Langtree join the group.

The high quality spiral bound book, perfect for young children and grandchildren, is now on sale for £8 at our Thomas Brassey Society stand in Chester Cathedral during Making Tracks 11.

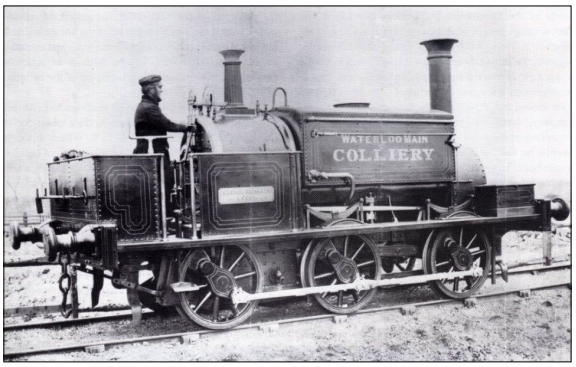
Members who aren't able to get to Making Tracks 11 can order a copy directly by sending a cheque for £10 (which includes the cost of postage and packing) made out to "The Thomas Brassey Society" to TTBS Treasurer, David Bebb at 2 King's Crescent, Chester, CH3 5TH or by BACS transfer to our TBS account, Sort Code: 01-07-02, Account No: 56481608 (*adding your surname followed by "book" as your reference)* along with a confirming email to:
dv.bebb@gmail.com.

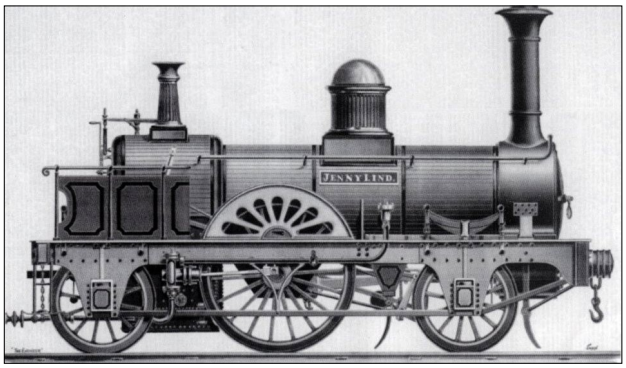
If you would like to help on the Stand, we will be in the Cathedral until the end of the Exhibition on 3 September so please get in touch with us.

NEWSLETTER

BRASSEY AND THE CRIMEAN RAILWAY

Peter Bolt writes:
I have always been under the impression that the 39 mile long railway that Brassey built was built using horse drawn power only. However, this was not so! I found this article written by Ken Burton and published in the South Leeds Life, July 2021, which talks about two locomotives which were sent out to the Crimea during the war.





"In 1854 in an Alliance with France, Turkey, and Sardinia a British and French force went to war with Russia and in the autumn of that year landed on the Crimean Peninsular to lay siege to the Russian base at Sebastopol.

The winter brought conditions so bad that the soldiers who were dug in around Sebastopol were dying of cold, cholera, and starvation. With all supplies being brought by donkey or by men, the road, hardly more than a track and not wide enough for carts, became impassable. It looked like defeat for the force by weather rather from the enemy.

It was at this point that Thomas Brassey, a millionaire contractor, offered to build a railway from the supply port to the front line. He was joined in this venture by two other contractors, Sir Martin Peto and EL Betts, it also included shipping out men and materials at cost. Initially the line was horse drawn but later steam locomotives ran on the main line and its branches, these totalled 29 miles.

The locomotives used were built at the Railway Foundry, Jack Lane, Hunslet, of Edwin Brown Wilson. 'Alliance' was the first of these and was an 0-6-0 six-coupled wheel tank engine built for John Leather, coal owner, and was overhauled and decorated with the flags of the Alliance nations after having been purchased by a Government Agent. A second locomotive, one built for Sir John L Kaye for use at his collieries was purchased and overhauled before being sent to war in the Crimea.

There are a number of firsts here, it is the first recorded mention of a truly industrial locomotive that Hunslet and Leeds became famous for, this was the first time in war that steam locomotives were used to move supplies from a port to the front line and lastly hospital trains were used for the first time to transport casualties."

(to read the remainder of the article please click on the link below)

https://southleedslife.com/the-crimean-railway-and-eb-wilson-co/

Welcome to new members

We would like to welcome the following new members to our Society and hope they enjoy reading their first newsletter.

Andrew Whitfield, David Evans, Phil Harris, James Treloar, Joanna Barnes

NEWSLETTER

Thomas Brassey and his link to Heritage Railways No 9

The Hooton to Parkgate Section of the Wirral Country Way
By David Bebb



Hadlow Road station as viewed from the level crossing and looking towards Hooton in 2022.

Thomas Brassey was awarded a contract by the Birkenhead Joint Railway in 1865 for the construction of a single-line branch from Hooton to a terminus at Parkgate, Wirral, Cheshire. The line, a total of 5 miles in length, included the construction of a sand-stone cutting in the section between Mellock Lane and Lees Lane, Little Neston. There were two intermediate stations at Neston (later Neston South) and Hadlow Road, Willaston. Provision was also made for later doubling (never carried out) and extension beyond Parkgate (completed by others in 1886)

Passenger services gradually increased through the early years and freight traffic was boosted with the opening of the colliery at Neston in 1874. The inter war years probably saw the peak traffic for both passenger and freight. The colliery closed in 1927 significantly affecting goods traffic due to the loss of the coal trains. By 1950 passenger services on the branch line had begun to decline as bus services offered an alternative means of travel and car ownership expanded. Increasing financial losses became unsustainable and passenger traffic ceased in 1956. Freight traffic continued on for a further few years until that service too came to an end in 1962. Following closure little time was wasted in the demolition and by 1964 most structures had been removed.



The surviving platform and station buildings at Hadlow Road, Willaston in 2022.

Happily there was to be a life after closure for the railway. In 1968 the line was bought by Cheshire County Council and 12 miles of track bed between Hooton and West Kirby secured. Following much consultation it was decided to turn the railway into a linear country park. Formerly opened in 1973 it became the Wirral Way and the first such country park in Britain.

Whilst Brassey's former railway would never see a train running over it again, due to the initiative of the Council, the track bed remains largely intact and the efforts of Brassey and his considerable work force can still be seen in the rock cutting referred to earlier. The former railway station at Hadlow Road was saved from demolition and is now beautifully restored as a museum and coffee shop. The work of Thomas Brassey completed over 150 years ago lives on.

A note from our Researcher

Jean Fortune jean.fortune@btinternet.com

One of my roles on the committee is to collect information about Thomas Brassey, whether it be articles, books, paintings or artefacts. Please be assured our intention is to collate information, not to set up an archive. If you have or know of any information about Thomas, please get in touch. I am also the person to contact if you would like to help on our stand in the Cathedral.

Wishing you all good health and hope to see you at the Summer Lunch

Peter Bolt, Secretary