NEWSLETTER



The THOMAS BRASSEY Society

Welcome to our October 2022 Newsletter

BREAKING NEWS

Our Patron, Pete Waterman, has just told us that he will be bringing 'Making Tracks 3' to Chester Cathedral at the end of July 2023.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



It was a great pleasure to see over 30 members and guests at our Summer Luncheon in Chester on 3rd September. The event was very well organised by our Vice-Chairman, Richard Coackley, who chose a French restaurant near the Cathedral. Perhaps this was all part of a cunning plan to promote the idea of a Society visit to France where our friends in Cruet are trying to save a bridge built by Thomas Brassey in 1853-56.

This bold excursion may come to fruition in 2023 but, in the meantime, we are keen to arrange a series of Society events on British soil. These will begin with John Whittingham's talk and tour of Chester station on 10th November. Thereafter we intend to organise more talks and visits to railways and other infrastructure built by Brassey. If you have any suggestions, or are willing to give a talk or host a visit please get in touch as soon as possible with Ian Walker, our recently co-opted committee colleague. Ian introduces himself later in this Newsletter and we thank him in advance for his help and support.

Also included below is an update about the Thomas Brassey statue at Chester station. We are extremely grateful to those who have increased their pledges or made significant personal donations in the last few weeks. There is still a long way to go, but we are very encouraged and are pressing on at an ever quickening pace. We have established a 'Statue Design Panel' which includes a representative of our main sponsor and, crucially, a representative of the Brassey family. We also have a draft Sculptor's Brief which, all being well, will be finalised and circulated widely well before Christmas.

Please read on and do keep in touch with us as we continue to celebrate '*the World's Greatest Builder of Railways*'.

With best wishes,

Stephen Langtree MBE

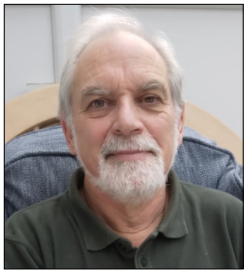
PS You will have seen in our "Breaking News" note above about "Making Tracks 3" coming to the Cathedral in 2023. At the moment your committee have not had a chance to discuss the implications for our attendance but would welcome your thoughts concerning taking a stand and assisting with the manning of it. Please email Peter Bolt with any comments. (petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com)

TALK AND WALK TOUR OF CHESTER

A gentle reminder: On Thursday 10 November, 2022, John Whittingham is organising a **Talk and Walk** event, starting at 7 pm, at the Town Crier Inn (opposite Chester Station). The plan is to meet in the upstairs room for a brief talk about the work of Thomas Brassey and Chester Station and then, from 7.25 pm there will be a guided walking tour of the station, finishing at approximately 8.15 pm. You are welcome to return to the Town Crier after the event if you wish. A nominal charge of £2.50 for TTBS members, £5 for non-members. Please pay the guide. Bookings to John Whittingham via email *whittingham50@hotmail.com*

NEWSLETTER

APPOINTMENT OF NEW EXCURSIONS SECRETARY



Hi there

I'm Ian Walker and after volunteering as a new committee member, now find myself as 'Excursions Secretary'! Let me introduce myself; I am a retired electrical design engineer, with a working life spent within the UK water industry. Now living on the Wirral with my better half, Gill, and two cats! Hobbies include DIY, model railways and travel.

Now that the worst, (hopefully), of the pandemic is behind us, we can begin to put together some activities for TTBS members across the country. Most of these will now be scheduled for 2023, but we have John's tour of Chester Station to look forward to in November.

I do have some ideas, (*I have discounted the nature walk*...), but would like to know what TTBS members themselves would like from their Society. Then, in the words of one of my senior managers when I was starting my career, "*talk to everyone involved, then just do what you want to do!"*

So far, my ideas start with activities and visits associated with Thomas Brassey, then railways and other engineering/heritage interests.

Would members be interested in visits on a general engineering theme, in addition to those which are railway related? Perhaps members could let me know please? (*my email is ian.walker131@gmail.com*) A bite to eat is also a welcome addition on a day out.

I'm also keen that we try to put together some activities across the UK, where this is practicable. In the meantime, however, I'll be working with some ideas to take forward in 2023.

Cheers
Ian

BIRKENHEAD MARKET



Hidden away in Birkenhead market is a wall plaque commemorating Thomas Brassey. It is a little faded as it has been there ever since I can remember. The Market was built on a grid system and the walkway running across to the other side of the Market Hall is named after him.

There are also plaques dedicated to other prominent Birkenhead residents including Sir William Jackson who partnered Brassey on a number of occasions and also Henry Tate, the sugar magnate.

Peter Bolt, Secretary

NEXT NEWSLETTER

TTBS Member, Brian Crossley, has just returned from Montreal, Canada following his daughter's wedding. Whilst there he spent time in the 'McCord – Stewart Museum' looking at the original drawings for the Pont Victoria Bridge. These were drawn up at the Canada Works in Birkenhead around 1852, the bridge being part of Brassey's 540 mile Grand Trunk Railway.

Brian has kindly agreed to give us an account of his visit in the December Newsletter.

NEWSLETTER

Thomas Brassey and his link to Heritage Railways No 10

The North Staffordshire Railway (1845-1923) and the Churnet Valley (Heritage) Railway (1992-present)

By David Bebb

In 1846, the North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) awarded two major contracts. The first of these was for the construction of the line from Macclesfield to Colwich, via Stoke (the Pottery Line). The second was for the construction of the lines between North Rode and Burton and between Stoke and Uttoxeter (the Churnet Valley Line).

The contract for the Macclesfield to Colwich railway, a length of 48 miles, was awarded to Thomas Brassey. Construction work was started under the supervision of the Engineer, George Bidder. It is reported that by February 1847 there were 1,300 men and 60 horses working between Macclesfield and Colwich. Some 61,000 m^3 of earth were removed and 770 metres of tunnel heading driven.

Brassey also built the Ashbourne branch for the North Staffordshire Railway that had a junction with the Churnet Valley Line at Rocester. At the opening of the Ashbourne branch, the NSR Chairman, John Lewis Ricardo described Brassey as ***"equal to anything, however great or small, in the construction of railways. He is competent to make the Great Northern, or to lease the Ashbourne branch."*** He added that he had known and worked with Brasses for six years, during which time they had been involved in railway works costing nearly £2m.

The contract for the Churnet Valley Line was awarded to contractor J&S Tredwell and opened in 1849. Following the publication of the Beeching Report in 1963 most of the line was scheduled for closure. Passenger services lasted until 1965 although freight traffic continued until 1988. In 1992 the Churnet Valley Railway Company was formed and in 1995 purchased the line from British Railways. The Company now operates heritage trains between Froghall and Leekbrook with branch to Ipstones, a total distance of approximately 11 miles.

It is clear that Thomas Brassey was well thought of within the North Staffordshire Railway Company and played a significant role in the development of the railways around the Potteries. The line between Macclesfield and Colwich, via Stoke and Stone is still in use.



Stone Railway Station looking south with the line to Colwich to the left and Norton Bridge to the right.



The Churnet Valley Line today, pictured at Kingsley and Froghall Station.

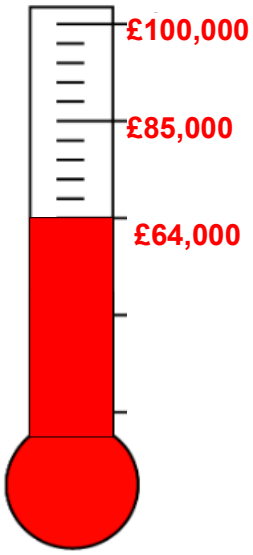
NEWSLETTER

FUND RAISING FOR THE STATUE GETS OFF TO A FLYING START

FUNDRAISER

OUR GOAL:

£85,000 +



The location for our proposed statue of Thomas Brassey, outside Chester Railway Station, is finalised and formally approved.

Our Case Statement and Funding Prospectus is published along with the "Sculptors' Brief" and the first meeting of our Statue Design Group is about to take place before we release the details of our national competition for the sculpture.

We are also registered with the Fundraising Regulator and HMRC has given their approval for the Society to reclaim Gift Aid where appropriate and requested by donors.

We have had an extraordinary start to our fundraising in the first few days and we are off to a flying start.

We are delighted to report that we have already received donations of £64,000 towards our target and fundraising goal which is between £85,000 and £100,000 depending on the agreed statue design.

This is an amazing start and our very grateful thanks to our donors and members go out for such enthusiastic support. We still have a long way to go, but we are well on our way to achieving our goal.

We will be delighted to receive donations as our fundraising activity continues, approaching trust funds, donor agencies, members, as well as those connected with Thomas Brassey and the public. Remarkably we received an anonymous donation for £5,000 recently which was very encouraging.

Details of how to make a donation are provided on our website (thomasbrasseysociety.org) together with a donation form which can be downloaded.

No matter how large or small, donations of any amount are very gratefully received and all will be personally acknowledged.

Richard Coackley CBE
Vice Chairman

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

A special welcome goes to the following new members.

Richard Adam	Chester
Rex Andrew	Wirral
Rodney Clayton	Derbyshire
Gary Alan	Swansea
John Henke	Watford

Thank you for joining and we look forward to meeting you in the not too distant future.

If you would like anything to be included in our next newsletter, please drop me a line.

With best wishes to you all

Peter Bolt

Secretary TTBS
(*email: petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com*)
www.thomasbrasseysociety.org