NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our July 2023 Newsletter



The THOMAS BRASSEY Society

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



Well, I have said it before and, forgive me, I'll say it again; "it's a busy time for the Society".

Your Committee is operating on an increasing number of fronts while, at the same time, preparing the rota for our stall in Chester Cathedral during ***Making Tracks 3***. So, before I go any further, please can I ask those of you who live within range of Chester to spare a day to help us between 26th July and 2nd September. More details can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Meanwhile, our Statue Design Panel has met twice in recent weeks to interview the two sculptors who we shortlisted in April. As discussions proceed and ideas are developed it is evident that it will be very difficult to choose between the two of them!

By contrast, it wasn't a difficult decision to participate in a local celebration on Tuesday 1st August. This is the 175th anniversary of the official opening of Chester station in 1848. It is, of course, one of Thomas Brassey's most spectacular constructions and is deservedly Listed grade 2 star. Transport for Wales is organising an event at 10:30 am that day to which all are welcome. Then, in the evening, from 6 pm until 10 pm we are organising a series of free talks at the Queen Hotel - again all are welcome. Further details will be available in the next 10 days or so.

Finally, Dave Bebb and I visited the Llangollen Railway recently. Our purpose was to examine potential sites at Llangollen station and (the new) Corwen station for information panels about Brassey; this being one of 10 or 11 heritage railways now running on lines built by him. Our visit was organised by TBS member Peter Robson and was well received. We will be starting work on the panels shortly.



So, yes, it really is busy at the moment so we are all grateful for your continuing support for our efforts.

With kind regards,
Stephen Langtree MBE





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STATUE UPDATE

Choosing a sculptor



The Statue selection committee met on the 20th June with Andrew Edwards, a sculptor of international renown having produced the 4 Beatles statues at the Pier Head, Liverpool amongst many more including Cilla Black and the lovely statue of a British soldier shaking hands with a German soldier, over a football, which is situated in the Bombed out church in Liverpool.

Andrew is based in Stafford and will be shortly opening up a studio in Liverpool. He has close ties with the Castle Fine Arts Foundry near Oswestry.



The other sculptor chosen to go through to the second round, is Ben Twiston Davies, an internationally known artist from Hertfordshire. He is famous for the Agatha Christie statue in Wallingford, Oxfordshire and also in Covent Garden, London. Other statues of note are Bobby Ball in Lytham and Ebenezer Howard in Welwyn Garden City

Both artists will be submitting a final maquette and we hope to have these on show at Making Tracks 3 in Chester Cathedral during August when we will be happy to receive comments from members and the general public as to their preference.

STATUE FUNDING

We are getting near our final total of £100,000 and need a little push to reach that figure. At "Making Tracks 3" we will have a 'Sum Up' card reader for the first time as we are fully aware that some people would be happy to donate but don't carry the cash. This may be the last time I will make an appeal for statue funds so if you haven't donated yet now is the time, big or small.



If anyone has not yet been able to contribute, we would ask you to give what you can! To quote Tesco's "Every little helps" !

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Don't miss your last chance to join Pete Waterman OBE and his Railnuts team for the third and final instalment of Making Tracks at the Cathedral from 26 July to 2 September.

This year's 64 foot long track is modelled after Milton Keynes railway station with some very special, never seen before, features and trains.

Like previous years, visitors will be able to drive the trains using dedicated control tablets.

Pete Waterman says:

'*I am really excited to bring this new, even better, layout to Chester again this year – after being set the challenge of building a station, I can honestly say it's going to be something very special and we will be offering the chance to adults and children alike to drive the trains*.'

In addition, Tom Connell is a transport illustrator who has produced the main picture for Making Tracks 3. There will be an exhibition of his work on display in the South Transept alongside the railway. Tom Connell has masses of experience producing highly finished work for major ad agencies, design groups, publishers, vehicle manufacturers, transport companies and all sorts of others who have commissioned illustrations so the Exhibition should be fascinating.

The Thomas Brassey Society will have a two table stand and this year we will show the model of the Chester Station as well as the Maquettes from Sculptors Andy Edwards and Ben Twiston Davies of their designs for a statue of Thomas Brassey. We look forward to receiving your comments on both.

We do need Members to run the stand and ask for your help. Please get in touch with the stand coordinator, Jean Fortune, (*tel: 01244 571155*) and agree a date. A list of the empty spaces is shown below, we can only do this with your help. (Each day we need to have a Trustee plus a member on the stand.)

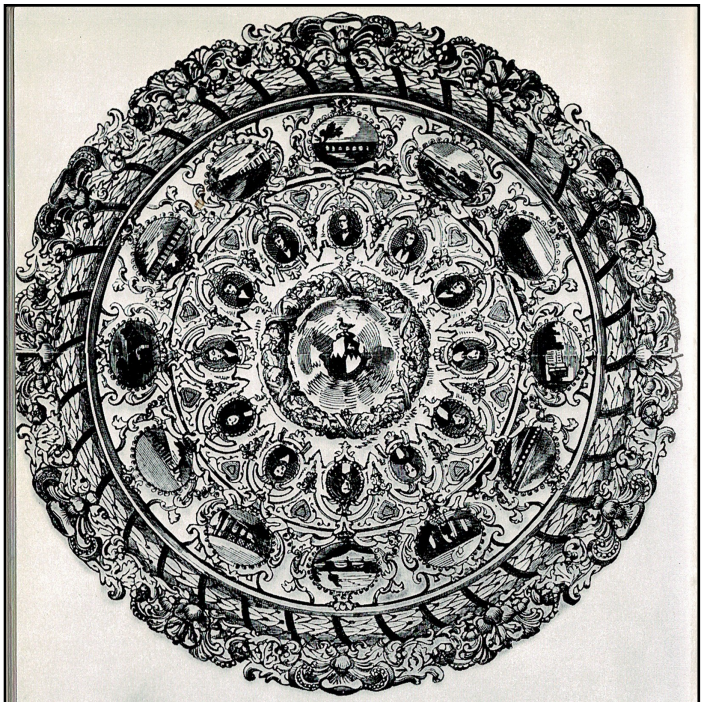
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	25th Jul stand set-up. Ian Walker	26 Jul Ian Walker	27 Ian Walker	28 Jean Fortune Janice Redican	29 Dave Hooley Steve Langtree	30
31 Ian Walker Steve Langtree	1 Aug Dave Bebb	2 Peter Cocker Peter Robson	3 John Whittingham Annie Wooley Dodd	4 Jean Fortune Jan Redican	5 Peter Bolt Gillian Bolt	6
7 Richard Coackley Steve Langtree	8 Dave Hooley John Roberts	9 Peter Cocker Moir Cocker	10 Peter Bolt Gillian Bolt	11 Richard Coackley Keith Stoops	12 Jean Fortune Rex Andrew	13
14 Dave Bebb	15 Dave Hooley John Roberts	16 John Whitting-ham Mac Steels	17 Philip Macey	18 Peter Bolt	19 Rex Andrew	20
21 Dave Hooley David Casement	22 Peter Bolt	23 Peter Cocker Peter Robson	24 Dave Bebb Keith Stoops	25 Peter Bolt Ian Walker	26 Jean Fortune Jan Redican	27
28 Ian Walker	29 Dave Hooley Philip Macey	30 Peter Bolt Gillian Bolt	31 Dave Bebb David Casement	1 Sep Richard Coackley	2	

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THE BRASSEY TESTIMONIAL SHIELD

The one that got away!

By Dave Bebb



The Brassey Testimonial, a silver-gilt shield 3 ft. in diameter and weighing more than 30 lb., depicts contracts, persons and events connected with Brassey's career. It was presented to Brassey in 1851 by his London agent in recognition of his achievements as contractor and employer

The Thomas Brassey Testimonial Shield was presented to Thomas Brassey on the 2 April 1851 at an event held at the London Coffeehouse. in recognition of his achievements as contractor and employer. The shield is circular and consists of silver-gilt with gold enamelling, 36" in diameter. The centre of the shield contains the inscription and the Arms of Brassey. The next portion of the circle is divided into twelve, each portion containing head and shoulders miniatures of the engineers under whom Thomas Brassey worked. Above and immediately over the portraits are twelve miniature pictures of some of the railway works of each of the engineers represented. For example Chester Station, completed in 1848, is depicted above Robert Stephenson. The ring beyond the pictures contains the names of thirty six of Thomas Brassey's agents. The whole, therefore, forms a perfect epitome of the characters and events connected with Brassey's career as a contractor.

The table below lists the twelve engineers depicted together with the associated works.

There is an excellent article of the presentation event published in the Illustrated London News on 19 April 1851. The following are some extracts.

"The presentation of this superb testimonial took place at the London Coffeehouse, and after an excellent dinner: Mr H.P Burt, Mr Brassey's London agent in the chair supported on the right by Mr Brassey, Mr Brunel, Mr R Rendall, Mr Bidder, Mr R. Stephenson, and on the left by Mr Cubitt, President of the Institution of Civil Engineers …… together with nearly 200 of Mr Brassey's agents, superintendents, friends and workmen.

The Chairman said, that in requesting Mr Brassey to accept the testimonial which they were about to offer him, he might be permitted to say that that gentleman had engaged in works of enormous magnitude, of the greatest extent in money value, and of the highest importance in a national point of view that probably any one man had been engaged in …….. One great thing in connection with all Mr Brassey's contracts was, that all the men he had employed had been duly paid. He would not speak of those men who were there to do honour to their guest for his duty was to call attention to the claims of Mr Brassey in the various classes who had been dependent upon him ….. But he might add that Mr Brassey had obtained the confidence of the principal engineers of the kingdom and all of them were satisfied when they had him to carry out their works ….. The agents, the sub-contractors and all who were engaged under him were always confident for they knew he had the greatest consideration for them.

And the navvies invariably said, "*We have worked for many a master but Brassey is the man for us".*

Mr G. Meakin, as the senior agent was called upon to make the presentation.

Mr Brassey in returning thanks said that the greatest pleasure the success he had achieved gave him was that it had been the means of raising others to a higher position than that in which they had been when he had first met them. It was recorded that following several other appropriate toasts the company separated at a late hour. (*to be continued in the next Newsletter.....)*

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OUR DAY OUT ON THE CHURNET VALLEY RAILWAY

On 17th May, 17 TTBS members met up at Kingsley and Froghall Station on the Churnet Valley Railway, to enjoy a trip on the 10.30 Breakfast Train. There was a mix of members from Cheshire, the Wirral, West Yorkshire, Shropshire and Hertfordshire so it was a chance to meet up, and for some to meet committee members.



The complete round trip, from Kingsley and Froghall, out to Ipstones loop and back, takes about 2 hours, during which time breakfast was served fresh and hot straight from the kitchen car. The dining carriage was ex Pullman dining car, 'Diana', provided with clean, white tablecloths, choice of tea and coffee along with a choice of cooked breakfasts!

As the train tickets were valid for the day, on the return journey, a number of members alighted at the workshops at Cheddleton for a look around; other members continued back to Froghall, some to depart due to other commitments, some to walk to Consall Station to await the next return train, some to take the next train to Cheddleton for a workshop visit.

The train was due to be hauled by steam loco 5197, S160, ex USATC, but this had failed some days before due to a crack in the firebox being welded at the workshops. The replacement loco was a Class 33 diesel. The difference in motive power wasn't noticed as the party was too busy eating!



The Pullman cars on the afternoon train were serving afternoon teas, perhaps this is worth a second visit? This would give opportunity to enjoy the industrial heritage of the line on the morning train, whilst looking forward to tea later.

A grand day out seemed to have been had by all!

Ian Walker

Excursions Co-ordinator





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Chester Heritage Fair 15th June

Three Trustees took our stand to the Chester Heritage Fair held at the St Mary's Centre in Chester. We picked up some membership applications and a donation so a useful day.

Talks about Thomas Brassey

Here are the dates for talks by your Secretary about Thomas Brassey in 2023.

1 August	Transport for Wales evening at The Queen Hotel in Chester Other speakers will also be talking to celebrate the 175 anniversary of the opening of Chester Station.
4 October	Willaston (Nantwich) History Society, 7.30 pm
8 November	Goostrey History Society, 10 am. CW4 8PE
14 November	Grosvenor Museum, Chester, 7 pm
15 November	Mayer Hall, Higher Bebington, 8 pm
16 April 2024	Ellesmere Port History Society, Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port, 7.30 pm

A Talk about the history of the Llangollen Railway

Following an excellent meeting with members of the Llangollen Railway (see our Chairman's Report) I thought members would be interested in a talk being given in August —see details below.

On Wednesday, 16 August 2023, Peter Dickinson *(Peter Dickinson MESci (Hons) FGS Principal Consultant, and Deputy Station Master (Llangollen*) will be giving a talk entitled "*Steaming through North Wales*", about the history of the Llangollen Railway at Llangollen Museum, Parade Street, Llangollen, LL20 8PW. 7.30 pm start, admission £3 per person inc tea/coffee & biscuits. All are welcome.

I am sure this will be very interesting and we plan to go and make a day of it.

Welcome to new members:

We are delighted that Gerald Leach and Phil Morrey have rejoined us and we look forward to meeting up with them in due course.

With best wishes and looking forward to meeting you at some of the events this year.

Peter

Peter Bolt
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