

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

APRIL 2014

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REMINDER: FRECCLES ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING THURSDAY 10th APRIL, 7pm ECCLES TOWN HALL. Speakers from Transport for Greater Manchester talking about rail service developments for the future



***Eccles Station gardens** are looking well to start the year off. ESN must offer thanks and praise to the gardening group whose efforts produce these refined and attractive layouts. Earlier in the year the crocuses were superb and now the daffodils have taken over. The tubs now contain a riot of attractive plants.*

Photos JER



Hazel Blears MP secured a half hour Adjournment Debate in Westminster Hall on Wednesday (26th March) to discuss **Rail Services in Eccles**. The debate was attended by Barbara Keeley MP and Patrick McLoughlin the Secretary of State for Transport. It took a lot of time and pushing to get this debate but no firm promises were forthcoming about two trains per hour for Eccles.

To view the session visit <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=15160> and slide the time line along to about 128min (2hrs 8 mins).

FRECCLES has received a grant of £250 towards the work with the gardens from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. ACoRP's Small Grants Fund will be acknowledged as a funder of the work undertaken by Freccles.

- *As a bit of side interest ACoRP's offices are now in The Old Water Tower at Huddersfield Railway Station (on the right as you go towards Leeds).*

On Easter Sunday April 20th there will be a **full train service** stopping at Eccles at the usual past Sunday times: the bus service for that day is cancelled.
NB: **Buses will still replace trains** on the first Sunday of the new timetable on May 18th.



*While **Victoria tram stop is closed** for reconstruction the trams are operating on a **single line**. This has necessitated a point being placed just on Balloon Street between Shude Hill and Victoria.*

Photos JER.

*To transfer to a tram you must walk from Victoria up to Shude Hill. Opposite there **The Lower Turks Head has finally reopened** after many decades. Attractively refurbished and extended into next door as 'Scuttler's Wine Bar,' the place is proving **very popular** perhaps because of the range of real ales and food on offer.*



OUT AND ABOUT...

At Huyton work is well underway to widen the Liverpool and Manchester route to four tracks between there and Broad Green.

The level crossing was at the end of the platforms on this view. Notice the boarding on the opposite platform – this is the site if the old passenger underpass. A part just further on from the above view was sold off to form part of Huyton bus station about 15 yrs ago and this is now causing delay to the project as planning permission is required to get it back for railway use.



Here is the old underpass. It will be brought back into use with lift access for all four platforms.

The new faces for the old platforms 3 and 4 are being put into place. This view looks towards Liverpool so the current platforms are to the left. It is ironic that it is only in the last few years that the track bed became largely obscured.





Work is also being done on
platforms 2 and 3.

All photos: J E Rayner.

...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.

ARTICLES

This month's articles are extracts taken out of 'From Oldham to Eccles and beyond: wanderings in Northern towns by tram' reproduced with the kind permission of Paul Salvesen (the railway doctor) who undertook the journeys described. The articles originally appeared in **The Northern Weekly Salvo**.

No. 131 February 9th 2014 called 'The Tram Ride Issue'.

From Oldham to Eccles.

Saturday was taken up with a very important bit of tram-bashing around south-east Lancashire. We joined the Metrolink service at Newhey, parking in 'Railway Street' (surely it's time to be re-named 'Light Rapid Transit Mews'?) Newhey still has its magnificent 'Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Cotton Warehouse' standing opposite the tram stop. We now consider ourselves experts in the use of the automatic ticket machines and quickly issued ourselves with £5 day rovers just as our tram was rolling in. Excellent value for fanatical tram bashers such as ourselves, determined to extract every possible kilometre of value from our tickets. Well, up to a point. From a tram perspective, the most exciting bit of the entire excursion came early on, using the newly-opened Oldham town centre route which diverges from the old alignment at Mumps and climbs along Union Street to the grandly-titled 'Oldham Central'. And why not? Oldham has always had a rather unfortunate set of names for its stations: Mumps, Glodwick Road, Werneth...need I go on? We alighted, or alit, at 'Central' and headed up into town, being forced to negotiate our way through 'The Spindles', a newish shopping centre the design of which was modelled on a classic Oldham cotton mill, in all its red brick ugliness. Our main objective was Tommyfield Market, which is great. Years since either of us had been but it remains a good traditional Lancashire market with the added colour of several Asian sari stalls which looked quite dazzling. We had hoped to find a nice café to sit down and get a decent coffee but I'm afraid we failed on that (any nominations, Oldham readers?). The other plus from our brief 'Owdham' visit was the Oxfam shop on Yorkshire Street which had a good book section. But onwards and downwards. The new route beyond the town centre drops at a gradient that must be more severe than the famous

'Werneth Incline' of old, which if my memory serves me right was 1 in 27 and a bit. I'd love to see the restored L&Y 'radial Tank' 1008, currently languishing at the NRM, having a go at this new challenge. The old tram/rail route which continued to Werneth station and Mumps was already lifted but the overhead catenary is still in place. Well worth going back on a DREGS trip for real up to date railway dereliction. Speaking of dereliction the shell of Hartford Mill dominates the skyline as you head down towards Hollinwood. The mill had been afire and looks ready for demolition, removing another piece of Oldham's textile history. Maybe it will be converted into a shopping centre like the Spindles? Back in the 1920s an amazing film was made from the carriage window of a train climbing up to Oldham from Failsworth and Hollinwood, showing literally hundreds of mills stretching across to Royton and Middleton. There's still a few left. I'd love to see the film again – does anyone know if it is available on DVD?

We continued past Newton Heath depot (26A) and the wonderful 'Central park' (sic) Metrolink station with its futuristic design, before heading down via Monsal to Victoria, which is currently a construction site. Hasta la vista, I can't wait to see the place finished and forming the jewel in the crown of this part of the city's renaissance. We alighted at chilly windswept Cornbrook and changed on to a tram – for Eccles! Another new bit of track beyond the junction with 'Media City' branch. We were reet hungry by now and lo! Our prayers were answered by the sight of The Regent Fish and Chip eatery literally across the road from the tram terminus. However, as I'm running out of page I will leave my account of Eccles to a separate story (below)

No Eccles Cakes in Eccles Shock!

Eccles is a town with a long history and is of course on the original Liverpool and Manchester Railway. The station now has a basic but fully-staffed booking office and a very active 'friends group' called 'FRECCLES'. They are one of the best of the lot and have won numerous awards for their work in improving what was a fairly dismal place, not helped by being in a fairly deep cutting. Their supporters include Christopher Eccleston and a Bishop of Manchester.

The achievements of FRECCLES are many and varied but their current activities focus on the station garden and also some great art work on the brick-walled cutting.

Eccles itself, notwithstanding its new tram and The Regent fish bar, can't be said to thrive. It feels run-down and poor. The 'new' 1970s (?) shopping centre was under-occupied and the public toilets had been closed. However, a nice bonus was finding one of the 'units' occupied by a local art group which was displaying some very good work. Further up the pedestrianised street which leads to the station is the very fine parish church, St Mary The Virgin (*no cheap jibes please* – ed). Up near the station is The Polish Club which was advertising a very attractive Saturday lunch menu, but just as well it was mysteriously closed as we were full of fish and chips (in Hester's case, to be rigorously accurate, steak pudding chips and mushy peas). There was also a good looking restaurant just by the station which deserves future investigation.

But the main absence in our visit was the town's far-famed and most notable product, viz, The Eccles Cake. Maybe we were looking in the wrong place but we couldn't find a single one. To add to our distress, we managed to miss the tram – largely because I insisted on taking a picture of it, with Regent Fish Bar in background). The tram was obviously a shy reticent type and shuffled off with the indicator still showing 2 minutes to departure. This condemned us to a further 18 minutes (according to the screen, which we no longer trusted). No further places of interest were revealed though The Old Town Hall looked quite impressive. We had missed the coffee morning and the place was being used to audition actors for some TV show whose name escapes me. The next tram also left early, but with us on it. We weren't going to be caught out a second time, oh no. It was raining by now.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

Two more trips to use the Ashton and Stalybridge through service before it ends in May. Both of these walks will tire the legs but for different reasons.

Firstly we recommend **trip No 6** which is:

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE – PORTLAND BASIN & CANAL

This walk passes some fine buildings, and includes a library with an art gallery above it and the industrial museum at the Portland Basin of the Huddersfield Canal.

Take the train from Eccles Station to Ashton-under-Lyne. (Book to Stalybridge). Outside the railway station cross the minor road, then go through the small garden.

Turn left along the main road. After a short distance use the pelican crossing to go to the front of the Tameside MBC Offices. *There is a tourist information office inside.* Go left and then right down the side of the building to come onto the Market Square. *On your left is the historic market building being rebuilt following arson.*

Next take the opportunity to browse the Market Square. *The market is held there seven days a week and the last Sunday of each month includes a farmers' market.*

Leave the square at the diagonal corner from the Town Hall building and go a short distance down Warrington Street to where it is crossed by Old Street. *The National Westminster Bank has a large lion and key carved in its broken pediment and bears the Ashton motto 'labor omnia vincit' (work overcomes all). This was once the local Trustee Bank.*

At this point turn right onto Old Street. *You pass the fine white tiled cinema building on the left.*

At Oldham Road see the tiled 'Forester's Call' on your left. *This is a free house with real ales.*

Cross Oldham Road to 'The Heginbotham Technical School and Free Library' building. Go in – it's a must! Go through to the back room of the library. *Notice the Assheton family coat of arms and motto later adopted by the town. Beyond this room is the local history and documents library.*

Go upstairs from the foyer to see the small art gallery. *This is open Tuesday to Saturday but p.m. only on the Thursday.*

Outside the building turn right past 'The King's and Manchester Regiment' building. Keep going ahead. On your right you pass 'The Witchwood'. *This is a free house offering real ales and music evenings.*

Continue into and across St Petersfield Square. *This is an attractive modern development.*

At the far end of the square to the left is a distinctive large building. *This was the Ashton Public Baths. English Heritage is preventing its decay but a sympathetic use needs to be found for it.*

At the main Stockport Road there are trees straight ahead. Go over two crossings taking you slightly left. Then turn right following the main road. *There are some large houses/offices on your left (one with an impressive portico) and a fine church behind the trees on your right.*

At the end of the row of houses/offices there is a stone sign pointing left to Portland Basin. Follow this sign. Go along Park Street to the end then turn right to go to the large chimney with a crowned top at the bottom of Margaret Street.

Cross the canal bridge and go left along the canal towpath. *You are now between the Huddersfield Canal and the River Tame.*

Go over the towpath bridge above the Macclesfield Branch Canal.

Go left over the footbridge to visit the Portland Basin Museum. The entrance is on the front of the warehouse. *This is open 10.00 to 17.00 Tuesday to Thursday, admission free. It houses period rooms and industrial exhibits including machine tools from the old Globe Ironworks at Stalybridge. There is also a café.*

On leaving the museum, cross the footbridge again and turn left along the towpath. There is a mill building with combined tower and chimney by the canal. The towpath is blocked.

At this point go up to the main road and cross it at the lights towards Asda. *If you wish to shop you can end the walk here then go back straight into the town and market.*

To continue the walk follow the green painted path along the right hand side of ASDA then between this and a viaduct to rejoin the towpath. *Notice the mix of surviving small industry and lost large industrial sites by the canal.*

Continue up a flight of locks. There is a gurgling gully at Oldham's Bridge then ascend the steps onto Armentieres Square in the centre of Stalybridge. U-turn right back above the canal to join Melbourne Street. Turn right and go to the bottom where you turn left. Follow this road and go under the railway bridge. The entrance to Stalybridge Station is on the left.

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM LENGTH, EASY.SHOPS, MUSEUMS,
 ARCHITECTURE, PUBS,

RAIL FARE – £3.90 adult Maps: Manchester A-Z or Philip's Gtr Mcr.

Nine STALYBRIDGE – HARTSHEAD PIKE.

This is a country walk with spectacular views. Those who like to pick out landmarks should choose a clear day and perhaps take binoculars.

Take the train from Eccles Station to Stalybridge Station. *Hartshead Pike can be seen ahead from the left of the train as it crosses Ashton Moss.*

Leave the front entrance of the station and walk left up Rassbottom Street to where it joins Stamford Road. Cross Stamford Road and go right gently uphill. Keep to this left side of Stamford Road and it becomes Wakefield Road. *Note the railway tunnel ventilation shaft above the houses.*

Wakefield Road now curves to the left. At the end of the stone terrace fork left, (not complete left) and go straight ahead uphill on Luzley Road. Luzley Road eventually becomes more of a path. *This goes along a ridge formed by the western side of the hill having been quarried away. On the right are the Pennine hills and on the left is a view west over Manchester and as far as North Wales.*

Go right where you meet a tarmac road (Arlies Lane) and keep along this. Just after Hopkins Farm take the right fork and stick with this lane straight on.

At the Hare and Hounds go right and keep straight on passing Luzley Hall. Eventually a main road gradually trails nearer and nearer from your left. There is a group of houses on your left (Cross Farm). Go left between them to the main road (Stamford Road).

Cross the main road and go right up Broadcarr Lane. On the left across from a modernised stone house called Stansfield there is a footpath towards the Pike. Take this path following the field boundary.

At the farmyard bear right to the lane then go left in front of farm.

Immediately after the farm take the track to the right that leads up to the beacon. *Here there is a full circle panoramic view – just beyond the beacon is a marker giving details of the view.*

Retrace your steps to opposite Stansfield. Turn right and then just after it go left through a gate up to a field.

At field level head straight across, over a stile and descend steeply towards Mossley.

Go to your right to the main road and turn left into Mossley. This is Stamford Road again. Follow this down through the town, over the crossroads and down the side of the George Hotel. *(The main part of Mossley is off to the right with shops, public houses etc. Notice the fine mill stone grit stone buildings of this Pennine Town)*

The road descends steadily to Mossley Station. *Opposite the station on the left is the Britannia pub with real ale and to the right is a coffee shop and another real ale pub.*

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM LENGTH, MODERATE WALK WITH STEADY ASCENT. PANORAMIC VIEWS, SHOPS, MUSEUMS, ARCHITECTURE, PUBS. RAIL FARE – £3.90 adult.

Maps: OS 1:50 000 sheet 109 Manchester A-Z or Philip's Gtr Mcr.

BOOK REVIEW:

'ON ROADS – a hidden history'

by Joe Moran ISBN 9781846680601. Profile Books
£8.99 Available at Eccles Library.

The author is a Reader in Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores' University and a regular writer in the press. This book is the product of exceptional writing skills, used here to make a literary confection that delights throughout. The narrative winds like a wonderful minor road through different aspects of our culture, history and psychology: the enlightenment it brings, it does so effortlessly. This book is highly recommended.

The book is available at Eccles Library.

OBITUARIES:

J. B. Snell.

John Bernard Snell was born in Fiji on 1st January 1932, grew up in New Zealand, and attended Bryanston School (Dorset) from the age of 15. In 1940 he was admitted to Balliol College (Oxford) to read politics, philosophy and economics with a view to becoming eventually a barrister. Fortunately for tens of thousands of boys, grown men, and not a few ladies too, this was not to be his career.

He had visited the clapped out Talylyn Railway in 1947 and this fostered a lifelong fascination for railways. In 1950 the railway owner died and a small group of enthusiasts proposed the seemingly mad idea of buying the railway and running it, using the old steam engines, and the labour of volunteers. Snell volunteered for the inaugural run and was there every University summer holiday. He joined London Transport and then moved on to British Railways but retained a keen interest in the little lines that were facing extinction.

He made a photographic record of the decaying Ffestiniog Railway, advised the Bluebell Railway (the first ex BR branch to become a preserved railway), and later the North Norfolk Railway of which he became chairman. He was vice chairman of the growing Heritage Railway Association and an adviser to the Railway Heritage Trust. He was appointed to run the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway (15" gauge and 13 ½ miles long on the Kent Coast) in the 1970s. He also travelled to see the world's railways, and wrote a delightful fictional railway book called 'Jennie' based on various Welsh narrow gauge railways. In his latter years he helped to plan the extension of the Kent and East Sussex Railway line.

When he retired he stayed in Dymchurch and remained unmarried. He died age 82 on 3rd January 2014 having helped to create a new style of industry and having demonstrated the great potential of volunteer organisations.

Bob Crow.

The 11th March 2014 saw the untimely demise of union leader Bob Crow at the age of 52 years. He was born on June 13th 1961 in Shadwell, East London. His mother died when he was aged eight. Leaving Kingwood School at 16, he started work with London Transport on a track gang and became interested in trade unionism when he was 19 following an argument he had with the gang leader. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and was a member of the Communist Party until he defected to Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party.

Following the death of Jimmy Knapp in 1991, Crow was elected leader of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) the successor organisation to the NUR. His exercise of the powers of leadership saw him become a very successful and highly paid (£140,000pa) trades unionist or "The most hated man in London" according to whether one is a worker or passenger on London's underground!

He successfully increased membership of the RMT to 80,000, against a general background of steep decline in union membership, and vigorously defended his members' direct interests. This was often achieved by the hard line tactic of holding an immediate strike ballot which was then followed by negotiations before the start of the planned industrial action. In negotiation he was a canny operator.

He cultivated the image of the 'union bruiser' but he was also renowned for his quick wit: accused by Jeremy Paxman of being "a dinosaur" he replied "Yes, but they was around for a long time."

The cause of his passing was a heart attack and aneurism. He is survived by his long term partner and two daughters (one from a previous marriage).

EDITORIAL

A THIRD ASPECT.

In last month's editorial ESN pointed out the lack of diversionary routes created by the Beeching years. This lack of alternative routes causes the use of replacement buses when civil engineering is undertaken and passenger numbers plummet on these days. This is hardly surprising. Even if the buses were reliable (and around here they are still not) journey times are greatly increased, and there is great inconvenience to passengers with luggage on transferring train-bus-train again.

Modernisation in the form of route electrification is causing a new version of the Beeching disease. What is the alternative route for an electric train when no other lines are electrified? Expensive Thunderbird diesels might serve to haul mainline electric trains via another route but ESN cannot see this happening for local services. In the distant future when electric trains (second or third hand from the South East?) serve Eccles station we shall probably continue face inadequate 'replacement, buses when there is work on Chat Moss!

To find out more about **FRECCLES** or to make contact see our **website:** www.freccles.org or e mail us at info@freccles.org.uk

