

ECCLES STATION NEWS

DECEMBER 2011

The contents of this month's e issue are as follows:

**News section, Articles, Trip of the Month, Fare tip,
Bargain fare, Book review.**

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

To all our readers

From all at Freccles.



NEWS

The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is to Sheffield. The city centre is compact with fine buildings and good shopping for Christmas. There are impressive fountains all over the place and the very pleasant Winter Garden (indoors). This trip makes use of the set of connections at Manchester Piccadilly mentioned in our CHANGING TRAINS article.

*The next **gardening day** at the station is at 11.00 Sunday December 4th. It is hoped we can complete the transfer of the rubble to the top of the garden ready for pitching over into a skip.*

Although things have improved, occasionally we do still get **irresponsible people** 'donating' their rubbish to the railway. They throw it over the wall from the entry between the station and Gilda Brook Road. This happens most at the top of Trevelyan Street. If anyone has information about the culprits then please e-mail freccles (address below) in confidence **so that they can be brought to book.**

*11th December is the last day of the current timetable. Make sure you **check your trains and onward connections for Monday 12th and onwards** if you are a regular traveller.*

From December 2011 onwards engineering work in connection with the electrification of the L&M route will take place. In order to avoid complete closures of the line the work will take place gradually and mainly at night. Therefore **late evening trains will be replaced by buses** between Manchester and Newton-le-Willows each Sunday to Thursday night from 11 December 2011. **They will operate normally on Friday, and Saturday evenings.**

*The promised (and much needed) second hand **carriages continue to arrive to serve the Northern Franchise**. They can be seen operating from Manchester Victoria, including carriages from Arriva Trains Wales, and the West Midlands PTE. They remain in their various liveries but with names of the previous operators scrubbed out. Presumably they will gradually convert to Northern livery as they go through workshops. The ex Arriva units are in addition to the net gain of one carriage under the DoT reshuffle.*



One of the recent additions to Northern rolling stock is standing at Victoria Station.

Photo courtesy of J E Rayner

JOHN HESKETH

We are sorry to report the death of rail and real ale enthusiast John Hesketh. John had been a graphic designer by trade, a rail enthusiast since childhood, and had also run The Railway pub in Ashton under Lyne.

He bought Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar in 1997. He never pulled pints there, instead he brought along Sylvia Wood to manage it, but he was a regular.

John was a smoker and instructed that his coffin should contain two packets of Benson & Hedges! He died from cancer at the age of sixty seven, leaving his wife Joyce. It is thanks to John's vision that we still have such a gem serving real ales and traditional food.

As a result of the inevitable regime change at Stalybridge Station buffet bar, manageress Sylvia Wood has indicated that it is time for her to retire from the trade. She worked with John Hesketh for twenty five years.

Manchester City Art Gallery is holding an exhibition called '**Ford Madox Brown: pre Raphaelite pioneer**' until 29th January. It is a large exhibition of paintings, sketches and studies from many collections, and includes his famous painting 'Work'. Admission charges are £6 and £8 (free for under 18s) and the art gallery is open 10.00 to 17.00 Tuesday to Sunday.

See <http://www.manchestergalleries.org/>

In connection with the Ford Madox Brown exhibition you can view Brown's series of large murals in The Great Hall at Manchester Town Hall on the following dates: 4th, 11th and 18th December, then 8th, 15th 22nd and 29th January. Again 10.00 to 17.00. Be prepared to be seriously impressed if you have not visited Waterhouse's gothic masterpiece!

There are **daily tours of the 134 year old clock tower at Manchester Town Hall** until December 22nd. The tour takes you in the mechanics room, the bell room - where hangs the 8 ton 'Great Abel', and inside the clock face. There are magnificent views from the 280ft tower. The tours are at 13.00, 14.30, 16.00 and 17.30. Tickets are £7.50 (under 12s not allowed) and can be booked on 0161 234 4433.

*Engineering work will take place **overnight** between Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds between the 19th and 23rd December then again for 27th to 30th December affecting night Airport to Leeds services via Huddersfield. ESN is not aware of any other alterations to services in the region during the festive period.*

Unfortunately arrangements for Greater Manchester buses, trams and trains over the Christmas to New Year break were not available as we went to press. Keep your eyes open for leaflets appearing in the Eccles Travel Shop in December.

Sir Jimmy Saville.

The eccentric and likeable Sir Jimmy Saville (*of 'Jim'll fix it' fame*) passed away in November, bringing to an end a long career in entertainment and charity work.

He had always been a regular trans-Pennine train traveller between his home in Leeds and studios in Manchester; often being seen dressed in his hunting pink with huge cigar and large gold rings on his hands. His funeral was held at St Anne's Cathedral in Leeds and he was buried in his favourite seaside resort, Scarborough. His coffin was set at 45 degrees so that he can see the sea.

ARTICLES

COMMUNITY ALARM

It has been reported that members of the public are being phoned to ask about their alarm systems by a male stating he was from the Police. When asked why he stated that they were giving out alarms for free which usually cost £2600. **The telephones calls are not from the Police so do not give any details or have anyone round to the house.**

Tuesday, 30th December 1941.

Just after 08.15 on this freezing wartime morning a loud, deep bang was heard by those near to Eccles station. It was not recognisable as a bomb, or any of the usual sounds in the area. It seemed even more mysterious because it was impossible to see what had happened. A dense morning fog had reduced visibility in the area to about ten yards.

However, the signalman at Eccles Station Signal box was all too aware of the explanation for the noise. Two local rush hour trains going in opposite directions had collided violently outside his box. The Kenyon to Manchester

(up) train had just started from Eccles station having filled with passengers at platform four. It was crossing over the Down Slow line to take the fast line to Manchester (in accordance with the signals). As it did so another local train appeared without warning (and not signalled) out of the fog. It was on the Down Slow line coming from Manchester!

This was a Rochdale to Pennington workers train. It was doing about 30 mph as it hit the sides of the carriages of the Kenyon to Manchester train. Its locomotive took away half the side of the leading carriage of that train, destroyed the second and third coaches completely, and took away half of the side of the fourth carriage, itself being thrown to the right and coming to rest leaning on the embankment 70 yards further on, just before platform four of Eccles station. The nose of the engine was embedded in the remains of the fourth carriage of the Manchester train. The leading carriage of its own train was also completely destroyed.

Emergency assistance was available almost immediately – possibly as a result of wartime readiness for disaster. Doctors, nurses, ambulances and the police were there within fifteen minutes. The general rescue work was provided by railway staff from Patricroft, Ordsall Lane and Manchester Exchange, many of whom had ambulance training. Uninjured passengers, the local Civil Defence organisations and Eccles residents also took part. This diverse group worked together for five hours to treat, rescue and comfort the injured, but also to remove the bodies of those killed. After this the breakdown cranes could start work on clearing the lines. The slow lines reopened for trains 19 hours after the crash and the fast lines after 37 hours.

Twenty three passengers were killed; fifty three passengers and the fireman of the Pennington train were seriously injured and detained in hospital; twenty seven passengers and the driver of the Pennington train were treated for less serious injuries at hospital then discharged, also twelve passengers and both train guards complained of minor injuries or shock.

The shock to friends and families of those involved can only be guessed at. Clearly it would not be a happy New Year at all for many people.

This was a serious collision indeed. Two eight carriage trains with a combined weight of about 525 tonnes and full of passengers had approached on a collision course from opposite directions.

Major G.R.S. Wilson was instructed to investigate the accident. He presented a very detailed report to the Ministry Of War Transport on 9th April 1942.

The report lays the principal responsibility for the accident on Signalman Lowe and Driver Mountford of the Pennington train, while recognising there were other contributory causes. Signalman Lowe had mistakenly accepted the Pennington train from Cross Lane Junction Signal Box when he should have had it held there until the crossing movement at Eccles was complete. Driver Lowe had delegated signal spotting to his fireman (despite the poor weather conditions), and accepted his assurances that the signals for his train were clear when they weren't.

Major Wilson's report also recommended technological innovations to reduce the likelihood of similar accidents occurring again.

Next issue we shall examine more detail of this horrific accident that took place 60 years ago this month.

Changing trains 10

This is the first of the articles covering train connections available from Manchester Piccadilly Station. There are many possibilities, as you will discover if you follow what is inevitably a series of articles!

On Sundays the trains from Eccles usually run direct to Piccadilly and on to the airport. On weekdays take the train from Eccles to Victoria and transfer by tram to Manchester Piccadilly. From the tram platforms you can ascend to the main concourse for your train. (Alternatively you can turn right as you get off the tram then follow the path out of the arches. Outside on your left is a lift to take you to the link bridge lounge form which there is access to all platforms).

We shall start off with express services.

First Trans Pennine operates frequent fast trains to the east side of the country from Piccadilly and the table below gives an outline summary of these services:

| Destination | weekday frequency | Also calls at |
|---------------|-------------------|--|
| Newcastle | 11 per day | Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Leeds, York, Northallerton, Darlington, Durham. |
| Middlesbrough | hourly | Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Leeds, Garforth, York, Thirsk, Northallerton, Yarm, Thornaby, Middlesbrough. |
| Scarborough | hourly | Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Leeds, York, Malton, Seamer. |
| Hull | hourly | Huddersfield, Leeds, Selby, Brough. |
| Cleethorpes | hourly | Stockport, Sheffield, Meadowhall, Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Barnetby, Grimsby Town, Cleethorpes. Some trains call additionally at Habrough. |

All are in the modern comfortable 185 units with the option of first class travel (in which case refreshments are included in your fare!). These units can travel at high speeds giving relatively short journey times.



A first Trans Pennine Express 185 unit stands at Carlisle Citadel station.

Photo courtesy of J E Rayner

Another operator from Piccadilly to the east side of the country is **East Midland Trains**. They run the Piccadilly to Norwich expresses, which depart hourly through the daytime, calling at Stockport, Sheffield, Chesterfield, Alfreton, Nottingham, Grantham, Peterborough, Ely, and Thetford. The evening trains go only as far as Nottingham. Again the carriages are comfortable and fast. Like the First Trans Pennine services above refreshments are available on most services.

Next month we shall cover more of the express services available from Piccadilly.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 74** which is

SHEFFIELD – CIVIC CENTRE & SHOPS

Steel yourself for a visit to Sheffield! This is a walk around the very fine civic buildings and also some good shopping in this compact city centre. The same itinerary covers both of these so you can make this a shopping trip, or a cultural trip, or both.

The adult day return fare from Eccles is £16.60 (check that this is valid for using Metrolink when you buy it). The journey time is under 2 hrs and the train passes through the lovely countryside around Edale. Just buy your ticket at Eccles station and off you go whenever you fancy!

For the itinerary see:

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2074.pdf>

FARE TIP

If you have a Greater Manchester senior citizen's pass or hold a valid GM 'Bus Card Extra' or 'County Train Card', you are covered to Stockport. Therefore booking a Stockport to Sheffield ticket before you set off at Eccles could save you some money. As we say 'Ask Stuart.'

DECEMBER FARE BARGAIN:

BARGAIN fares all year!

With the approach of Christmas we decided that it was time to cover the railcards on offer. The yearlong benefits would be appreciated by family members or friends – so it is worth offering these as a choice of gift. Take a look at the leaflets or on the web site:

<http://www.northernrail.org/offers/railcards>

All the cards cost £28 for the year and give a reduction of one third on most rail fares in Great Britain. There are other benefits and occasional extra offers available too.

Here are the three main railcards:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 16 – 25 Railcard | One third off Standard Anytime, Off Peak, all Standard and First Class Advance fares | Minimum fare is £12. Needs proof of age and passport photograph. |
| Family and Friends Railcard | One third off Standard Anytime, Off Peak, all Standard and First Class Advance fares for adults. 60% reduction off children's fares | Valid for up to four adults and four children together. There must be at least one child in the group. |
| Over 60s Railcard | One third off Standard Anytime, Off Peak, all Standard and First Class Advance fares | Proof of age needed. |

There is also a disabled person's railcard available for £20 for one year. This gives discount of one third of the fare for the disabled person and also for a friend or family member who accompanies them.

The tickets can be purchased at Eccles station booking office.

BOOK REVIEW

'TICKETS PLEASE! A nostalgic journey through railway station life.'

by Paul Atterbury. ISBN 9780715328767

David & Charles £14.99 Available at Eccles Library.

It is a picture book and the title says what the pictures are about. The book is divided into sensible short sections covering many facets of railway stations: architecture, advertising furniture, staff, travelling, closures etc., and the short verbal sections can be quite insightful. It is a book you could dip into, flick through, or read thoroughly.

The whole provides a wonderful reminder of the great contribution of the railway station to our cultural lives.

The book is available at Eccles Library.

Why not join Freccles? It is only £5 a year and this contribution helps us to improve the gardens and tubs at the station as well as to campaign for a better station and services.

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

