

ECCLES STATION NEWS

Spring Quarter 2018

Welcome to our latest Eccles Station News.

Station Activity:

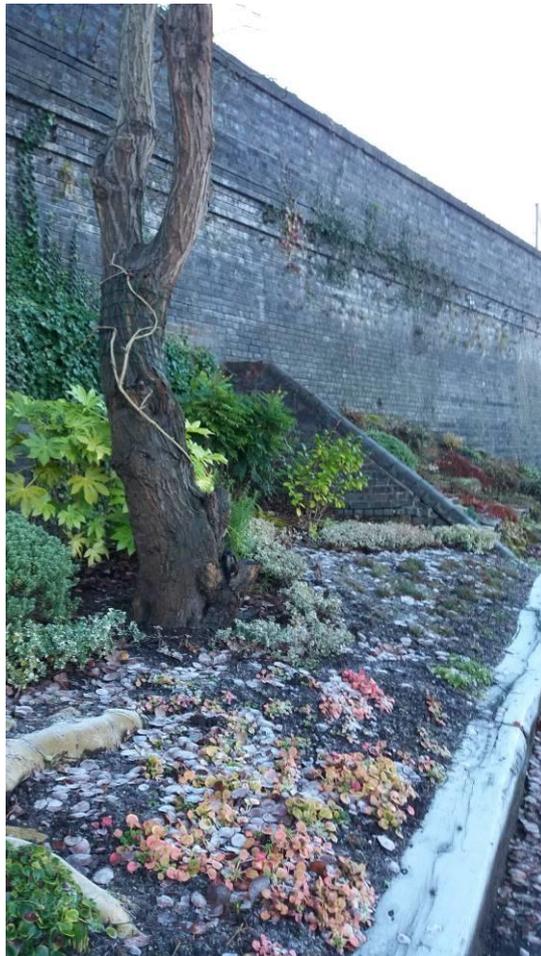
FRECCLES members have removed the banner mural on the Liverpool platform. This was created for FRECCLES by students of Eccles College and has been up there brightening up the station for many years. However, age had now rendered it rather faded and tatty, so it will be replaced by another artwork in due course.



Some wall cleaning could be needed too, or else an even larger piece of artwork!



At the same time (first Sunday of each month @11.00 – next one is 4th February 2018) the garden group did some early year tidying up on what was a moderately frosty morning.





If you would be interested in a bit of light gardening work to help FRECCLES then please do pop along on one of these Sundays.

Miscellany.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) inspected over 3,700 lorries on Britain's trunk roads between August and December last year. It seems that 7.8% of them (about 1 in 13) were fitted with devices to bypass the system that detects excessive exhaust emissions and forces the lorry off the road for repair. 8.5% of British lorries and 4.9% of foreign HGVs were fitted with these.

On 12th January a huge fire temporarily closed Nottingham railway station and caused severe damage to the recently restored forecourt area. The fire is believed to have started in the ladies' toilets. At its peak 10 fire crews were tackling the fire, which began at about 06:30 GMT. Flames were seen coming from the station's roof and smoke filled the foyer, prompting the building's evacuation. The fire is being investigated as arson. Speedy action allowed 5 of the 7 platforms to reopen for trains on the 13th January.



See As it happened: Large fire at Nottingham railway station

There was a continued boom in shopping at Britain's large railway stations. This has lasted five and a half years (22 quarters) of consecutive retail growth. Station retailers have enjoyed a very successful Christmas with £110m spent on station Christmas shopping with like for like retail sales increasing by 3%. Paddington (+42%), Euston (+12%) and King's Cross (+12%) stations showed the highest growth in London, with five stations in total recording double-digit growth. Meanwhile, Manchester Piccadilly (+9%) and Bristol (+7.4%) were the best performers outside of the capital. These results have been achieved despite concourse footfall remaining steady over the year.

To ESN this indicates that the station shoppers may be feeling better off; certainly, the retail offerings at main stations continue to improve and are helping to establish the main stations as ideal destinations for pre-Christmas shopping, eating and drinking.

It was announced at the beginning of December that The Virgin East Coast franchise is to end three years early, in 2020. The franchise – owned jointly by Stagecoach (90%) and Virgin (10%) – had agreed to pay the government £3.3bn to run the service until 2023 based on what ESN considered to be rather optimistic growth forecasts for the franchise. This growth has not materialised, and it is believed that Stagecoach has taken an 80% hit to its profits because of it. Additionally, the franchisees claim that hoped for line improvements have not yet taken place. Under the terms of the franchise the franchisee will forfeit

a deposit of £165,000,000 to the Department for Transport: this performance penalty was newly introduced in the last round of franchise grants.

When a new operator is chosen for the service it is expected to run under the public-private 'East Coast Partnership' likely to be like the model announced for the next South Eastern franchise.

Channel Four has been running a series on the construction of a railway along the Great Glen (from Fort William to Inverness) in Scotland. It is a miniature railway with a tiny gas fired steam locomotive that can run at 2mph. The challenge for the volunteers is to construct the railway and run the steam loco along it within the two weeks' permission obtained to have a railway there! Rob Coldstream, Commissioning Editor, Factual, added, "Channel 4 Specialist Factual is about bringing subjects like history and engineering to life in spectacular, joyful and – frankly – slightly unhinged ways, and this epic undertaking promises to do exactly that."

Licking the rails on your local railway line could help ward off anaemia, but it is not exactly a safe course of treatment. However, Japan's deer are not to know this and their habit of congregating and licking the rails is leading to many accidents on unfenced Japanese branch lines. Various tactics tried have had limited success but now Researchers in Japan have fitted a train with a speaker that barks like a dog and snorts like a deer: a three-second blast of the sound of a deer snorting attracts the animals' attention, and 20 seconds of dog barking is enough to make them take flight. This has so far halved the sightings of deer by the tracks. Further research on location, timing and possible static speaker sites will take place.

See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-42714353>

Issues for the year ahead.

2018 starts with many troubles and questions for Britain's railways and unlike recent boom years these seem to outnumber the items of good news.

The hectic growth in passenger numbers seen since privatisation seems to be tapering off judging from the 2017 figures, and ton mileage of goods traffic has been hit by the rapid drop in coal carried to electricity power stations. There has been no compensatory increase in fuel oil or wood pellet traffic.

The resulting slow growth of revenue has had a knock-on effect on the profitability of the passenger franchises which were never highly profitable in the first place. Recently granted passenger franchises were based on highly optimistic growth forecasts (partly encouraged by the process) so it seems improbable now that Department for Transport will receive the promised high payouts on gains from such growth. We have already seen the Stagecoach/Virgin East Coast franchise surrendered for a penalty payment of £165,000,000 as it was generating losses for the consortium. In the coming year it is possible that we shall see other consortia renegotiating or surrendering franchises that have become heavily loss making.

Network Rail has surely embarrassed itself with the escalating cost of the electrification of the Great Western mainline from Paddington to Oxford and Swansea. Poor initial guesstimates have combined with adoption of excessively demanding standards. It is nowhere near complete and well over budget. As a result, the government is cancelling other electrification projects as this one swallows all the money. However, was the coalition government not rather optimistic in expecting NR to go suddenly from electrifying about 30 miles of track a year to over 100 miles per annum? We wait to see what electrification projects survive the coming twelve months.

On top of all this the RMT and its members are grossly inconveniencing passengers and risk damaging the reputation of the railway with their repeated 24 hour strikes over Driver Only operation. These strikes extend to franchises where DOO is not yet proposed such as Northern Rail. Perhaps it is no wonder passenger growth is levelling off.

The collapse of Carillion will affect arrangements for some of the railway's maintenance and for some future construction projects such as HS2, and it is likely contract prices will increase now there is less competition in the field.

On external potential challenges to the railway there will be further developments in driverless cars and on the hyper loop system. Driverless cars are still a few years away at least, and hyper loop is in the 'decades away' or 'if ever' category.

We are likely to hear more on possible amendments to the railway fares system in 2018 but what it is hoped to achieve ('simplification' is stated) is anything but clear to ESN.

There are positives though. The government has been quite generous in the finances for the next five-year period of Network Rail capital expenditure, and the dual electric/diesel trains are now rolling off the production lines. These should help compensate for the slow and no progress in electrification and offer some interesting possibilities in new express links to places that would probably never be wired anyway. In addition, there is continuing planning and legislative progress on HS2 phases 1 & 2 and the electrification of Manchester to Leeds and York has not been ruled out.

Locally, May 2018 will see significant timetable changes for Eccles station when the trains start running to Piccadilly, -Airport and Crewe rather than to Victoria. There will be pluses and minuses here, hopefully more gains than losses and ESN will take a detailed look in the net issue. (The auto spelling changed that last sentence to 'more gins')

Railway holidays.

It started before Christmas and has continued to grow till now it is often several pages in newspapers. A good number of companies are now offering rail-based holidays, so ESN looked at these and then perused the numerous websites.

There are holidays for railway enthusiasts, curious tourists and those seeking luxury for a week or two. Some include flights to and from the train, coach excursions and boat rides as well and some include tour guides. For some you stay on the train and on others in top hotels at stops along the way. The most expensive are like going on a cruise except by train with full accommodation and gourmet dining. It is even possible to design your own holiday package!

The broad price range is £500 to £5000 for trips of 5 to 14 days. Travellers from the north of Britain face extra expense on a number of these holidays because they start from St Pancras station in London and take Eurostar onto the continent. ESN has been told that the Harz Mountain holiday is a very good one for steam train enthusiasts and not that expensive.

The websites are pretty prosaic to be honest, concerned more with booking you on than selling you the idea but take a look for yourself at

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=railway+holidays&form=WNSGPH&gs=SW&cvid=63aca2fcc8fd4a039a477ff98d0996cb&pq=railway+holidays&cc=GB&setlang=en-US&nclid=4328D89AE7DC297E8BF815A3A29B6FFC&ts=1517056004320>

For the Harz mountains see https://www.greatrail.com/holiday-types/harz-mountains-tours/?TelRef=PPC_GOO_GER&utm_term=harz+mountain+railway+holidays&utm_campaign=Europe_Generic_Germany_Harz_Mountains%5BGER%5D_Exact&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=Rail&utm_source=bing

TIMETABLES FOR ECCLES TRAINS

The full official timetable can be printed out from or viewed at:

<https://be803fe5c416e39d38ae-aa21086260d3bd4e072d597fe09c2e80.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/images/timetables/2017-10/winter-timetables/Northern-15-Liverpool-to-Manchester-1017.pdf>

It is valid up to and including May 19th, 2018.

ESN has prepared an abstract from that timetable. It is on the succeeding two pages so that if desired you can print out a page for travel to or from Manchester, or the second page for travel to or from Liverpool direction. Please note that the editor has checked to make sure that the times given are as accurate as possible but would be glad to hear if any corrections are needed.

TO MANCHESTER AND BACK

ECCLES TO MANCHESTER VICTORIA (journey time about 10 mins)

Monday to Friday

0611 0706 0807 0832 0909 1008 1108 1206 1306 1406 1506 1606
1706 1732 1807 1827 1907 2005 2108 2208 2306 0007

Saturday

0612 0707 0807 0832 0906 1006 1106 1210 1311 1411 1510 1610
1706 1731 1806 1826 1906 2006 2106 2206 2306 0008

MANCHESTER VICTORIA TO ECCLES (journey time about 7mins)

Monday to Friday

0539 0600 0702 0738 0802 0838 0902 1002 1102 1202 1303 1359
1502 1559 1702 1738 1802 1900 2002 2109 2209 2309

Saturday

0539 0602 0702 0738 0802 0838 0902 1002 1102 1202 1302 1402
1502 1602 1702 1738 1802 1902 2006 2109 2209 2309

ECCLES TO MANCHESTER OXFORD ROAD, PICCADILLY AND AIRPORT (journey times about 10, 13 and 30mins respectively)

Sunday

0902 1002 1102 1202 1302 1402 1502 1602 1702 1802 1902 2002
2102 2202 2303 0005

MANCHESTER PICCADILLY TO ECCLES (trains depart Airport about 20 mins earlier than these times, and about 2mins later for Oxford Road)

Sunday

0859 1001 1100 1200 1301 1401 1501 1601 1701 1801 1901 2001
2101 2201 2301

TO LIVERPOOL LIME STREET AND BACK

ECCLES TO LIVERPOOL LIME STREET (journey time about 50 mins.)

Monday to Friday

0547 0607 0709 0745 0809 0845 0909 1009 1109 1209 1310 1410
1509 1608 1709 1745 1809 1909 2009 2116 2216 2316

Saturday

0546 0609 0709 0745 0811 0845 0910 1010 1110 1209 1309 1409
1509 1610 1710 1745 1810 1910 2013 2116 2216 2316

Trains also call at the following stations with approximate journey times in brackets:

*Patricroft (3) Newton le Willows (14) Earlestown (17) St Helens Junction (22) Lea Green (25) Rainhill (29)
Whiston (32) Huyton (36) Roby (38) Broad Green (42) Wavertree Technology Park (45) Edge Hill (48)*

Sunday

0910 1011 1110 1210 1311 1411 1511 1611 1711 1811 1911 2011
2111 2211 2311

Trains omit Patricroft and Edge Hill stations on Sundays but do call at stations with approximate journey times as given above.

LIVERPOOL LIME STREET TO ECCLES (journey time about 47 mins.)

Monday to Friday

0525 0620 0720 0744 0820 0921 1021 1120 1222 1320 1420 1520
1619 1646 1719 1740 1820 1920 2022 2122 2220 2319

Saturday

0520 0620 0720 0744 0820 0920 1020 1120 1220 1320 1420 1520
1620 1645 1720 1740 1820 1920 2020 2120 2220 2320

Trains also call at the following stations. The approximate time after departure from Lime Street is given in brackets. Edge Hill (4) Wavertree Technology Park (6)

*Broad Green (9) Roby (13) Huyton (15) Whiston (19) Rainhill (22) Lea Green (25) St Helens Junction (28)
Earlestown (33) Newton le Willows (36) Patricroft (47)*

Sunday

0816 0916 1016 1116 1216 1316 1416 1516 1616 1716 1816 1916
2016 2116 2216 2315

Trains omit Patricroft and Edge Hill stations on Sundays but do call at the following stations. The approximate time after departure from Lime Street is given in brackets. Wavertree Technology Park (5)

*Broad Green (8) Roby (12) Huyton (14) Whiston (18) Rainhill (21) Lea Green (24) St Helens Junction (27)
Earlestown (32) Newton le Willows (35)*

Eccles Station News welcomes feedback from readers. Please do not hesitate to send in your own views, photos or snippets of news to the e-mail address below.



FRECCLES

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