

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

JUNE 2011

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

News section, Articles, Trip of the Month, Bargain fare, Editorial.

NEWS

*The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is a very good value one for culture vultures or the plain curious. It is to **Port Sunlight**. The trip makes use of the Wirral lines connection. These are described in the **Changing Trains 4** article in this newsletter.*

The next **gardening day** at the station is **at 11.00 Sunday June 6th**. It is a pleasure to contribute a bit of light effort to such a successful group activity- especially when the weather is sunny. Why not give it a try?

*If any of your friends, family or colleagues is interested in seeing **ESN** then you could forward it via your e mail system. Otherwise send their e mail address to info@freccles.org.uk requesting inclusion in our circulation list.*

This month will see the demolition of and erection of replacements for two road over railway bridges in Eccles. After the demolition, concrete piles will be driven 15 feet or so into the ground (and allowed a week or so to set) before new buttresses and spans are built. Now overhead electric wires don't weigh enough to need this much support! Clearly it is for the benefit of the gigantic lorries that use the bridges. So once again it is not the railway work that is taking up the time.

The work will involve the closure of the line on three weekends in June.

These are the weekends of 4th-5th, 11th-12th, and 18th-19th June 2011.

Replacement buses will run on these weekends picking up and dropping off at the corner of Vicarage Grove. For full details of work and arrangements see:

www.freccles.org.uk/news.asp

*Our Bargain Fare article is about the **North West Rover ticket**. This is appropriate for the approaching holiday period as it affords a few days out at a very reasonable price and covers a large area.*

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport is changing its name to **TfGM – Transport for Greater Manchester**. We are not aware of the reasoning behind this or if it heralds any practical change for customers.

*Timetables changed on May 22nd, though you wouldn't notice on the L&M line. However there were **alterations on the East Coast main line** which might alter some of the connections when travelling east: so check!*

A **Community Rail Festival** is to be held at Sheffield Station on 24th September this year. ESN will try to keep you informed as news is released. Any community rail group wishing to take part (e.g. marketing stand or exhibition) should contact Neil Bentley at the Penistone Line Partnership whose e mail address is neilbently37@btinternet.com

*Work is nearing completion on extensions to the canopies at **Bolton Station**. This will eliminate the unsheltered gap between the footbridge and the traditional canopies. A new booking hall with five ticket windows has also been built. **The work has cost a total of £4,000,000.***

The canopy on platform 1 at **Stalybridge station** is being repaired and reglazed. This will let in more natural light. The station recently acquired a stylish new booking hall and a restored conservatory for the station bar on the same platform.

Virgin Trains are offering 'two for one' vouchers valid for attractions (including theatres and restaurants) throughout the country until June 30th 2011 (we wish we'd seen this sooner!). Savings range from £4 to £30 or so. You must buy two

Virgin train tickets and fill in the voucher in the book for at the attraction. You can also download the vouchers from www.virgintrains.co.uk

ARTICLES

NORTHERN 'EXPLORE' BOOKLETS

Northern rail has published two excellent '**EXPLORE**' booklets - very well timed with coming holidays and longer daylight hours. Both give maps and fares for a range of good value tickets. Pick up copies at the station or see the web address below.



EXPLORE The north of England with a Rail Rover has tickets that cover quite large areas and are valid for four days out of eight, or else for a week continuous. Two are valid from Eccles: the **Coast and Peaks Rover** and the **North West Rover** (See this month's bargain fare article). The booklet also gives details for the National All-Line Rail Rovers which are valid for seven or fourteen days continuously.

http://www.northernrail.org/pdfs/special_offers/dayrangers/rover_2011.pdf

EXPLORE The North West and more by train with a Day Ranger or Round Robin ticket covers one day tickets for smaller areas of the network. Of particular interest from Eccles are the **Cheshire Day Ranger** and the **Lancashire Day Ranger**. There is also a **South Pennines Day Ranger** which is valid from Victoria and Piccadilly. Concessions against rail cards are available on tickets covered in both leaflets and the tickets can be bought at Eccles station booking office.

THE FELLSMAN.

This summer steam hauled specials will be running over the famous **Settle and Carlisle** route. The trains will run every **Wednesday, 20th July to 14th September**, departing from Lancaster. They will also stop at Preston, Blackburn, Clitheroe and Long Preston to pick up passengers. The fares to travel on this train start at £65 standard class, there also being first class and premier dining class tickets available.



Northern rail is offering a £5 return

connecting fare if you are going on the tour. To find more details see www.statesmanrail.com or ring 0845 310 2485/2489.

The timings quoted are:

Lancaster:	dep 08.05	arr 21.20
Preston:	dep 08.35	arr 20.10
Bamber Bridge:	dep 08.50	arr 19.50
Blackburn:	dep 09.15	arr 19.30
Clitheroe:	dep 09.45	arr 19.00
Long Preston:	dep 10.50	arr 17.55 (It is near Settle)

Even if you don't go on the special it is a superb chance to see steam locos in action. Consider buying a conventional Northern Rail ticket for a day out from Eccles and go somewhere on the route. Consider these possibilities:

Blackburn - shopping, cathedral, museum etc.

Whalley – a pleasant little town with abbey ruins, shops, cafes, riverside walks and a great brick viaduct!

Clitheroe – an attractive old market town with a castle and good views of the railway. See <http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2097.pdf> for a suggested itinerary of the town.

Settle – a good size Yorkshire Dales town with a bit of everything.

Changing trains 4

Liverpool Lime Street is the western terminus of the Liverpool and Manchester line. A change of trains here opens up a host of new destinations to the traveller from Eccles. Trains leave from the mainline station and call at **Mossley Hill, West Allerton and Liverpool South Parkway** - the station for Liverpool (John Lennon) airport. A hopper bus links the station to what was formerly called Speke airport. Next to this is the romantic half timbered Speke Hall (National Trust) whose grounds provide a great view of the runway and the Mersey estuary.

Down the escalators (or lift) and on the right of the corridor is the entrance to the underground Wirral Lines – four lines with frequent trains allow you to reach a further 32 stations. They pass deep under the River Mersey.

All the trains call at **James Street** (for the ferries and the Albert Dock area). For suggestions on what to do, see

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2051.pdf>

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2052.pdf>

All trains call at **Birkenhead Hamilton Square** (historic centre of Birkenhead). For suggestions on what to do, see

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2077.pdf>

Beyond Hamilton Square the lines split to north and south serving the following destinations (table continues on next page):

WIRRAL & NEW BRIGHTON LINES (North)	ELLESMERE PORT & CHESTER LINES (South)
Birkenhead Park	Birkenhead Central
Birkenhead North	Green Lane
Wallasey Village	Rock Ferry

Wallasey Grove Road	Bebington
New Brighton (terminus)	Port Sunlight
Bidston	Spital
Leasowe	Bromborough Rake
Moreton	Bromborough
Meols	Eastham Rake
Manor Road	Hooton
Hoylake	Little Sutton
West Kirby (terminus)	Overpool
	Ellesmere Port (terminus)
	Capenhurst
	Bache
	Chester. (terminus)

New Brighton still provides a breezy stroll on the sands and some people walk between there and Birkenhead on the promenade. **West Kirby** is a really lovely little spot for a sunny day. See

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2042.pdf> .

Bache is the nearest stop to Chester Zoo and **Ellesmere Port** is worth a look – it has a historic locks area that is part of the National Boat Museum, see

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2075.pdf> .

More connections from Liverpool next month!

ANOTHER ROUNDHOUSE OF BEER.

What would you do with a grimy, old, unsightly steam engine shed that used to house goods locos and is situated in the middle of nowhere? Such is Barrow Hill near Chesterfield. One answer could be to use it as a grimy, old, unsightly steam engine shed in the middle of nowhere to house and repair locomotives. Oh, and you could throw in the occasional beer festival.

The Barrow Hill beer festival is in its tenth year, and is a very busy event held against the backdrop of the locomotives - you can get a lot of people into an engine shed. It was a pleasant experience sampling from a large range of beers to the accompanying strains of The Ashover Brass Band.



You can't get a much more sympathetic reuse of an old railway building – no major conversion work has occurred at all.

Great Central railway 4-4-0 'Butler-Henderson' is on the turntable.

Courtesy of J. E. Rayner

The roundhouse shed was logically sited relative to the old steelworks and collieries of the area, but is now becoming a centre of railway industry in its own right. It is still linked to a rail route and houses sets of mainline passenger carriages, many old diesels and a few steam locos. The depot carries out associated servicing work and has open days through the year.

The train was hauled by the glistening black 47406.

It provided that distinctive, evocative smell. (The author likes it anyway!).

Courtesy of J. E. Rayner



TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 71** which is

PORT SUNLIGHT – GARDEN VILLAGE & LADY LEVER ART GALLERY.

A fine example of Victorian philanthropy, Port Sunlight was built from 1888 onwards to house and provide for workers at the adjacent Lever Soap Works. A pleasant stroll through this attractive, well laid out village takes you to an art gallery with an opulent collection of nationally important pieces.

It is a short easy walk on the level. The architecture is interesting, the streets very pleasant and there are cafes, a pub, museum, garden centre and shops. Admission to the gallery is free.

The rail fare is **only £12.80 adult day return** from Eccles and the journey takes 90 minutes. So 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%2071.pdf>

JUNE FARE BARGAIN:

NORTH WEST ROVER.

This Rover offers really good value for days out further afield in the North West. It covers from Shotton, Chester, Northwich and Stockport in the south to Dumfries, Lockerbie and Carlisle in the north. From Hexham and Leeds in the east it covers all stations to West Kirby, New Brighton and the Lancashire and Cumbria coast.

Visit Carlisle with its cathedral, castle, shops and excellent Tullie House Museum, or Windermere for a lake cruise from Bowness. Take a look at Hexham and its impressive abbey church in the North east, or have a ride on the Settle and Carlisle line to visit historic Appleby. Of course you could stop over at any of the places.

The ticket can be bought covering a full week, but a more relaxed holiday week can be covered by buying the four days out of eight version. On this one you write the date of travel in a box on the ticket.

The potential is huge so take a zoom look at the map on the next page to decide for yourself where you want to go.

North West Rover

Explore great cities like Manchester and Liverpool or enjoy great British seaside resorts like Blackpool, Morecambe and Southport. Discover the stunning scenery of The Lake District or the industrial heritage of the north.

North West	Adult	Child	Railcard*
4 in 8 Day	£60.00	£30.00	£39.60
7 Day Rover	£74.00	£37.00	£48.85

*16-25 Senior and Disabled Railcard holders

The leaflet also features a detailed map of the North West railway network and two photographs: one of a castle on a hill and another of a large sculpture.

The tickets can be purchased at Eccles station booking office and cost:

North West Rover	Adult	Child	Railcard*
4 days in 8	£60	£30	£39.60
7 day	£74	£37	£48.85

*16-25 Senior or disabled railcard prices. Please note that these prices are correct – one section of the Northern website has different prices on it. The tickets are valid for travel after 08.45 on Monday to Friday and at any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. For full leaflet see

http://www.northernrail.org/pdfs/special_offers/dayrangers/rover_2011.pdf

REPLACEMENT BUSES.

The work of replacing bridges cannot be done efficiently or safely with trains running. Thus passengers **will** be inconvenienced on three weekends because replacement buses are inevitably much slower than the trains they replace. This much is unavoidable. However there are other problems and here they are listed in order of increasing inconvenience value:

Firstly bicycles are not conveyed on these replacement services. *It is a minor difficulty but could a rack or trailer be provided?*

Secondly prams are not conveyed. *This seems odd given that so many modern buses can convey prams.*

Thirdly the punctuality of the buses is erratic. *This is inevitable given road traffic variability, but passengers worry that they are waiting for a bus that is not running once it is 20 or 30 minutes late. Is there anyway passengers can be kept informed of the bus running?*

Finally (and most seriously) the buses do not always turn up at the stations they are supposed to call at. *This has been witnessed on a number of previous L&M route closures. One cause has been drivers not knowing the specified route and appearing to have no map of it. The other cause has been drivers who cut out parts of the route to finish quicker –a particular problem in the evenings. Should a train guard or other responsible railway employee accompany the bus to inform and enforce route discipline?*

ESN believes that passengers being inconvenienced by engineering works deserve the best possible alternative service. The railways strive for punctuality and reliability on the trains: surely they should do so on the replacement services also? Experience has shown that these services do not always match up to such standards.

We hope by raising this issue that planners of these services will take note and give the matters mentioned some thought.

GOOD NEWS.

A glass that is half full would be better described as half empty. Perhaps even better would be to say that its contents have almost gone. Such is the current, dubious, morale sapping practice of much of British journalism. ESN on the other hand (while having no intention of becoming a cheerleader) is delighted to report good news.

There is a great deal of it too. The improved reliability and punctuality of the trains; growing passenger numbers; the value fares; increasingly civil train staff; station improvements; clock face timetables; railway reopening; steam rail tours and promotion of great scenic lines are all to be welcomed. We should also mention the therapeutic volunteer involvement with station or line adoption groups.

The bulk changes seen in the last 15 years have been impressive. These are changes previously thought to be possible but unlikely to happen other than in isolated cases. All are worth reporting and celebrating. Perhaps the forests are grateful that this is an e-journal!

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

