

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

JUNE 2014

Once again welcome to all our readers. As usual there is plenty news to report and ESN has written another walk for you. On the map it appears to be unpromising but by now you should know that the Middleton area is full of surprises.

NEWS

For the fifth year, **Network Rail** is supporting the competition '**Take a view - Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards**', where amateur and professional photographers can highlight the very best imagery of Britain's rural and urban landscape (top prize of £10,000!). **The Network Rail 'Lines in the Landscape' Special Award** - will be given for the best photography of Britain's rail network. The winner of this award will also be boarding a flight in Network Rail's inspection helicopter offering a unique photography opportunity. Entrants have until 11th July to enter the 2014 and you can enter up to 25 photographs across the four categories. All entries must be uploaded via the competition website, www.take-a-view.co.uk To read more and view last year's winning picture go to <http://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/News-Releases/Could-you-be-the-next-Lines-in-the-Landscape-photography-award-winner-2080.aspx>

***Northern Rail's performance figures** for April 2014 were the train operator's best since the start of its franchise in 2004, with 95.26% of services having departed and arrived on time in line with the industry's Public Performance Measure (PPM). Northern, a Serco and Abellio joint venture, has consistently driven and improved levels of performance and punctuality since the start of its franchise ten years ago.*

Arriva Trains Wales lunched a TV campaign called **‘Makes me smile’** on Saturday 17th May. The TV advertisement highlights some **great value, long distance journeys** you can make on the Arriva Trains Wales rail network. The fares are all advance purchase (you cannot buy them on the day of travel) and they are specific to the train time and service purchased. For the best Advance ticket prices book early – up to 12 weeks in advance – and travel at less busy times of the day or week. You can get 1/3 off Advance Purchase ticket if you have a 16-25, Family & Friends, Two Together, Disabled Persons or a Senior Railcard holder. Also, child discounts apply for all Advance fares.

[Click here to see the new TV advertisement.](#) You are not restricted to the examples in the ad. Buy low cost Advance tickets at: www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/TVEmail or at Eccles Station on weekdays until 13.00. You can travel on Arriva trains from Piccadilly or Newton le Willows.

Please let ESN know of any good bargains that you discover to share with other readers.

***Northern Rail**, in a rail industry first, has unveiled customer information facilities on 92 Ticket Vending Machines around its network with smaller, rural stations benefitting first. The new software, provided by Parkeon, allows customers to not only purchase their tickets at the machine but to also find out **what time the next train will arrive** and at which platform.*



Photo: Northern Rail Website.

Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Northern Rail, comments: “Embracing this new technology has made our Ticket Vending Machines even more customer-friendly. Passengers at a number of our smaller stations don’t have access to physical Customer Information Screens and it can be difficult for them to access the most up-to-date train running information. We know how important this is

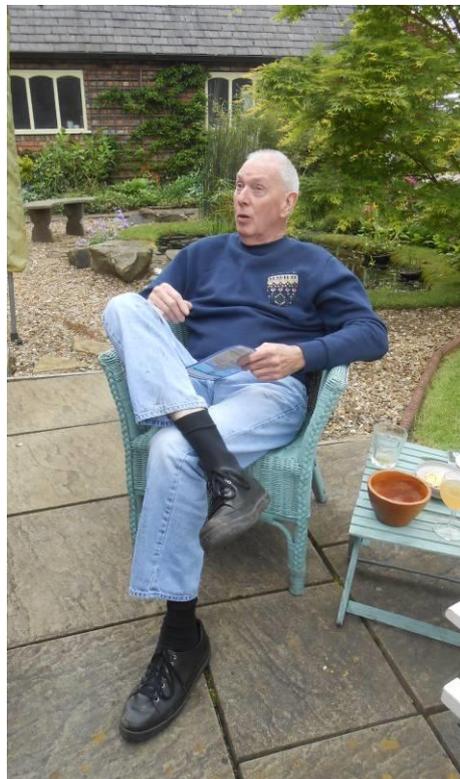
to them and we're now offering even more ways to keep informed." Greater Manchester Stations set to benefit include:

- *Ashton Under Lyne*
- *Atherton*
- *Bromley Cross*
- *Cheadle Hulme*
- *Deansgate*
- *Glossop*
- *Hadfield*
- *Hazel Grove*
- *Heaton Chapel*
- *Irlam*
- *Littleborough*
- *Marple*
- *Mauldeth Road*
- *Mills Hill (Manchester)*
- *Rochdale*
- *Romiley*
- *Salford Crescent*
- *Stockport*
- *Walkden*
- *Westhoughton*

Over the bank holiday weekend of Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 May, Network Rail had to carry out **emergency engineering work on the Calder Valley line** near Todmorden. **The work affected trains** on the Leeds – Manchester Victoria route and the York – Blackpool North route with buses running regularly between Hebden Bridge – Rochdale and Hebden Bridge – Burnley Manchester Road. The work was to rectify problems during the final stages of the signalling work on the new ‘Todmorden Curve’ and the line closures over the bank holiday weekend allowed the work to be completed.

FRECCLES' gardening team was invited to a leaving do at Mary's and Chrissie's house after the May session at the station. It isn't all railways and work you know! The weather was kind and the hospitality warm, so here is a bit of pictorial indulgence to mark the occasion.







OUT AND ABOUT...

The new timetables provide better connection with Southport trains at Manchester Victoria so ESN sent a reporter out to find a story.

The result was quite rewarding even though it might seem strange to leave the train at Meols Cop. Turning right outside the station along Bispham Road and then left along Old Park Lane brings one to Churchtown. This is an attractive little village (which was there before Southport was thought of) with a number of thatched buildings. There are small shops and two old pubs: The Bold Arms and The Hesketh Arms. These are family names of the local landowners.



As with Worsley, the attractiveness of the village is explained by it being an estate village and much of it is still owned by the Hesketh family, who reside locally in Meols Hall. It was a member of this family (Richard Hesketh-Fleetwood) who developed Fleetwood as a port, resort and key point on the journey by rail from London to Glasgow. Passengers used to alight from London trains at this most northerly part of the railway (as it was for a few years) and transfer to steamships to travel to Scotland!



Our reporter was lucky – it was a Bank Holiday so the hall was open for a visit. Dating from the late 17th century it is not a vast, pretentious Palladian palace but a more modest yet spacious brick house, tastefully decorated for comfortable living. There is a severely formal garden with long distance views at the back.

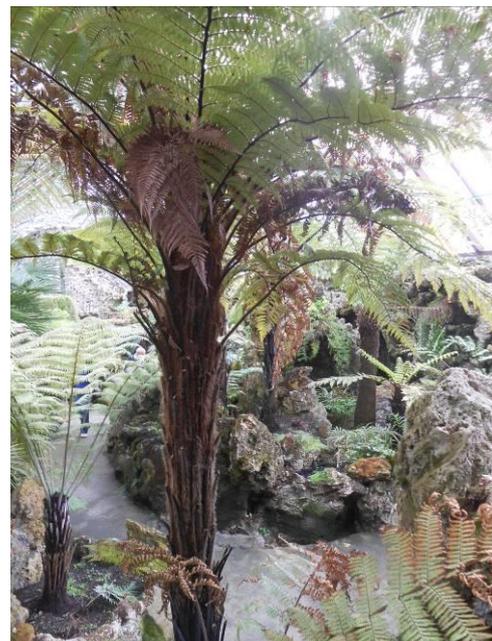


Further along Botanic Road from the hall is to be found The Botanic Gardens, a spacious park with a serpentine canal.



It is more of a play park now, having lost the grand central pavilion, but still worth a visit. Of note is the survival of the Fernery, a feature much loved by the Victorians.

*All photos courtesy of J E Rayner of
FRECCLES*



One can return to Meols Cop station (buses available) but it is no great distance to the centre of Southport (again buses available) if time allows.

...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

Here is a newly discovered itinerary for your leisure and pleasure. Give it a go and let ESN know what you think of it.

MILLS HILL – FOXDENTON HALL CIRCULAR

A good walk in what seems an unpromising area. There is a patch of open country teeming with wildlife and a little country house in a pleasant park. The modern world seems to be nibbling away at the area.

Catch the train to Manchester Victoria. There change onto a train to Mills Hill. Alight at Mills Hill station and turn right at the bottom of the steps.

After you cross the canal descend the steps on your right, down to the towpath. Turn left to head towards Manchester. *Pass Swan Mill.*

After the locks, skirt round a truncated arm of the canal *that went towards Chadderton*. On your left is the stone buttress of a former railway bridge. Ascend left to join and follow the track bed of the old railway from Middleton Junction. *Note evidence of a junction off to the right where a track forked off right to Oldham*. Some paths and a farm lane cross the track bed, but keep straight on. *This route was the line to Chadderton where it terminated between Hunt Lane and Middleton Road.*

You come to a spot with houses on the left, and a palisade fence on your right at the top of the cutting side. U-turn right, up the side and then immediately left to a stile in the fence.

Cross the stile then follow the path keeping by the palisade fence (*which protects you from the schoolchildren at a modern school building.*) Go through a gated stile where the palisade fence goes sharply to the left. Turn right and follow the path as it gradually curves right.

You come to a substantial old bridge which you turn left to cross. *The cutting was for the Oldham branch from Middleton Junction, and from here ascended a severe gradient to reach Werneth*. After the bridge take the left hand path. The path descends gradually to be slightly below the level of the old railway. Curve right by the hedge (*note the bulrushes and flags etc in the boggy ground*).

Cross the bridge over the stream. Go right up the little cliff and at the top go 45 degrees left past a lone hawthorn bush to the right corner of the farmyard. *Notice just by the farm road the modern school buildings that have intruded into this rural patch.* Go through the stile into the adjacent field. Ignore the stile into the farmyard on your left and INSTEAD cross the field slightly right, descending gently towards the trees in the valley bottom.

Cross the stream by the rickety bridge. Head up the valley side aiming for the left of the farmstead. Go over the stile and cross the rough ground to Horseshoe Lane (*note the renovated old stone farmhouse on your left*). Go left on Horseshoe Lane, cross the main road and turn right by the stone wall.

Enter the park through the ornate gates on the left. Walk up to the hall. *It is almost Queen Anne in style but dates from 1680, and was restored in 1963. Note the basement which was the ground floor of a stone hall of 1620. There is a formal garden with bowling green behind and a view to more mills in the distance. Interestingly the estate was with the De Trafford family from 1215.*

Take a good look round the park – *there are hidden nooks and crannies.* Leave the park and go left along Foxdenton Lane. *You pass MALTA mill. Note the lifting bridge at the canal.* Go right along the canal bank to head back to the main road bridge at Mills Hill.

[OPTION: if you want some refreshment continue under the main road bridge and take the steps up to the Lancaster Rose – *an attractive Lees Brewery pub with a good menu.* Then retrace your steps along the towpath.]

At the main road bridge go up the steps and turn left. Cross Mills Hill Lane and ascend the ramp left to the Manchester platform of the station.

CATEGORY: MEDIUM & FAIRLY EASY. Some damp ground.

ARCHITECTURE, VIEWS, INDUSTRY, COUNTRYSIDE,
CANAL, WILDLIFE, PARK, PUB.

RAIL FARE: category ONE.

MAP OS 1:50 000 sheet 1099

Manchester A-Z

Philip's Street Atlas GREATER MANCHESTER.

EDITORIAL

OUT OF STOCK.

The Todmorden curve is now complete in theory allowing a Victoria – Rochdale – Todmorden-Burnley train taking about 45 minutes for the journey, but there is not quite enough rolling stock to provide the full service. An examination of the new timetable seems to show that the lack of one two car unit prevents the full operation of the new service.

There is now an hourly train from Victoria (xx.56) calling at Mills Hill, Castleton, Rochdale, Smithy Bridge, Littleborough, and terminating at Todmorden station at xx.30. It then undertakes the reverse journey to the same timings so one unit is providing the new service as far as Todmorden only. A return run to Burnley would take just over 90 minutes and could be repeated every two hours so a second unit is needed to provide the hourly service.

Unfortunately Northern Rail is reliant on second hand units becoming available from elsewhere and can only hope that a unit is transferred to them in time to allow the December timetable to include the full service. This shortage of rolling stock indicates a systematic failure to predict and provide in the current set up of the railway. It would be interesting to know how this can be allowed to happen. Secondly, why is the north of England expected to wait, and then to make do with rolling stock that is second or third hand anyway?

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

