

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

MARCH 2011

The contents of this month's 11 page issue are as follows:

News section, Articles, Editorial, Book review, Bargain fare, FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month' itinerary.

NEWS

*The March day out itinerary is **beautiful, historic Chester**, with its walls and large sandstone cathedral. Change train at Newton le Willows and the Chester train comes in a few minutes later on the same platform— about an hour's journey.*



Chester Cathedral.

Those of you who did the city's real ale pubs last month might be hazy about the city so it is worth going again.

Courtesy of J E Rayner

Our fare bargain is a **cheaper off peak return to Leeds**. There is a lot to do and see when you get there. Thanks are due to Stuart at the Eccles booking office for researching this issue.



Our next **station tidy up day** will be on **Sunday March 6th at 11.00** and finishing when you've had enough! Do come and join us. We hope you enjoyed the blossoming of the snowdrops during February. (see editorial)

*Station usage data for 2009-10 (April - March) has just been published by the Office of Rail Regulation and shows a trend of **strong growth** in passenger numbers. This is heartening as it is surely a case of 'USE IT OR LOSE IT' and for a long time it has been galling to see how busy Newton le Willows station is compared to Eccles which serves a much, much larger community. If we want a half hourly service we have to make use of the trains we already have!*

Total entries and exits at Eccles were 112,288, up 12% over 2008-9.

Total entries and exits at Patricroft were 33,766, also up 12%.

This is based on total ticket sales, with estimates for PTE 'zonal/multimodal Travelcard type of tickets'. The figures may not include free usage with PTE 60+ passes and certainly don't include Fare Dodgers! However the Eccles count may benefit from ticketless passengers stopped at the Victoria Station barrier claiming they came from Eccles!

However flawed the data, the trend is significant (see <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529>).

*The latest available GMTU counts for station usage at Eccles indicate strong growth over the previous twelve months. These are based on a survey finding 206 total entries and exits between 07.30 and 13.30 on one day in November 2009. **These were 26% up on the previous year.** The corresponding figure for Patricroft was 54 (not surveyed in 2008). Does Freccles make a difference?*

We were hoping that during February Network Rail would be patching with tarmac to get rid of the puddles that form on the Manchester platform, but this is now postponed. Northern and Freccles have kept up the pressure over this for quite a while. We shall continue to push for a solution.

*On 26th January members of Freccles met with Chris Hanks of Alliance Rail to discuss their proposed **direct London train service from Eccles**. This would need the approval of the rail regulator. The decision is due in spring, and if it is favourable the service would commence in about one year's time. This should also lead to significant investment in the station including lifts for disabled access. It is hoped that an Alliance Rail rep will give a talk about the proposals at the coming Freccles AGM. We shall keep you informed.*

ARTICLES

BE TRANSPORTED BY RAIL

There is a noticeable increase in the number of **rail based holidays** being offered by travel agents. Could it be that train travel is becoming fashionable once more?

ESN has spotted one clear gap in the market offerings though and that is **“Explore the Antarctic by Rail”**. Other than that, there are so many that it is not possible to go into any detail (however see the book review!). Here are some links if you wish to find out more about what is on offer:

A number of hotel type trains ply through Canada and across the Rocky Mountains: www.canadianaffair.com www.milestonetours.com and www.GreatRail.com

A general international offering plus some British train holidays will be found at upmarket travel agent Page & Moy www.pageandmoy.co.uk/rail and also at railtravel.com (www.travelsphere.co.uk).

Just using the train as transport to the destination, The Times Traveller (with Eurostar) has some very reasonably priced short breaks in Lille, Paris, Brussels, Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. See www.aagetaways.co.uk/times

Next month's **ESN** will take a further look at this holiday market.

Changing trains 1

The hourly trains from Eccles serve 17 different stations directly. In addition there are the rush hour trains through to Huddersfield which serve an additional 5 stations directly - Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden, Slaithwaite and Huddersfield.

Changing trains is not a favourite occupation with many people (pace anoraks) but it adds greatly to the number of places that can be reached. One change of train takes you to about 190 extra destinations from Eccles and a second change adds a further 330 (approx.) possibilities. It was too big a job to work out for 3 or 4 changes but there are just over 2000 other railway stations in the UK alone, then we add in Europe, and then stations beyond that etc.

With this potential it was decided to run a short series of articles giving readers the gen on the key changing points to use from Eccles. Travelling westwards from Eccles the three changing stations are Newton, Huyton and Liverpool Lime Street and we shall deal with this direction first starting in the April **ESN**.

FRANCESCO DI MAJO

Di Majo was director general of the railways division of Fiat and applied himself to the problems of increasing the speeds of trains in the 1960s. Increasing the banking (super elevation) of the curves too much renders the track unsuitable for slower trains and a dedicated high speed route needs much open space and is very costly. His idea was to have the high speed trains lean into the curves.

The proto type had tilting passenger seats but by 1969 he and Oreste Santanera had developed a tilting carriage and the first train was ready in 1975. The tilting was caused entirely by the inertial forces acting on a pivot hence the train gained the name '**pendolino**' or 'little pendulum'. However the passengers were still uncomfortably aware of the centrifugal forces acting on this type of train.

This problem was solved by good old **British Rail** in its **Advance Passenger Train** which had hydraulics on the bogies to tilt the carriage accurately and quickly to the appropriate degree. In the early 1980s this successful project was abandoned (Britain at its best!) and Fiat acquired the patents. The first modern Pendolino ran in 1988 between Rome and Milan at speeds of up to 155mph and **increased passenger traffic by a factor of ten** on that route! They are now in use in about a dozen countries including Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Britain.

He was born in Turin on February 27th in 1910 and qualified as an engineer at the city's Polytechnic in 1932. He first worked on pioneer petrol and diesel propulsion for the state railways and during the war was in charge of Croatia's railway system with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In 1945 he went to Fiat and later was to lecture at Turin and Pisa universities. In 1994 he was awarded Genoa's Christopher Columbus Prize for communications.

Francesco di Majo, engineer and plain speaking man died on January 15th 2011 aged 100.

You are cordially invited to attend

The 2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FRECCLES (Friends of Eccles Station)

Monday 28th March at 19.00 at Eccles Gateway.

Guest speakers are being arranged. Please do come along.

Admission & refreshments free

EDITORIAL.

PREVENTION & PERSEVERANCE.

Not a story by Jane Austen but a rather sad contemporary tale. Twice within one week in February plants were torn out of the tubs on the Liverpool platform and strewn around. This probably happened in the evening in each case.

The fact that this damage was rectified speedily by our volunteers and that occasional vandalism seems to be inevitable does not mean that we should not deplore such acts. Vandalism costs GMPTE alone over £3,000,000 per annum – nationally the cost is vast. We are all reduced financially and socially by it.

The puzzling negativism behind vandalism can drive us to speculate on the possible cause(s), wondering whether they are single or multiple. Was the intent criminal? Was it an act of whimsy by a person with no regard for other people? Was the person angry at the world? Or possibly the perpetrator was mentally defective (temporarily or permanently)? Whatever the cause(s) our attempts to explain have too readily been used (often by people who should really know better) to excuse such behaviour.

Looking on the bright side, vandalism at Eccles Station has become an infrequent occurrence. Eccles Neighbourhood's active intervention policies, local policing & PCSOs and the work of Freccles have all contributed to this. The friends' group is bringing the station back into the heart of the community, and the improvement in the station's gardens and tidiness is without doubt a significant help. Academics refer to this as 'the broken windows' syndrome. Whereas the rundown area of a town gets greater vandalism to make it worse, a well kept area discourages it.

Accordingly we must not shrug our shoulders and tolerate vandalism and its results. We must do our best to prevent it in the first place, repairing promptly any damage that is done. By persevering in this policy the rewards will come with time.

BOOK REVIEW:

GREAT TRAIN JOURNEYS OF THE WORLD. Time Out Guides.

ISBN 978184670151-1 £16.99 Available at Eccles Library.

This is a travel guide full of tempting pictures and short descriptions of train journeys all over the globe - each description has a short taster list of facts and occurrences to whet your appetite for travel. All the trains go through grand countryside or weave through exotic foreign cultures.

The trains covered range from what are effectively transcontinental hotels on wheels, such as The Indian Pacific in Australia, and the Orient Express, down to ordinary service trains on branch lines, and on narrow gauge railways such as the Kalka – Shimla line in India. My favourite was the basic, crowded train struggling across the Andes – the attendant distributes coca leaves for chewing and takes an oxygen mask round the train!

British lines and preserved railways are also included. So, in this volume are railway holidays for wealthy tourists or economic backpackers, and also days out more locally. You'll be amazed by the variety! Read it to plan a very different holiday (contact details are given for booking travel) or else as I did, to indulge in a fantasy of exotic travel.



MARCH FARE BARGAIN:

OFF PEAK DAY RETURN TO LEEDS.

Northern trains provide a cheaper off peak day return to visit Leeds. There are two direct rail routes to Leeds. One is via Huddersfield and the other via Hebden Bridge. First Transpennine Express sets the fare on the first route and Northern sets the fare via Hebden Bridge through the Calder Valley.

At peak times there is not a great difference in the fares but after morning rush hour the Northern route via Hebden Bridge offers a worthwhile saving.

Compare these specimen outward journeys:

LEEDS via HEBDEN BRIDGE	LEEDS via HUDDERSFIELD
£14.80 off peak day return	£16.50 off peak day return
Depart Eccles 10.36	Depart Eccles 10.36
Change at Manchester Victoria	Change at Stalybridge
Catch 11.00 Leeds train	Catch 11.26 Scarborough train
Arrive Leeds at 12.31	Arrive Leeds at 12.09

The Hebden Bridge route is a little slower but the scenery is just as good! Look at the specimen return journey:

LEEDS to ECCLES via HEBDEN BRIDGE	LEEDS to ECCLES via HUDDERSFIELD
Depart Leeds 14.08 (Victoria train)	Depart Leeds 14.08 (Liverpool train)
Change at Manchester Victoria	Change at Stalybridge
Catch 15.39 Liverpool train	Catch 15.22 Liverpool train
Arrive Eccles at 15.46	Arrive Eccles at 15.46

The journey times are the same! This is not a special offer it is the normal fares available every day. Leeds is well worth a visit or two – see ‘100 days out’ at www.freccles.org.uk

A DAY OUT BY TRAIN!

MARCH

No. 49 **CHESTER – CATHEDRAL & SHOPS.**

Chester has a large historic cathedral with an excellent musical offering. There are also excellent shops including the famous rows. These could be treated as separate visits if preferred.

SHORT EASY.

ARCHITECTURE, SHOPS, PUBS,

CAFES, MUSEUMS

RAIL FARE: £14.50 day return

Catch the stopping train to Newton-Le-Willows and change there to catch the Llandudno/North Wales train soon after on the same platform. Alight at Chester Station. *This grand station was opened in 1848 to serve the Chester & Holyhead Railway and also the Chester to Shrewsbury route.*

Immediately outside the station catch the free rail link bus into town past Iceland and get off on Frodsham Street. Walk ahead and turn right onto Eastgate. *This is the main shopping street.*

Go under the Victoria Jubilee Clock and turn right into St. Werburgh Street. Follow this up to the Cathedral entrance. *Built of the same sandstone as Eccles Parish Church this large Cathedral was originally a Benedictine Monastery. By the side of it is the elegant cathedral close.*

[OPTIONAL CATHEDRAL VISIT: there is a charge (category one) to visit the cathedral. (Discounts are available for pensioners and groups. Enquires for groups and guided tours: 12 Abbey Square Chester CH1 2HU or call 01244 324756 or www.chestercathedral.com.)

The cathedral has a fine carved wooden quire. *Under the misericord seats are some amusing carvings and above them the small angels are posed as musicians or builders.*

There is a splendid cloister enclosing a peaceful garth (garden). *The stained glass here has some interesting little inserts – can you find the Everest climbers' entry?*

There is also a consistory courtroom. *The Cathedral has regular musical services (posted at the entrance), organ recitals and concerts. The music is of a very high standard.*

Leave the Cathedral through the gift shop to enter the refectory hall. *(Serves very good lunches or afternoon tea).*

Leave the refectory by the steps up into the Abbey Close. Head out through the abbey gateway.]

Facing the cathedral is the Town Hall (Gothic, 1869) and on its right the 'Westminster Coach and Motor Car Works' building. *The Duke of Westminster, one of England's wealthiest individuals, owns the Grosvenor estates and lives at Eaton Hall just south of Chester. So these names keep cropping up around the town.*

Facing the town hall go left along Northgate Street. *Notice that there is much use of pargetting (decorative plasterwork) on building facades in Chester.*

As you come to the end of Northgate Street the Rows start above you. *For every shop, pub or café on the street you will now get an additional one above set back in the rows – make sure you don't miss going along these.*

Go right on Eastgate Street and continue to the stone pillar.

Turn left to go down Bridge Street.

Half way down at the cross roads is the Chester Heritage Centre; on the right is The Falcon and down the street right is The Grosvenor Museum with many Roman artefacts. *(The Falcon serves Sam Smith real ales and some good food – I recommend a lunch here.)*

Return up Bridge Street and on the right go up the steps into the Grosvenor Arcade. *This contains many modern shops and some fine tile work. The tile work has tracery similar to that on the pargetting around the town.*

Leave the Grosvenor arcade via Newgate Row and exit onto Eastgate Street.

Turn right and walk along to Foregate Street or Frodsham Street to catch the rail link bus back to Chester General Station.

Catch a train to Newton le Willows and change there for Eccles.

**MAP OS 1:50 000 sheet 119
Atlas Cheshire**

Chester A-Z

Philip's Street

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

