

ECCLES STATION NEWS

MARCH 2012

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

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

NEWS

Presumably spring will be on its way again in March. The bulbs in our station garden should be out then? Or will they have been seen off by the February return of winter? You'll just have to go and see. The garden is worth a look even if you are not planning to travel. Next gardening day is March 4th.

The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is to **Shrewsbury**. This is the county town of Salop, and is packed with things to do and see. Take a quick journey using the hourly Arriva Trains Wales expresses from Piccadilly, as covered in **our CHANGING TRAINS article**.

*Here is a reminder to you that the electrification work continues between Manchester and Liverpool. **Therefore the last two trains of the day in both directions will be replaced by buses on Monday to Thursday inclusive.** Friday and Saturday night trains run as normal. Additionally on **Saturdays until 24th March** trains between Earlestown and Lime Street will be REPLACED by bus but Newton/Eccles/ Manchester/ Stalybridge trains will still run. On **Sundays during March** all trains will be replaced by buses.*

MONDAY 26th MARCH 2012

19.15 ECCLES GATEWAY

Put this date in your diary! Freccles is holding a **meeting for the general public** and will have two **expert speakers giving short updates on railway developments in the area** at public meeting. There will also be updates on our own projects at the station. You'll be free to ask questions if you wish.

There will be light refreshments and a chance for informal discussion.

After the refreshments Members of Freccles will reconvene to hold the:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FRECCLES 2012

At which members will transact the formal business including receiving the accounts and holding any elections.

Members' subscriptions (£5 per annum) will be due and will be collected by the treasurer during the course of this evening.

*Work is also commencing at the end of this month on **improving the track layout at Stalybridge station**. Therefore in the last week of March the Monday to Friday 10.36 from Eccles will end at Victoria, and all return journeys (Mon to Sat) from Stalybridge to Eccles will involve a change at Victoria. On Saturday 31st the 17.36 will not continue past Victoria. Check before travelling!*

The home secretary Theresa May has announced that she will table amendments to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill that is going through parliament. The amendments will prohibit cash payments for scrap metal at licensed scrap yards and it is hoped that this will help to block the market in stolen scrap metal. **Thieves have caused significant disruption on the railways** by stealing signalling and telegraph cable from the line side. This yields little to the criminals but they don't care. **Last year there were about 1000 such incidents causing delay to 35,000 journeys and costing Network Rail about £16,000,000.**

Make a point of visiting <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/cabletheft/> which explains the position. This page also links to **a petition for government action** against cable theft: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/21165> -do support this petition. There is also a link to a suggestion form for you to give **your ideas for preventing cable theft**. *See our editorial.*

Janice Turner, of The Times, has written an eloquent piece (Dec 24th 2011) on the general effect of metal theft on our communal lives. It is archived on The Times subscription service which is available on the computers at Eccles Library if you don't have this at home or work. You will need your library number and it is item 61 under her name at: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/912496371?accountid=16898>

*Network Rail directors announced in early February that they would **forego their bonuses** and contribute them to the level crossing safety budget. The Chief Executive, David Higgins, whose salary is £560,000 p.a. was due to receive £360,000 bonus and also long term incentive payments that would roughly double his salary for the next couple of years. *See our editorial.**

Teresa Villiers has told a House of Commons select committee that the Northern Hub scheme is an **'expensive project'** and as such the government is likely to fund only part of

the scheme. The full scheme, which would cost £560,000,000 would provide the Ordsall Curve, two extra through platforms at Piccadilly, reintroduce four tracks through Standedge tunnels and also between Lime Street and Huyton, plus various other lesser track and layout improvements. **See our editorial (the editor is treating himself to a right old rant this month!)**

ARTICLES



*We hope that **mentioning their city whenever there is a guild fair** will keep the burghers of Preston happy, and there is one this year.*

2012 PRESTON GUILD YEAR

For up to date details of the Guild see: <http://www.prestonguild2012.com/>

The recommendation this month is for a visit to the **Harris Museum and Art Gallery**, where you can also pick up a free leaflet for the **Preston History Walk**. Admission to the gallery is free and it is open Monday to Saturday. See: <http://www.harrismuseum.org.uk/the-harris.html>

TRAVEL: You can travel to Preston by train from Eccles by changing at Victoria. For speed catch the Clitheroe train to Bolton and swap there to a fast train to Preston, but for a more leisurely comfort journey wait for the Blackpool stopper at Victoria. The off peak day return fare is £10.70. (Fare tip: if you have a pass for Greater Manchester rail network book a ticket from Bolton – it will be a little cheaper.

TO THE HARRIS: Leave Preston station by the front entrance and as you walk up the ramp take a look back at the elegant little chateau style station building.

At the top of the approach road turn right along Fishergate. Continue straight along here (it is not far) until you come to Cheapside on the left. Go left along Cheapside and you will come to the Flag Market, and see the art gallery and museum on your right. *It is a grand classical building with a portico and steps above a great stone base that acts as a ceremonial balcony.*

Go to the right of this and turn left to enter through the gate.



The stone base of the portico turns out to be the hidden entrance to The Harris. It is a huge porte cochere with lamp standards, and offices opposite the main doors.

Photo J E Rayner

Enter the main doors and you go into the heart of the building.

IN THE MUSEUM & GALLERY: Go towards the cafe tables. Look up. The first floor is pierced to form a circular balcony, thus allowing you to see up to a fine classical lantern with a skylight in the roof. You will probably agree that the cafe is grandly sited. Take your time to visit some (or all) of the excellent collections.-for details of the galleries history as well, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harris_Museum#Collections

If you wish to do the Preston History Walk ask for a copy at the reception desk and shop on the right as you are leaving the Harris:

The attractive Preston History Walk leaflet gives the itinerary and a map for a medium length walk that might start off a little unpromisingly to some, but it is worth the effort as a way of getting to know about Preston.

The walk finishes back at the gallery.



Retrace your steps to Preston Station.

Tuesday, 30th December 1941.

The dreadful railway accident that took place at Eccles on the above date was extensively reported upon by the **Manchester Evening News** - copies of which are archived at Manchester Central Library.

The first report was on the **front and back page** of the **late edition on the same day**, along with a small stop press item. Blackout times are given as 5.28pm. to 8.55 a.m. for the night. There is a grainy low contrast image of some of the wreckage; comment that the Home Guard helped, and a report that many yards of track were ripped up. This latter appears to be erroneous if compared to the railway inspector's report.

Five female victims remained unidentified at this stage. Other casualties were listed and their home towns given allowing the following reckoning:

Wigan 3, Eccles 13, Leigh 10, Tyldesley 10, Walkden 7,

Oldham 24, Boothstown 2, Rochdale 3, Manchester 1, Atherton 1,

Hindley 2, Swinton 1, Moston 1.

There is a mention of poignant case of a 15 year old girl having an emergency amputation of her leg (performed on the platform by the light of torches and flares) but who nevertheless died.

It is of interest also to note a small article **"24 Injured when Buses Collide."**

Manchester Evening News Wednesday December 31st 1941

This edition reports the death toll as having reached 19, two casualties having died at Hope Hospital after operations. At the same hospital Frederick Coates 18, Joyce Kirkman (15?), and Walter Jackson 51 are described respectively as very poorly, poorly and very ill. At Eccles and Patricroft Hospital Joseph Slater was poorly and Bernard Roddy was very ill. It is reported that more than half of the 40 casualties treated at Hope received plasma transfusions and a special resuscitation ward had been used for the first time. Dr J. R. Burn, Salford Medical Officer of Health is quoted as saying, "The whole of the ARP arrangements have been put into action and have worked with 100% efficiency."

Manchester Evening News Thursday January 1st 1942

A small article on page 4 "**RAIL CRASH INQUIRY BY EXPERTS**" reports that they held a private inquiry into the cause of the crash. No location is given for this meeting, but it is stated that the official inquiry will open on January 7th at Eccles Town Hall. Fifty of the injured were still detained in hospital mainly with broken limbs.

Page 5 holds a report "**3000 – a Grim Year on Roads**" with the subheading "**BLACK OUT TOLL**". This is the total killed and injured on the roads in Manchester alone in 1941 – the death-roll was 'over 141'.

Manchester Evening News Saturday January 3rd 1942

Under the heading "**Trinkets Identify Rail Dead**" the opening of the inquest at Eccles is reported. Manchester County Coroner F G Ralphs confined the proceedings to evidence of identification of the dead (some by relatives recognising items such as locket, cigarette cases, rings, and gold crosses). Sympathy with the relatives was expressed by the Coroner, Mr Walter Marsh (NUR), Mr W Monslow (ASLEF), and Mr C T Tewson (the assistant divisional solicitor for the London Midland and Scottish Railway, Manchester division), who also stated that all claims would be sympathetically considered, due regard being had to the legal liability of the company. The inquest was adjourned until January 16th.

Manchester Evening News Wednesday January 7th 1942

“Engine ‘Ploughed Through Coaches’” reports the 21st death from the crash (Edward Garstang, 46, of Leigh at Hope) and that there were 91 other injuries. Forty nine were still in hospital with 21 being considered ‘serious’. The article is about eight column inches on page four.

It deals with the opening of the official inquiry in to the crash under the auspices of Major G R S Wilson of the railway inspectorate, who had visited the site of the crash before this. He pointed out that it was a technical inquiry and in no way a court for determining legal responsibility. Large scale railway maps were spread out on tables and the accident was described by Mr S E Parkhouse, Chief Superintendent of Operations. The lines were cleared within 36 hours and a great deal of voluntary work done, doctors and nurses coming from places including Eccles, Urmston and Cadishead. On page three is given the Manchester area daylight graph showing that the morning of the crash would have been dark until about 08.55 – the latest possible.

A stop press item in the late edition mentions evidence from the Cross Lane signalman and Driver George Ashcroft of Canal Bank who was driving the Kenyon to Manchester train. Major Wilson decided that he would hear further evidence in private.

Manchester Evening News Tuesday January 27th 1942

This brief report on page 3 is headed **“23rd Death in Eccles Collision”**. This was Thomas Rafferty, 66, of Oldham, the last victim to die. 14 people were still at Hope and five at Eccles and Patricroft Hospital – all said to be progressing.

Manchester Evening News Friday February 13th 1942

“Train Crash Fund” is a very short article on page three. It states that the subscribers to the Mayor of Eccles Fund for the relief of distress caused by the train crash agreed that the £58 raised should go to the two hospitals. This was because no claims had been made by any of the victims or their relatives.

Manchester Evening News Wednesday March 18th 1942

This issue fills almost the whole of column one on an inside page under the headings **“Coroner Told of Rail Signalmen Shortage”** and **“TAKEN TO SERVE IN THE ARMY”**. This

evidence was heard from Thomas Ward, district inspector LMS, at the resumption of the Coroner's inquiry into the train crash deaths.

Also evidence was heard from Albert Patton *sic* (fog signal man) of Watson Street, Patricroft; Charles Thomas Lowe (Eccles signalman), and Walter Parrington (fog signal man) of Trafford Road, Eccles.

A verdict of accidental death was returned on the twenty three passengers who died.

Manchester Evening News Saturday April 25th 1942

A lengthy article on page three gives an accurate and easy to read summary of Major Wilson's report into the accident under the headings "Signalman Blamed as 'Primary Cause' of the Eccles Train Crash" and "DRIVER'S 40 M.P.H. IN A FOG". The Ministry of Transport released the report on this day.

The article opens with the recommendation that 'automatic train control' giving an audible warning in the cab and a partial brake application would have prevented the accident. Signalman Lowe and Driver Mountfield were blamed for the crash having produced a "... rare coincidence of the failure of two men in different positions, acting independently of each other." **Next month our article will take a look in detail at the Inspector's report.**

Where to from Eccles?

It is looking likely that Eccles will lose its direct trains to Ashton and Stalybridge. These are well used from Eccles for leisure, and for shopping at Ashton Market. The change would be in a coming timetable (probably the December one).

Councillors for Wigan area want the Victoria to Stalybridge slot swapped to a Wigan train. They appear to have been pushing this consistently and effectively, while meeting no apparent resistance from elsewhere. Wigan – Manchester – Tameside has been identified as a key employment travel corridor and it could be that the change would be for the greater good.

The question arises as to what happens to the train from Eccles. Will it terminate at Victoria? (We don't know yet.) If it does Eccles passengers will have to change there for

Ashton and Stalybridge and the net result will be the loss of a convenient through service and slightly longer journey times.

However Wigan's gain does not necessarily have to be Eccles' loss. The service into Manchester could still continue through but to an alternative destination. A clear possibility would be for it to run to Rochdale, Hebden Bridge, Halifax, Bradford and Leeds (the Calder Valley route). This route would give Eccles a direct link to two more cities, a large town (Halifax) and many smaller towns with great leisure potential. Some would regard such a service as a gain to Eccles, not just a consolation prize. However the question remains as to how this is to be achieved, and whether it can be achieved by the December timetable or later.

Rail timetable planning occurs over a scale of months to years and needs constant influential input. Railway officers meet regularly with Greater Manchester transport officers and councillors at Manchester Town Hall - Freccles members have attended as observers and were pleased to see that the rail representatives try to provide what councillors are asking for.

(Good public transport links are an important contribution to a town's prosperity. On these route changes it seems that Wigan has been asking and Eccles has not. A plan is needed to provide better input about the interests of the people of Eccles and Patricroft with respect to rail travel. Freccles can do some of this.)

Changing trains 13

Arriva Trains Wales (Trenau Arriva Cymru) runs hourly express trains from Manchester Piccadilly to South Wales. This is a very good service: they depart at 30 minutes past each hour on seven days a week!

The basic pattern is that the even hour departure goes to Swansea and Carmarthen, and the odd hour departure continues all the way to Milford Haven (Aberdaugleddau). Even the Sunday service tries to follow this model.

Here are the main stations served Stockport, Wilmslow, Crewe, Shrewsbury, Church Stretton, Ludlow, Leominster, Hereford, Abergavenny (Y Fenni), Cwmbran, Newport (Casnewydd), Cardiff Central (Caerdydd Canalog), Bridgend (Pen-y-Bont), Port Talbot Parkway, Neath (Castell Nedd), Swansea (Abertawe), Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin) and Milford Haven (Aberdaugleddau).

Some of the trains call at stations between Crewe and Shrewsbury. There are other stops along the South Wales section too.

On Sundays the trains from Eccles usually run direct to Piccadilly and on to the airport (but check – electrification will alter this on some Sundays). 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.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 100** which is:

SHREWSBURY – town trail

It is surprising that this large and ancient county town is not more visited. It was included as the last of the one hundred days out because it has so much to offer. There are walls, a castle, an abbey, museums, shops, pubs, a market, a riverside park, ancient churches and many old secular buildings.



In the castle grounds.



A view of the abbey.

This itinerary could fill a couple of hours without popping into anywhere! Perhaps decide which attractions to go into and then come again to do some of the others. The itinerary can readily be split in half.

The total journey takes one and three quarter hours – much of it through attractive countryside. The off peak day return fare is £20. Check that it covers Metrolink between Victoria and Piccadilly.

If you have a Greater Manchester pass or travel card, ask for a ticket from Stockport – this could be a little cheaper.

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%20100.pdf>

EDITORIAL

BONUS CULTURE.

You have to admit that ‘the bankers’ are very clever people indeed. To be given a salary of a say a million pounds a year, and then insist on a bonus of two or three million before being willing to do any work requires incredibly creative thought processes. This bad thinking is not limited to the banks though!

It sounds so reasonable to talk about ‘employing the best people’, ‘rewarding excellence’, ‘payment for risk taking’, ‘paying the market rate’ or ‘performance related pay’ but it is just so much verbiage. Many employers use the first two phrases that nearly everyone must be excellent or above average – a logical impossibility. The merchant bankers or company directors do not take risks -it is not their own money at stake! The market rate is not what is being paid to senior directors and bankers – it is rather the cartel rate established by circular references to each other on pay committees. The aim of these committees (always to reward their particular interest group with above average salaries) has brought the mathematically inevitable perpetual rises in the averages to which they refer! Don’t be fooled by references to ‘pay consultants’ either – they are employed directly by the people to whom they award extravagant amounts of money and refer to the same ever rising averages.

The obvious giveaway that the system is not about just reward is that extraordinary sums are still doled out when performance is mediocre (or even when the organisation makes thumping great losses). A more subtle point about a bonus system or ‘performance related’ pay is that most financial success for companies results from the general success rate of the economy (i.e. nearly everyone’s work). In other words it is a form of rent. Would you pay the landed gentry a great big extra bonus just because their land values and rents had risen?

How can anyone use the word 'earned' about such packages? To ESN the connotations of 'earned' are very different from 'taking amounts you find you can get away with'! This is not anti-business thinking but anti greed. After the excesses of the last two decades the phrase 'bonus culture' conjures the image of an agar plate with something very unhealthy spreading over it.

These excesses have been so great that they make Network Rail's figures look almost reasonable. You might guess now that the ESN editorial team is highly pleased that directors at Network Rail will surrender their bonuses this year. From now on every year needs to be a year of justifiable reasonable pay levels.

A CAPITAL IDEA.

Implementation of The Northern Hub proposal would improve express rail transport across the entire north of England – Liverpool, Manchester & airport, Sheffield, Grimsby, Leeds, York, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Wigan, Preston, Blackpool, The Lake District, and possibly Carlisle, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. Local services around Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds would also benefit significantly. However the transport ministers seem to think that the half a billion pound (or so) price tag is 'expensive'.

Notes to the DoT:

"The Northern Hub would cost less than one twentieth of the London Crossrail proposal, and less than one sixtieth of the Very High Speed lines proposal. It is about 1% of the cost of building another London Airport. This is about the same as building roughly 40 miles of motorway and you will have to spend more on road building if you don't do the Northern Hub.

"For some reason governments spend three to four times as much per head on rail in London as elsewhere in the country. The government is the **UK** Government, and the south east might have more journeys per head but the most rapid growth in rail travel is in the north.

"The economic disparity between London and the north is growing, and part of the remedy is investment in northern infrastructure. This will need to be done either by this government or a succeeding one. Hence you are not 'saving' by avoiding it - merely putting off the evil day when government is forced to act and by which time it will cost more.

“The project would be a one off spend that equates to about 0.5% of the current annual benefits bill. The construction spend would reduce unemployment directly. Without this infrastructure investment the unemployment and benefits cost in the region will continue to rise.

Yours sincerely,

The Editor, Eccles Station News.

THEFT.

Eccles Station News is heartened to hear that the government is to legislate in order to curb cable theft on the railways by licensing and controlling the scrap metal industry. This sort of market blocking will impose its own small costs on commerce but it is a very cheap and effective way of reducing crime and as such should be welcomed.

However there has been a complete media silence on the legal penalties applied to the thieves, and this at first sight seems puzzling. Perhaps offenders could be fined £50? Or given a conditional discharge? Or subject to a community supervision order (this involves seeing a probation officer for one hour about every third week)? Or a suspended sentence? Perhaps on the eighty-seventh offence, a jail term of six months could be given by the magistrates. This would be halved automatically (by a crazy Act of Parliament passed in 1991), then up to 18 weeks deducted (to reduce prison overcrowding), and also allow time off for period in pre trial custody or on bail.

At this point legal aid solicitors could sue on the grounds that the sentence interfered with their clients' normal pursuits. Cue £20,000 damages and legal costs paid by all the rest of us. Perhaps the silence is not so puzzling after all!

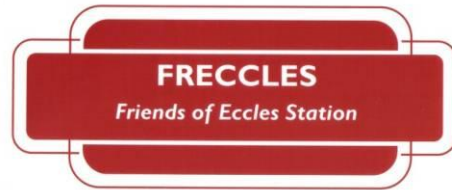
OK, hyperbole in the last paragraph (the damages might be only £10,000), but it is obvious that sentencing and justice policy often disregard the protection of the public interest. Space precludes our covering this, but it is certainly not policy making with scientific or democratic origins!

But let us be positive – the police, magistrates, and judges eventually handled the challenge of the recent 'riots' (read 'mobs looting') and showed they can act effectively, even though policy is against this. **Can they bring the same effective action to bear upon metal thieves?**

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



STOP PRESS

Real Ale Festival

During March a Festival with fifty real ales from Lancashire and Cumbria is being held at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

The beers plus ciders, perries and foreign ales can be enjoyed in The Power Hall with its impressive collection of engines and locomotives.

The dates and times are Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd from 17.00 to 22.30 and Sunday 24th from 12.00 to 22.30.

Tickets are £5 at the door (£4 for concessions).

See www.mosi.org.uk
