

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

MAY 2011

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

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

NEWS

The FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month' section is changing style. Now in the articles section, the itinerary will be a web reference. To access it, place your cursor on the reference, then press the 'control' button on the keyboard, and click the mouse at the same time. All the references given in ESN work this way. You should get rapid connection to the desired text.

Additionally from this month onwards the choice of itinerary will be from all 100, not just the first fifty of the trips. Changes are also afoot at Eccles, Hope and Winton libraries. The paper itineraries will be replaced with a leaflet listing all 100 itineraries and how to access these on the website and at the library.

A reminder that extra help is needed with the gardens over the summer period: Light weeding and/or watering of the gardens could be undertaken at times to suit the volunteers. If you are interested please send your name and e mail address to info@freccles.org.uk quoting "garden helper".

Past issues of **ESN** are now archived on the website, **making it very easy if you wish to refer to a back number**. Do take some time to browse the website www.freccles.org.uk. Developed by our Webmaster (Sean) it is packed with news, information, heritage and pictures. It is a quality and quantity offering.

The replacement of bridges in Eccles is continuing. The **temporary Bailey bridge for pedestrians** at Old Wellington Road opened in early April, and another will soon provide for pedestrians at Albert Street.

Anyone who has been up to the two road bridges during April will appreciate why twenty weeks has been allocated for the work. It is not the railway work that is slow - both bridge spans carry an amazing number of service conduits linking the two sides of the town. All these must be excavated, identified and diverted, protected or made interruptible during the project. For greater details see www.freccles.org.uk/news.asp

*Our Bargain Fare article is about the **Wayfarer Ticket**. Its area of coverage has gradually extended. To pull together all the different bus, tram and rail operators over such a portion of the country in one ticket is certainly one of the notable achievements of Greater Manchester Transport. It is also remarkable value!*

Old but good news – the works at Liverpool Lime Street station (completed during 2010) have provided a public space worthy of St Georges Square and gained Lime Street that year's 'Station of the Year' title at the National rail Awards. **It is worth taking a look at the result. It feels 'right' both ways - for a grand entrance to the station, or a formal arrival in the city!**

The work has opened to view a corner of the iron and glass train shed supported on a classical arcade. A gentle rise of steps leading up to it has a minimalist, formal planting of trees trained in a Mediterranean style. Some of

the flags have images of Liverpool engraved. The great iron pillars supporting the station roof can be seen striding along Skelhorne Street to the side.

On 16th April Eccles station had a noble visitor! Great Western Railway Castle class locomotive number 5043 named EARL OF MOUNT EDGCUMBE arrived in Eccles at about 11.15 hauling a passenger special organised by Vintage Trains Ltd. It pulled into the goods loop at Eccles in order to take on water from the fire hydrant on the bridge above. This attracted quite an audience of local people on a very sunny day.



The beautifully polished loco made a splendid sight when it departed after about 20 minutes to complete a circular tour of Lancashire and West Yorkshire. The tour had started out from Tyseley in Birmingham.

Courtesy: J E Rayner

The Castle class locomotives were built at Swindon works from 1924 onwards. Artistry and engineering skills combined to produce a powerful, elegant locomotive - the nine carriages of the special train were no challenge to 5043.

Two floors of **TATE LIVERPOOL** at ALBERT DOCK are devoted to **an exhibition called 'This is Sculpture' which runs for the rest of this year.** A full range of work includes also paintings where shape is a key element. Classical style sculpture is followed by Degas, Magritte, and installation art. The Jones chair, which so enraged solemn feminists, is included. Anthony Gormley is still

'selling his body' in various forms! There are paintings by Picasso, Nash, and Johns.

The exhibition is cleverly arranged and lit, such that the ensemble is part of the 'wow' factor. It is open daily and admission is free. So take the train to Liverpool to marvel at the skilful, enjoy the delightful - and perhaps laugh at the plain silly!

(Our trip of the month is to the architecture and shops of Liverpool One so a gallery visit could be easily added on!)

ARTICLES

PENSIONERS' PASSES

During April there were **changes to the conditions of use of** the Greater Manchester national bus pass (**pensioners' passes**). The changes arise because of the need to save money following the government's reduction in local authority grants. Given the severity of these cuts the PTE has done well to preserve the main off peak benefits of these cards.

A white A5 flier is available about the changes but some people have found this capable of various interpretations. The subject is complex so here is the ESN attempt to simplify:

****On Saturday and Sunday and after 09.30 on Monday to Friday there is no change at all. You can still use all the same buses (throughout England) and the same local trains and trams as before.***

****Before 09.30 on GM buses, trams and local trains there are no concessionary fares – you pay the full fare for the part of the journey before 09.3.***

****Buses in the Glossop, Wardle and Bacup areas now have their own systems for pre 09.30 on Mon to Fri so ask. There may be a concessionary fare available in those areas on production of the pass but it could be restricted to those who live in those areas. After this time on Mon – Fri the national bus pass is valid for free travel as usual.***

GOTHIC REVIVAL

Many readers will be aware that the Midland railway built a premier hotel (The Midland) in front of their Manchester Central station. The money ran out for the proposed grand station entrance and a small wooden booking office block sufficed until closure - hence the open space between the station's train shed & the hotel opposite.

At the other end of the line things went rather better -an even more opulent hotel was built integral to the station. **The Midland Grand Hotel** at St Pancras railway station was designed by the prolific Victorian architect **George Gilbert Scott** (also St Mark's church, Worsley) using the neo Gothic style. It opened in 1873 with 300 rooms and 5 bathrooms!



The St Pancras Hotel narrowly avoided demolition in the 1960s.

It is an exceedingly impressive gothic revival building.



The hotel closed in the 1930s as it gradually lost business to more modern hotels, and parts of it served as railway back offices. Thanks to the campaigning of the former poet laureate (and Saint?) John Betjeman, along with the Victorian Society it did not follow Hardwick's great Euston Station in being reduced to rubble during the 1960s. However it did remain unused until very recently when it was acquired by the Marriott Hotel group.

The hotel reopened in March 2011 after a £150,000,000 conversion into the modern **St Pancras Renaissance Hotel**. It fronts the great Barlow train shed from which Eurostar expresses leave for France and Belgium, and ageing but still good Inter City 125s run to Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds. The stunning Gothic interiors have been retained with 245 rooms and presumably a much better ratio of bathrooms!



A very fine lounge has been made from what was once the porch for taxis. Not a budget hotel!

Done at a cost of about £600,000 per room this is not a budget hotel – double rooms are from £250 per night. There are stunning bars, restaurants and a ballroom. Cocktails (including Victorian ones) are £7 and main courses are about £15. Chambers are available from £500 per night but this also includes the breakfasts! However this need not be a problem - you can drop hints to your partner as your birthday or Christmas approaches.

Take a look at <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/lonpr-st-pancras-renaissance-london-hotel/> to see more photos or to make a booking.

What a way to start or end a Eurostar break!

Changing trains 3

On the way to Liverpool, **Huyton** is a less well known junction. Some would say deservedly so, but this **is the changing point for St Helens Central**, and has been ever since the closure of the short but important branch line from St Helens Junction to the Central station.

After alighting from the Liverpool train, cross over via the underpass to the opposite platform and 23 minutes later there is a Wigan bound stopping train that takes you to St Helens Central. This is worth visiting even if you don't have work, family, or business there. There are lots of shops, many large stores, a grand Wetherspoon's pub, an impressive brick parish church, a fine town hall, and an excellent glass making museum. For a suggested itinerary for your visit see the FRECCLES website at:

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2059.pdf>

At thirty nine minutes past each hour during the day there is a fast Liverpool train back from St Helens Central to Huyton where you have 13 minutes to cross platforms and catch an Eccles train (Victoria/Stalybridge).

The Wigan bound stopping train on this line also serves the **lesser stations of Prescott, Eccleston Park, Thatto Heath, Garswood and Bryn**. However the return train from these stations to Huyton arrives there with 51 minutes wait for the Eccles train. One way to fill this time is to go under the railway and continue up the lane a short way to Huyton centre. There is a bronze statue of Harold Wilson who was the MP and the shopping centre is quite good (about the size of Eccles but completely modern). This can easily turn into one hour and fifty one minutes - then you arrive back in Eccles with all your groceries!

Please note that **Bryn is in Greater Manchester** and it is therefore cheaper to go from Eccles via Victoria and the two Wigan stations on a GM ticket.

More changes of train at Lime Street next month.

MORE RAILWAY HOLIDAYS

Great Rail Journeys are offering a selection of escorted rail holidays called 'The British Isles Collection'. The holidays last between 5 and 8 days in some of the most scenic parts of the country. ESN thought they look interesting so here we are:

Highland Adventure *Breathtaking scenery and fantastic journeys by mainline and steam railways; this tour takes in the very best of northern Scotland, from the mysterious Loch Ness to the majestic highland landscapes from a base in Inverness.* 10 departures 6 days from £425

Yorkshire and Northumberland *Travel on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway and the Settle to Carlisle line to discover the wild beauty and rich history of these two counties. Explore York, Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne, Bamburgh Castle and beautiful Alnwick gardens.*

15 departures 8 days from £595

Railways and Castles of Wales *Stay in the Victorian seaside town of Llandudno and discover the great beauty of North West Wales on the Snowdon Mountain Railway, Welsh Highland Railway and the Ffestiniog Railway. Visit Caernarfon castle, Conwy castle, beautiful Bodnant Gardens and Portmeirion.*

14 departures 6 days from £565

Norwich and the Norfolk Broads *Historic Norwich provides the base to explore the unspoilt Norfolk coast and beautiful Broads. Cruise reedy waterways from Wroxham, take vintage steam trains in the gentle countryside and visit Sandringham.* 7 departures 5days from£398

To find out more see www.GreatRail.com or to request a free brochure call 01904 730844.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 89** which is

'LIVERPOOL – ONE FOR SHOPPING'

Liverpool One has a huge number of shops. The finest of modern architecture combined with good design of public space and the exclusion of road traffic makes this a tranquil and impressive experience. If you haven't shopped in the new Liverpool then you haven't shopped!

It is a medium length walk – an easy stroll. You will find astounding architecture, shops, shops, cafes, bars, shops, pubs, art centre and more shops!

The rail fare is £10.40 day return from Eccles, the journey is just under an hour. For the itinerary see:

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2089.pdf>

NB At the half way point of this visit you can cross The Strand to **ALBERT DOCK** for a visit to **TATE LIVERPOOL** in order to view the sculpture exhibition.

MAY FARE BARGAIN:

WAYFARER TICKETS.

Valid all day on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and after 09.30 on ordinary Mondays to Fridays, **WAYFARER tickets cover trams, trains and buses**. This is **not just in Greater Manchester** but also includes parts of Lancashire, Cheshire, West Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. It's great for getting out to wander in the countryside, visiting picturesque villages or just to take scenic bus or train rides. **It's cheap too** - comparing very favourably with the cost of a coach excursion!

*An adult Wayfarer costs £10 for the day.

*A concession Wayfarer is only £5. Valid for 5 – 15yrs or 60+ **these do not require any special permit** but you could be asked to prove your age.

*A group Wayfarer (for up to four with a maximum of two adults) is available for £20.

Wayfarer tickets can be purchased at Eccles station booking office during the mornings on Monday to Saturday. You scratch off the date before your first journey so you don't have to use the ticket there and then. You can hold one for future use, especially on Sundays of course.

The potential can't be covered in a few words so look at the details at the address below. It includes a map of the travel area and a rail diagram for where the ticket is valid.

http://www.tfgm.com/journey_planning/tickets_wayfarer.cfm?submenuheader=1 .

Enjoy your exploring this summer!

FARE TIP

If you don't have the "over sixties" rail card then the concessionary Wayfarer is a good way to save money on the train outside GMPTE borders. What is more

surprising is that even if you have both a GMPTE pass **and** over 60s railcard it can be cheaper to buy the £5 concession Wayfarer when going to stations a few stops outside Greater Manchester. For example; to Hathersage would cost £6 or Buxton £5.50 using your cards. So ask Stuart to check this for you before you go.

EDITORIAL

TIMES MUST CHANGE.

A small but important point: on Monday 11th April 2011 there was reference in The Times to the squeezed middle being hurt by 'food and petrol prices'. In the cited example, the motorist mindset has affected the journalist's choice of phrase, and/or the public vocabulary being reported upon. Analysis and education are as much part of journalism as is reportage, but not always present even in the quality press. Let ESN bring some balance to the issue.

Exactly what dietary function does this liquid serve? Which vitamins, minerals and major nutrients does it provide to its consumers? There is no doubt that the petrol price has risen, but it is not the staff of life.

Most of the rise (possibly all) can be negated anyway, by common sense driver measures: drive carefully; accelerate slowly; brake gradually; let the car coast; don't do short journeys; on motorways drive at the optimum mpg speed for the engine, car share, and next time you buy a car choose a high mpg model.

That is not all by any means. ESN would also suggest (quite heretically) using the car less often: take the bus and train occasionally. This is easy to do in a great city area like this - the barrier is often psychological.

SERIOUS MATTERS.

There are murmurings of an April fools' article in the last issue of this organ. In response it must be said that ESN, in common with other red top publications (yes, look!), aspires to the highest standards of British journalism. Like our sister publications we take pride in factual, morally uplifting content.

Is it therefore to be expected that ESN would indulge in such flippant tomfoolery? The editor trusts that readers will look at the evidence, weigh it carefully, and make their own judgements.

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

