

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

MAY 2012

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

News section, Articles. Trip of the Month Editorial

ESN is suffering a carryover effect of last month's news glut but we struggle on. There is even more news this month!

*To save space we have combined '**Trip of the Month**' into our Preston Guild article -it is a lovely easy stroll through a delightful area. It is of medium length and a possibility for wheel chair users.*

There is a 'What's On' for the month at Preston Guild, news of railway improvements, plenty links to other web sites, and an investigation of some strange figures in other publications. As if that's not enough, in response to popular demand there are now more pictures than ever!

The Editor.

NEWS

Freccles members will be doing the garden on Sunday 6th May. Come along to see what we are doing and have a chat with us.

Incidentally, many thanks to the nice lady who runs Eccles Community Art Gallery (we shall mention no names), for e-mailing a query about the garden picture contained in the April 1st edition of ESN.



Talking of having a chat, Bernard Marron demonstrates his skill with the rake on one of our previous gardening days.

Photo J E Rayner

*State spending on public transport is estimated to be **far higher in London than anywhere else**. This is not just because of the greater population – the spending per inhabitant is much greater too. Look at the per capita per annum figures:*

*London **£802***

*North West **£333***

*Yorkshire & Humber **£272***

*North East **£248***

Take comfort that our region doesn't come last!

March saw the completion of 14 months of renovation work at **Chester General Station**. Network Rail replaced the canopy over all seven platforms, and **architects BDP designed new passenger facilities** including more waiting rooms, a new travel centre, and a new cafe area – all of which are architecturally related in having verdigris plating. For images see: <http://www.bdp.com/Projects/By-Name/A-E/Chester-Station/>

*That damned **Aeolian Sculpture** is never out of the newspapers, now it is in London (a place south of Manchester). It was never mentioned when at Salford Docks (sorry Salford Quays, oops Media City UK). **It's second hand!** In fair exchange Media City got a second hand Blue Peter Garden from London. **What on earth has this got to do with Eccles Station?***



The Aeolian Sculpture, where it is no longer. The spot is now an attractive modern formal garden, part of which is the Blue Peter garden.

Photo J E Rayner.

The **summer rail timetable comes in on Monday May 14th** so do check your train times before you travel. If any major changes occur locally we shall mention them in the June edition.

Observant customers will have noticed the markings made on the Eccles platforms recently. These are the locations for the gantries that will carry the electric wires

Photo: J E Rayner



As part of the new timetable to be introduced on May 14th, **Arriva Trains Wales** will **increase the number of seats** by 340,000 per annum on some of its most popular routes. This is in response to rising demand and will be achieved by better utilisation of current rolling stock. Of local interest are extra seats and extra services between **Chester to Llandudno Junction** in the mid-

afternoon and evening commuter period, and improved connections with **ferry services from Ireland at Holyhead.**

*During April **Virgin Trains** began the introduction of longer train sets onto routes from London to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. **The Pendolinos are now 11 carriages long** providing 150 extra seats on some of the busiest services on the West Coast Main Line. Each train will now have 589 passenger seats – over 440 of these for standard class passengers.*

***Four new eleven coach trains** are being built and 62 additional vehicles to convert the 31 existing nine carriage sets to 11 coaches. When all of the extra carriages are in service they will provide over 10 million extra seats on the West Coast Main Line every year.*



A Virgin Pendolino awaits departure from Preston station.

Courtesy J E Rayner

The **new Chetham's School building is almost complete.** It is on the site of the old Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway offices on Hunt's Bank opposite Victoria Station. The building is large, and is in a stone-like colour. Some of the aspects are quite impressive but unfortunately it presents a very plain face to the station exits and so has not had universal acclaim.



This is a more interesting face of the new building on Hunt's Bank than the one staring at the decorative facade of Victoria Station.

Photo J E Rayner

*Freccles got a mention in **LANCASHIRE magazine** last month as part of a full photo article on Eccles. If you want to take a look it starts at page 18 in this on line copy of a very attractive fellow publication.*

<http://www.thelancashiremagazine.com/ezine/lm/2012-03/#/18/zoomed>

(Turn the pages by putting the hand over the bottom corner and clicking.

Steam locomotive number 60163 'Tornado' will be at the **Ribble Steam Railway** from Saturday 26th May until Tuesday 29th. The Ribble Steam Railway is down at Preston Docks which has been transformed into an attractive part of the city to visit.

Although the last of this class (designed by Peppercorn) was scrapped by BR in 1966, enthusiasts raised the money to **build this Tornado from scratch!**

Courtesy of J E Rayner



*The **Barrow Hill Rail Ale Festival** will be held on **Friday 18th and Saturday 19th of this month**. You may remember we ran an article about it last year after the event – here is advance warning!*

*If you want to go then travel by train to **Chesterfield station** and there is a **free bus service** from the station to the festival. See: <http://www.barrowhill.org/links/railale.pdf>*

Ale service and LNER Pacific locomotive 'Blue Peter' at last year's Barrow Hill Rail Ale Festival.

Courtesy of J E Rayner



Home Secretary Theresa May has announced a **budget of £5,000,000** for a special police team to **combat metal theft**. This is good news but ESN notes the **continued silence about the role of sentencing** in helping to sort out this problem. A similar omission in the report on the “riots” led to criticism from Dr Derrick Campbell. See: <http://www.metro.co.uk/news/894435-riots-were-caused-by-government-going-soft-on-criminals>

The cost to Network Rail rose by 18% to **£18.3 million** last year despite 15% fewer incidents. Passenger delays fell by 6% to 5,734hours. **Notice that passengers are victims of these malefactors in two ways** – paying higher fares and having disrupted journeys.

ARTICLES



2012 PRESTON GUILD YEAR

WHAT'S ON AT PRESTON THIS MONTH:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Monday 7 th | 5k road running races for a Guild Series medal. 10.00 Avenham Park |
| Monday 13 th | Outgoing Mayor's service and procession. |
| Wednesday 16 th | Guild Mayor-Making ceremony. |
| Thursday 17 th | The Continental's Beer Festival. 100+ real beverages. Free entry. Runs till... |
| Saturday 19 th | Last day of the beer festival. |
| Saturday 26 th | Carnival King and Queen Competition. |
| Saturday 26 th | Tornado at the Ribble Steam Railway until |
| Tuesday 29 th | Last day of Tornado's visit to Ribble Steam Railway. |

For more Guild details see: <http://www.prestonguild2012.com/whats-on>

PENWORTHAM PERAMBLE.

This is a lovely, easy walk by the side of the River Ribble. There is plenty of interest on the way, and the choice of a very good riverside pub or a modern pavilion cafe towards the end.

Alight at Preston railway station and leave through the main exit. At the top of the approach road turn right along Fishergate. *Over the road is the powerful architecture of the Baptist Church, which nevertheless has the most slender of lancet windows along the side street.*

When you come to Chapel Street, turn right down it. *On your left is the Municipal Swimming Baths of 1910. This is a joke! In fact it is St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Church of 1798. Do go in to see its splendid interior.*

Continue down the street to Winkley Square. *There are fine Georgian buildings around a formal park.*

Continue ahead to where the street bends to the left and go through the park gates opposite. This is Avenham Park. *To your right is the Japanese Garden and Swiss Chalet.*

Take the left hand path which goes along below the gardens of the houses adjacent to the park. *This is the path of the old tramway that linked the northern and southern sections of the Lancaster Canal.*

On your left you will see a Victorian belvedere. *The large house behind it was the home of the founder of Booth's Supermarkets.*

Continue down through a grotto and cross the river Ribble on the tramway bridge.

Turn right off the tramway down to the river bank and then left along that bank with the river on your right (*notice that the river is tidal here*).

Go under a railway viaduct (*this once carried the East Lancashire Railway lines to Blackburn and beyond*).

Now on the far side of the river is Miller Park and above that the large Victorian former Park Hotel *where Queen Victoria once stayed*.

Next go under a collection of viaducts that carry the west coast mainline over the river. Continue along the river passing the remains of another viaduct. *It used to carry the West Lancashire Railway lines into Preston from Southport.*

You are now in Penwortham village. Turn right over the pack horse bridge - *this used to be a main road.*

At the far side turn right along the other bank of the Ribble. *Notice the flood defences.*

As you approach the viaducts carrying the main line there is a pub on your left called The Continental. *This is a tastefully modern establishment serving a number of excellent real ales, and there is a good menu on offer. The garden is a pleasant sun trap in the afternoons, and the pub is also a venue for a wide variety of cultural activities. See: <http://newcontinental.net/home>*

From the pub continue under the viaduct into Miller Park. *Notice the statue of The Earl of Derby on the terrace.*

Continue on the river bank to go under the next viaduct. At this point take the path to the left of the modern Pavilion Cafe. *This is a good stop for tea or coffee and snacks.*

Follow the path's gentle curve right with the Japanese Garden on your left. Continue uphill to leave through the gates where you first entered the park on this walk.

Walk back along past Winkley Square to the main road. At Fishergate, turn left to continue to the railway station. *As you go left onto the station approach road you see the attractive little chateau that is the station building.*

MEDIUM LENGTH, EASY (a possibility for wheelchair users who have a strong pusher!) ARCHITECTURE, PARKS, VIEWS, RIVER, PUB, CAFE

The rail fare is £10.70 off peak return for an adult from Eccles Station – cheaper for children and rail card holders. The journey takes about 1hr 20mins changing at Victoria and Bolton.

FARE TIP

If you have a valid Greater Manchester County card or Travel card you can book a Bolton to Preston return and this will be cheaper still!

Changing trains 14

Arriva Trains Wales (Trenau Arriva Cymru) runs hourly trains from Manchester Piccadilly to Llandudno. These call at Warrington Bank Quay, Frodsham, Helsby, Chester, Flint, Prestatyn, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno Junction, Deganwy (request stop) and Llandudno. However from Eccles it is usually better to change to or from these services at Newton le Willows, rather than going to Piccadilly.

First Trans Pennine Express runs trains from Piccadilly (and Oxford Road) to Bolton, Chorley, Preston, and then on to Blackpool or else to Lancaster then onto one of the following destinations: Barrow, Windermere, Edinburgh or Glasgow. On a Sunday when trains from Eccles run into Piccadilly it is best to alight at Oxford Road to change onto these services. On Monday to Saturday you can take a tram from Victoria to Piccadilly, but a quick way to connect to them from Eccles is to swap to the Clitheroe train at Victoria (usually adjacent platform and a few minutes after arrival), alight at Bolton and cross over to platform 1 to catch the First train a few minutes later.

The other stations served are:

Preston, Poulton le Fylde, **Blackpool**.

Lancaster, Carnforth, Silverdale*, Arnside, Grange over Sands, Kents Bank*, Cark and Cartmel*, Ulverston, Dalton*, Roose*, **Barrow in Furness**.

Lancaster, Oxenholme, Kendal, Burneside*, Staveley*, **Windermere**.

Lancaster, Oxenholme, Penrith, Carlisle, Lockerbie and thence to Motherwell then **Glasgow** Haymarket and **Edinburgh**.

**not all trains stop at these stations.*

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.

FIDDLING THE FIGURES?

Some of you will have seen in newspapers during April an article about a 'Which?' magazine report concerning railway passenger satisfaction (or apparently the lack thereof). The resulting flurry of articles displayed the journalistic jeering style of the 70s and 80s when railways could do no right. For example it appeared in the Metro under the heading:

“Blast for ‘overcrowded, late and expensive’ trains.”

ESN was puzzled by the table of figures quoted from the 'Which' report, as the low journey satisfaction scores therein conflicted with much other published data. Almost all of this other data shows much higher satisfaction scores and to illustrate this look at this table:

OPERATOR	WHICH: % of people satisfied with journey	PASSENGER FOCUS: % overall satisfaction
Virgin Trains	64	89
Merseyrail	60	93
East Midlands Trains	57	87
Cross Country	56	82
Arriva Trains Wales	56	84
First TransPennine	54	84
Northern	49	83

Quite a difference! The two number columns are not a direct comparison (that was not possible) but Passenger Focus publishes wads of data about all aspects of journeys, stations etc and these separate data are then combined in the above overall satisfaction scores. Almost all the separate aspects have much better scores than the 'Which?' figures anyway, and are similar to the second column.

Passenger Focus surveys large numbers of passengers, so its figures should be reliable, and ATOC Chief Executive Michael Roberts points out that their samples are about ten times the size of ‘Which?’ samples. So we could expect the two sets of figures to disagree in a random way – some higher some lower- but the ‘Which?’ numbers are **systematically lower** than those of Passenger Focus – definitely arousing suspicion. ‘Which?’ magazine is a regular provider of survey data so we ought to be able to trust it, surely? ESN was stumped!

What is going on with these figures? We were delighted to find the answer in a RAIL MAGAZINE column researched by Christian Wolmar. It arises from the way the raw data is cooked for presentation. Any reasonable person would use a simple recipe and expect a mediocre result of 50% based on marks 0 to 4, but by awarding very high marks to the “very satisfied” results it is possible to have a mediocre mark that is much lower (27% or 31% say). This is how ‘Which?’ has processed its raw data. The result is a set of numbers that show performance appearing to be much worse than reality, and that coincidentally generate attention grabbing, dubious headlines.

Compared to a mediocre result of 31% the ‘Which?’ figures are actually an indicator of good performance – but only if you know the trickery! ESN is not at all certain why a consumer champion should present its results in a way which could mislead readers that do not know the methodology.

The conclusions from ESN are:

Trust the Passenger Focus presentation of the results.

Satisfaction levels could continue to improve but are high.

Be sceptical about the British Press – especially when in ‘rail-bashing’ mode.

We need an editorial that points out what the railways are doing right!

Here is the rationale behind the above article. Skip this if you don’t want the technicalities.

The questions in the surveys were five option multiple choice ones with the responses ranging from ‘a’-“very dissatisfied” to ‘e’-“very satisfied”. Now any sensible person’s recipe would give these marks on a linear scale of 1 to 5 (or possibly better 0 to 4). Then if every respondent picked answer ‘c’ – “satisfied” the score would be 60% (or possibly better 50%) on the survey.

In contrast 'Which?' Magazine's recipe awarded 1 mark to 16 marks for the answers! ESN would presume that this was in the geometric progression 1, 2, 4,8,16, Notice that if everyone answers 'c' – "satisfied" the survey result is only 25%. (4 marks out of a possible 16). If five people give a different answer the mediocre result is only about 39%. (1+2+4+8+16 = 31 marks out of possible 5x16 =80. 31/80 is 39%.) Bizarrely the method used by 'Which?' would give an even lower- 31% to this last case, so it would appear that their weightings of the answers are not in an obvious progression. If we divided by the mediocre result for each column then the two sets don't look quite so different:

OPERATOR	WHICH: % of people satisfied with journey divided by 31	PASSENGER FOCUS: % overall satisfaction divided by 50
Virgin Trains	2.06	1.78
Merseyrail	1.94	1.86
East Midlands Trains	1.84	1.74
Cross Country	1.81	1.64
Arriva Trains Wales	1.81	1.68
First TransPennine	1.74	1.68
Northern	1.58	1.66

PUBLIC NOTICE

MAYORAL AND LOCAL COUNCILLOR ELECTIONS

On May 3rd

Elections for a Salford Mayor and many local councillors take place.

Many people regard voting as a civic duty, and in some countries there is a fine for not taking part. There are states where people would be ONLY TOO GLAD to be able to take part in free and fair elections.

Don't waste this valuable civic liberty – get down to the polling station.

CAST YOUR VOTE!

SHOCK HORROR DISASTER.

The Editor feels the need to reflect this month on the disastrous results of privatisation of the railways, and the consequent poor performance of the franchise operators. The resulting dog's dinner is providing a field day for many journalists, who thrive on bad news!

Since this short-sighted and misguided policy was introduced we have seen nothing but improved reliability and punctuality; more trains running than ever; passenger numbers growing each year (*back up to the levels of the 1920s*); many value fares (*as evidenced in our Bargain Fares articles*); increasingly civil train staff; a multitude of ongoing station improvements; clock face timetables; better information systems; new train services; a significant fall in the average age of rolling stock; maintained infrastructure (*as opposed to 'maintenance holidays' under BR*); and more goods carried by rail. All of this is combined with higher average wages for rail staff and a passenger safety record that is the best ever achieved -it is no wonder that so many critics hope for renationalisation.

Things were so much better before, weren't they? Or perhaps it is a case of "What have the Romans ever done for us?"

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

