

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

NOVEMBER 2011

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

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

NEWS

The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is to Wigan, a bustling town centre, and very cheap to get there. It makes use of the final set of connections at Manchester Victoria mentioned in our CHANGING TRAINS article.

*The next **gardening days** at the station are at 11.00am on Sundays November 6th and December 4th. Do come along for a bit of exercise and participation at your own pace.*

Sadly, our rain soaked 2010 Station Open Day did not win any prizes for Freccles at the ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships) Community Rail awards in Sheffield this September, but we were one of the 5 short listed from the 19 entries and the only railway marketing event organised by a single group to get shortlisted! We thought it was brill anyway and we have our **award winning station garden** as compensation!

(As an aside, it is good to note that our Colleagues at Friends of Hindley Station were rewarded with their runner up place in the Best Station Garden award

category this year. Their garden is well worth a visit (see the 'CHANGING TRAINS' section for how to get there!)

*Alliance Rail's bid to run services on the West Coast Main line includes various improvements at Eccles station. It is hoped that this will include installation of **two passenger lifts** to allow **disabled access**. It is thought that the work would cost roughly one million pounds.*

There is talk of the railway line through Eccles becoming much busier in 2013, when the electrification is completed from Deansgate to Parkside. Not only will the route be the obvious choice for diversion of West Coast services during maintenance work on that line, but it is possible that First Trans Pennine Express services will use electric rolling stock to run from Manchester Airport to Glasgow and Edinburgh through Eccles.

*Philip Hammond was transferred to the Ministry of Defence on 14th October to replace Liam Fox as Defence Secretary. His replacement as Transport Secretary is **Justine Greening**.*

If you are going to Liverpool for a day then pick up the Northern Leaflet 'Visit Liverpool by train.' **This has two for one vouchers** covering 'Age of the Dinosaur', Mersey Ferries, Tate Liverpool Cafe, City Sightseeing bus, Liverpool Cathedral Tower, and The Beatles Story. The vouchers for the dinosaur exhibition are valid till April 15th 2012; the others are valid till 31st December 2011.

The Friends of Patricroft Station (FrOPS) will be holding their Annual General Meeting on Thursday 10th November. It is at 19.00, and the venue is the community room at the back of Eccles Fire Station off Green Lane in Patricroft. The meeting will include a report on progress at Patricroft station during 2011. Apart from the formal business there will be Talks by Jon Clee and Anna Guinness from Network Rail about the electrification of the Liverpool to Manchester railway line. More of this work will be starting in December this year so here is chance to find out the full details.

ARTICLES

MORE CARRIAGES?

Northern Rail is due to receive some extra carriages to help with the growth of passenger numbers. These are not new but come from the London Midland franchise which has now received new class 172 passenger carriages. The process is known as cascading. In this process the Ministry of Transport has decided that Northern will receive eight x two car 150 sets and seven x two car 142 pacer sets. The latter are the bus-like 'Nodding Donkeys'.

Unfortunately the exercise is something like musical chairs – in turn Northern will lose four x two-car 156 sets and three x five-car 180 sets to other operators. **ESN notes that this is a net gain of one carriage!** It could be argued also that it is a reduction in quality of rolling stock - the 150s lost are better riding than the class 142 Nodding Donkeys that will replace them.

However there are eight carriages left over after this reshuffling by the DoT. They are non standard oddities (but presumably four x two-car sets) and it is thought Greater Manchester Transport is likely to pay for these to come to the Manchester area.

Apart from these there must be another source of rolling stock because the managing director of Northern, Ian Bevan is expecting a total of sixty extra carriages by December of this year. These should provide seating for an extra 2,200,000 peak hour passengers over the course of 2012.

LOCAL AREA INVESTMENT.

Two network Rail employees attended Eccles Station on Thursday 13th October as part of the consultative process for area investment plans. These plans cover Liverpool and Manchester electrification, Ordsall Chord and Victoria Station.

The Ordsall Chord plan is fully funded. After the consultations and detailed design work it will go to the national infrastructure committee for permission

to proceed. Its construction would allow trains from West Yorkshire to travel through Victoria and Piccadilly to Manchester Airport.

The funding is also granted for the Victoria alterations which will include two new bay platforms at the Eccles end; two more tram platforms; improved passenger facilities; more retail outlets, and the much needed new roof. This work will require the approval of English Heritage, and of the planning committee of Manchester City Council. If the graphic on the cover of the leaflets is to be believed then Network Rail will be providing flying saucers in the City Centre (in place of the little Metro buses?).

North West electrification is also funded. This covers the routes Manchester – Newton – Liverpool; Liverpool – St Helens – Wigan, and Victoria – Bolton – Blackpool. The work should be completed in 2016. All the work will be carried out at nights or weekends to minimise inconvenience to travellers. It is felt that the alternative of full closure of the routes for a few months instead would not be acceptable. The combination of these projects should greatly increase the capacity of the railways in the North West.

However any increase in rail service for Eccles will be decided when the new franchises are awarded in 2013 (vide infra ↓). In the run up to these awards political pressure will be required to increase the service at Eccles. Freccles will be working on this but will need the active support of local politicians and transport organisations.

REVISED RAIL FRANCHISES.

Current rail franchises are of short duration (about 7 years) and prescribe in detail the timetables and other conditions that operators must meet. However they are due for renewal. The first to be issued will be for Intercity West Coast which will start operations in December 2012. Most others will then follow over the succeeding twelve months.

Of note are the extensions granted by the government to First Trans Pennine Express and to Northern (operator of the Eccles services). This means both of

these will continue to operate until April 2014 at least, because the government is wondering whether to merge these two or group their services in some other way.

How will the new franchises differ? They are expected to give the operators more freedom to decide what trains to run and also they are likely to last much longer. There is talk of a period of fifteen years or so. A much longer duration makes sense in an industry with very long planning and maintenance cycles. For example rolling stock typically serves for 25 years on the railways, and maintenance cycles of 50 or even 100 years can apply for the infrastructure.

According to the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), such changes should bring fundamental improvements to running of the railway. They state that they would allow greater investment opportunities, more responsiveness to passenger demand and also operational cost reductions.

Changing trains 9

This article covers the last of the connections available from Manchester Victoria. These services are to Wigan, Southport and Liverpool. Travel for these can be via Bolton or via Swinton and Atherton. Clifton, Kearsley, Farnworth, and Moses Gate are not dealt with as the services are restricted and you are much better off using the number 22 bus from Eccles for these places.

There are two lines between The Crescent and Hindley where they rejoin giving two routes to Wigan Wallgate:

VIA BOLTON: Salford Central, Salford Crescent, Bolton, Westhoughton, Hindley, Ince, and **Wigan Wallgate***.

VIA ATHERTON: Salford Central, Salford Crescent, Swinton, Moorside, Walkden, Atherton, Hag Fold, Daisy Hill, **Hindley**, Ince, and **Wigan Wallgate***.

From Wigan these trains can then go either to Southport or Kirkby.

SOUTHPORT LINE: Gathurst, Appley Bridge, Parbold, Hoscar, Burscough Bridge*, New Lane, Bescar Lane, Meols Cop, and **Southport**.

KIRKBY LINE: Pemberton, Orrell, Upholland, Rainford, and **Kirkby** (for frequent Mersey Rail trains to Liverpool)

Wigan is a sizeable shopping centre. Southport has the elegance of Lord Street, a pier, and a beach which sometimes accommodates some sea. There is attractive hilly countryside around Gathurst*, Appley Bridge, and Parbold; but the flatter countryside around Burscough Bridge* has its own charms and nearby is the lovely Rufford Old Hall. The asterisks show that there is a handy itinerary available at <http://www.freccles.org.uk/trips.asp>

The train to Victoria from Eccles is often delayed by signals but if you are given a clear run in there is just a couple of minutes to dash over to platform three for the Southport train. If you miss it (common) it is as well to get the Clitheroe train to Salford Crescent for a Southport train from there. There is an alternative Wigan train from Victoria about 25 minutes after arrival.

Next month we shall start to cover the multitude of train services available if you take the tram across to Piccadilly.

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 70** which is

WIGAN – TOWN, MARKET & SHOPS

‘There’s more to Wigan than pies and pints,’ at least according to the locals. In fact there are many fine buildings; an outdoor & indoor market (open Monday to Saturday) and an impressive array of shops from old fashioned to modern large stores in the Grand Arcade.



It is a busy town centre – go for a nosey or to shop or both! This is the main street. The modern shops are in the distance, the markets are behind the half timbered buildings, and there is a Wetherspoons on the right.

Image courtesy of J E Rayner

The parish church is an impressive ancient building, between Wallgate Station and the shops.

Image courtesy of J E Rayner



The journey takes about 75 minutes, changing at Manchester Victoria. The adult fare is **only £4.40** based on purchase of the Greater Manchester Day Ranger Ticket which allows travel on any trains in Greater Manchester that day. Children travel half price. GM pensioners go free. Holders of various railcards would get the off peak day return reduced by one third (this should be 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%2070.pdf>

FARE TIP

If you have a Greater Manchester senior citizen's pass or hold a valid GM 'Bus Card Extra' or 'County Train Card', you are covered to Wigan. You can therefore go for free!

NOVEMBER FARE BARGAINS:

CLUB 55.

A REMINDER TO READERS that there are two great bargains on offer for those aged 55 and over. **First Trans Pennine's club55** bargain tickets (on sale till 20th November) allow cheap period return travel (starting at £18) to quite distant places in the north east and north west of the country. **Arriva Trains Wales club 55** lets you go anywhere on the network for £18 period return maximum!

These are not just 'day return' tickets – they are valid for up to one month!

For fuller details see our last two issues at

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/archive.asp> or see the companies' websites for the definitive version.

The tickets can be purchased at Eccles station booking office.

BOOK REVIEW

'THE MOST POWERFUL IDEA IN THE WORLD. A Story of Steam, Industry and Invention.'

by William Rosen. ISBN 9780224082259 Jonathan Cape
£20.00 Available at Eccles Library.

William Rosen formerly worked as an editor and publisher at Macmillan, then Simon & Schuster. This may explain how he comes to be so widely read, and well informed on these topics. The book surveys the vast territory of the history of industry, technology and intellectual property up to 1830 in an easy narrative that is sprinkled with deep insights.

There are some technical flaws in the account. For example the Bersham ironworks of 'Iron Mad Wilkinson' was near Wrexham (not on the Severn); air brakes succeeded vacuum brakes on the railways; the twenty five fire tubes were in Rocket's boiler not the firebox, and it had no condensing system.*

I am nitpicking of course! These do not detract from the general picture painted by this compelling book. One is forced to agree with the jacket blurb saying: 'Astoundingly erudite yet completely accessible, this is a superbly inspiring work about the experiments and accomplishments that led to a revolution, the effects of which still power and plague us today.'

The book is available at Eccles Library.

**ESN would welcome e mail correspondence from readers knowledgeable in these matters!*

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL POLICY

Here is the policy underpinning these editorials and the other content of Eccles Station News.

ESN is a monthly newsletter for and on behalf FRECCLES (The Friends of Eccles Station). It will remain monthly while there is a sufficient supply of news and other topics to maintain this frequency. The content is intended to support the aims of FRECCLES.

The journalistic staff (such as it is) **has complete journalistic freedom.** The Freccles committee does not interfere in the choice of articles and style of coverage. As far as we can tell the Chairman of Freccles has not expressed any desire or intention to dominate world media or to seek political advancement.

The reportage and editorial comments comprise matters of local, community or transport interest. Working with such material ESN tries to be informative and entertaining for the readership; provides information and insight about our local station, Freccles volunteer projects, and railway services.

The publication strives to be one of record. ESN avoids the artificial generation of controversy that so often mars the reportage in our national press; expresses no preference for any political party; tries informing readers

about both the strengths and weaknesses of our rail service and also of the complementary transport systems.

We try to provide informed opinion and put this in separate categories from news items. Our editorials might sometimes ask seemingly awkward questions but this is in order to balance out arguments that seem to be in danger of becoming very one sided.

We promote greater use of Eccles Station. It is an important facility which is valuable for work, business and leisure travel. Eccles would not wish to lose this rail service which will improve if more people use it. In doing this we hope to assist in improving the health and quality of life of Eccles residents. We believe that life is much better if you get out and about occasionally; healthier too if it involves use of public transport and some walking.

So we provide Information, Education and Entertainment! We hope that Lord Reith himself would have been delighted with our publication!

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

