

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

OCTOBER 2011

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

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

NEWS

The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is to Clitheroe. It makes use of the connections at Manchester Victoria mentioned in our CHANGING TRAINS article.

*This month's **bargain fare article** covers the return of the First Trans Pennine club55 bargain tickets which allow cheap return travel to quite distant places in the north east and North West of the country.*

The next **gardening day** at the station is at 11.00 Sunday November 6th. Do come along for a bit of exercise and participation at your own pace.

*The **MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL** is advertised as 'open to the public'. It is housed in the compelling new 'foghorn' or ear trumpet shaped modern building at Pier Head, Liverpool. However a recent visit by ESN found it to be very much a work in progress. Galleries were closed (or not yet open) and our visit was truncated*

by the fire alarms going off as soon as we got into one of the two open galleries. You might want to delay your visit and wait for a future news item on this.

Have your say at The HM Government e petition web site, which is now running. This site allows one to start petitions or add one's e signature to existing petitions. If 100,000 signatures are obtained then Parliament should debate the petition. The listing gives them in order of decreasing support, a completion date is shown and reasons are given for disallowed petitions. What is noticeable is how few signatories there are on topics that seem to generate much heat and light in the media. A lot of the petitions seem to be about justice perhaps bearing out Aristotle's observation: **"The weak are always anxious for justice and equality. The strong pay no heed to either."**

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/>

You might wish to lobby against the inflation plus 3% fare policy or support HS2? Well in that case the petitions can also be viewed by department and the transport ones are at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/departments/10>

Perhaps it is the time of year, but ESN visited Bradford for research purposes and a number of galleries in the excellent National Media Museum were closed for work! There is still plenty to see though: The Kodak Gallery, Television Gallery and IMAX cinema are all splendid. Across the road a new art gallery appears to have opened recently and two galleries were being worked on! There are some fine Victorian buildings in the city too. So keep an eye out for a future news item. Bradford will be worthy of a Freccles 'day out' itinerary when everything is open.

Transport for Greater Manchester has given a cautious welcome to Alliance Rail's renewed bid to run services on the West Coast Main line to London, some of which will go via Eccles and even stop here! They note that the

proposals include £5.5m to improve stations; including 'an upgrade at Eccles to provide a new concourse, ticket office, covered access, toilets, heated waiting areas and the installation of passenger lifts.' Their caution comes from wondering who is going to pay the running costs of the enhanced facilities.

The full response from TfGM can be seen at:

http://www.transportforgreatermanchestercommittee.gov.uk/download/4147/item_09_west_coast_services_update_alliance_rail_track_access_application

Another interesting new website is at <http://www.fixmytransport.com/>. It is for reporting (relatively minor) problems with any public transport. Your complaint is automatically forwarded to the appropriate authority and made public on the website. You can also support an existing complaint. This is worth considering!

A May bulletin from Network Rail gave an outline schedule for electrification in the local area. Manchester (Victoria and Piccadilly) to Newton le Willows through Eccles is due for completion in 2013. This work will include the Parkside links to the west coast main line.

Earlestown to Liverpool will be completed in 2014 allowing through electric trains between the two cities for the first time. At the same time the Huyton to Wigan North Western route will be electrified. Following on Blackpool to Preston will be completed in 2015 and Manchester, Bolton and Chorley to Preston will be finished in 2016. (See editorial)

The Heritage Open Days walks for 'Caked in History' went very well with 7 walkers on Saturday and 9 on Sunday. The Saturday ended with a call in the Patricroft Tavern (Queen's Arms) then the train back to Eccles. (very lazy indeed! Ed.)

*On the Sunday, one of the walkers found a 'double frog' brick abandoned from Hampden Grove and **carried it back to Eccles**. The brick is now destined for a museum in the North East. Many thanks to Liz Charnley & other helpers for these guided walks.*

If you want to know more about the Ordsall Lane Chord and the Northern Hub proposals then Eccles Station will be hosting a Network Rail exhibition on Thursday 13 October. The times are: 07.00 - 09.30, 15.00 - 19.00. This information comes from the Network Rail website - <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/north/Ordsall-Chord.aspx>.

Eccles Community Art Gallery is displaying competitors' entries about the Bridgewater Canal until 8th October. Toddle along to take a look. Mark Charnley, (husband of FRECCLES Secretary, Elizabeth) also has some photos in the exhibition.

The prize winners were chosen on 24th September and prizes were awarded on 1st October by Cllr Eric Burgoyne, Mayor of Salford, to the following artists: Ron Redshaw (Heritage), Julie Porter (Leisure) and Graham Douglas (Scenic.)

It is nice to know that Northern has no plan to close Eccles Station booking office. A large number of these at category D stations have been threatened with closure in a report prepared for the Transport Minister. On the contrary, planning work has started on a new building for Eccles Station.

*Don't forget **Arriva Trains Wales great offer for 55+ travel** - anywhere on the network for £18 return maximum! ESN reporting teams have explored museums in Ironbridge and Herefordshire using Leominster as a base.*

ARTICLES

Changing trains 8

More connecting services at Manchester Victoria are described this month. First of all is the tram service north to **Bury**. This calls at Woodlands Road, Abraham Moss, Crumpsall, Bowker Vale, Heaton Park, Prestwich, Besses o'th'

Barn, Whitefield, Radcliffe and Bury. The trams are every six minutes in the day time and every 12 minutes at other times. It is much quicker to take the train to Victoria than the tram to Piccadilly Gardens.

Heaton Park is spacious and pleasant to visit. There is the splendid Wyatt mansion, wide views and a vintage tram runs near the lake. **Bury** is a great market town, being regularly chosen as the best market in Britain. There are modern shops in new arcades and also at the new Rock development (which is a fine, enjoyable public space). Take a look at the Wetherspoon's conversion of The Art Picture House across from the bus station. The additional Victorian buildings, an art gallery and museum, The Fusiliers' Museum and the East Lancashire Railway station make this a 'Must go!' place.

At Victoria you can also change to trains going north through **Bolton** to **Blackburn** and **Blackpool**. On the Blackburn route trains go to Salford Central, Salford Crescent, Bolton, Hall i'th' Wood, Bromley Cross, Entwistle*, Darwen*, Blackburn, Ramsgreave & Wilpshire, Langho, Whalley, and Clitheroe*. There is plenty to do and see on this route – Whalley with its ruined abbey, Clitheroe – an unspoilt market town with a castle and a famous sausage maker, and the countryside around Entwistle and Darwen. The asterisks show that there is a handy itinerary available at <http://www.freccles.org.uk/trips.asp>

On the **Blackpool** line trains call at Salford Central, Salford Crescent, Bolton, Lostock, Horwich Parkway, Blackrod, Aldington, Chorley, Leyland, Preston, Kirkham & Wesham, Poulton le Fylde, and Blackpool North. The tower at Blackpool has been refurbished, and Preston is a fine town with an excellent museum and art gallery, the lovely Avenham Park stretching down to the river, and a well hidden redeveloped docks area. **Perhaps another Freccles itinerary is deserved here! More train connections next month!**

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 97** which is

CLITHEROE– TOWN AND CASTLE

A lovely train ride through fine countryside takes you to this stone market town. With old fashioned shops, a lovely park, and the castle perched on a prominent rock, it is a very attractive place.

The journey takes one and three quarter hours. The adult day return fare is **only £9.30**. Children travel half price and there is a third off for holders of various railcards. It is a good trip out without doubt. So 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%2097.pdf>

FARE TIP

If you have a Greater Manchester senior citizen's pass or hold a valid GM 'Bus Card Extra' or 'County Card', you are covered to Bromley Cross. Ask at Eccles for a Bromley Cross to Clitheroe return and this will cost **£6.90** only. Even less with a Senior Rail Card!

OCTOBER FARE BARGAIN:

CLUB 55 with First Trans Pennine.

Club 55 is a great value way for people over 55 to travel with FirstGroup. If you're aged 55 or over, you can buy these discounted FirstGroup train tickets in England, Wales and Scotland from 19 September to 20 November 2011. Tickets start from £20 return (£35 First Class), and price depends on zones travelled -add £15 for each extra zone you go into. All Club 55 tickets are Off-Peak return tickets, and tickets are valid for return travel up to one calendar month from the date of outward travel.

You don't need to be a Senior Railcard holder, and you can buy tickets as many times as you like within the promotional period. So whether it's a long distance journey, or just down the track, now is the perfect time to get out and about with FirstGroup trains and Arriva Trains Wales.

The £20 zone takes you to Windermere, Penrith, Carlisle, Sheffield, Grimsby, Cleethorpes, York, Scarborough, Thirsk, Middlesbrough, Durham or Newcastle. £35 will take you to Glasgow, Edinburgh, or to the south west of England as far as Penzance! See the map to work it out yourself!

The offer is to be found at <http://www.tpexpress.co.uk/special-offers/20/club-55.htm>

The map is at <http://www.tpexpress.co.uk/MediaLibrary/club55/map2011.pdf>

The tickets can be purchased at Eccles station booking office.

BOOK REVIEW

'An Illustrated Historical Survey of a Great Provincial Station MANCHESTER LONDON ROAD.'

by John Hooper. ISBN 1899624058. Book Law/Railbus Publications 2006 £9.99

A soft backed A4 book of 64 pages packed with black and white photographs covering the era when Piccadilly Station was 'London Road' up to and including the 1960's rebuilding. All this of course is prior to the Health and Safety at Work acts. Some of the photos show the equal and opposite approach to work practices!

There are plans of the 1875 and 1938 track layouts included - neither seems particularly logical. There were fewer platforms but many more tracks and the preponderance of goods provision is striking. There is no doubt that the modern station is much better for passengers.

The photos are sheer nostalgia (as well as documentary) and all in black and white. This does not matter because there was little colour in Manchester then. When the original buildings were there, we all thought stone was black!

Take a look at this book for indulgence or to see just how much the place has changed.

HANDS OFF THE PENSIONER PASS

Occasionally since the election of the current government there have been journalists and letter writers suggesting ending the pensioner travel pass. This enthusiasm for Mr Osborne's budget balancing is usually accompanied by comments along the lines that the passes make no difference, or cost a lot of money but hardly anyone uses them. Perhaps in the world of hefty five-figure (or even six-figure) salaries on the national newspapers; multiple car ownership, inherited wealth and second houses in the Cotswolds this observation might be true.

However ESN sees a different world: large numbers of senior citizens do use the pass to get about and more do get out following its introduction. They go to meet family and friends or to shop with them; to take a look around the area; to have a walk; to do their own shopping etc. With the current rate of increase in fares, the incomes of the majority of pensioners are not going to stretch to fund these activities without the pass. Do you see the state pension rising to a value such that the passes are not necessary?

Alternatively, our senior citizens could stop going out - perhaps they should shop only once a month too - hardly a reward for a life of service. Should they lose the health benefits of getting out and about and meeting friends on a regular basis? The NHS could pick up the resultant bills for that. What if we do not tempt those drivers whose age is diminishing their skills out of their cars? Insurance costs and the NHS would cop for it!

The cost of the system has been reduced recently by removing the peak time travel privilege which the pass conferred. If looked at as a public transport subsidy, at least it is related to a group of customers using the services rather than being money without conditions attached. Society and the environment will also gain if a few people are tempted out of their cars onto communal transport by having a pensioners' pass.

It is not all downside for the taxpayer – and almost all taxpayers will be pensioners one day!

HIDDEN MEANING?

Phillip Hammond, the current transport secretary, stated during September that the railways are already a toy for the rich. He gave as an example 'eye wateringly expensive fares on the West Coast Mainline' and the fact that train passengers are on average better off than the general population. Is this an attempt to justify the higher fares, or for a return to the Thatcher years' policy that rail travel is a luxury that should not be subsidized, or for rail closures? ESN does not know and only time will tell.

Let us examine why the words of Mr Hammond are perplexing. Undoubtedly high though 'turn up and go' fares are on Virgin West Coast services, there are many very cheap advanced fares available on those trains. Northern's 'turn up and go' fares are very reasonable. **Look at the trip of the month above for an example.** So, some high fares do not generalise to 'a rich man's toy' railway.

A second point is, that if the transport secretary believes what he says, why is he a subscriber to the new government policy of inflation plus three percent fare increases? Surely this only exacerbates the problem he mentions?

Thirdly and clearly, not all rail passengers are rich. Many commute to quite lowly paid shop and office jobs in the large towns and cities. Perhaps they are better off than the general population (which includes many unemployed, disabled, sick, children, students and pensioners after all).

Can you think of any business client group that is not better off on average than the general population? Perhaps Iceland, Pound Shop, Charity Shop and School Tuck Shop customers might fall into this category but it is hard to think of others.

ESN is genuinely puzzled as to what he is getting at. Keep talking, Mr Hammond, so that we might understand you in time!

SLOW PROGRESS.

Picture Brunel's Great Western Railway from Praed Street (Paddington) to Bristol (Temple Meads). It was completed in five years from the first meeting of would be promoters. This was done with picks, spades and wheelbarrows; paper, pencils, pens and ink starting from scratch.

Now fast forward to the early twenty first century which has power drills, bulldozers, JCBs, computers, and who knows what other gadgetry. We then switch to v-e-r-y s-l-o-w m-o-t-i-o-n on our history documentary.

The electrification of about 50 miles of pre-existing railway in the North West is going to take about 5 years to complete. The conversion of the Victoria – Oldham – Rochdale line (about 15 miles) to trams is looking likely to take all of four years. The maligned planning system is not to blame for the above durations which are for execution of planned projects.

Now what is it that takes so much longer to do than 180 years ago? Does this slowness contribute to the incredible cost of such projects in this country? Can anyone enlighten ESN and its readers on this problem? We would be genuinely interested to know the answers.

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

