

ECCLES STATION NEWS

Spring edition

April – June 2018

Welcome to Eccles Station News!

Thanks to Ann Taverner and the station art & heritage group the new artwork on the Liverpool platform was unveiled earlier in March: it is a pair of fine figures by the eminent English sculptor Arroll Clewis. At first a Northern Rail representative was not keen on the installation going ahead, clearly rattled by the thought that these could be interpreted as waiting passengers on a day the RMT takes Industrial Inaction. However, a battle did not take place after all. Mr Clewis says that these figures complement each other perfectly.





Volunteer Eddie Sheehy helping with the gardening work on the last Sunday in March. It was a glorious day – readers who fancy a bit of light sociable work should come along for an hour or two.

Retirement of Veronica Yates.

Freccles member, Veronica Yates, has been gardening on Eccles Station since the group was formed on 2005. For much of the time she has been the Head Gardener and with her remarkable knowledge of plants has taken prime responsibility for garden design, purchase of plants and planting. Under her guidance the group developed and maintained the gardens and planters on the platforms and forecourt leading to FRECCLES receiving awards for Gardening and community involvement in 2010 and 2016.



Veronica has now decided that it is time to retire from this activity and we would like to thank her for her major contribution to the station gardens. We hope to be able to maintain them the the same high standard!

We all wish you well Veronica.

Miscellany.

What's this? It is clearly at Patricroft station and it appears to be a conversion of the brick former waiting hut on the Manchester platform. Done a couple of weeks ago it is now a spacious store shed for the Friends of Patricroft Station (well for their work gear). Volunteers do a lot of make do and mend so it is nice to see some improvements to their facilities.

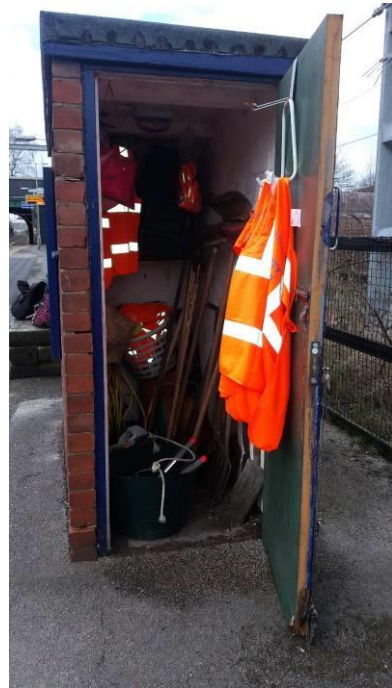


Inspired by this provision, FRECCLES is now planning ways to increase storage space for paraphernalia at Eccles station. A team is working on the design to add another storey to its current brick shed, so it will be commodious as well as convenient.



The FRECCLES storeroom yesterday.

It currently requires a degree of organisation to ensure all items are available and to hand.... There is room for one more storey under the gantry.



The thing about Newton le Willows is it's a very quick journey on the train so with only a short afternoon to spare (and even less personal energy) ESN could pop there to see how the work is going. It's quite a large project by Mersey travel to provide a park and ride station. Already large numbers of cars use it.



The car park on the south of the line is being enlarged. New staircases with lifts are being provided up to both platforms and a new underbridge has been punched through the embankment to link the two sides:



However, that sign on the adjacent garage must be a little worrying for those leaving their cars there:



Newton le willows is a commuter area for work in both Manchester and Liverpool. It would be interesting to know the ticket split Manchester versus Liverpool.

At Newton station there are interesting displays on the history of the line. Outside the station is the Newton viaduct: an attractive structure, and across

the road is Mesnes Park. The village is north of the station, (take the left fork, an artificial lake for Haydock Park is in the Y) and still has a little of the flavour of an estate village. There are a couple of attractive pubs, a lovely late 19th century church, and former gateways to Haydock Park, home of the Legh family who owned Haydock collieries. At the top end of the village a grand arched gatehouse has been converted very attractively into an Italian restaurant.



Earlestown is the next station after Newton Le willows. The place is named after the founder of the railway works. On Friday there is a market around the obelisk on the big market square. ESN bought about 4lbs of tomatoes at the death for £1. On Saturdays it is a car boot sale.





Here is the big brick former town hall for the Newton area. It is showing some signs of subsidence from the colliery working beneath.



A very attractive addition to Earlestown is the new Wetherspoons pub next to the bus station. It is called The Nine Arches (a reference to the nearby viaduct crossing the Sankey valley) and is a lovely conversion of a former school. Definitely a worthwhile relaxing visit with bottomless coffee.



There is a delightful little beer garden and on the walls are titbits of local history: the town was home to a large railway wagon works; the Sankey canal runs by, and just south was the Vulcan Foundry locomotive works (the village is still there). If you fancy exploring, see the itinerary at <http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2048.pdf>





NEW! – cook along with ESN.....

Recipe for 4lbs of tomatoes bought from Earlestown Market.....

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6/400°F.

Slice tomatoes in half onto a roasting tin and drizzle olive oil over them. Sprinkle with salt, black pepper and dried marjoram. Place in the pre-heated oven. (It is important that you do **not** set the oven timer.)

After 2 & ½ hours, remove the roasting tin from the oven & scrape the blackened cinders into the kitchen compost waste bin and wash the roasting tin.

Check contents of your refrigerator or kitchen cupboards for alternative meal options or go to nearest supermarket or other food outlet and purchase ready-prepared evening meal if funds permit.

Yes, ESN's reporter is doing a lot of travelling in a small way. Northern Rail has provided a network pass to help furnish articles for this newsletter, so I'd better use it! One of ESN's favourite little places is Todmorden, an interesting stone-built town nestling in the Pennines on the Calder Valley line. The surroundings

are dramatic. Here is a view over the impressive Town Hall towards Stoodley Pike.



On this visit ESN's reporter though he was just about recovering from the strange first quarter cough and cold (it was back with a vengeance in two days!) so spent a couple of hours reading *The Times* and drinking coffee by the open fire in *The White Hart*. This is a delightful wood panelled country pub near to the station and beautifully preserved by *Wetherspoons*.



Then a visit to the thriving little market hall. This is a must, there is a remarkable Tea and Coffee stall, and *Ham Corner* does excellent pies.



To explore Todmorden see

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2041.pdf> the travel arrangements at the beginning apply only during the current timetable.

Fair Fares (I).

It is not the purpose of this article to go into detail about individual ticket types and their relative advantages: that will follow in some later editions. Rather it is to take a sceptical look at the current media and political clamour to 'simplify' the railways ticket offering. It is useful to this end to do a quick run through the offering and indeed there are many types of rail ticket on sale to the public:

The standard national offerings are as follows:

- Advance - Buy in advance, sold in limited numbers and subject to availability. These tickets are only valid on the date/train specified.
- Off-Peak - Buy any time, travel off-peak.
- Anytime - Buy any time, travel any time.
- Season - Unlimited travel between two stations for a specified period.
- Rovers and Rangers - Unlimited travel within a specified area. There may be a few time restrictions on when you can travel.

Some of the above can be single or return tickets and possibly first class as well. PlusBus can be added to many individual journeys, and then there are railcard discounts available and child fares. It is also possible to do a journey on more than one ticket (so-called 'split ticketing.')

Non- nationally there are often cheaper offers by individual operators at times and on lines to suit the availability of seats; and the permanent regional tickets such as Oyster card in London. Specifically, in Greater Manchester there is a Rail ranger, combined bus/tram/train tickets, System One travel cards and the Peak Wayfarer tickets.

Now that's quite a suite of ticket types on offer, but it doesn't end there because of course there is often more than one route available between two points so there is the potential to book the first four national ticket types as 'by any permissible route', 'via X', or 'via Y'.

At this stage some things are clear.

Firstly it can pay to investigate the prices of the different choices of ticket to suit your travel needs so start by taking a look at the useful leaflet http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/NR_GUIDE_TICKETS_2017.pdf , and then either ask at a railway booking office, or try network rail journey planner <http://ojp.nationalrail.co.uk/service/planjourney/search> or even some of the split ticket websites: just search for 'split tickets'.

Secondly, a passenger new to rail travel will almost certainly feel bewildered by the range but should follow the same advice.

Thirdly, one can see how the feeling that all this is unnecessarily complicated has arisen and it is the purpose of this article to deal with what ESN considers to be a superficial judgement with potentially grave consequences.

***It is incumbent on the rail operators to inform and educate travellers about ticket types, market them honestly, and sell correctly these products. It is also an essential self defence step against destructive criticism. An increase in sophistication of ticket machines will help here, as will availability of staff advice.**



Why does Wilko display so many types of pen? Is it time for an inquiry?

From this point onwards, ESN will make a determinedly sceptical examination of the hoo-hah for ticket simplification and will start with more general reasons for cynicism and then work into more technical objections.

For some reason or other ESN does not take the morals or the motives of politicians or the media to be pure. It is the feeling about unnecessary complexity that allows the press, in furthering their own aims, to beat up the railways. Tendentious articles about some people paying 50% more for supposedly the same journey help to sell their newspaper but also tarnish the image of the railway and may reduce passenger traffic. In a similar vein, politicians latch onto such issues exploiting them in the hope of election. It looks as if the Labour Party will use this as one of their 'arguments' for nationalisation. This neglects the fact that load-managing tickets have a very long history, and **if** a solution to the 'problem' is possible it does not logically follow that nationalisation is the solution.

The next general caution is that from Edmund Burke's conservative philosophy. The present is as it is for manifold reasons, and those reasons are not always explicit. For instance, many explanations of the present lie in obscure history books. Perhaps the historical fares system is as it is for good reasons, reasons not explained, or hard to grasp? No one sat down and consciously designed a

fares system with a large amount of unnecessary complexity, and it has survived many inquiries with only minor changes already.

Even worse is the so-called argument “The fact that it has always been done this way is the best argument for change.” This statement shows arrogant disdain for the wisdom of the past and a lack of awareness of The Law of Unintended Consequences: any change can (will?) produce other changes, the bad ones being unexpected. A good response in this case is **‘be careful what you wish for!’** ESN is concerned that the review will end up greatly reducing the number of types of bargain tickets on offer in the names of ‘simplicity’ and ‘fairness’.

Fairness and its apparent contravention seem to be a big part of the whipped-up storm, and it is here that there is a niche for critics to get into. One should ask ‘Whose idea of fairness will apply?’. There is no objective price for any transaction except that at which the bargain is struck. This can be a list price (in the window, on line, in a catalogue etc) or an ad hoc/ad hominem price. The former is a more recent idea than the latter and has become the dominant way we trade, but the old way holds on in antique shops and auctions for example. A well-dressed customer (The Duke of Wealthshire?) with his or her chauffeur in tow is likely to be asked a much higher price than Joe the odd job man in his overalls. Even list prices are often discounted for trusted customers. The railway is offering a hybrid system. It is a list system with a set of prices to suit the Duke and Joe and those in between. This is done by attaching varying conditions to the different prices, and operating discounts by railcards as well – nothing immoral there and it widens the market served by the railways.

However, people do tend to feel it is unfair if there are hidden charges beyond the fare (the railway doesn’t do this) or if the list is hidden or obscured and people thereby miss the best price to suit them. Does this arise? Yes, where an operator/website sells only its own tickets for a common route with these dearer than what else is on offer on that route. This should not happen, see * below). Also, with some dumb ticket machines that can sell only the standard price tickets at the instant they are bought and rather unethically do not point out that cheaper alternatives are available, or about to become available in a short time. At the very least an ethical disclaimer to this effect is needed. Although logically if the bargain is struck there should be no objection it does not do to give gross offence to one’s customers! With gradual investment this technological inadequacy should be wiped out.

ESN reiterates:

***It is incumbent on the rail operators to inform and educate travellers about ticket types, market them honestly, and sell correctly these products. It is also an essential self defence step against destructive criticism. An increase in sophistication of ticket machines will help here, as will availability of staff advice.**



Morrison's offering a bewildering range of beers and ciders. Are they trying to confuse the customers?

Now some critics would say that the above would be achieved more easily by having fewer or even only one type of fare. Well indeed. The purchase of an electric toaster would be so much more straightforward if there were only one design with a single slot and a single medium toast timing (so the 'average' consumer would be fine but for some the toast is too pale and for others it is too dark) and it would be much more simply made too, at one small factory for all the sales it would generate. ESN hasn't noticed a great aversion to shopping-around in the British public. Indeed, many seem to enjoy it and become quite adept at finding the best to suit their needs and pockets.



Poor Morrison's – they seem to be serial offenders against simplicity. This time they are offering a bewildering choice of bread.

Surely there should be only one size and one thickness of sliced white bread on offer? The size, thickness and wrapping could be determined by a parliamentary inquiry, perhaps.

The simplifiers are missing a grasp of commerce and the point of the fares system. No system is immediately comprehensive to all people and some people will not comprehend however simple the system is. The purpose of the system is to maximise the railway's revenue and seek to balance demand and supply of seats. It must work with the complexities of the rail Network and as a secondary aim should avoid serious injustices to the travelling public. Having a range of tickets widens the market offering (increases the choice of goods) and helps maximise revenue by satisfying more customers. The different prices of the offerings help to divert demand to trains where seats are plentiful. Reducing this ticket flexibility could reduce revenue, lead to busy trains being even more crowded and less busy trains running (for how long given the reduced revenue?) empty.



Political parties seem to have nothing to say about this bewildering variety of vegetables. Perhaps nationalisation would end this outrage?

ESN is waiting for the start of the press and political campaigns to simplify the beer, bread, pen and vegetable ranges in our shops! It would certainly sell newspapers, but would it be a vote winner? Is wrong to be offered the chance to shop around different ticket types to see if you can get the best value to suit your needs? Would consumers really prefer that there be one design of electric toaster only; only one colour of paint in one size of can; only one therapy regardless of ailment? Is simplicity therefore always desirable?

Next part:

In the next edition ESN will deal with the effects of network; the questions: are there too many fares? Are rail fares too expensive? And we shall also examine different prices for the 'same' journey.

Timetable Changes.

Locally May 2018 will see significant timetable changes for Eccles station when the trains start running to Piccadilly, Airport and Crewe rather than to Victoria. There will be pluses and minuses here, hopefully more gains than losses, but ESN's proposed detail examination cannot take place this issue because the new timetable is not ready. A surfeit of changes has rather overwhelmed the timetabling department and more delays with the electrification of the Blackpool route have further complicated the issue. There are about 200 stanchion sites for the overhead wires that have hit unmapped shallow mine workings, drains or running sand, but over engineering (going deeper than the

standards required) will have increased the number of such problems encountered.

Anyway, as a result the timetable is delayed, and a temporary timetable lasting twelve weeks will be issued too late for this edition – please see the FRECCLES website after 7th April 2018 – this is the date that Northern have advised that their new timetable should be available.

Below is the timetable applicable until May 19th.

TIMETABLES FOR ECCLES TRAINS

The full official timetable can be printed out from or viewed at:

<https://be803fe5c416e39d38ae-aa21086260d3bd4e072d597fe09c2e80.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/images/timetables/2017-10/winter-timetables/Northern-15-Liverpool-to-Manchester-1017.pdf>

It is valid up to and including May19th 2018.

ESN has prepared an abstract from that timetable. It is on the succeeding two pages so that if desired you can print out a page for travel to or from Manchester, or the second page for travel to or from Liverpool direction. Please note that the editor has checked to make sure that the times given are as accurate as possible but would be glad to hear if any corrections are needed.

TO MANCHESTER AND BACK

ECCLES TO MANCHESTER VICTORIA (journey time about 10 mins)

Monday to Friday

0611 0706 0807 0832 0909 1008 1108 1206 1306 1406 1506 1606
1706 1732 1807 1827 1907 2005 2108 2208 2306 0007

Saturday

0612 0707 0807 0832 0906 1006 1106 1210 1311 1411 1510 1610
1706 1731 1806 1826 1906 2006 2106 2206 2306 0008

MANCHESTER VICTORIA TO ECCLES (journey time about 7mins)

Monday to Friday

0539 0600 0702 0738 0802 0838 0902 1002 1102 1202 1303 1359
1502 1559 1702 1738 1802 1900 2002 2109 2209 2309

Saturday

0539 0602 0702 0738 0802 0838 0902 1002 1102 1202 1302 1402
1502 1602 1702 1738 1802 1902 2006 2109 2209 2309

ECCLES TO MANCHESTER OXFORD ROAD, PICCADILLY AND AIRPORT (journey times about 10, 13 and 30mins respectively)

Sunday

0902 1002 1102 1202 1302 1402 1502 1602 1702 1802 1902 2002
2102 2202 2303 0005

MANCHESTER PICCADILLY TO ECCLES (trains depart Airport about 20 mins earlier than these times, and about 2mins later for Oxford Road)

Sunday

0859 1001 1100 1200 1301 1401 1501 1601 1701 1801 1901 2001
2101 2201 2301

TO LIVERPOOL LIME STREET AND BACK

ECCLES TO LIVERPOOL LIME STREET (journey time about 50 mins.)

Monday to Friday

0547 0607 0709 0745 0809 0845 0909 1009 1109 1209 1310 1410
1509 1608 1709 1745 1809 1909 2009 2116 2216 2316

Saturday

0546 0609 0709 0745 0811 0845 0910 1010 1110 1209 1309 1409
1509 1610 1710 1745 1810 1910 2013 2116 2216 2316

Trains also call at the following stations with approximate journey times in brackets:

*Patricroft (3) Newton le Willows (14) Earlestown (17) St Helens Junction (22) Lea Green (25) Rainhill (29)
Whiston (32) Huyton (36) Roby (38) Broad Green (42) Wavertree Technology Park (45) Edge Hill (48)*

Sunday

0910 1011 1110 1210 1311 1411 1511 1611 1711 1811 1911 2011
2111 2211 2311

Trains omit Edge Hill station on Sundays but do call at all the other stations with approximate journey times as given above.

LIVERPOOL LIME STREET TO ECCLES (journey time about 47 mins.)

Monday to Friday

0525 0620 0720 0744 0820 0921 1021 1120 1222 1320 1420 1520
1619 1646 1719 1740 1820 1920 2022 2122 2220 2319

Saturday

0520 0620 0720 0744 0820 0920 1020 1120 1220 1320 1420 1520
1620 1645 1720 1740 1820 1920 2020 2120 2220 2320

Trains also call at the following stations. The approximate time after departure from Lime Street is given in brackets. Edge Hill (4) Wavertree Technology Park (6)

*Broad Green (9) Roby (13) Huyton (15) Whiston (19) Rainhill (22) Lea Green (25) St Helens Junction (28)
Earlestown (33) Newton le Willows (36) Patricroft (45)*

Sunday

0816 0916 1016 1116 1216 1316 1416 1516 1616 1716 1816 1916
2016 2116 2216 2315

Trains omit Edge Hill station on Sundays but do call at the following stations. The approximate time after departure from Lime Street is given in brackets. Wavertree Technology Park (5)

*Broad Green (8) Roby (12) Huyton (14) Whiston (18) Rainhill (21) Lea Green (24) St Helens Junction (27)
Earlestown (32) Newton le Willows (35) Patricroft (44)*

Stop press



Freccles held its AGM on Tuesday 27th March at The Queen's Arms, Patricroft – the world's first railway pub. "Purdah" rules prevented the original format meeting going ahead so instead they chose this fine example of unspoilt friendliness and olde-worlde charm only a mile down the track at Patricroft to cover the constitutional AGM business meeting. The keynote speaker and presentations from the FRECCLES sub-groups format meeting will occur in June 2018, at the equally grand restored delight that is Eccles Town Hall. Watch your inboxes for more details. It will be on a Tuesday evening, so clear all your Tuesday evenings in June to ensure you do not miss this annual masterpiece.

Eccles Station News welcomes feedback from readers. Please do not hesitate to send in your own views, photos or snippets of news to the e-mail address below.



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