

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

JULY 2011

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

News section, Articles, Trip of the Month, Bargain fare.

NEWS

The **FRECCLES 'Trip of the Month'** is an easy stroll along a sandy beach, with a look at some famous statues. It makes use of the connections described in the 'Changing Trains' article in this edition and **it costs only £10.50 day return!**

Great value days out in Southport this year from Northern. The Northern Duo day return ticket to Southport from Manchester costs only £15.10, allowing two adults to travel together. A leaflet of 'two for one' vouchers is available at Victoria covering various Southport attractions, theatres, cafes and shops. Combine these two offers and two adults can have a REAL bargain price day out!

This month's **bargain fare article** is about good value rover tickets for use while on holiday in North Wales. It covers both buses and trains, and offers some very good extra deals as well!

*The next gardening day at the station is at 11.00 Sunday July 5th. **HELP!!!!***

The railway bridges in Eccles have now been replaced, and **ESN offers readers an apology**. The buttresses of the road bridges were not replaced as we had expected (based on an early meeting about the work). Instead substantial concrete sills were added to give the additional height needed for the spans.

THE SCARBOROUGH FLYER steam hauled express train will operate again this year. Organised by The Railway Touring Company it will run every Friday from 22nd July to the 9th September. The locomotives to be used are 60019 Bittern, 6201 Princess Elizabeth and 70013 Oliver Cromwell. The train times are 08.20 out (20.55 back) at Stockport or 09.40 out (19.45 back) at Huddersfield. Adult fares start at £59 but first class and premier dining tickets are available. See www.railwaytouring.co.uk for more details.

ARTICLES

NARROW GAUGE EXPANDS.

For over 100 years North West Wales was a centre of Lilliputian railways. There were dozens of narrow gauge railways serving the numerous slate quarries. Some were horse operated but others, such as the Ffestiniog railway, became so busy that they adopted steam locomotives, many of which were made locally. Boston Lodge works at Porthmadog still builds and repairs locos, and the De Winton Foundry building (source of many eccentric little shunting locos) still stands on Seiont Quay at Caernarfon.

The longest of these narrow gauge railways (about 25 miles) was The Welsh Highland Railway. It ran right through the heart of Snowdonia itself, forming a coast to coast link for a number of quarries. The route makes you think the projectors were 'optimistic' people, and thanks to people whom we should politely call 'visionary' this one has come back to life in recent years!

The Welsh Highland Railway once again runs steam trains between Caernarfon and Porthmadog. One return train daily departs from each terminus at 11.00 covering the full length of the line. They pass through idyllic pastoral scenes

and mountainous terrain. At one point (in a forest) the train keeps passing track it has already covered as it follows the convoluted hillsides.

The journey takes over two hours in each direction (roughly fast cycling pace) with a very short stay at the end. Friendly kitchen car staff bring food orders (and locally brewed beers!) to the small wooden tables provided at every seat, and the carriages are air conditioned. This little railway is big on service!



The locomotives are Beyer-Garret articulated steam engines, one built in Belgium for South African Railways and the other at Boston Lodge works. *The two trains pass each other at Rhyd Ddu below Snowdon, and it is just as open, empty and bleak as in 1920s photos.*



The third class carriages are comfortable and there is table service at each seat. The windows provide panoramic views of the varying landscape. *All photos courtesy of J E Rayner*

Fares for the full journey are £32.00 return third class adult (*discounts for various passes, also see this month's bargain fare article*), but there are also first class and observation car tickets available for a small supplement. Further details can be found at: <http://www.festrail.co.uk/main.shtml?mn=0>

Changing trains 5

By transferring from Liverpool Lime Street to the obscurely sited Liverpool Central Station, a further 33 destinations can be reached from Eccles, allowing you to reach **Southport, Formby (for woods, sea and sand hills), the market town of Ormskirk, Aintree races and Liverpool airport**. The Liverpool underground map makes it look like you should go down to the Wirral Lines and catch one of these trains to Central, but it is not worth it. The walk between the stations is very short.

Leave Lime Street at the front and go slightly left to cross onto Elliot Street (across from 'The Crown'). Turn left by the Wetherspoons onto Great Charlotte Street and at the end turn right onto Ranelagh Street a very short way. Cross left to enter the shopping arcade on the opposite side and Central Station entrance is facing you at the far end.

Going south the trains call at Brunswick, St Michaels, Aigburth, Cressington, Liverpool South Parkway (for John Lennon Airport) and **Hunt's Cross** –the terminus. There are still sandstone Cheshire Lines Committee buildings at some of these stations.

Going north the line heads for **Southport**. The coast stations are Moorfields, Sandhills, Bank Hall, Bootle Oriel road, Bootle New Strand, Seaforth and Litherland, Waterloo, Blundellsands and Crosby, Hall Road, Hightown, Formby, Freshfield, Ainsdale, Hillside and **Southport**. *A good seaside stroll can be made from **Hall Road to Crosby or Waterloo** – see our trip of the month article in this issue.*

A branch turns off inland after Sandhills station and then splits again. One line goes to Walton, Orrell Park, Aintree (for races), Old Roan, Maghull, Town Green, Aughton Park and **Ormskirk** (terminus and old market town). The other line goes to Rice Lane, Fazakerly and **Kirkby**. Tickets to all these places can be booked direct from Eccles Station.

If you want to potter around Merseyside during your visit, buy a **Saveaway** ticket once there. You can do this at Lime Street. You can save more money by

booking to Newton le Willows, getting off to buy your **Saveaway**, and then catching the next train to Liverpool from there a few minutes later.

More train connections from next month!

VICTORIA STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Manchester Victoria has not been treated kindly since the 1930s. It was bombed in WWII and little was spent on it for fifty years. Sixteen platforms dwindled to six and the later construction of the MEN arena could be considered 'disinvestment' in the station itself. As a result it has been called the 'worst station in the country'.

There is some justification for this – the roof is leaky, the gents' toilets are decrepit, passenger waiting facilities are poor and the large Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway war memorial is in need of attention. The station hardly reflects modern Manchester or the fact that the active centre has crept slowly closer to this northern quarter of the city.



A detail of the imposing L&YR Great War Memorial.

St George has lost his lance. Some of the small plinths along the base are missing and others are damaged.

Photo courtesy of J E Rayner

Although not in the same league as Piccadilly for inter city travel, commuter traffic at Victoria has increased greatly already, and it is estimated that this number could double between now and 2019. So significant investment is urgently needed and some work is starting.

A doubling of passenger numbers would be driven by the increasing proportion of jobs being city based in the UK, and by the COOP redeveloping 20 acres of adjacent land for commercial purposes. Here the building work is well underway.

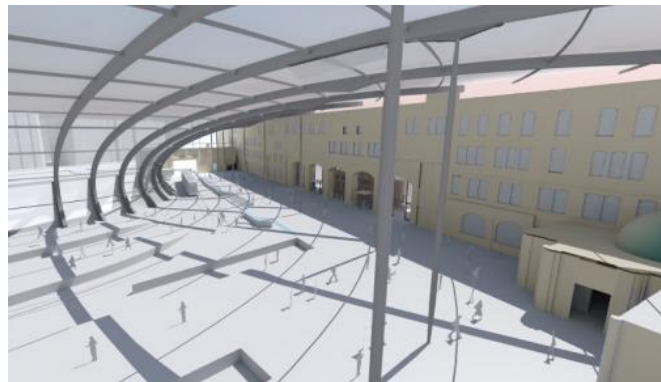
Photo courtesy of J E Rayner



As part of this Victoria station will get a new roof in the near future. It will replace the leaky roof covering the bay platforms, the tram platform, and the concourse. The proposed roof would let in much more light and its outer edge would follow the curve of the tram lines as they go to Shudehill.

A graphic realisation of the proposed new roof at Victoria - there is a tram depicted departing to Shudehill. (Centre left)

Image released by Network Rail.



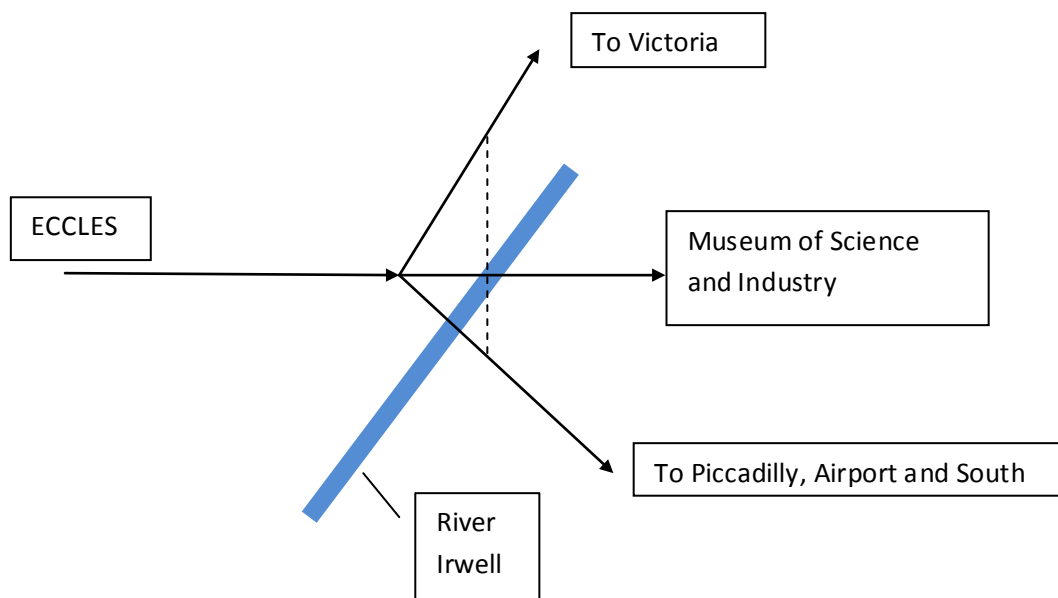
The work will cost about £20,000,000 with four fifths of that coming from Network Rail and the other £4,000,000 provided by Transport for Greater Manchester. The translucent, air inflated roof will be made of a polymer, ETFE. This is the same as over the concourse at Manchester Piccadilly. The plans also include new shops, cafes and a refurbishment of the grade II listed concourse building. The project is the responsibility of Graham Botham at Network Rail.

Planning permission is required for alterations to this listed building so the railway is working closely with the city council and English Heritage on the project and there will be a full public consultation. If permission is granted work should begin on the summer of 2013 and be complete by winter in 2014. An interesting history and full description of the station can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester_Victoria_station

ORDSALL LANE CHORD.

In his budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the provision of £85,000,000 for the construction of this extra link in Manchester's railway network. It will provide a triangle of lines at Ordsall Lane Junction by adding a short length of viaduct across the Irwell from the South Junction line to the Eccles line as it approaches Victoria. **The new line is shown dashed on the diagram.**



It will bring a number of benefits:

*Passengers will be able to transfer by train between Piccadilly and Victoria stations.

* Calder Valley and Huddersfield line trains will be able to run via the chord to Piccadilly. This will provide convenient connection with expresses to the south. The trains can then run on to Manchester Airport too.

*Diversion via Victoria and the chord of First Trans Pennine services between the North East, Yorkshire and Manchester Airport. This will free up capacity at Piccadilly station. (These trains currently cut right across six busy tracks limiting the use of Piccadilly station). In addition it will shave a few minutes off journeys to Manchester because the Ashton under Lyne route is faster.

*Victoria station's importance in the network will be increased with more intercity destinations.

The chord cuts across the MOSI rail link. This is the Liverpool & Manchester line going over the Irwell on the listed Stephenson viaduct and into the historic Liverpool Road station. The consequences will become clear when detailed plans are published soon. If the chord would sever this link then MOSI could object to the development. The Georgian Society and the Victorian Society (among others) might object if the viaduct is affected. Interestingly it has been pointed out that the link to MOSI is also part of a statutory railway and has not (as far as anyone can tell) been closed under any formal procedures.

On its own the chord will direct trains into the already choked through platforms at Piccadilly, but it is part of a greater scheme - the Northern Hub (option 2) work. Costing up to £500,000,000, this project will include replacing platforms 13 & 14 at Piccadilly with a new viaduct carrying four tracks and four platform faces.

A very detailed appraisal of the Manchester hub problem is to be found at http://www.networkrail.co.uk/documents/Projects/The%20Northern%20Hub/6485_Manchester%20Hub%20Rail%20Study.pdf

NEW BOOKING OFFICE?

In May a meeting was held to discuss the scope of works to be undertaken at Eccles station. There were representatives from Freccles, Northern Rail, Network Rail, Transport for Greater Manchester and Salford City Council. The range of small but desirable improvements identified cost over £300,000 whereas the improvement budget is only about £150,000.

In discussion a feeling developed that the money might best be spent on a new booking office. Although this must be a light prefabricated building (bridge strength and budget!) it would be well designed and have architectural cladding. Inside there would be a waiting/ booking area, ticket office and staff facilities. If this is done then other local funding becomes available to improve

the station forecourt, giving Eccles something worthwhile at the top of Church Street.

The alternative possible improvements to the station included help points, electronic information boards, CCTV and improved seating. These works would not release any money for the forecourt improvements, and the meeting was told that these items should appear anyway (as part of a TFGM funded rolling programme over the next few years).

TRIP OF THE MONTH

This month we recommend **trip No 45** which is

HALL ROAD – COAST & “ANOTHER PLACE”.

This is ideal for a good summer day, being an easy stroll along a sandy beach.

Take a look at Anthony Gormley’s famous statues and watch the ships go to and from Liverpool. Take in a bit of Liverpool on the way if you want - you will be using the Liverpool underground. It is a medium length, easy walk on the level. The streets are very pleasant and there are cafes, a pub, and shops.

The off peak day return rail fare is **only £10.50 adult** from Eccles. Now compare that with the cost of a day out on a coach! The journey takes about 90 minutes.

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%2071.pdf>

The itinerary in the books ends at Crosby station but the one on the web includes an extra stretch past the Crosby Marina to Waterloo village.

JULY FARE BARGAINS:

NORTH WALES ROVERS.

These Rover tickets offer really good value for travel while you are staying in North Wales. There are different types so take your pick.

EXPLORE NORTH & MID-WALES FLEXI ROVER - This ticket covers all North Wales. The area boundary is Chester, Crewe, Shrewsbury and across to Aberystwyth. For your money you get eight days travel on most buses in the area, and you can select four of the eight days to travel by train as well (after 09.15). The ticket gives a 50% discount on the Welsh Highland Railway and the Ffestiniog railway fares! The flexi rover prices are £57 adult, £37.60 railcard holder, and £28.50 child.

NORTH WALES ROVERS (DAY) - These tickets allow both bus and train travel for one day in given areas approximating to each county. The prices are: two adjacent zones (counties) £8, three adjacent zones £13, and All Zones £23. Children go for half price. The All Zone version gives a 50% discount on the Welsh Highland Railway and the Ffestiniog railway fares – so it is really good value for a visit to these wonderful little railways!

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

