

# ECCLES STATION

## NEWS

MARCH 2014

NEWS

**FRECCLES' friend Dwayne Wells** left Northern at the end of February to join First UK Bus as their Customer Services Manager. He says to staff and Friends' groups, "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here... and I wanted to ensure I put on record my thanks to each and every one of you for your support, friendship and helpfulness over the past four years." Dwayne worked for Northern on the Area West Service Quality Team and his tasks included Station Quality audits, and research into route 28 covering all the stations from Lime Street to Piccadilly, and onto the Glossop line. **He can leave with a sense of pride** as station Quality on the Liverpool and Manchester section gradually moved up to the best ever position for his last results at 91.99%. Among Dwayne's best memories of working at Northern are: "Route 28, our friends groups and Eccles Cakes at the National Rail Awards." (ESN notes that these Eccles Cakes may well have come from a champion Eccles Cake baker known to the members of FRECCLES...)

*Markings on both platforms at Eccles Station seem to indicate that **electronic train information screens** are about to be installed. These give real time information about the running of the trains and would be a welcome addition to the service. They have been a long time coming!*

*After all it was a few years ago that the Chair of the Transport for Greater Manchester, Andrew Fender, said: "If we're to encourage more people to travel by rail - and to make rail journeys easier and more convenient for those who already use it for commuting and leisure - it's important that passengers feel*

*safe, secure and confident in their surroundings. Providing **facilities like up-to-date information displays and public address systems** so it's clear which platform you need and when your train is due, putting in help points so passengers can call for assistance, and installing CCTV cameras as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour are all part of that. These sorts of facilities are familiar to people who use larger, inter-city stations **but it's important for passengers at smaller, local stations to benefit from them too.**"*

Network Rail has released **station retail sales** results showing **7.8% growth** in like-for-like sales from September to December 2013 – the most successful quarter for Network Rail managed station retailers on record and a significant outperformance over high street sales (+0.6%). Top performing stations include King's Cross (+26%), followed by **Manchester Piccadilly (+10.7%)** and Liverpool Street (+8.7%) when compared to the same period last year. **Specialist food (+15.8%) performed best** in stations this period followed closely by dining (+14.1%). Other top performing categories include pubs and bars (+13.9%) and health & beauty (+12.7%). In contrast Eccles Station retail sales showed no growth in the same period.

The recent stormy seas have **washed away the Great Western mainline** at Dawlish, between Exeter to Newton Abbott. Passengers have to be bussed between the two stations in order to travel to Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall. It is estimated the line could be **closed until mid April**. [See articles and Editorial](#).

*Railway engineers are also working hard **to re-open the Cambrian Coast line** following recent storm damage which resulted in damage to sea defences and embankments, the loss of rail ballast to the sea and debris including rocks and boulders littering the line. **The railway is currently closed between Barmouth and Pwllheli** due to severe damage at a number of locations. Work completed in the **Tywyn area** allowed the line to re-open as far as **Barmouth** in mid-February. However the line from Barmouth to Pwllheli, which suffered the most devastating damage, will take longer to repair and it is estimated that **it will re-open fully by mid-May 2014**.*

**The next timetable** will commence on **18 May 2014**. The service pattern at Eccles will remain the same (hourly, but half hourly at rush hours) but times will change **to xx.10 to Manchester and xx.09 to Liverpool** (this will affect connections at Victoria and Newton le Willows.) Trains will terminate at Victoria, so we lose the Stalybridge through service and again there is no service to Oxford Road or beyond.

Details of the new timetable can be found on the site OPENTRAINTIMES, a site provided by and copyright of Peter Hicks. The links below are for Eccles and Manchester Victoria:

<http://www.opentraintimes.com/location/ECC/2014-05-28/0809-1009>

[www.opentraintimes.com/location/mcv/2014-05-23/0002-0001](http://www.opentraintimes.com/location/mcv/2014-05-23/0002-0001)

You can search for **other stations or trains** by pressing on the Train Times button, which has a clock icon, at the top of the page.

***The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) recently required Network Rail to reduce its costs prior to the start of Control Period 5 and one result of this is to be a 15% reduction in staff numbers. This includes a proposal to disband the Community Rail section leaving community rail responsibility with the 10 separate Routes. Friends' groups worry that the lack of a responsible director is a downgrading and could jeopardise the delivery of the Community Rail Development Strategy. Possible concerns should be addressed to Network Rail's new Chief Executive, Mark Carne ([mark.carne@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:mark.carne@networkrail.co.uk)), as soon as possible.***

From Friday, 21 February and for approximately 9 months **the metro link stop at Manchester Victoria station will be out of use**. Passengers will need to walk up to Shude Hill to catch a tram. A single track will allow through services to continue to Bury and Rochdale but this will be too busy to allow time for stops there. For the duration Eccles trams will run to Ashton and all Bury trams will run to Altrincham. This arrangement means there are **no trams to Piccadilly station from Shude Hill!**

For details see <http://www.metrolink.co.uk/pages/news.aspx?newsID=76>

## **OUT AND ABOUT...**

Darwen is a sizeable northern hill town. It is situated near the top of a deep valley in the West Pennine Moors. There are views of hills all-around: however, rural, Darwen is not.

In its time it has been home to numerous substantial industries and the wealth they generated - this is reflected in the millstone grit architecture – the stones are ashlar not rusticated. Of course Darwen suffered the same penalty as many other places guilty of having been industrious – closures, unemployment, dereliction, loss of direction..... but ESN is writing this because there is a sense of rejuvenation starting in the town.

Pay a visit by train – not much to impress you at the station, but immediately outside you see the buildings have some small sense of class. Walk down the road and you come to a sort of ‘seaside’ promenade where you can look down on the impressive (and still functioning) market hall and square. Behind you is the grand portico of a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel ironically converted to a public house:



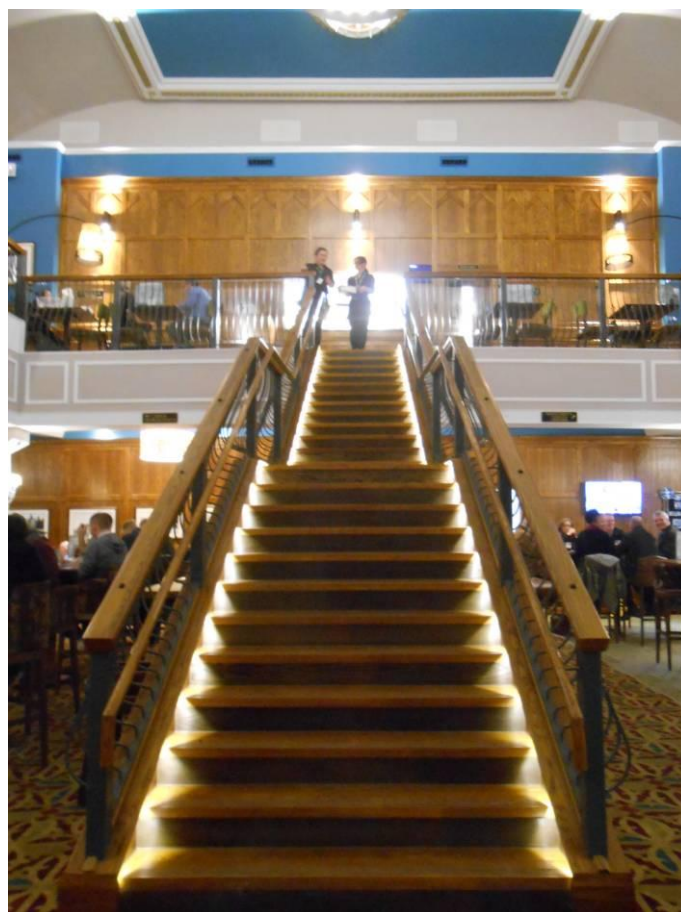
Fortunately the conversion was done by the Wetherspoon chain of pubs and what a superb job it is. Well worth a look in. It was formerly a tatty A&M

bargains store – now it is welcoming, spacious, and staffed by friendly youngsters who are clearly proud and pleased to be working there.



That's a wonderful stove in the background – get near to it after a winter moorland walk for your beer and food! As usual there is much made of local history – ESN was taken by the 'trades' type of banners.

Clearly the architect doing this wonderful chapel conversion had a rare sense of humour:





The simple elegant balcony is used for dining but a part of it retains the tiered wooden benches of a chapel.

If you want to explore further around Darwen, and you don't mind walking, then try the itinerary 'Darwen – The Jubilee Tower and Sunnyhurst'.

<http://www.freccles.org.uk/pdf/Railway%20trips%2044.pdf> .

If you are energetic enough to do this walk then try to find time for a look in Bold Venture Park. If you are not going on the walk try to find the energy to follow the itinerary only as far as the park. This was a splendid make work creation. It is now restored and cared for– you will be impressed.

Another innovation in Darwen is that it now has its own brewery! Continue down from the station and turn left after the Millstone Hotel. On this little shopping street a double fronted shop is now The 39 Bar – a modern comfortable brewery tap for Hopstar Brewery.

*All photos courtesy of J E Rayner.*



**...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.**

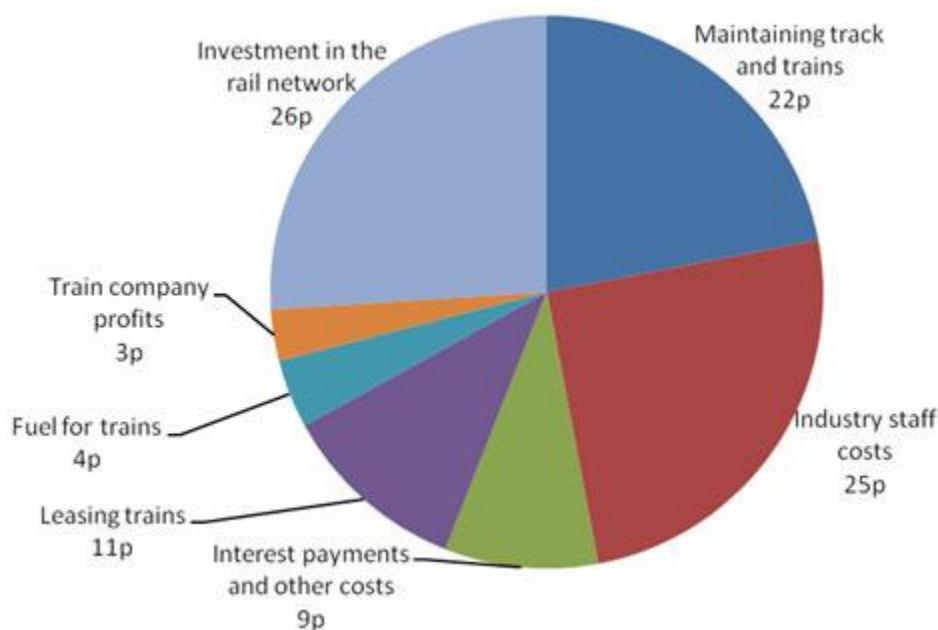
## ARTICLES

### January Fare Rises.

From 2 January, Northern Rail's fares rose by an average of 2.8%. This is the equivalent of around 10-20p per single journey and is in line with the Government applied formula of Retail Price Index (RPI) for regulated fares (although this is higher than average wage increases, and above the inflation in motoring costs).

Most of the fare money goes towards the costs of providing services (62%) but also has to fund further improvements to stations, trains and services (26%), which include electrification of routes across the north of England which will mean newer trains and faster journey times. Apart from this spending to benefit customers, a small amount of the rise goes to increase the train company profit (3%). This provides the necessary incentive for the company to operate the railway effectively.

Every pound of income that train companies receive is allotted in the following approximate proportions:



Northern Rail has chosen to freeze its own advanced booking fares (over which it has full control) but the vast majority of ticket sales on its network are regulated 'turn up and go' fares which must rise in line with the Government's formula of RPI. Following the rise Northern says, "We will continue to work with the Government and the wider rail industry to drive down the cost of



running the railway to provide better long-term value for money for passengers and taxpayers.”

Fares valid from 2 January 2014 are available on the National Rail Enquiries ([www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)) and Northern ([northernrail.org](http://northernrail.org)) websites.

To find out more about rail fares and why they are changing visit [www.railfares2014.com](http://www.railfares2014.com)

## ***Washout at Dawlish.***



*The first storm damage at Dawlish, is seen in a picture looking towards Exeter. Note the line of the promenade to the right of the railway.*

*Photo courtesy Network Rail*

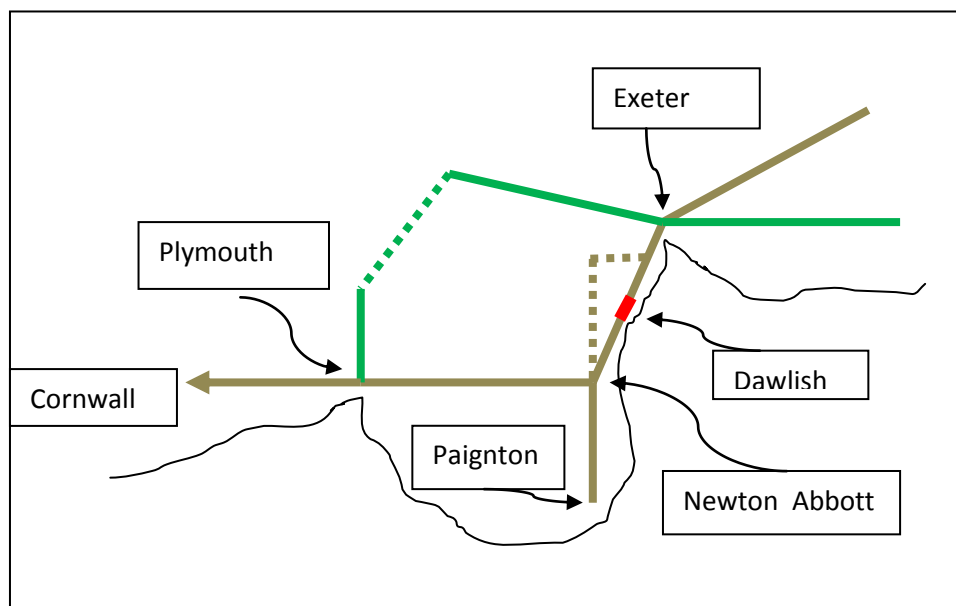
The former Great Western Railway main line linking Exeter to Newton Abbott, Plymouth and Cornwall was breached at Dawlish by a storm on February 5<sup>th</sup>. Work had started on repairing the damage from the first storm when a second storm caused further damage. Network Rail now estimates that restoration of the railway at Dawlish will be complete by mid-April. The seaward platform at the station was destroyed and several hundred yards of the parapet wall (which retains the ballast) was also demolished.

ESN was entertained by the media referring to this stretch as part of the main line to Cornwall, when In fact it is the only line. ESN sees this as an indictment of the foolish transport policy of those decades for reasons that become apparent in the next paragraphs.

At Dawlish the railway acts as both the promenade and the sea wall and in stormy weather the waves there are huge (being up to 20 feet high in

February's storms. ESN has been at Dawlish when spray from the waves goes across the railway (and even the station!) to wet the houses. Network Rail spends £500,000 per annum to try to maintain this short stretch. Such storms have breached this part of the line before and will probably do so again in a few decades time. (The breach is shown in red on the schematic below).

The alternative inland main line from Exeter to Plymouth going to the north of Dartmoor via Tavistock was closed in the 60s (a Southern Railway route in green on the schematic below, the dotted line being the closed section). An alternative inland branch from Exeter to Newton Abbott was also closed (Great Western – dotted brown). In 1939 Parliamentary powers were granted to the GWR to construct an inland diversion of the main line on a shorter alignment than the branch. Construction actually started, but was ended permanently by the Second World War and ensuing transport policies.



It is estimated that the economic loss to the area from breach of this transport artery is running at millions of pounds a day, and some estimate it at £20,000,000 per day. If this is so then a week's closure at Dawlish costs more than enough to reopen the dotted green line from Tavistock to Bere Alston (£100,000,000) because the track bed is still there with few buildings on it. The other £40,000,000 would pay to run it for free for quite a few years!

Network Rail has set up a video feed of its restoration work on <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/Dawlish/>



*After the first storm Network Rail installed a temporary sea wall made from shipping containers filled with rubble and welded together. This limited the extra damage in the second storm and meant that Dawlish did not disappear into the sea!*

*Photo courtesy Network Rail*

## **TRIP OF THE MONTH**

While until May we still have the through service from Eccles to Ashton and Stalybridge it seems a good idea to select our trip of the month with this in mind. So two trips – one for the sedentary, the other to provide an easy leg stretch.

\*This month firstly we recommend **trip No 1** which is:

### **STALYBRIDGE - STATION BUFFET BAR**

This remarkable survival is situated at the West End of the Leeds platform underneath the railway clock. Step inside to enjoy the feel of an earlier age that is here still alive and well maintained.

*In winter there is the comfort of a large coal fire; in summer you can sit outside and see the impressive hills. The bar serves hot drinks, and a range of top quality traditional hand pumped beers. Recently under new ownership it might be worth seeing if it still sells pie and peas, black puddings and black peas! This buffet bar is a gem – it has appeared regularly in ‘The Good Beer Guide’ – and some people see no more than this bit of the town!*

Just take the train from Eccles Station to Stalybridge. *Do remember that you will need to find the Manchester Platform to get home.*

CLASSIFICATION:            A DODDLE.    FOOD & DRINK        RAIL FARE: £3.90  
adult.

**\*\*Also, to walk off the effects of the first trip we recommend **trip No 7:****

## **STALYBRIDGE – MOSSLEY via THE CANAL.**

A walk by the side of the Huddersfield Canal so that you can say you've walked through a canal tunnel.

Take the train from Eccles Station to Stalybridge Station.

Leave the front entrance of the station and walk down to Market Street. Turn right under the Railway Bridge and walk through the town.

Continue along Market Street until you come to the façade *of the once very impressive town hall.*

Ignore the small continuation of Market Street, instead bear right to the War Memorial and Victoria Bridge. Cross the River Tame and go up Trinity Street. *In succession on your left you will see: The post office, the Astley-Cheetham Art Gallery and Library and then the impressive former Market Hall.*

Pass the large stone church (Holy Trinity & Christ) and you will come onto Armentieres Square and the canal side.

Go left by the canal to bridge 100 and cross over this bridge. U-turn right at the bottom of the steps on the other side, and head for the hills.

You will pass a number of locks and walk through Scout Tunnel.

At bridge 91 go right up a narrow path between the bridge and a works yard. U-turn to left at the top then follow the road.

Mill Street goes up steeply on the right. Take it to the top. *Notice the large houses high up ahead.*

*You are on a pleasant small town high street. Opposite you will see Mossley Station to take the train back. To the left there are shops, cafes and a real ale pub. To the right is The Britannia public house. Open evenings – real ale and in CAMRA national guide. Notice the fine buildings in this hill town. Up the long steep road behind the station is another part of the town with the Market Square.*

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM LENGTH, EASY, ARCHITECTURE,

RAIL FARE – £4.20 adult (book to Mossley).

Maps: OS 1:50 000 sheet 109 Manchester A-Z

## EDITORIAL

### TWO ASPECTS.

From Exeter there is a cost effective and very busy railway into South Devon and Cornwall. It is in fact the only route and there is a weak link at Dawlish – not because it is lightly built but because the waves there are ferocious every time there is a storm. Cross Country Voyager trains, being insufficiently like submarines, used to break down often on this stretch in such weather. Rail connection to the south western peninsula (SWP) is cost effective but not robust.

A robust network is a little less cost effective but far more reliable – a necessary trade off if minor mishaps are not to produce expensive crises. The SWP had robust connection to the rest of the country until the Beeching years left just one particularly brittle route. Full Beeching would have extended this unreliability of only single routes with no detours to the entire country. For instance there would have been only one line into Scotland, the one from Carlisle through Carstairs. As it is we got only part Beeching (e.g. only one main line London – Manchester, but there are diversionary routes still available).

The SWP is a populous, industrious, but poor area of the UK, and it did badly out of Government non-Railway policies in the 60s and 70s. It both needs and deserves a more robust railway network. If it does not get one soon then it will be on account of politicians and administrators showing themselves to be penny wise and pound foolish.

To find out more about **FRECCLES** or to make contact see our **website:** [www.freccles.org](http://www.freccles.org) or e mail us at [info@freccles.org.uk](mailto:info@freccles.org.uk)

