

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

NOVEMBER 2012

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

News section, Articles. Trip of the month. Book review, Editorial.

Phew, another busy month on the railways. There is news of a station building for Eccles. Our Trip of the Month is to Macclesfield, an any-weather destination for November (you might wish to look at no 72 on the website as well if you want to go to a good museum there), but there are some changes as detailed in our 'Out and About...' article, and we examine if Eccles could learn anything from these.

NEWS

FRECCLES and FrOPS heritage group has been awarded funds in the 'All Our Stories' Heritage Lottery project to run an **Oral ("Cake Hole") Histories** project. The group will be working with the professional oral historian, Chris Gibbons, (who has worked on several local projects and is partial to an Eccles cake,) to record stories of people working, living and playing in relation to the transport of Eccles and Patricroft: canal, roads/trams and rails. More info to follow but if anyone is particularly enthusiastic and wants to volunteer now to help the group run the project and get the chance to work with a professional oral historian into the bargain, get in touch via the FRECCLES email info@freccles.org.uk or phone 0161 789 5016.

The garden group reckons that it has been a wonderful year for slugs!



Here is some **autumnal colour**, seen in Eccles Station garden. If you want a colourful spring then do come and help with the bulb planting on Sunday November 4th.

Photo: JER

Angie Tunstall volunteered to help with the watering, but for some reason has not needed to do this yet.

.....Unfortunately the **thefts** from tubs are continuing – if you have any information about the culprit please let us know via the e mail address at the end of the newsletter.

Bulb planting will be a big job this month - snowdrops, bluebells and possibly tulips. The team is of limited size and would welcome more volunteers to help so **come along on Sunday November 4th at 11.00!**

*We could say **Northern has done it again** – but it is the volunteers really - at the STEAM Railway Museum in Swindon on Friday 28th September train operator Northern Rail was awarded the prestigious **Overall Winner's Prize** at the Community Rail Awards 2012. This award is for the group, Community Rail Partnership, individual or train operating company - or any combination - that in the judges' view has contributed the most to community rail development in the past twelve months.*

*Northern were awarded the Overall Winner's Prize after groups on their network won six other categories, including; **Community Art Schemes** for Running Man Art Project at Heaton Chapel; **Best Station Garden** at Dronfield; **the Local Station Development Award** for the Glossop Station Project and Northern Staff member Jason Townsend winning **Outstanding Railway Staff***

Contribution and Mid Cheshire CRP winning the **Teamwork Award** for their Mid Cheshire Line in Bloom project.

It seems that the government is considering **changes to road speed limits**. The speed limit on minor country roads could be **reduced to 40mph** according to recent proposals. In 2010 these contributed 42% of the distance travelled but 70% of road deaths. The government is also looking at the possibility of 20mph zones in villages. However **in a bizarre contrast** they are thinking of making it possible to raise the limits to 40 or 50mph in built up areas! A great achievement of the last 30 months is that **road deaths have started to rise** again after years of decline. (*See our editorial*)

*Network Rail has launched a new TV, radio and online advertising campaign as part of its **level crossing awareness programme** to educate people that they should treat approaching rail footpath crossings as they would a busy road, even in quiet rural areas.*

The TV advert “Distraction”, directed by the award-winning Brett Foraker, depicts a family taking a slow and easy cycle through the countryside, playing a game of “I spy” which distracts them as they approach the footpath crossing. To see the advert go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy-slfsW7tq&feature=player_embedded

Prime Minister David Cameron announced during October that **the average increase in regulated rail fares will be limited to one per cent above inflation for 2013 and 2014**. This is the ‘status quo ante’: rail fares had been due to increase by RPI+3%, in 2013, and in succeeding years under Mr Osborne’s austerity programme. The Department for Transport (DfT) is planning that from thereafter the regulated fares cap for franchised train operators will increase by RPI+1% as established under the previous government. The decision to reduce the planned increases is supposedly funded from savings identified in the DfT’s budget.

*Did you **remember to bring your clocks forward** (or maybe it is backward) by one hour to GMT (e.g. from 10.00 to 09.00) on Sunday morning 28th October? If you did not then **why not save time** and just leave them as they are for a few months - then they will be right again.*

Stalybridge Station buffet bar will be closed for nine days until 5th November. This coincides with the work to improve the railway there. The bar closure is to allow the **new owners**, who run the West Riding bar at Dewsbury Station, to move in, renovate the kitchen and cellar, and redecorate. The bar is in good hands therefore, but ESN is sad to bid **goodbye to Sylvia and her daughters** who have run it so well, and for so long.

PUBLIC INFORMATION.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS.

On the 15 November 2012, for the first time ever, the public across England and Wales will elect a Police and Crime Commissioner for their police force area. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will aim to cut crime and deliver an effective, efficient police service within their force area. Everyone registered to vote in the police force area will be able to vote, including British, EU and Commonwealth citizens living in the UK, and voters will be able to express a first and second choice on the ballot paper.

Although the idea of commissioners was that they would be apolitical, four of the five candidates in Greater Manchester have come from and stand under the banners of their political parties. The candidates are:

Tony Lloyd	Labour
Matt Gallagher	Liberal Democrat
Michel Winstanley	Conservative
Steven Woolfe	UKIP
Roy Warren	Independent.

PCCs will not be expected to run the police. The role of the PCC is to be the voice of the people and hold the police to account. The Police and Crime Commissioner role includes:

- meeting the public regularly to listen to their views on policing
- producing a police and crime plan setting out local policing priorities
- deciding how the budget will be spent
- appointing Chief Constables and dismissing them if needed.

For further information see: <http://www.policeelections.com/> and also <http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/pcc.aspx>

USE YOUR VOTE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Annual General Meeting of



Friends of PATRICROFT Station

Thursday, 8th November 2012, 7pm

There will be a talk by

Network Rail's Marketing Manager (West)

about

Fares and Ticketing

Eccles Fire Station Community Room,

Liverpool Road, Patricroft (M30 0RZ)

Access and parking via New Street entrance

(Behind the Fire Station, off Green Lane)

5 minutes walk from Patricroft Station

PLEASE COME ALONG - ALL VERY WELCOME

OUT AND ABOUT...

...this time in Macclesfield, the choice for our trip of the month. There are a couple of changes which could end the walk nicely.



Here is the dramatic war memorial at Macclesfield. Note the old industrial buildings of which the town has many. It is at this point of the itinerary that you go left along Sunderland Street back to the station.

Photo: JER

Sunderland Street had a number of closed traditional shops when I first went to research the itinerary, but a few have now reopened as experimental businesses including two new bars that can be recommended. They are attracting visitors to Macclesfield centre. It is a bit reminiscent of how the renaissance of Manchester's so called Northern Quarter started.



On one side of the Sunderland Road is 'The Treacle Tap', and roughly opposite is 'The Snow Goose'.

Both of these are new bars in old premises, both sell quality drinks and can rustle up some decent food or snacks for a hungry customer.

Photo: JER

They have good ambience and rather more in common with continental bars than with pubs. They are women friendly, civilised, and one could quite happily pop in for tea or coffee after shopping.

Photo: JER



...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.

ARTICLES

A lesson for Eccles?

Supposing instead of Sunderland Street, from the Cenotaph to Macclesfield railway station, instead we think of Church Street, from the Cenotaph to Eccles railway station. In just the same way there are traditional shop premises out of use. Perhaps some of the same ideas could work.

The two restaurants at the station and Booth's cafe on John William Street were a step in the right direction. If some quality small bars were to open on Church Street then Eccles station might just join that club of smaller towns that are 'must go to railway destinations' including Stalybridge, Marsden, Mossley, Sowerby Bridge, and now Macclesfield. Passenger numbers could increase a lot and there is a chance that regeneration would get a boost.

However, the history of Church Street (as in many other places) is one of licensed premises opening with the same worn out and now failing business model – the uncritical boozers' pub. Such establishments don't compete on quality (doesn't usually come into it at all) but usually on price. The quasi beer on offer bears the same relation to real ale as does Pot Noodle to Loire Valley cuisine: should the alcopop bottles leave any room on the shelves for wine then it is likely to be of poor quality. As for food - forget it, and don't ask for tea or coffee, "This is a pub, mate!" You can sip your synthetic concoction with

a juke box blaring from one side of the room, and Sky Live Sports from the other. (Live in this context means **not** live but televised.)

They struggle on for a while then close again. Someone's redundancy money or savings has vanished and the town has gained nought. We should all hope that this historic pattern will be broken soon if we want regeneration to happen.



This is the pleasant new 'Vintage' cafe and bar. The Czech owners, Daniela and Miroslav serve excellent pastries, good tea/coffee, sandwiches and panini. Upstairs is a room for live music and films. An alcohol license has been granted, but cannot be exercised until a decision by the planning committee. If this is successful good Czech lagers will be on sale.

Cafevintagebar@gmail.com

Photo: JER

With one of the attractive new town shop frontages, this potential bar is ideally situated for a resurgent Church Street. Will it confirm the trend for newer and better things, or shall we see a rerun of the same sad history? Let's wait and see.

Photo: JER

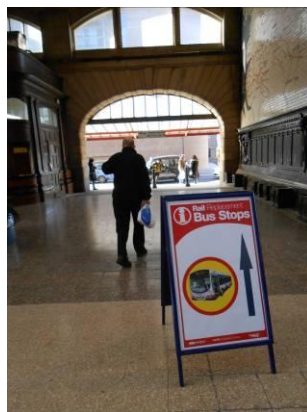


Stalybridge News.

There are no trains to Stalybridge for the first few days of November. The service will resume on Monday, November 5th. The station is closed for a remodelling of the track layout and resignalling work taking nine days and costing £20,000,000. The end results of this temporary inconvenience will be more and longer platforms, plus capacity for more trains to pass through, or

call at the station, without delay. Rassbottom Street outside the station will also be closed for a few days to allow a large crane to assist the work on the bridge at the east end of the station.

For the duration of the work rail replacement bus services will run hourly at XX.27 from Manchester Victoria to Ashton, Stalybridge, stations to Huddersfield and back. There is no bus provided to link to the service from Eccles, which merely terminates at Victoria. Ecclesiastics are therefore advised to delay leisure visits to Ashton and Stalybridge until after the work is completed. Passengers from Piccadilly will travel by train to Guide Bridge for a bus link to Stalybridge. Northern and Trans Pennine are co-operating to run a frequent service to Leeds and beyond via the Calder Valley line through Rochdale.



There has been plentiful passenger information at stations about the temporary changes to services. This is better than ever before, the only drawback being it does not make plain that the ex Liverpool trains to Stalybridge do not have their own replacement bus. *Photos: JER*



Large numbers of workers are involved in the project and work is going very quickly. To cater for the workforce the Coffee Bar at the east end of Platform 1 is staying open. The famous station buffet bar is closed for the duration. *Photo: JER*

THE NEW ECCLES STATION

By our junior correspondent, Stephen Hopkins.

Eccles railway station is no longer the focal point it once was. Fire and the M602 have since reduced it to a shadow of its former self. Award winning garden displays have transformed the platforms, but now plans for a new station building and forecourt are set to improve the surroundings at street level as well.



Plans for forecourt improvements were drawn up on behalf of Freccles some time ago, thanks to funding from the Eccles Community Committee. However, it was felt these should not proceed before putting a new station building in place. To enable this, funding from the National Station



Improvements Programme was secured and a new Ticket Office was designed. The design was arrived at in consultations between Northern Rail, Freccles, Network Rail, Transport for Greater Manchester, and Salford City Council. This has been a slow process, in part because of difficulties presented in placing a structure on a train bridge, as well as resolving issues of responsibility and ownership. However, the plans have now been approved and it is hoped that the building will be in place before the **summer of 2013**.

In the meantime, the forecourt plans have to be revised to accommodate the new ticket office. With generous funding from Salford City Council, Eccles Community Committee and Northern Rail, the resulting transformation should see clear pathways to the station and more attractive surroundings. An additional, but welcome, complication is that funds have also been made

available to install cycle lockers at the station. These will allow commuters to arrive on bikes and leave them in safety while travelling onward by train. Such lockers will also be appearing in large numbers at Victoria and other stations around Manchester and Salford, although some uncertainties about their number and dimensions need to be resolved. The electrification of the line that is currently in progress also brings the promise of additional trains stopping in Eccles. So, the prospect of Eccles station becoming more prominent focus for Eccles once again is certainly in view.

FRANCHISE DEBACLE

By our Senior Transport Editor.

The Secretary of State for Transport announced on the 3 October that the Inter City West Coast franchise competition had been cancelled. Virgin Rail Group said at the time: "We welcome today's frank announcement by the Secretary of State, acknowledging the flaws in the way the Intercity West Coast competition was assessed and launching a review into franchising more widely. In the meantime, we will assist the Department for Transport in ensuring continuity of service for the millions of customers who depend on train services on the West Coast mainline."

It would seem that the selection process was arithmetically flawed as suspected by Virgin. The mistake lurked undetected in a crucial spreadsheet of figures relating to projected income and expenditure for the bids. As a result the whole expensive process is invalidated and the Department of Transport (taxpayer) will need to reimburse the costs incurred by the bidding groups – this could be up to £40,000,000.

This is not a flaw in franchising itself, though some would like to think it is: franchising is a respectable and much used business model. In the case of the railways it is intended to increase competition by removing the substantial capital barrier to entry: the franchisee hires the lines, stations and rolling stock rather than purchasing them all at great cost. This makes it more likely that many companies will compete to run the service. In addition the franchisee can be given the full profit incentive to innovate, grow the business, and to collect fare revenues.

That said, the railway franchise bidding process does seem to be a lengthy, overblown, and unduly expensive process. On top of this it is undertaken too frequently for an industry with such long time horizons. None of this is the industry's fault, nor can the bidders be blamed.

The fundamental flaw is at the Department of Transport. It is extremely prescriptive about the franchise conditions but it suffers from constant changes of personnel and policies. There have been three Transport Secretaries and three undersecretaries in 30 months of the coalition government (but this is not new), and large losses of senior staff as part of the cuts. No wonder mistakes are made! Responsibility for the railways needs a professional and permanent team and some continuity of policy.

There are now two reviews into the mess which one might hope will come up with improvements, but the awarding of franchises will now be delayed, and the department will be fully occupied trying to bring in temporary arrangements to cover the gap. Virgin has offered to continue to run the trains on West Coast as an interim management contract. Another possibility is that the Minister might choose Directly Operated Railways (a subsidiary of the Transport Department) to do this, but currently they operate East Coast – the main competitor to West Coast!

TRIP OF THE MONTH.

This month the chosen trip is number Sixty eight:

MACCLESFIELD – MARKET & SHOPS

Macclesfield is an old fashioned Cheshire market town with some fine buildings. There is an indoor market, and an outdoor market on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

Take the train to Manchester Victoria and from there a tram to Manchester Piccadilly Station. From here there are frequent trains that stop at Macclesfield. *Option: - turn right as you get off the tram and on Fairfield Street use the lift on the left to the link bridge lounge.*

As the train approaches Macclesfield notice the furniture factory and showrooms of Arighi Bianchi on the left.

Alight at Macclesfield Station. *As you leave the station notice the buildings and styles on the opposite side of Water's Green – Water's Green House, and Wylde's (Joseph Holt hand pump mild and bitter, also meals.)*

Descend the approach road on the right and cross the main road.

Walk ahead up the road into town, passing the Nag's Head (*Robinson's beers*).

Follow the bend to the left (*but notice The Castle pub tucked away on left hand side*).

You come out onto the main town square. *There is a fine old church on your right -St Michael and All Angels - a fine old parish church – take a walk round it. Open 09.30 to 13.00 most days with tea and coffee from 10.30. Website www.stmichaels-macclesfield.com*

Cross the town square on a diagonal.

Opposite the portico of the Town Hall building go left along Chestergate-*this street has shops on both sides and The Bate Hall pub on the right (Marston's real ale)*.

Go as far as the traffic lights on the road that crosses Chestergate.

[OPTION: You may wish to cross and go further along Chestergate. *There are some interesting buildings: left on Bridge Street is the 1872 Drill Hall for the Cheshire Regiment Volunteers; on a street corner is Norbury's 'Garden Machinery Shop' – full of lawn mowers etc! Also on the left is The Picturedrome – "The World in Motion." – as its motto says. On the right is 'The Spectacular Fireworks Shop'.]*

Turn back and retrace your steps along Chestergate towards the Town Hall.

Enter The Grosvenor Shopping Centre on the right. *As well as the shops there is an indoor market. At a very good cheese stall I bought 'Stinking Bishop' (well wrapped!) and Staffordshire oatcakes. (Derbyshire oatcakes are also available)*

Exit at the opposite end of the shopping centre and there is another section of the open market (*on the busiest days this continues a long way to the right and onto a car park*).

Turn left outside the shopping centre.

At end of street go right. This takes you along the main shopping street.

Follow this as it gently curves downhill. *Keep your eyes open on the right for Duke's Court (shops and cafe) under the white tiled 1922 tower, The Cheshire Gap (a good delicatessen), the outdoor market up a street on the right, and on the left an old half timbered curry restaurant!*

Further along on the right is The White Lion (*Cask Marque real ales*).

You come to a civic open space. *On the left a large classical portico is followed by a few shops including an excellent old fashioned butcher's shop. On the opposite side is a registry office and 'The Society Rooms' – a J.D. Wetherspoon pub – real ales and food.*

Continue ahead to the main road. Turn left along it opposite the memorial garden. *There are small and specialist shops along here, and two new style bars called 'The Snow Goose' and 'The Treacle Tap'.*

Ascend the station approach road on the right to catch a train back to Manchester.

CLASSIFICATION: SHORT, EASY (ONE STEEP BIT)

MARKETS, PUBS, CAFES, SHOPS, FOOD,
ARCHITECTURE

RAIL FARE: £8.30 off peak adult return

MAPS: OS 1:50 000 sheet 118 Phillips street atlas Cheshire

BOOK REVIEW:

'The BERLIN-BAGHDAD Express. The Ottoman Empire and Germany's bid for world power 1898-1918.'

by Sean McMeekin. ISBN 9781846143236 Allen Lane.
(Penguin) £25.00. Available at Eccles Library.

The author teaches at Yale, and Bilkent University, Ankara. He has produced a book that ably describes and comments on the complex politics of the Middle East at a time when railways were an important part of super power

diplomacy. The Berlin to Baghdad line via Constantinople was a continuation of the politics of Wilhelmine Germany by other means. It was intended to give the Reich an economic empire and influence in the east. Fortunately for the Entente Powers, the railway was not ready in World War I. Two mountainous regions in Turkey, and tunnelling through a mountain of quartz delayed completion of the route.

This is not a railway book. It is a history book, and as such a catalogue of human follies. There are splendid examples of the law of unintended consequences; some bizarre characters; many plots, and much incompetence. Oceans of Entente and Allied Powers money vanished into the region without producing the intended effects: Kaiser Wilhelm thought that Global Jihad was a great idea, and ironically the architect of the original concept was a member of a wealthy German Jewish banking family! That's not all - The Reich arranged for Lenin to go back to Moscow in 1917 and financed his propaganda.

Simply wonderful! You couldn't make this stuff up.

The book is available at Eccles Library.

ADVERTISEMENT.



A government-funded initiative to help local community or voluntary groups

FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

It is a matched fund programme, which means that every £1 provided in funding must be matched by a similar amount of in-kind donations (this means donations of cash, services, free products or volunteer time calculated at £11.09 per hour, per volunteer). Money is available for Barton Ward projects and Eccles Ward projects.

Applying for funds is easy and details can be found at:-

Barton <http://bartoncommunityfirst.wordpress.com/>

Eccles <http://www.ellesmerepark.org.uk/ECF/default.html>

EDITORIAL.

TOO BAD

It is true that the railways are now costing four to five times as much in subsidy per annum as in British Rail's final days. However a very common mistake is to take this as proof that the privatised railways are wasteful and good old British Rail was a paragon of efficiency in comparison. Commentators putting forth this view are forgetting inflation and also that in the latter days of British Rail the infrastructure was being reduced by the removal of passing loops, signalling, crossovers and the singling of lines. Even worse the remaining infrastructure was subject to annual "maintenance holidays" – a euphemism for neglect. This is a very cheap short term way to run a railway – to run it down! In the long run it is expensive because there is no railway left to show for the annual subsidy!

The network was close to collapse as a result of the neglect (do you remember the Barmouth Bridge rotting away?), and then Railtrack was blamed for some 'accidents' that had been waiting to happen (do you remember the track spreading under a goods train on the Settle and Carlisle line?). Maintaining a railway inevitably costs more than neglecting it. Counteracting historic large scale neglect costs even more (a stitch in time would have saved nine!).

Rail traffic is growing at a Chinese economy rate –one of Britain's success stories – and this means Network Rail has to reinstate infrastructure that was taken out by BR. This costs a large amount of money that the latter day British Rail was not spending. Therefore the larger subsidy is not in itself a proof of waste or over spending, any more than the small subsidy given to British Rail was proof of careful and prudent investment!

It is a poor journalistic argument and ESN thinks that this argument is so bad it is not even wrong! *

**with due acknowledgement to the irascible physicist Wolfgang Pauli, author of the quantum exclusion principle.*

TOO FAST.

When the first motor car was registered in 1895 it had to be preceded by a man walking with a red flag. With this ultra safe (except perhaps for the flag carrier) regulation in force the car would have appeared to be a purely benign innovation and 'unnecessarily' restricted in its potential by 'over regulation'.

Not surprisingly pressure built up from influential (and necessarily very wealthy) car owners for a relaxation of this severe limitation, and in 1903 a national speed limit of 20mph was introduced. This compromise between speed and safety was wisely chosen for a number of reasons, not all of which will have been fully obvious to the legislators of the time.

Up to 20mph is roughly the range of speeds that humans have evolved to deal with – at higher speeds sight and judgment are overtaxed*. More important though is the fact that biological tissues such as skin, muscle, and bone have evolved the limits of their strength in this range too. Someone hit by a vehicle at 20mph will almost certainly survive their injuries whereas at higher speeds flesh and bone behave in a more brittle fashion, tearing and shattering to such an extent that a victim of a 30 - 40mph impact has a high probability of death or else certainly serious injuries as a result.

So a safe and sensible compromise speed limit had been introduced in 1903. What on earth happened to it? As more of the wealthy clubbable people and members of the legislature acquired cars, one can imagine the influential, invisible, and informal conspiracy (as noted amongst businessmen by Adam Smith) developing as a motor car lobby. Add also that the motor car has an almost unbelievable potential to produce selfish, inward looking, and irrational thought processes immune to considering the general good.**

This sort of thinking therefore prevailed and in 1930 the 20mph speed limit was abolished by parliament: there was to be no speed limit! For the first time continuous mass killing and maiming was sanctioned without the need for a war. Decades of carnage had begun.

*This explains much of the seemingly incredible behaviour one sees on the roads. Drivers are quite literally struggling to remain human in their decision making at high speeds.

** Even when not being driven. This strange effect on drivers has been the object of much recent research in transport studies.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

If you were naive and gullible and had a profitable business opportunity to let you might lease it to someone who offers you a pound a year for ten years and promises to pay you all the tea in China at the end of the lease.

You would learn the hard way about human affairs – distant promises are worth little. You would have to be very stupid indeed though if, after this experience, you were to let out a similarly good business again on the same terms.

If, say, a Department of Transport were to let out, say, a Great Western Franchise.....*(Oh, dear reader. Please complete this editorial for yourself!)*

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

