

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2014

Welcome to Eccles Station News. It is an unpleasant duty for ESN to convey bad news on local rail fares this month. However it is policy to try to keep readers informed and include 'warts and all' reporting. There is no Trip of the Month this time while ESN digests the consequences of the changes Peak Hours restrictions.

NEWS

From Sunday 7th September 2014 **half price evening return tickets will be withdrawn and so will the Greater Manchester Evening Rover ticket.** This applies to all train operators within Greater Manchester. Travel at these times will require the purchase of off peak returns or standard GM Rover tickets at twice the price. (See later items too.)

*At a general meeting on Friday 29th August, 97.3% of Network Rail's 41 Members (the company's equivalent of shareholders) voted to change the company's articles of association. The change was necessary as Network Rail is to be reclassified as a public sector company on Monday, 1 September following a statistical change in the classification of its debt from private sector to public sector. **The main changes to the articles give the company's special member - the Secretary of State for Transport - additional powers over the appointment of the company's chair, its remuneration policy and the selection of its Members.***

- On Monday 8th September 2014 **the definition of peak hours** for rail travel within Greater Manchester (currently defined as before 09.30 Mon-Fri) **will be extended to include the hours 16.01 to 18.29 Mon-Fri.** This means that off peak tickets, Duo tickets, GM Rail Ranger and GM Daysaver tickets will not be valid for journeys commencing in Greater Manchester area between those hours. Passengers will need to travel before or after these hours except on Saturday and Sunday. Otherwise it will be necessary to purchase an ‘anytime’ return on setting out for the day, or else a single ticket on the way back to Eccles. (See article for fuller details and reasons).

*Northern Rail’s webpage has details of **attractions that allow 2 for one entry when combined with travelling there by train.** The current venues are Staircase House, Stockport, The Blackpool Tower Circus, The Blackpool Tower Dungeon and Newcastle Life Science Centre.*

For details see: <http://www.northernrail.org/offers/Exhibitions+and+Events>



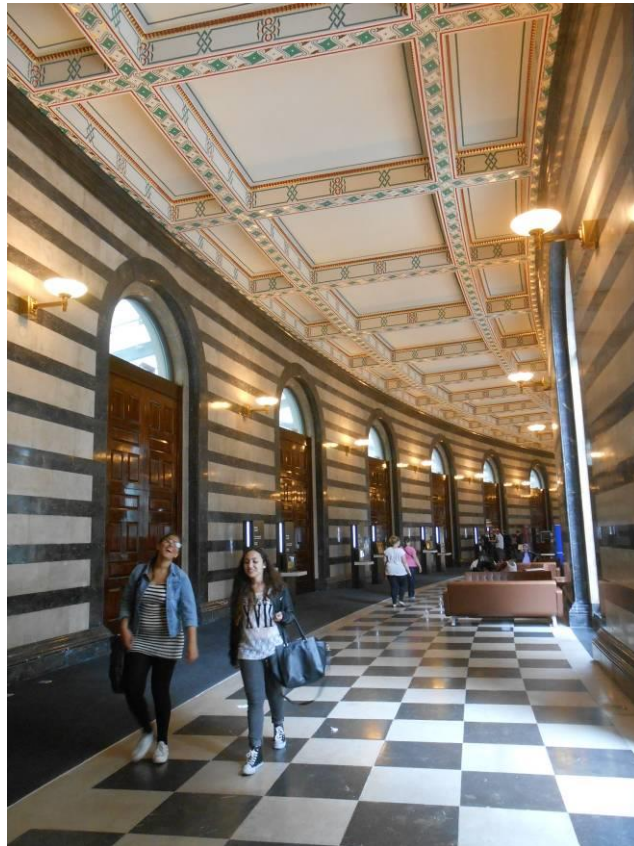
44786, with a West Coast Railways tour, awaits departure from Manchester Victoria in the early evening of 5th July 2014

Photo J E Rayner

Private Eye magazine might not seem the place to look for informed railway comment but ‘**Dr B Ching**’ is a regular contributor to the satirical and scurrilous organ, and is obviously an industry insider. His articles (usually about page 10/11) often refer to **DafT** (Department of Transport) and provide an original viewpoint. In 8th August (Ed 1372) under SIGNAL FAILURES – ‘luck of the

Northern Irish' the author points out that the fastest growing UK railway is **Northern Ireland Railways** whose passenger journeys rose by 90% and not Great Britain's railways whose numbers rose 57% in the same period. The article points out that **NIR** is neither a franchise nor privatised!

LEISURE ON LINE.



Manchester Central Library has reopened after a major refurbishment. This fact is well hidden because the building is still surrounded by a building site but part of this is work to expand the St Peter's Square Metro stop. You may wish to pop in to take a look at the results in what is now a multipurpose building as is Eccles Library, aka 'Gateway'. The game is to find out where the books are hidden! See: <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/centrallibrary>

Central Library opening times are:

- Monday: 9am-8pm

- Tuesday: 9am-8pm
- Wednesday: 9am-8pm
- Thursday: 9am-8pm
- Friday: 9am-5pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm



September is heritage month so there will be lots of places open to the public in many towns and cities. Middleton (accessible from Mills Hill station) will once again be opening its historic buildings and if you have not been yet, then it is well worth a visit. See last year's September ESN for ideas (<http://www.visitmanchester.com/middletongoldencluster>) and also see <http://www.visitmanchester.com/middletongoldencluster>

Previous leisure items still on:

Mondrian and his Studios is a special exhibition at Tate Liverpool open from 6th June – 5th October 2014. Admission charges are: Adult £11 (without donation £10), Concession £8.25 (without donation £7.50). An audio guide is available: £3. *Mondrian and his Studios* See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/mondrian-and-his-studios>

ESN's money is on some inspiring art being in The Walker Art Gallery between 5 July and 30 November 2014 with the 'JOHN MOORES PAINTING PRIZE'

exhibition. See:

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/johnmoores/jm2014/index.aspx>

The Lady Lever Art Gallery : 'Rossetti's Obsession: Images of Jane Morris'.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/exhibitions/rossetti/index.aspx>

OUT AND ABOUT...

Here are a few photographs taken on the Trip of Month itinerary between Moreton and West Kirby in last month's ESN. It is an itinerary for a relaxed stroll and well worth doing if the rain should stop during September!





...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.

ARTICLES

Extension of Peak Hour Restrictions.

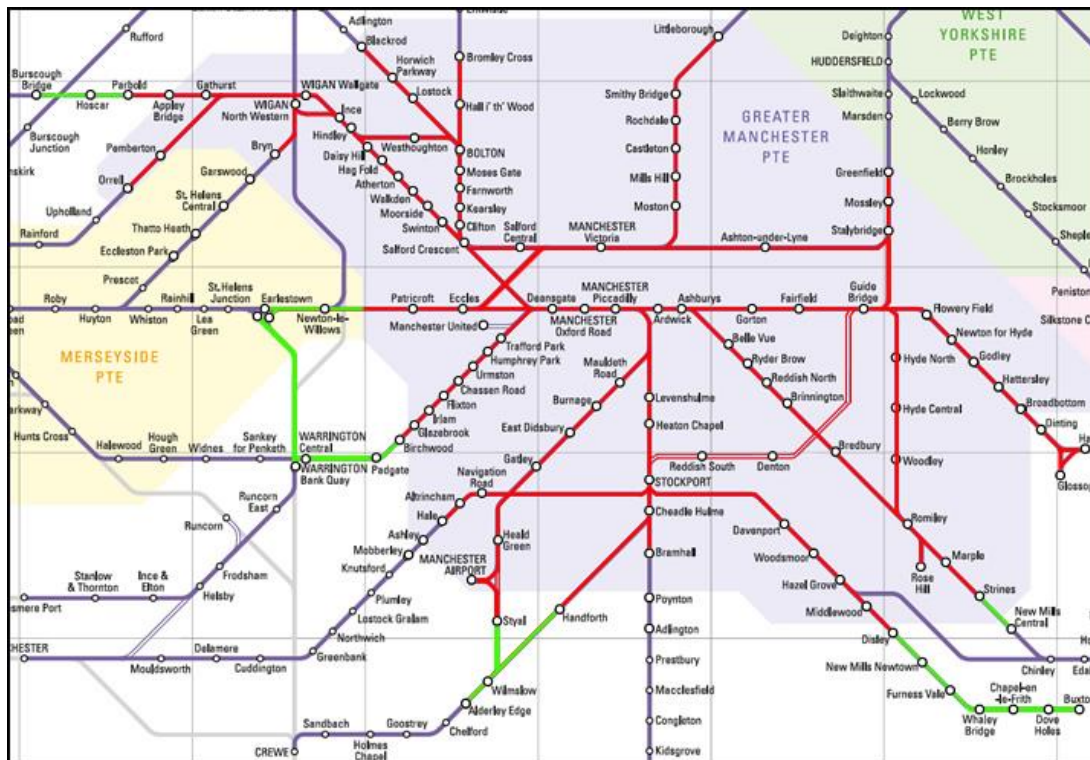
The Department for Transport asked Northern to look at several options to help reduce subsidy as part of its new franchise extension agreement. The change to off-peak tickets is the only option that has been taken forward and will be used to reduce the cost of the railway to taxpayers by reducing subsidy to Northern.

As well as the withdrawal of the very cheap evening returns and GM Evening Rover tickets, Northern Rail is introducing changes to the times that customers can use off-peak tickets as part of its franchise extension agreement with the Department for Transport. The hours 16.01 to 18.29 on Mondays to Fridays will count as Peak Travel Hours and will mean that many (not all) off-peak tickets can no longer be used to embark on journeys on local rail services in Greater Manchester and some associated routes during those times. The changes will take effect from Monday 8 September and similar arrangements will apply within each of West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and the Newcastle – Hexham line.

The rule applies to the use of off peak single and off peak return tickets to embark upon journeys wholly within the Greater Manchester rail area. The following tickets also fall under this rule: Greater Manchester Rail Ranger, Duo tickets, Greater Manchester Daysavers (train and bus, train and metro, train bus and metro versions).

Obviously any time single or return tickets are not affected by the rule, nor are the Greater Manchester Concessionary Passes or the Greater Manchester Peak Wayfarer Ticket which remain valid for journeys started within these hours. Also valid are most cross boundary off peak tickets eg to Southport, Liverpool, Huddersfield etc. If your journey in the area has already started before 16.01 then your ticket is still valid until you either reach your destination or change train.

However an added complication is that the 'off peak' rule also applies to a number of stations just outside the Greater Manchester rail boundary as shown on this map in red or green:



Thus Hoscarr, Burscough Bridge, Parbold, Newton le Willows, Earlestown, Warrington, Padgate, Birchwood, Styal, Handforth, Wilmslow, New Mills Central and stations Disley to Buxton are included. However if you have an off peak return to stations on the blue lines then these are still valid for travel in the evening peak hours. The complexity of these rules is likely to be beyond the grasp of the occasional traveller and it looks like station and on train staff will have their work cut out in explaining them tactfully. 'Booking clerks' will be needed more than for a long time.

Evening peak trains are liable to be much less crowded. Customers who currently use the affected off-peak tickets during the weekday evening peak will either have to travel earlier or later, buy an anytime ticket, or travel at weekend instead. The majority of commuters who travel in the evening peak already buy season tickets or anytime fares and won't be affected by this change, but economy minded 'off peak' commuters with part time jobs could

be badly hit. Those who cannot change times will see fares rise between 50% and 100%, and this is before the January general fare rise.

Given the ban on travel in a crucial two and a half hours It is not unreasonable to anticipate a loss of rail passengers. Some may not travel while others transfer to bus or tram. Some (how many?) will opt to use their cars with a resultant decline in environment and life quality on urban roads.

Richard Allan, Commercial Director, Northern Rail said: “The majority of customers who travel at peak times, such as those with season tickets, will be unaffected by these changes but we want to make sure that those who are (affected) know about what is happening. We have consulted extensively with local stakeholders and with Passenger Focus on the detail of this change, which is part of our new franchise agreement that was announced in March.”

In addition to the changes to off-peak tickets, the franchise agreement more positively includes commitments to invest in more customer information systems, better retailing facilities and environmental initiatives. Over the course of the 22 month franchise over £6million will be invested to improve facilities for customers.

Full details of the changes are well presented on the Northern Rail website (northernrail.org/off-peak) or by speaking to station staff. These changes apply to all rail services, not just those operated by Northern, on these routes and between these times.

BOOK REVIEW:

‘THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY in the first world war’

by Sandra Gittins. ISBN 9780752456324. The History Press £16.99. Available at Eccles Library.

This is an attractively presented new book detailing the contributions (materials, money, manufacturing, manpower, expertise, transport and more) made by a great British company to the national effort in a time of crisis.

The book is mainly narrative, being almost devoid of analysis or comment, but is still worth a read. It reminds us 'lest we forget' of the great financial and personal sacrifices made in this war, and may surprise some younger readers by the described ingenuity, speed of work, and unity of purpose possible in a previous age.

One is provoked to reflect on the breadth of the support offered to the nation by the Great Western Railway. It was possible because the large railway companies aimed for autarchy - making as much as possible 'in-house'. Ironically this is now an extinct business model.

It is amusing that little GWR steamships were robust enough to accidentally damage warships (unfortunate own goals in both cases), and that the company experimented with coal-gas powered buses – gas balloons on top deck!

The book is available at Eccles Library.

EDITORIAL

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The choice for Greater Manchester off peak passengers after 8th September is a great loss of flexibility, a huge fare rise (50% plus), or don't travel on the train between Mondays and Fridays. There will then be a general fare rise in January. A decline in rail use is inevitable.

This is not what the roads, railway, region or travellers need, but it does suit someone with blinkered vision. This retrograde step has HM Treasury fingerprints all over it. In a narrow-view book balancing exercise 'subsidy' (purchase of a public good) will be reduced with the result that people are priced off the railway and the less obvious costs of congestion on the roads will increase. However expect the blame to be passed on to Northern Rail.

It also says a lot (not complementary) about our supposedly 'national' media that this is occurring almost without comment while they lament the likely January fare increases at length.

Eccles passengers will face a double whammy because of having only an hourly service and no services running beyond Victoria. The last off peak travel to Manchester will be on the 15.07 and the next train will be 19.10. Returning from Victoria is no better with a 15.02 to 19.02 gap.

The editorial heading sums it all up.

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

