

ECCLES STATION

NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2015

NEWS

It's lovely to see a well kept railway garden in summer as shown in the photo below, but underneath this photo we take a look at **some intruders on the station.**



The left hand shot is of **Rose Bay Willow Herb** but the plant in the right hand photo is unidentified due to ESN's editor being unable to find his Collins Guide to Wild Flowers. So some help from readers would be appreciated! Below we see two more flowers that have adopted the station, in the form of garden gnomes Johnny and Tommy enjoying the comfort of the sleeper bed on the Manchester Platform one sunny afternoon:



*Work continues on the site for **the new bus station at Bolton**. This is situated between the Bolton – Blackburn line (which curves away in the photo) and the Bolton – Preston line (in the foreground) and will be connected by a footbridge to the booking hall on the railway station.*



*On a recent visit to the station the **Transport Minister Patrick McLoughlin** promised that Bolton will get a fifth platform as part of the electrification scheme. This will be a through platform on the Newport Street side – the old Wigan platform face still being there without the track.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES.....

The First Group of train companies will once again run the hugely popular **Club 55 tickets**. These are a discounted, walk up and go rail travel offer for people aged 55 and over. From 19 September over 55s can travel on all of FirstGroup's train operating companies, First Great Western, ScotRail, First TransPennine Express, First Hull Trains and First Capital Connect, **for just £20 return** (£19 for ScotRail services) or if travelling First Class £35 return (£26 for ScotRail services). The offer runs until 20 November 2011 in England and Wales and until 30 November 2011 for ScotRail services. In England and Wales, Club 55 will have four travel zones - with tickets starting from £20 return and then £15 for each extra zone.

It is possible that **Arriva Trains Wales** will also run this scheme again. Neither the First nor the Arriva websites currently offer any sense when asked about club 55 so we cannot direct you to an address to use.

The next station gardening and tidying event is this coming weekend, **6th September from 11am at the station**. We know that many of you have commitments and even live in far flung reaches of these isles but if you are free or visiting on the first Sunday of the month, come down to the station and say hello. We will only thrust a trowel or a litter picker in your hands if you let us, promise!

OUT AND ABOUT...

Well it's very good news at Liverpool Lime Street station as ESN found on a recent visit. The hellish station bar that sold poor beer in a dismal room racked by competing televisions and LOUD juke box has gone!



J D Wetherspoon have taken over; transformed the premises from Hades to Heaven, and the resulting 'Liverpool North Western' is entirely fitting for a great Victorian Railway Station. ESN recommends a visit whether for coffee, beer, food, or just a gawp at the decor. Railway Buffs might want to question the chosen railway images (see next issue).



As you come off the platforms head diagonally right (as if going to the toilets) for the obscurely sited entrance door down the side of the concourse shops.

...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.

ARTICLES

Transport for Eccles (X).

Up to now we have pointed out the improvements needed to the station at Eccles and that because it is an expensive asset it should be much more intensively used to get the value from it. This brings us to consider the location of the station. Now in common with many railway stations it is probably not ideally located in the town but it has to be on the railway line and any alternative site on it is less ideal still! The cost of moving the line and station would be great and the benefits small: it would be cheaper to rebuild the town with the railway in mind!

Its position at the top of Church Street puts it fairly central for much of Eccles town – the entire centre is within 10 minutes walk. A fifteen minute walk radius takes one to Ladywell, Lankro, Barton Lane, Eccles Recreation Ground, the near edge of Patricroft (White Lion, Liverpool Road), Lyntown Industrial Estate, the near end of Monton Village, the southern part of Ellesmere Park and (just) Salford Royal Hospital. That is not bad at all. Is it possible that access to the platforms from the Manchester end would attract more passengers to and from the hospital?

Down Church Street there is a private hire cab office and five minutes' walk to the black cab rank, bus station and tram stop linking with all the other services described in previous articles in this series. For this interchange to be made easier would require a major development of the town centre and its roads! The station does have a drop off point on the forecourt. This is reached by a quiet, but obscure road between Albert Road (Orbit House) and Regent Street (The Lamb) so the cars do not have to go through the town centre. It is possible that brasher signs and an information campaign might lead to more use of the station in this way. Car drop offs from the north of Eccles (Monton and Ellesmere Park) could be done without using this route at all if it were possible to provide a drop off point on the other side of the motorway footbridge from the station. At this point it is worth mentioning that this bridge is being considered for replacement, and there is pressure for this to be a classy walkway rather than uncomfortable experience for pedestrians. Is it possible to link bridge replacement with a new drop off point for the station and town centre?

Cycle provision has recently been greatly enhanced, and we wait to see how this is used, so now we are left with car parking. Car parking at the station itself is very limited and will remain this way for some time. It is recognised that very limited car parking tends to keep station patronage low but park and ride is an expensive facility to provide from scratch because one car tends to yield only one railway fare per day, and at Eccles this would be a low value local fare to Manchester.

There seem to be no immediate plans to rebuild Eccles Station with a multi storey car park above one of the platforms and accessed from Gilda Brook Road, but an alternative would be to close the motorway to through traffic (or reduce it to two lanes for goods traffic) while still keeping access from Gilda Brook Road and the M60. This would provide space to park perhaps two thousand cars with convenient access to Eccles station. This could reduce noise levels and exhaust emissions in Eccles.



In terms of low cost projects and short term planning there could be modest improvements to the park and ride possibilities of Eccles Station. Nearby (about 5 minutes walk) are about 500 public car park spaces some of which are barely used. These are (in order of distance from station):

St Mary's Road	ca 40 places	£3.50 per day	busy to full
John William St	ca 160 places	£3.50 per day	rarely full
Multi storey Apron	ca 30 places	£3.50 per day	not busy
Mall (under apron)	ca 30 places	£3.50 per day	busy to full
Multi storey 7 floor	ca 300 places	SCC permit*	nearly empty

The multi story 7 floor car park is in poor condition but usable. The John William Street car park is a good one with fence, lighting and security cameras. This is fenced off in the direction of the railway station because the corner was being used as the escape route for those robbing cars before the security improvements took place. The St Mary's Road one is right next to the railway! The apron pay and display is the victim of a misleading sign on the ramp (right below)



Despite this ESN is not aware of much park and ride usage of Eccles station. Do any readers know differently? Has this been surveyed by FRECCLES, Northern or TfGM? Has the possibility of park and ride from Eccles not been noticed by the public? Could this produce an additional 200 + return fare sales per day at Eccles station? ESN is not aware of the charges or conditions for the SCC permit* but the £3.50 per day charge is not at a prohibitive level, especially for Saturday shoppers – it is cheap compared to much City Centre parking. ESN is puzzled and finishes with the following thoughts:

Is there the possibility that park and ride could be grown by advertising?

Is there possibility of cooperation between Northern and SCC whereby some part of the £3.50 is redeemable on purchase of a return ticket to Manchester?

Could there be a similar arrangement made for season ticket holders?

Would it be worth Northern either taking over the St Mary's Road car park for the station, or an equivalent number of designated places on John William Street car park?

(The spell checker keeps suggesting 'carp ark' for this article!)

New Thinking on Station Development.

ESN was delighted to receive the text of this presentation made to ACoRP Station Adopters' Conference, Friends' Meeting House, Manchester, June 2nd 2015, by Dr Paul Salveson (the railway doctor) and reproduced here with his permission.

'New thinking on station development'

Change is constant – but sometimes it can accelerate

There are few examples of completely 'new' ideas. Most practical – even revolutionary – ideas emerge and build from development that has already happened. Sometimes you see great leaps forward, a shift from quantitative change and development to something that marks a qualitative shift. In politics, that can mark a revolution. And something of that sort has happened with community rail. In the late 1980s and early 1990s there were several things going on that contributed to a positive approach towards rural and local railways in general. The Devon and Cornwall Rail Initiative was set up in the early 1990s to promote the local rail network, involving BR, local authorities, national parks and the University of Plymouth. There were several examples of rail user groups which were doing more than just protesting: groups like the Cotswold Line Promotion group, as the name suggests, took a positive approach to their local line. The BR Community Unit, almost forgotten now, did some great work in taking railways out into local communities. And at a very

local level there was the beginning of the station adoption movement. I honestly don't know which was the first example of a community 'adopting' their station. Dolau on Heart of Wales? One of the East Anglian rural stations? Answers to ACoRP on a postcard please. In addition there were isolated examples of local business enterprise at a station, notably the one-man booking office at Ledbury, which continues to thrive. Putting all of these good things together led to the 'community rail' concept. But sometimes radical change needs an external stimulus and this came from the plans for rail privatisation which were taking shape in the early 1990s. Would rural railways survive? What actually happened was that privatisation created space to develop some quite new initiatives which the more formal structure of BR might not have endorsed so positively. We've not looked back.

A mature movement

Station adoption – or more cumbersome – 'community-based station development' – has been around for over 25 years. Along with its bigger sisters in community rail partnerships, it's a mature movement with lots of great work happening up and down the country. My friends in ACoRP reckon there are over 300 groups on the network. Their work has led to the transformation of hundreds of stations, making them more welcoming and attractive to use. They have re-established stations as being at the heart of many communities. Here in Greater Manchester, there are brilliant examples at Hindley, Westhoughton, Walkden and Littleborough. Some are staffed but many are not; most have lost their buildings but that hasn't stopped volunteers at the likes of Westhoughton transforming their station through gardens, art work and a range of amusingly eccentric features.

So a perfectly reasonable stance is to say 'carry on lads and lasses, you're doing a grand job'. I certainly don't want to give the impression that what you're doing is old hat and should be swept away in pursuit of something new and better. What I am offering is the possibility of doing more – sometimes quite a lot more – if you're up for it. Unlike the situation in the early 1990s, there isn't the external stimulus of a *threat* (i.e. privatisation leading to closures).

However, there is a more positive stimulus, represented by a far more positive approach coming from the Department for Transport, the devolved governments for Scotland and Wales, Network Rail and the train operators. Your work has been recognised and people at a very high level of government are saying "let's see more of this sort of thing". For the first time in my experience, civil servants are challenging community rail activists to be more radical. This is reflected in the core of rail policy and expressed in franchise documentation. The Northern Rail Invitation to tender gives explicit support to

community rail and group station adoption, and supports plans to bring unused station buildings back to community use. And what's more, this will be scored in the franchise evaluation. There are great examples of station buildings being brought back to use around the network: Littleborough with its superb community museum and archive centre, Moorthorpe (pop in and enjoy a brew in The Mallard Cafe) and Todmorden with its artists' studios. And the jewel in the crown – or soon to be – Wakefield Kirkgate, an example of station adoption on steroids. The once derelict station buildings, which added extra emphasis to the station's former title of 'Britain's worst station' have been restored in a £5m project led by not-for-profit environment charity Groundwork, working with Metro, Network Rail, train operators and Wakefield Council – with generous help from the Railway Heritage Trust. When it opens later this year there will be conference facilities, office space and cafe facilities. I invite next year's adopters' conference to meet there.

The challenge of 'scorched earth' stations: enter the 'caboose'

There are still station buildings sitting there, waiting to be brought back to life. Mytholmroyd; Padgate; Askam and many more. But they are shrinking in number as communities realise that they can intervene and bring those buildings back to productive use. But suppose there isn't a building to be brought back to use? Back in the 60s and 70s BR pursued a policy of 'scorched earth', trashing many buildings that could now be part of flourishing community station. Nobody is going to wave a magic wand and bring back the buildings which once graced Llandeilo, Craven Arms and Church Stretton on the Heart of Wales; Clapham, Wennington and Giggleswick on the Bentham Line; and so many more. But that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do. There is. In rural Mid Wales – Presteigne – a local company owned by David Bamford that specialises in eco-friendly 'passiv haus' homes, has come up with the 'caboose' concept. For those of you old enough to remember, it looks like the classic BR 'fitted van' some of which and still be found in farmers' fields across Britain. But it's built to modern standards using sustainable materials. And it isn't expensive. We're not talking about a more attractive waiting shelter. It's a building made for things to happen inside it (yes OK, I know all about some of the things that happen in unstaffed waiting shelters). It provides room for small businesses, station adoption groups and local community groups. It could be used as a small shop, a booking office and convenience store, a bike hire business – or whatever the local need might be. Art gallery? Tourist information? Local food shop? Bike hire? The list is endless and will be determined by local opportunities rather than any top-down 'model'.

It isn't the kind of place that should be run by the train operator, or by a local authority. It needs people like you – local social entrepreneurs – to activate the concept. But it does need a supportive framework, and I'm delighted to say that Network Rail, the Welsh Government and the train operator (Arriva) is keen to see a pilot 'caboose' installed at Llandeilo. The project is being encouraged and promoted by the Heart of Wales Line Forum and its newly-formed subsidiary Heart of Wales Line Enterprise Network. The caboose will be ready soon and I hope some of you will be able to get over to Mid Wales and see it. Even better, start talking to your TOC and Network Rail about getting one installed at your station.

Re-creating the garden railway village

Sometimes to go forward you need to find inspiration in the past. Back in the 19th century the railway opened up many parts of rural Britain, connecting villages and towns to larger centres. In some cases they helped create completely new villages, usually around junctions or other operating centres. A few railway workers' cottages led to building the station pub. A church would be built; shops provided, such as a local co-operative. Before long, you had a complete, more or less self-sustaining, village. Many of the railway workers tended extensive gardens growing their own produce and sharing it with neighbours and workmates. They formed societies and built 'reading rooms'. In the North-east you still see examples of these railway villages, like 'Ferryhill Station', which though it has a busy railway has long since lost its station. On the Heart of Wales Line, 'Builth Road' is a good example of a surviving railway village, though few railway workers still live there.

Can we re-interpret that concept in a 21st century context? There is growing interest in a new generation of sustainable 'garden cities'. Why not re-create 'railway garden villages' with affordable, eco-friendly housing built around the station? The station could be the community centre, village shop and visitor centre. It's an ambitious vision and would need the co-operation of Network Rail, willing to use some of its unused land assets, the local authority and train operator. But above all it would require community engagement stimulated by a not-for-profit development trust.

Staffed stations

Many station adopters work at stations which are staffed for at least part of the day. Examples include Kidsgrove, Hebden Bridge, Todmorden, Poynton, Littleborough and Whaley Bridge. Relationships with staff are invariably positive, with station staff recognising that adopters add value that neither they nor their employers could provide. It's great to see staff getting involved in station adoption projects, often in their own time. I think there is scope to

extend the scope of smaller staffed stations which may otherwise be vulnerable to de-staffing in years' ahead. It baffles me that station booking offices sell only one 'product', i.e. tickets. Some stations could generate additional income by developing them (Merseyrail has already done it) as combined ticket sales and convenience stories. In some cases, currently unstaffed stations could be brought back to use with ticketing facilities supplemented by offering other sales and services, depending on what the local need might. And if there is no building – but the commercial opportunity – hire in a 'caboose'! And it doesn't have to be staffed by the train operator; it could be a local business – or maybe even the station adoption group. That would require, in most cases, a major step change which might be scary. But remember, you've got allies.

Larger stations

Most of this paper has focused on opportunities at small stations. But we shouldn't ignore the potential of larger stations. Huddersfield, with nearly five million passengers a year, has its own 'Friends of Huddersfield Station' which staffs a visitor information point (VIP). The volunteers give advice and information on the town as much as the trains, to a degree compensating for the loss of the town's tourist information centre. On certain evenings you can buy home-baked bread from the HandMade Bakery, cakes and flowers. Local artists display their work in the station concourse, with exhibitions changed every month so it's always fresh. It wouldn't have happened without the support of TransPennine, both station staff and senior management; now there is a team of some 25 volunteers who staff the VIP four days a week. Preston station, managed by Virgin Trains, has introduced a 'station market' for local businesses offering bread, pies and pasties, olives, soap and crafts. I can recommend the cheese and onion pie! The stall-holders aren't charged – Virgin recognises that they bring a positive sense of community to this large, busy station. And there's the space to do it without anyone getting in the way. There is scope to do similar things at many more larger stations. You need a supportive TOC and station management team and a way of reaching out to the community. Adopters of smaller stations nearby could play a pivotal role in helping the TOC do that.

Encourage innovation and do new stuff

Community-led station development is a flexible tool which can take in a wide range of activities. Grand Central has encouraged 'station ambassadors' to assist passengers using their services when the station (e.g. Hartlepool) isn't staffed. Local volunteers come into more direct contact with users of the station, providing a positive, useful service. Huddersfield's VIP again adds value

and works at busier stations; we need more of them. Innovation works by sharing ideas and experience. Adopters need to get better at networking, through events like this and more regional events across the UK. Use social media to pass on things that have worked – or things that haven't. Organise one-off events – station galas, station markets, festivals and the like. Invite other station groups to come along and join in the fun and have a stall. Get local producers involved, local artists (e.g. Todmorden) and musicians.

Don't feel that you have to carry on doing the same thing all the time. Find ways of getting young people involved, through schools and youth groups. They will bring fresh ideas and a different way of thinking. Embrace that and learn from them, as they will learn from you. There's lots you can do and within the railway industry the old 'can't do that' attitude is being replaced by a much more positive 'can do' approach. Bill Bolt, TransPennine's station team leader and former conductor on the Penistone Line, did much to encourage the visitor information point and station art gallery at Huddersfield. I introduced him to a senior DfT civil servant who wanted to see examples of community involvement at a larger station. Bill was asked what was the main ingredient in success. Bill said that it was about providing 'creative space' and not being put off by some of the hurdles that still get erected. "The only limit is the limits of your imagination" said Bill, to a slightly shocked civil servant. Bill died a couple of months ago but his legacy lives on. Take his advice to heart.

June 2nd 2015

'Tunnel'.

The town of Farnworth lies on the Bolton Road between Kearsley and Moses Gate. The Manchester, Bolton and Bury Railway (formerly the canal company) opened its line along the Irwell Valley on 29th May 1838 and provided a railway station called 'Tunnel' at Farnworth. This closed in 1841 but reopened four years later under the name of 'Halshaw Moor' and in 1852 became 'Halshaw Moor and Farnworth'. This changed to 'Farnworth and Halshaw Moor' in 1870 and on 6th May 1974 it became simply 'Farnworth'.

At the Manchester end of the station a promontory projects eastwards into the valley from Farnworth town and is known as Clammerclough. There was a colliery in this spot and the land is not firm. Originally a cutting was proposed through Clammerclough but the line opened with a two track brick lined tunnel

instead, and this gave the name to the original station for Farnworth. The tunnel was constructed with an invert. This is an upside down arch under the track level, not needed when tunnelling through stable rock, but necessary in such spots to prevent ingress of soft subsoil or copious water rising under the track.

The route merged to become part of The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. The L&YR linked Blackburn to Hellifield (on the Midland Railway's Settle and Carlisle line) in June 1880. The Midland Railway wished to run trains over this line from Manchester Victoria to Scotland via Bolton, Blackburn, Settle and Carlisle. These express trains would use Pullman carriages and the two track tunnel was too small for these large vehicles. Rather than rebores the tunnel (which already needed repairs as well) it was decided to bore a new smaller tunnel with invert, in parallel on the west side. This took from April to the beginning of December 1880 (only!) and the down line from Manchester was diverted through this tunnel. The up line to Manchester was slewed to the centre of the two track tunnel and the tunnel lining repaired and thickened.

This gave one tunnel of generous dimensions for the Pullman stock, and a new tunnel nowhere near big enough for these large vehicles, so the old tunnel must have carried both up and down Pullman trains! This would require crossovers at Farnworth and Kearsley and special signalling arrangements between the two signal boxes. ESN has not come across any account of how these trains were operated there and would be interested to hear if any reader does have information about this.

Of current relevance is the fact that both tunnels were constructed with inverts due to the friable nature of the geology at Clammerclough. It is the presence of these inverts that precludes the simple solution of just lowering the tracks through the two tunnels to accommodate overhead electric line equipment, leading to the great engineering project currently underway to return all trains to a new tunnel on the old tunnel alignment.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farnworth_railway_station

Footnote: David Yates, founding chairman of FRECCLES has recently suffered a bout of ill health but is now up and about. We hope you will join ESN in sending best wishes to him and for his continued recovery

And it's goodbye from Johnny and Tommy!



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.



FRECCLES

info@freccles.org.uk tel: 0161 789 5016

Visit our website: www.freccles.org.uk

