

## Tales from DalesRail

**Garsdale  
Craig Ward**

*DalesRail may not be operating in 2020 but that doesn't stop us sharing our many interesting experiences about our journeys. We hope you will share your interesting stories, favourite walks, fascinating anecdotes and pictures about DalesRail. Please send them to [richard.watts.crl@gmail.com](mailto:richard.watts.crl@gmail.com) or Simon Clarke at [simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com](mailto:simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com).*

### **Is it better to travel than to arrive? Craig Ward**

It was the famous writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, who stated that it was better to travel than to arrive. In the case of DalesRail I should argue that both to travel and to arrive are of equal value especially if the weather is good. The DalesRail journey along two of Britain's most scenic rail routes with ever changing landscapes of rolling pastures, lush valleys and rugged fells is a pleasure in itself but to alight at one of the numerous country stations offers even more delights.

Each station on the DalesRail route gives access to a wonderful variety of walks or strolls. For example, Settle gives access to the limestone scenery of Attermire with its caves and scars, Horton in Ribblesdale is the gateway to Three Peaks' Country, Dent offers walks down through the wildflower meadows of Dentdale and Appleby is perfect for a stroll around an ancient market town. Over the years of travelling on DalesRail I have alighted at all of them so which is my favourite?

After giving some thought to this question I have to say it is Garsdale and for a number of reasons. Garsdale is the quintessential Dales' station. It is truly remote and retains many of its original features but, above all, it gives access to superb walking country. The first thing you notice when you leave the train and it disappears over Dandry Mire Viaduct is the silence – a rare commodity these days. You realise that you have arrived in the middle of nowhere. All around you is inviting fell country and a decision has to be made. Which route should you take today?



The picturesque Garsdale Station

But, before you make that decision have a look at the station itself. Opened as Hawes Junction in 1876, its principal purpose was as an interchange with the six mile branch line to Hawes which was opened

by the Midland Railway in 1878. At Hawes the line made a connection with the North Eastern's Railway route down Wensleydale to Northallerton. Part of this line is now in the care of the Wensleydale Railway which has aspirations to rebuild the whole line back to Garsdale but that won't happen for many years, if at all.

Garsdale Station retains most of its platform buildings, including toilets, and a 1910 Midland Railway signalbox which is still in use. The waiting room was once used for Anglican church services for the scattered local community. Adjacent to the Station is a row of sturdy cottages originally built to house railway staff. On the Leeds bound platform is a small statue of a dog – a memorial to fellow rail rambler and rail campaigner – Graham Nuttall who loved this location and often alighted to walk in the fells with his dog – Ruswarp. When the closure of the Settle-Carlisle line was proposed Graham was a founder member of the campaign group established to oppose it. He, along with 25 000 others, including me, signed a petition to keep the Line open. Famously, Ruswarp signed the petition with its pawprint. Sadly, Graham died in January 1990 whilst walking in the remote country of mid Wales. His body wasn't discovered for eleven weeks and in all that time Ruswarp stayed at his master's side.



Ruswarp taking in the magnificent view

So, which route do you take? For those who want a classic fell walk the choice must be an ascent of Wild Boar Fell. The path to this distinctive mountain begins almost opposite the end of the lane leading from Garsdale Station and climbs steadily to the ridge of Swarth Fell with views back down Wensleydale. The summit is crowned with several large stone cairns. In every direction there are superb vistas and, far below, it is sometimes possible to catch a view of a passing train. From the summit it is possible to continue via High Dolphinsty and a long downhill route to Kirkby Stephen Station and the end of an exhilarating thirteen miles' walk.



The striking view from the summit of Wild Boar Fell

Another less strenuous, but equally rewarding route, leads via The Pennine Bridleway to Lady Anne's Walk which follows The High Way, an ancient routeway made famous by the fact that Lady Anne Clifford, a doughty Tudor lady, used it to visit her network of castles stretching from Skipton to Brough, Appleby and Brougham. Lady Anne's Walk is a popular choice with DalesRailers as it is a route along which to stride out and all the time being rewarded with fine views.

Those wishing for something easier can find routes through the meadows and pastures of the Mallerstang Valley where the hamlet of Outhgill was home to the parents of scientist Michael Faraday and the ruined Pendragon Castle is said to have links to King Arthur.



Pendragon Castle – what a lovely name for this castle full of mystery

These are but a few of the possible walking routes starting from Garsdale Station. Of course those returning to Garsdale in the late afternoon or early evening after a beautiful walk can stop off at the Moorcock Inn about a mile from the Station. It is linked to it by the off-road Pennine Bridleway and passes under Dandry Mire Viaduct. The Moorcock offers a friendly welcome and serves both tea and homemade cakes as well as beer – a place to sit with your fellow walkers at the end of a perfect day in the Dales but, not quite the end, as you have the scenic rail journey home to look forward to.