

## Tales from DalesRail

### Graham Nuttall & Ruswarp 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).*

Few people reading the pages of this website will remember Graham Nuttall – one of our Rail Rambler and DalesRail regulars back in the 1970s & '80s. Graham was a quiet, unassuming character who enjoyed his rail trips and usually walked alone with his faithful dog, Ruswarp. In the way that our rail trips and walking groups operate he was accepted for who he was - just another person who enjoyed being with like-minded people enjoying a day out together.



Regular DalesRailers will have seen the statue of Ruswarp on the southbound platform at Garsdale Station and read the words on the accompanying plaque about Graham and Ruswarp's contributions to saving the Settle & Carlisle line from closure in the late 1980s as well information about his tragic early death.

Garsdale was one of his favourite destinations and he was a regular traveller there. He often stayed with the old lady who ran the post office from a cottage on the lane leading from the

station to the main road. From there he would spend long days walking in the surrounding fells with Ruswarp.



The following article was written by the founder of Lancashire Rail Ramblers – the late Howard Hammersley as a personal recollection of and tribute to Graham at the time of his death in 1990.

### **Graham Nuttall – A Footnote to a Life**

It is with great sadness that I add a personal footnote to the reported death of Graham Nuttall in late January 1990, although his body was only found in late April.

I first met Graham in the early 1960s when he was still a teenager. He was a regular on the last series of ramblers' trains from Manchester in the 1960s, some of which passed through NE Lancashire.

Graham had two loves, the countryside and railways, and where they combined, even better. He often said that he had been born too late, for whereas I had ridden along many of the closed rural lines, particularly in Wales, he could only walk their track beds. His personal conversations and, particularly his letters, revealed him as a romantic, the wandering scholarly gypsy – if only he had written down all he told me of his adventures. He rarely looked back nostalgically except to make a point about the future. The removal of railways from the Welsh heartlands was seen by Graham as a blow to the traditional way of life from which it would never recover.

It is difficult to remember how many rural lines were under threat in the 1960s & '70s, many had gone in the Beeching Era, but Graham set about encouraging others to fight for their local line. His dog Ruswarp recalled the battle for the Esk Valley Line to Whitby, but he is probably

best remembered for his early advocacy of a plan to fight the inevitable closure of the Settle and Carlisle. He got no recognition, except from those in the know, for his work against the closures, but in the case of the Settle and Carlisle, the fact that Ruswarp registered an objector (Ed: with paw print) gave him national newspaper coverage.

Graham seemed to become more of a loner as he grew older, his letters grew infrequent, but when we met, he always regaled me about his latest project, always had positive encouragement for our dealings with British Rail on the Rail Ramblers and would make suggestions for future programmes. Never negative, always positive, I always felt better for talking to Graham – he made you feel that way. For his part, he recounted increasingly of near misses, just getting back in time, hitching lifts to get back on the last train. The important thing for Graham was to complete the walk then worry about getting home. Knowing he carried little food with him, I was not the only one who cautioned him – all to no avail as it turned out. Going to Wales on January 20<sup>th</sup>, he was reported missing during the next week and his body was found in the mountains by Llandindrod Wells in April, his faithful Ruswarp by his side, Graham had tempted fate once too often.

What a tragic end – he who had spent his life helping others died because nobody was there to help him when he needed them – except, that is, for his faithful friend Ruswarp.

I will miss that low velvet voice on the telephone, I will miss that twinkle in the eye as Graham related his latest walking expedition, including missing the last bus and having to hitch it. I will miss the letters in his distinctive precise hand, encouraging me on. Yes. I will miss Graham with affection.

**Howard Hammersley**

Ed: Graham was also closely-associated with STELLA (Support the East Lancs Line Association) the forerunner of SELRAP (Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership) the current campaign group working hard, with some significant success, to have the Colne – Skipton Line rebuilt. It would be a fitting tribute to Graham and other campaigners back in the 1970s if this ‘missing link’ were to be rebuilt.