

Tales from DalesRail

DalesRail – An Appreciation (part 2) John Barnes

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 or Simon Clarke at simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com.

Picking up the story of how the Lancashire Rail Ramblers became much more deeply involved in DalesRail. I quote from a letter written by Colin Speakman to Paul Bunting, Commercial Director First North Western, on the 25th February 1991 and copied to Chris Anslow and Richard Watts at Lancashire County Council.

Dear Paul

Lancashire Sunday Rail Programme

Following our meeting on January 31st 1991, I have since had a meeting with Alan Howard, national vice chairman of the Ramblers' Association and Howard Hammersley of the Lancashire Rail Ramblers.

Alan and Howard confirm my own view that the success of the projected 1991 Lancashire programme depends critically on the programme being a genuine countryside recreational package, which includes a programme of guided walks from the trains.



DalesRail – the old order at Clitheroe with a train heading towards Carlisle in the early 1990s

I emphasise that it was only because of such a programme that the DalesRail project was such a success in the 1970s and this success played no small part in the subsequent re-opening of the Settle Carlisle line.

Howard has confirmed that the existing organisation of the Lancashire Rail Ramblers could actually provide the administrative structure to operate a similar programme of up to four walks (and maybe a town trail) for every train and to prepare a programme of walks and a team of experienced leaders.

This will include the existing Lancashire DalesRail service for which the YDNP are unable to provide leaders.

The Lancashire Rail Ramblers group have unrivalled experience in this area, and I should add that Howard worked closely with me in establishing the guided walks programme for the Lancashire DalesRail way back in the mid-70s.

We could offer assistance in publicity and in some administration through the Countrygoer project, particularly as we are hopeful that the Ramblers' Association may well be prepared to support the programme as an Associate Member.

This might be especially important from the Stockport and Manchester end of the exercise.

It is likely that Lancashire County Council will also help as they already do with publicity and distribution of the Rail Ramblers programme using regular services.

It is my view that the whole area represents a very exciting development of the whole concept of using railways for access to the countryside and we shall give it every support.

However, time is of the essence if leaders are to be arranged and publicity produced in time for the first train which I assume will coincide with the new BR summer timetable in May? ...

*Yours sincerely
Colin Speakman*

Thus, the Lancashire DalesRail service as it now is, came into being in 1991 and is today a partnership between Northern, Community Rail Lancashire and the Lancashire Rail Ramblers.

So there we have it, a regular Sunday service throughout the summer which gives access to some of the most beautiful countryside in England, a walks programme to suit all levels of ability including town tours and history walks and all starting from the comfort of a scenic train journey – no cars, no hassle, just a wonderful day out for keen walkers, strollers and all the family – what more could one want?



DalesRail on its way to Carlisle at Kirkby Stephen with a group leaving the train, with one young person leaping off the train (Photo Craig Ward) in August 1994

Important note:

These two episodes have been taken from a longer piece written and collated by John Barnes. If you would like the full story please email me at richard.watts.crl@gmail.com and at the same time let me know what you like about DalesRail.