



Obituary:



Duncan Fuller

10 January 1972 - 3 October 2008

Duncan Fuller wasn't just an immensely valued colleague; he was also a close friend, my partner in crime, my comrade in arms. In the classroom and in the field we were like a double act, we knew instinctively what each other were thinking and what our next moves or 'lines' would be. But like all good double acts we were actually so very different.

Duncan graduated from Hull University with a first class honours degree in Geography in June 1994 and was appointed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) in the same department a few months later. Duncan began his Ph.D. on Financial Exclusion and Credit Unions under the guidance of Dave Sibley, Andy Jonas and Andy Leyshon whilst working as a GTA at Hull and completed it soon after joining us at Northumbria in May 1998.



When Duncan joined Northumbria he was like a breath of fresh air or actually, more like a hurricane. He didn't exactly 'play himself in', he said what he thought from day one and he didn't care who he said it to or how he said it. He was an angry young man, kicking down the pillars of the university establishment and challenging our polite consensus and conservatism. He effectively took the mould for what was an accepted way of teaching and operating within a university setting, smashed it and then set about rebuilding it in a refreshingly more relevant, democratic, entertaining and less hierarchical form. He was a true radical. Yes he ruffled some feathers, he unsettled the establishment, he offended some people's sensitivities but he inspired so many. He didn't just preach about inequality, injustice and exclusion (though he could do that better than most of us too!), he actually went out there and made a difference. He got involved, he made things happen.



Whether it was setting up credit unions for the financially excluded or bringing graffiti writers into a meaningful dialogue with the police and the local authorities, he was there on the front line, making it happen. He brought participatory approaches to a wider academic community and then set about helping train others in the skills he so passionately believed in through establishing the cleverly named 'PEANuT' (Participatory Evaluation and Appraisal in Newcastle upon Tyne). In truth, Duncan always had wider geographical horizons for his 'PEA' idea than just his adopted city but he was particularly amused by the challenge of forcing the university's management to support a venture with such an inspired title!



Duncan's geography was not just something studied inside schools and universities and played out on the pages of our navel-gazing journals — it was out there, 'beyond the academy'. He brought the real world into geography and took geography out into the real world. A true ambassador. He was a man on a mission, always full of great ideas and new initiatives. But unlike many of us, he actually

had the energy, enthusiasm and sheer bloody-mindedness to make them happen. And he achieved so much in so little time. Duncan the Programme Leader, Duncan the PEANuT director, Duncan the Enterprise Fellow (one of the first in the university!), Duncan the Chair of numerous committees and special interest groups, Duncan the committed trade unionist, Duncan the inspirational lecturer.

Entering his office was like going into a bear's cave and some students (and even staff!) sometimes found him a little scary but *all* respected and admired him and especially loved the way he challenged them and engaged them. Not all of us were fortunate enough to know his private side well, the loving husband, the brilliant dad, the loving son, the trusted friend, but no one who met him could fail to be touched by his enthusiasm, wit, and uncompromising attitude to life. I feel utterly humble and totally inadequate when I consider the massive legacy he leaves us in terms of the lasting influence of his work and personality. The sheer number of people whose lives he has touched and help change for the better is a tribute to the man. One of the many people whose lives he briefly touched, said of Duncan just after his death '*he was one of those people who shines a light into an often confusing and complex world and the rays of light always shine much further than any of us think*'. So in the words of the House of Love song, '*Shine on*' Dunc '*Shh shh she Shine on*'...

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