

# The Cumbrian Engines

*By Eliot Andersen*

## Volume 2 – The Mine Engines

Dear friends,

Here is the second volume in the series. It is about my engine friends at the Haig Pit mining museum. I went up there recently to see if they had any good stories to tell me about. Askham Hall and his friends told me so much that I had too many ideas to put in the book! Anyway, here are my favourite ones. I think they are very interesting, and I hope you will too!

The Author

### **Dramatis Personae**

*Andrew* – Barclay 0-4-0 diesel-mechanical locomotive, owned by Haig Colliery Mining Museum.

*Askham Hall* – Avonside 0-4-0ST steam locomotive, owned by Haig Colliery Mining Museum.

*Howard* – Hunslet 0-4-0 diesel-mechanical locomotive, owned by Haig Colliery Mining Museum.

*Paul* – Hunslet 0-6-0ST steam locomotive, once based at Ladysmith Pit.

*Peter* – FR 0-6-0 steam locomotive, once based at Whitehaven.

*Robert* – Fletcher Jennings 0-4-0WT steam locomotive, once based at Barrowmouth Works.

*Vanguard* – Fowler 0-4-0 diesel-mechanical locomotive, owned by Haig Colliery Mining Museum.

## **The Olden Days**

Askham Hall is a steam engine who works up at Haig Pit. His line runs across the cliff-tops. He has 4 little wheels and loves to tell me stories of his adventures. There are 3 diesel shunters who also live up at Haig Pit. There is Howard, a small green diesel; Andrew, a blue diesel, and Vanguard, a shunter who was larger than the other three.

One night, the four engines were resting in their shed. The wind was howling and the rain battered the roof. None of the engines could get to sleep. Askham Hall decided to tell his friends some stories about when he was young and he worked down on the harbour. Here is one of the stories that he told them...

The Corkickle Incline led down from the top of the hill near to Haig Pit. At the bottom of the incline, engines would collect the trucks and take them down to the goods yard, where the big engines would take them away to their destinations.

Askham Hall was one of the shunters who would collect the trucks from the bottom of the incline and then take them to the goods yard. One night he was working late. He had brought the last load of trucks down from the incline and was pushing them back to the yard.

As they reached the junction, the trucks decided to play a few tricks. They bumped Askham Hall hard and giggled as they trundled along. Askham Hall would take no nonsense. He bumped the trucks right back. They realised he was angry and decided to wind him up even more. They surged forwards and the coupling holding them to him snapped. The 6 fully loaded trucks sped down the line.

Further down, there was a level crossing where the line crossed a road. There were few cars about at that time, but the trucks flew dangerously over it. Askham Hall whistled frantically as he rushed after them, trying to alert anybody he could.

The yard signalman was not expecting the trucks and before he could change the points, they went the wrong way over them towards the harbour instead of the yard. It was only when Askham Hall came puffing as fast as he could after the trucks did the signalman realise what had happened.

The trucks accelerated as they neared the harbour. They thundered along the rails, before crashing down the quay and into the murky water.

The next morning, the trucks were cleared out of the water and the manager came to see Askham Hall. Askham Hall was looking very sad.

“Don’t worry” said the manager, “the accident wasn’t your fault. The couplings were old and needed replaced. The coal was mostly recovered anyway.”

Askham Hall felt happier that he knew that the accident wasn’t so bad, but from then on, he and his fellow engines were all very careful when shunting the naughty trucks.

## **Paul and the Incline**

Paul was a tender engine who worked at the top of the Corkickle incline. He pulled trucks from the mines and pits to the top of the hill, where they were attached to a strong cable and winched down the long, steep hill. Paul had light green paint and 6 wheels.

Paul longed to do something different than just pushing and pulling trucks about the same place. He wanted to see what was down at the bottom of the hill. He sometimes watched and saw long passenger trains on the main line, and big ships down at the harbour.

One afternoon, he was waiting to pick up some trucks at the Barrowmouth Alabaster works. The little narrow gauge engines that worked on the line from the Gypsum Mine to the Alabaster Works would usually chat with Paul while his trucks were filled.

Robert was a little blue narrow gauge engine. Today, he was talking to Paul. He was telling Paul about big engines that lived and worked down the hill and pulled very long trains and rode to far away lands on their rails. Paul wished that he could go to see far away places. He asked Robert how to get to the bottom of the hill.

“That’s easy,” said Robert, “The incline. That’s how the trucks get down. I don’t know if engines can go down it though.”

Once Paul’s trucks were filled, he pushed them to the incline. The workman prepared to uncouple the trucks and attach them to the winch, but the trucks had overheard Paul talking about how much he wanted to go down the hill. He never bumped them so they decided to help him see his dream. They inched forwards and before anyone was aware of what was happening, Paul’s crew were flung from his cab whilst Paul and the trucks fell down the incline.

Paul closed his eyes as they raced to the bottom. The gatehouse’s gate at the bottom was shut, and Paul and the trucks crashed through it and sped onto the mainline.

“Help!” wailed the trucks as they aimlessly clattered along the line. Neither the trucks nor Paul saw what was coming: the tail of a goods train was up ahead and they were headed straight for it.

The trucks collided with the guard’s van and lurched off the tracks and down the embankment, landing in a heap in the bushes.

Paul lay beside the trucks, unknowing of what had happened. The breakdown train came to clear the wreckage and the manager spoke angrily to Paul.

“You wanted to see the outside world,” he thundered crossly. “You have done now and caused a lot of confusion and trouble. If you misbehave again then you shall be strictly punished!”

Paul now knows that his place is up at the top end of the incline, and neither he nor the trucks wish to make that journey down the incline again.

## **Peter and the Fishing Boats**

Peter was a tender engine. He had a 0-6-0 wheel arrangement and had a Furness Railway Red livery. He worked around the town of Whitehaven pulling the trucks from place to place. He sometimes went onto the harbour side to push around trucks.

He always liked to watch the boats and ships come and go in the harbour. There would be big passenger cruisers as well as little tug boats and trawlers. Peter liked the fishing boats best. They would come in and behind them would fly a trail of seagulls, all squawking as they tried to get some fish to eat.

Peter's favourite boat was called the "M A Kirk." He would always whistle a friendly "Hello" to the skipper and his crew. Sometimes, he would be parked in the sidings near to where the boat was tied up, and Peter would talk to the crew.

One morning, the M A Kirk came in after being out fishing overnight. The crew waved and shouted to Peter to attract attention. The harbour master came running, along with Peter's driver, fireman and guard.

There was a leak in the side of the boat's hull, and water was pouring in fast. It was beginning to sink. They needed to secure the boat and bring it ashore to be mended, and they needed to hurry.

Nobody knew what to do, nobody, except Peter. He had a very good idea. He told his driver to throw a rope to the skipper and tie it onto the boat. The other end of the rope can be tied to Peter, so he could pull the fishing boat around the harbour to the big crane that lifted the boats out of the water to the fixing yard.

The boat was heavy and Peter had to pull with all of his might. He slowly but surely worked his way around the quayside to where the boat crane was. The boat was fastened on and it was lifted up out of the water and into the yard.

The skipper was very pleased with Peter. "Thank you so much Peter" he said, "You helped to save our boat!"

The manager came to see Peter that night at the sheds. "Well done," he said proudly. "You acted quickly and bravely in an emergency and helped to save the skipper's boat."

And from then on, Peter was always known as the "Fishing Boat Engine"!

## Robert the Little Engine

Robert was Fletcher Jennings Narrow gauge tank engine who worked on a short line from the Alabaster works to the Gypsum mine. He had a shiny sky blue coat of paint and would pull trains of trucks full of important rocks up and down the line. The big engines, such as Paul would collect the rocks at the junction and would take them to the incline to be taken to the world beyond.

Robert was a cheeky little engine. He would often play jokes on the other engines and the workmen. He would sometimes bump the trucks in the yard and they would yell and scream. He would laugh as they went flying down the sidings, spilling their loads. He sometimes got into trouble for being silly and careless. He always tried to do his best, but somehow, he could never work hard enough. He thought that he could do nothing correctly.

One day, he was playing with the trucks at the yard in the Gypsum mine. He pushed them down a siding. They went sliding into the buffers with a thump. Robert laughed and prepared to fetch them when he heard a loud crashing sound from down in the tunnels.

Lots of workmen came running out, shouting and yelling. The foreman ran up to Robert's driver. "A part of the tunnels has caved in, and some gas is leaking. I've got a lot of men trapped down there."

"We'd better go and call for help!" Robert said. He raced back along the line to the Alabaster works. Paul was there; his trucks were being filled up.

"Steady on there, Robert!" exclaimed Paul. "You don't want to have an accident now, do you?"

"The tunnels at the mine have caved in!" Robert told Paul.

Paul was horrified. "I'll go and fetch help from the top of the incline!" He puffed away, leaving his trucks.

The men from the incline came quickly back with Paul. Robert then took them to the mine.

All working together, they managed to dig their way through the blockage until they came to the final rock. It was very big, and covered the whole passage. The men pulled and pushed, but to no avail.

"What about if I try, sir?" asked Robert anxiously. He wanted to prove his worth to the manager.

Robert was tied to the rock with a long chain. All the men clung on the chain and slowly but surely, the rock began to come away.

Robert heaved with all of his might. He pulled so hard he thought that his buffer beam was going to be pulled off. He came right off his tracks and the boulder rolled out from the tunnel entrance. The trapped workmen all came out safe and well.

Everybody was pleased with Robert's brave and noble achievements. He helped to save the miners who had been trapped by rocks and had proven himself to be very useful.

That night, the manager came to Robert's shed to see him. "You were very brave today," he began. "The miners would like it if you were to be their official engine to celebrate your triumph. Would you like that?"

"Oh, that would be wonderful, sir." said Robert happily.

"I see that your buffer beam was damaged today and I think that you deserve to go and be fixed after your excellent effort today."

"Thank you so much, sir." Robert replied as he drifted of into a happy sleep...