

The Cumbrian Engines

By Eliot Andersen

Volume 7 – The Visiting Engines

Dear friends,

We have had some visitors to the region recently. They are now just living in the National Railway Museum in York, and were both on special sightseeing tours for enthusiasts. They both are great express engines, but one of them was jealous of City of Carlisle.

The Author

Dramatis Personae

Alexander – BR Class 47 Co-Co diesel-electric locomotive, operated by Virgin Trains

Arthur – BR Class 25 Bo-Bo diesel-electric locomotive, owned by Cumbrian Engines Enterprises

Brian – BR Class 60 Co-Co diesel-electric locomotive, owned by English Welsh & Scottish

Calder Hall Power Station – BR Class 31 A1A-A1A diesel locomotive, owned by Direct Rail Services

City of Carlisle – LMS Princess Coronation 8P 4-6-2 steam locomotive, owned by Cumbrian Engines Enterprises

Craig – CR 0F 0-4-0ST steam locomotive, owned by Cumbrian Engines Enterprises

Fred and George – BR Class 142 “Pacer” diesel multiple unit, operated by Northern Rail

Hermione – LMS 5P4F 2-6-0 steam locomotive, owned by Cumbrian Engines Enterprises

Jack – LMS 4MT 2-6-4T steam locomotive, owned by Cumbrian Engines Enterprises

Kestrel – LNER A3 4-6-2 steam locomotive, owned by National Railway Museum

Rory – BR Class 156 “Sprinter” diesel multiple unit, operated by First ScotRail

Seagull – LNER A4 4-6-2 steam locomotive, owned by National Railway Museum

Tom, Dick and Harry – BR Class 20 diesel locomotives, owned by Direct Rail Services

Sightseers

All the engines were excited when they heard that two special visitors were coming to the region. The only thing that the engines would talk about was who they thought the special visitors could be.

“I bet it ends up that it’s some old useless steam engine.” grumbled Rory. “They’re all a waste of space if you ask me. Scrap ‘em all, I say.”

The other engines were used to Rory’s moaning and grumbling, so no-one took a slight bit of notice of him.

The day of the visitor’s arrival grew closer and closer. The engines couldn’t wait to meet them.

At long last, the day had come. The engines were all lined up in the sidings near platform one awaiting the sightseer’s trains.

The arm of the signal dropped, and two steam engines came puffing in from the east. They pulled into platforms one and three.

One of the engines was dark green. He had beautiful sparkling brass and shiny paint. The other engine was painted blue. He was rather peculiar-looking. He did not have a smoke box like the other engines. His front was at an angle, and plates covered a lot of the side of his wheels. He was bigger than the other engine, too.

The smaller engine was called Kestrel. He was kind, and loved the nice journey over the Pennines. The other engine, meanwhile, just sniffed at the shed and refused to enter.

“It’s far too smelly and damp in there.” He said proudly. “And to think of it, having to share a shed with diesels. I am disgusted with you. I certainly won’t be sleeping in there.” And he puffed away grandly, nose in the air.

“Don’t mind him.” said Kestrel. “He’s Seagull. He thinks that he’s the best engine in the whole world.”

Kestrel was assigned to working on the coastal line, while Seagull demanded that he went on the main line. Kestrel, Jack and Hermione were all working together on the coastal line, with Fred and George as well, while Seagull was shouting at poor Craig, who was shunting in the Carlisle yard.

Motorway mayhem

The M6 is a very busy motorway. It runs parallel to the West Coast Main Line for quite a lot of its journey through Cumbria. The railway sometimes gets very close to the motorway, and sometimes the people in the cars wave at the passengers in the coaches of the trains.

Alex the Virgin Trains diesel was in the workshops. He needed repairs. They could not find a replacement for him, so City of Carlisle had to take over on Alex's trains from Carlisle to Preston.

Seagull was racing up and down from Carlisle to Lancaster. It seemed that he was trying to show off to the Pendolinos that were also travelling and up and down the route.

City of Carlisle was pulling out of Penrith station, on his way south to Oxenholme. On the motorway below, a car was speeding down the road. It was going at least 120 miles per hour. The driver was in a big hurry. He had missed his train and now was trying to get to Lancaster where he could finally get onboard it.

The traffic was busy as it was a Friday evening. The rush hour traffic was clogging the lanes, and the car driver had to resort to going onto the hard shoulder to creep round the other motorists.

There were lots of lorries and wagons on the road, too, along with coaches and vans as well as the cars. A lot of the vehicles were travelling slowly, so the driver of the car angrily honked his horn at them to get them to move out of his way.

A lorry was changing lanes near one of the exits. The car came speeding up. The driver was distracted by one of his children that were sitting in the back seats, and he did not see the lorry. He could not brake in time and went crashing into the side of it.

The car skidded off the road and into the nearby lay-by. The lorry had spun around and was now blocking the whole south-bound side of the motorway.

The emergency services could not reach the car because of the traffic tailbacks, but some of the people got out of their cars and climbed up the embankment by the railway. They alerted City of Carlisle, and he stopped by the place where the accident had occurred.

One of the children in the car had been injured, and they needed to get him to hospital. The ambulances couldn't reach him, so City of Carlisle would have to get him to safety.

City of Carlisle left his coaches and set off for Oxenholme. The station was not too far away, and an ambulance was waiting to take him to hospital.

The boy made a full recovery very quickly, as he had only sprained his wrist. The boy's parents came to see City of Carlisle at the sheds that night.

"Thank you for helping our son." They said gratefully. "Your driver and fireman should be very proud of you."

Stuck on Shap

Seagull was always boasting. The other engines were fed up of him rambling on all day and all night. Eventually, City of Carlisle came to put him in his place.

“You’re driving all of us crazy.” He said. “You go on, day and night, trying to distract us from anything we’re trying to do. We really don’t care what you’re going on about. Most of the time it’s stupid anyway.”

“For your information,” said Seagull, in a matter-of-factly sort of way, “I was telling you about the time that I raced a thousand space rockets to London, and I beat them.”

City of Carlisle rolled his eyes. “The sun’s definitely cracked your boiler. You need to keep in the sun, out of the summer sun.”

Seagull scowled. He was jealous that City of Carlisle had real stories to tell, and they were all very interesting. Meanwhile, he had done absolutely nothing of any interest at all, and had no friends.

Seagull sulked away to fetch his coaches for “The Cumbrian Mountain Express”. It was going down the main line to Lancaster, and then up the coast line back to Carlisle, with a stop at Ravenglass, for the enthusiasts to go on the Eskdale railway.

It was a very hot day, as it was the middle of summer. The sun shone down, and the passengers were sheltering in the shade. It was still only mid morning, but it was already very humid. The passengers climbed into the cool dark coaches, and Seagull set off on his trip.

There was a water tower at Carlisle station. It was the only one on the line. Penrith had a stand pipe from which the engines could drink from, and that was notorious for being bad, and making engines ill.

Seagull was already thirsty by the time they reached Penrith. He and his crew were unaware that the stand pipe had bad water. He took a big long drink to quench his thirst.

“We’ll need as much water as we can get.” said Seagull’s driver. “We’ll need it to get over Shap.

Shap is the highest point of any main line in England. It was situated not long after they passed through Penrith station. It tired a lot of engines out, but was much worse in the summer heat.

Seagull struggled up the side. He grew very thirsty again. He began hissing alarmingly, and he struggled to catch his breath. He was stuck nearly at the summit of the hill.

The guard went back to the station for help. It was not long before City of Carlisle and Brian had arrived. Brian took the coaches to Lancaster, and City of Carlisle helped Seagull back to the sheds at Carlisle.

Kestrel had collected the coaches from Lancaster, and he had brought them up the coast line back to Carlisle.

That night, Seagull came over to see City of Carlisle. “I’m sorry I was so rude.” He said. “Can we be friends please?” He was delighted when City of Carlisle happily agreed.

Explosive Results

Tom, Dick and Harry are three silly diesel triplets that work at Sellafield. They help shunting the nuclear flasks around the complex, and also take them up and down the coastal line. The three friends can be very mischievous and naughty sometimes, but they always get their jobs done in the end.

Sometimes they are cheeky to Calder and Arthur, who pull long trains of flasks to other destinations. Calder is the only engine who can fully keep them in order.

“Do you know,” said Tom one morning, “That old Calder’s so useless, he can’t pull more than five trucks, or his wheels will fall off!?”

His brothers chuckled. They loved teasing the big engines.

“And Arthur will explode if he goes too fast.” Dick said cheekily.

“Rubbish.” Put in Harry. “He’s too fat to go any faster.”

Arthur and Calder were used to the endless teasing from the silly brothers. They all had a good laugh, and sometimes, Calder would tease the triplets instead.

One afternoon, Calder was taking his last long line of flatcars with flasks on up north. He warned the brothers that they had to behave while he was gone, or else he would be very cross with them. The brothers promised that they wouldn’t be naughty while he was gone.

The triplets knew they couldn’t keep promises, and soon they had forgotten all about their promise. They were messing about more than ever.

Arthur arrived and waited while they prepared a line of trucks for him to collect. He had a spare driver today, and he was relatively inexperienced. He had forgotten to put on Arthur’s brakes fully. He went to the signal box to talk to the signaller, while Tom, Dick and Harry shunted the trucks into place behind Arthur.

They pushed them hard into Arthur. “Steady on!” called Arthur. The trucks had been fastened on when Tom realised that there was a truck left in one of the sidings. He collected it and rammed it into the back of the train.

Arthur began to move down the line. His driver was still in the signal box and the three brothers watched in horror as he gathered speed and vanished around the corner.

There was chaos that ensued. The flasks had previously been carrying radioactive waste, and it could be very hazardous if any leftover radiation leaked out if Arthur crashed.

Fred and George passed Arthur at St. Bees. They were astonished to see him yelling for help as he rattled over the level crossing and into the distance.

Kestrel was up at Whitehaven with Jack. They had been warned of the runaway that was now speeding through the tunnel between Corkickle and Whitehaven stations.

The engines set off on the same line as Arthur, heading north. They would act as a sort of moving buffers to slow him down.

Arthur and his train emerged from the tunnel. He closed his eyes when he saw the two steam engines in front of him. The gap between them closed gradually, and soon they were buffer to buffer.

An inspector was on board Jack's cab. He climbed out and round to the back bufferbeam. Arthur was looking terrified. The inspector stepped onto Arthur's front, and swung himself into the cab. He put on the brakes gently. Gradually, the whole cavalcade came to a standstill.

Arthur was too tired to say anything. He wheezed a thank you to the engines, and set off to the shed to rest.

That night, Kestrel and Seagull had to return home. All the engines went to Carlisle station to see them off. A chorus of whistles and toots filled the air as the two visitors rounded the corner into the summer's night.