

The Cumbrian Engines

By Eliot Andersen

Volume 8 – More from the Whitehaven Mines

Dear friends,

While looking through some old books, I found some very interesting images of engines that used to work in and around Whitehaven. I did some research, and went to Haig Pit, to find out more about these engines. Askham Hall was only too pleased to inform me of some more incidents that happened many years ago, and here is a selection of some of them.

The Author

Dramatis Personae

Askham Hall – Avonside 0-4-0ST steam locomotive, once based at Whitehaven

Charlie – Fletcher Jennings 0-4-2ST steam locomotive, once based at Barrowmouth Works

Chris – FR G1 0-6-0T steam locomotive, once based in Whitehaven

Edward VII – Barclay 0-4-0ST steam locomotive, once based at Whitehaven

Hutton Hall – Stephenson 0-6-0ST steam locomotive, once based at Moor Row

Jack – LMS 4MT 2-6-4T steam locomotive, once based at Carlisle

Lingmell – Barclay 0-4-0ST steam locomotive, once based at Whitehaven

Michael – LMS 5MT 4-6-0 steam locomotive, once based at Carlisle

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

Peter – FR D1 0-6-0 steam locomotive, once based at Whitehaven

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

Chaos in the Goods Yard

Askham Hall worked in the Preston Street goods yard. There was a terminus here, for trains coming north from Barrow. The goods yard was always full of trucks that had come down from the Croft Pit Incline.

The trucks were noisy, and would make fun of the engines. They would squawk and yell as they were pushed into their proper places. They loved causing havoc and delay. Askham Hall had a hard job keeping them in place.

One morning, a heavy load came down the incline, and Askham Hall had to deliver it to Bransty station, on the other side of the town, by the harbour. He set off on his journey, pulling the trucks behind him.

Not long after he had left, another saddle tank engine puffed into the goods yard from the south. He was Hutton Hall. He was bigger than Askham Hall, and had six wheels. He worked in the iron ore mines at Moor Row. He needed to collect some empty trucks. He did not know which ones he needed, and he was in a hurry.

He found some empty trucks and went back over the level crossing, heading south. Little did he know that the trucks were the wrong ones, and were the ones who always were naughty in the goods yard. They did not want to go all the way up to the iron ore mine. They tried to make Hutton Hall stop, but they couldn't. They decided to pay him out on the way back down to the goods yard instead.

The trucks behaved as good as gold for the rest of the journey. They didn't grumble as they were filled up, and as they set off back down, they were still acting like little angels.

This stopped when they reached the junction. The signalbox grew closer, and as soon as they had passed it, the trucks rammed into the back of Hutton Hall. They rambled onto the main line, the trucks pushing him forwards. His brakes were no use against the ten fully loaded trucks.

“On! On! On!” they yelled in their silly way.

They passed Jack, who was pulling a passenger train, headed south. He didn't know what had just sped past him.

The signalman in the signal box at the Corkickle junction spotted them speeding down the tracks. He set the points to the goods yard and halted all traffic. He contacted the level crossing, who halted the cars on the road.

Hutton Hall and his runaway trucks rocketed over the level crossing, towards the goods yard. They rumbled over the points and into the yard. Before the signalman could change the points, Hutton Hall had collided with a row of coal trucks. Their loads spilled everywhere.

Askham Hall was shocked when he returned to find the yard in a dreadful mess. Lots of trucks had been over turned, and the yard manager was very cross.

Peter brought the breakdown crane to clear the wreckage. They lifted Hutton Hall back onto the tracks, and returned him to the shed. He was always careful whenever he took other trucks again.

Peter and the Special Coaches

Peter was happy working at Whitehaven Harbour. He would sort out the trucks and then shunt them to the station, for the engines on the main line. The job would sometimes get boring, with only the silly trucks to talk to, and they would usually respond with rude remarks.

Peter was getting fed up of doing the same job, day after day. He wished that he could work on the main line. Not even the cheery crew of the M A Kirk could brighten his mood.

One day, Peter was busy shunting the trucks in the harbour yard, when all of a sudden, he and his crew heard a loud clattering sound. They found that to their horror, a long line of trucks had broken away from their engine on the main line, and were rushing down the strand.

Men dived out of the way, and the ducks quacked as they flew up into the air, escaping the rampaging trucks. The runaway trucks rumbled onto the siding where the big crane that collected the loads from the trucks to put them into the ship's cargo holds were.

They came right off the rails, and collided with one of the big poles that held the crane up. The heavy trucks knocked it right out of place. It fell into the harbour with a splash. Then, the rest of the crane fell to the ground, crushing the trucks, and blocking all of the lines.

The disaster had caused many problems for the manager. He sent all of the dock engines to work at different places instead, until the docks had been reopened. He sent Peter to help on the branch line from Frizington to Preston Street station.

Peter arrived at Frizington. Hutton Hall found him some coaches, and he collected his passengers. He puffed down the line towards Cleator Moor.

The people at the station all crowded round Peter. He was unused to all the attention, and this made him very puffed up.

"I must be very grand." He said to himself. He did not know that all the passengers were remarking on was that they had a different engine puffing their train.

He continued down the line, thinking he was the most splendid engine in the world. He went very fast, rushing under the bridges and past the farms. He went past the signal so fast his driver could not tell if it was up or down.

"Well risk it." He said to the fireman. "I don't think that there's anything due."

The risk was a bad one. Michael was pulling a long train of coal trucks, heading north towards Corkickle. He passed under the bridge. Before he was aware of what was happening, he was pushed right off the tracks and skidded down the embankment.

Peter's front was crumpled, and his coaches had come right off the rails. He was very worried for what the manager would say when he arrived.

Much needed help

The manager was cross. Both Michael and Peter needed to go to the works to be mended. He was two engines down, and he had no more spare to do their jobs.

The manager went to the workshops to purchase a new engine. He saw big engines, and little engines. Happy engines, and sad engines. Some were anxious, and others were scared.

There were some quiet little saddle tanks in the corner of the workshops. The manager walked over to them. "Hello there." He said cheerfully. "What are your names?"

Then told him that they were called Lingmell and Edward VII, but everyone called him Eddie for short.

"You look like hard working little engines. Would you like to come and work in the yard for me?"

"Oh yes please sir!" squeaked the two engines in unison. "They were used to working in quarries, and were wishing to work somewhere new.

Next morning, the two engines arrived at the sheds in the yard. They were given a big welcome by Askham Hall and Hutton Hall. Soon, the yard was all sorted out. The trucks were put into nice, neat columns ready for their departure.

Soon, Chris, one of the bigger engines arrived. He had a train of full trucks that had come down from the mines. He collected some empty trucks, and started off again. He had not gone far before he came to a standstill, right on the level crossing.

Cars angrily tooted their horns. Their drivers got out and started shouting at Chris' crew. The four saddle tanks rolled alongside him. They were coupled on in front, and behind. Together, they all pulled and pushed as hard as they could, and brought Chris back into the goods yard. They pushed Chris to the engineer's workshop, and they took his train up to the mine.

When they returned to the yard, they set about shunting again. Hutton Hall sorted out some coaches, and set off up the line to Moor Row.

Askham Hall took a train of empty trucks to the Howgill incline on the harbour, and he left Eddie and Lingmell to double-head a train of vans full of cargo up to St. Bees.

The two saddle tanks arranged their long line of trucks, and got into position at the front. They rumbled over the level crossing and up the line towards the junction. Jack was in Corkickle station with a passenger train. The passengers were climbing on board.

Up at Corkickle incline, some troublesome trucks were being very naughty. They decided to break away. They were halfway down the incline when they pulled at the rope, which then snapped. The trucks went down in the line like a jack in the box. "On! On! On!" they yelled in their silly way.

They rumbled onto the main line. The points were set for them to head north. They approached the station. They saw Jack's coaches sitting at the platform. They raced towards them, but were stopped by Lingmell and Eddie, who had come onto the main line. The trucks were halted at last.

The manager praised Lingmell and Eddie for being very brave, and he sent them to the works to be mended. When they returned home, they received an even bigger thank you from Jack and his coaches.

Robert's Rival

Robert the narrow gauge tank engine works up on the line from the Gypsum Mine to the Alabaster Works. He always has a long line of trucks, and this wears him out a lot.

The yard foreman promised that they would get a new engine to help share the workload. Robert was very excited about getting a new engine. He talked to Paul about it.

"I can't wait till the new engine arrived." He said eagerly.

"Well, it'll do more than just take the strain off you." replied Paul. "It'll get more stone for me to take to the incline, too."

The next morning, Paul brought the new engine on a flat truck. He parked the truck in the siding, and a crane transferred the little engine onto its own size rails. The little engine was blue, the same as Robert, but was a saddle tank and had six wheels, instead of just four. It looked a stronger engine than Robert, too.

"Hello" smiled Robert. "What's your name?" he asked the new engine.

"My name's Charlie." Snapped the new engine crossly. "Not that you need to know, as your going soon."

"I'm going where?" asked Robert. He was puzzled.

"They'll be getting rid of you now that I'm here." Said Charlie. "I'm much more powerful than you." He sneered.

Robert was upset. He wanted a new friend, but he definitely hadn't got one. Charlie went around the yard, collecting as many trucks as he could get. He then set off for the mine. Robert collected the few remaining trucks, and followed him to the mines.

Charlie shunted his trucks under the big hopper. "I bet I can get all of my trucks filled up faster than you can." He boasted.

"I'd say you would," retorted Robert, "As there's only one hopper, and you're hogging it all to yourself."

At last, all the trucks had been filled up. "I'll take more trucks than you," said Charlie loudly, "because I'm better and stronger than you."

Charlie had a long train of over thirty trucks. He was going well until he reached the hill. It was not very steep, but it was quite long. Robert only took small trains so that he would not have trouble here, but Charlie didn't know that. His wheels slipped, and he slid back down the hill to where Robert was watching.

"Well," he chuckled, "I thought you said you were better than me." Charlie looked at his buffers. "I suppose I'll have to push you over the top." Said Robert cheerfully. The engines made good time, and they arrived in the yard safely.

That night, Charlie crawled over to where Robert was sitting in the shed. "I'm sorry I was horrible to you." Said Charlie. "Please forgive me."

And so Robert did, and the two little mine engines have been firm friends ever since!