

Calf's To Kittybrewster

Once upon a time the railways carried all sorts of traffic, cattle trains from Holyhead was one forty or fifty wagons for London all stacked like sardine in ten ton wagons so they did not end up on the floor on the long journey, it must have been murder for them a drover used to travel in the brake van to keep a eye on them and water them at prearranged stop.

Even carrying cattle has it's funny moments, one such incident was told to me by a fireman friend of mine Bob Lloyd, it was like this one night when on the Royal Highlander to Perth, Inverness.

Early in the day at Manley's cattle market they would be a BR rep looking for traffic and we would get a couple of van loads of young calf's for Kittybrewster other side of Perth some times loaded into horse box's or BG van, after being feed by rail staff and loaded, (we had siding into the market) the shunt engine would trip them over via Grestey Lane No1 box to the horse landing in Crewe stn and waited aprox five hours for the Perth engine to come of shed and couple on the calf's would be blaring all-night how any one got to sleep, in the sleeper's I don't know.

The train left at 2230, after arriving from Euston with a load of 17 vehicals,over 610 tons,Bob takes up the tale we had just run threw Preston when the signal went back in front of us at Oxheys after speaking to the signalman he said a door on the horse van was on the first catch, on going to check I open the door to give it a good slam shut,there was a stampede and four jumped out onto the track,it is black dark and nearly midnight I chased them nearly to Garstang with the train following slowly behind I found a gate into a field and with the help of the driver put them in I bet the farmer was surprised in the morning on arriving at Perth we had to give detail's only trouble was me and the driver could not agree the precise field.

The same train some time later,also with calf's on was having vacuum trouble north of Carnforth the vacuum kept dropping to 16 inches for a few seconds putting the brake's on the train that is the last thing you want with a train of over 600 tons approaching Oxenholme, after this accorded a few times the driver stopped and sent the fireman back to check the train he could find nothing amiss the butter fly disc on each coach were in line, as he walked pasted the horse vans he heard the vacuum blowing for a short while, stopped and started again, he decided to look into the van he had the surprised of his life some of the calf's had got into the guards compartment and while he watched one of them was rubbing his head on the vacuum pipe up and down and lifting the brake handle a few seconds a time he moved them out and no more trouble that was a million to one chance, he said it must have been some old guard who came back as a calf. Loco men have to be very verse tile.

Les Jackson Driver - Retired Crewe North