

DISTINGTON RAVENGLASS 1956 - (Tom Lowrie)

A Few months after arriving back to Workington MPD after doing NS in the Suffolk Regt. I was marked with driver Tom Lowrie late of Moorrow shed he was a good mate lots of fun. Well one morning in late September 1956 we booked on at 0315 to go light loco to Moorrow and couple on to 3 coaches and work the works train to Selafield via Egremont and Woodend, leave the coaches at Selafield and go light loco back to Moorrow to work a pick up freight enroot to Bootle even calling at Vickers Gun range swopted over with Barrow men and worked back to Egremont with a class 4 tank loco then get releaved by our own men and home pass by Cumberland bus.

I said we booked on at 0315 but no sign of Tom so after awhile the forman gave the job to Passed Fireman John Fee, as the ground signal came of at Workington No2 box Tom arrived, no teeth in and not shaved, said he had slept in and came of his motor bike on ice on his way to work from Moorrow that was the start ,late of the shed with 43009 to Siddick Jnc, reverse, then loco first via Workington Central, Harrington, Distington and Moresby Parks (we called that line going over the alps) we were booked that way as Whitehaven tunnel was blocked on nights, by now Tom was going like hell to get the time back, must not be late for the workers or they will be hell on the fire was shooting out of the chimney as if we had 14 coaches on we arrived Moor Row and left late the Signalman at Sellafield, when we arrived said control wants a word with you driver, did you know that Distington Station as burnt down and you lot were the only one over there, that was the second misfortune the third was nearly a collision at Ravenglass it was like this, arrived Ravenglass left part of the freight wagons on the main line and went in side to sort the rest out.

I said to Tom I will go to the box to sign the book Rule 55 (now rule Section K) to remind the signal man the train is standing on the main line, don't bother said Tom we will not be long and he can see them, there only 100 yards from his box, we were longer in the yard that morning, the guard talking to the farmers trying to get some eggs, when I herd a sound of a signal being pull of on looking over towards the station I was amazed to see the main line home signal off, and looking towards Drigg I saw the distant signal also off, but worse I saw steam of the rail special from Workington fast approaching shouted to Tom and said he's pulled of on the main and the rest of our train is on there I jumped of and ran to the box, talk of panic Tom did a ten minute move in one minute grabbed the train and whipped it inside by then the rail special was near the distant and steaming hard they would never have stopped with that load he went speeding passed with a class 5 loco on and driver Bob Grayson on they would take the train as far as Carnforth via Dalston loop .

I told him months later before I left to go to Crewe he said his fireman, an old hand called right away Bob ,Ravenglass and started to fire the engine we were doing about 50mph when the distant signal came into my view at about 300yds I saw it on just as I was about to close the regulator and put the brake on it came of I said nothing to the fireman as it's the drivers responsibility to check the signals if he had put the brake on in

panic he could have killed the guard as that train is a head code top and right less than have the train on vacuum brake the rear have would be like hitting a stop block, a very near thing from that day on I vowed never to bend the rules .

The fourth incident, oh yes we are not finished yet was on arriving back at Sellafield and started to shunt next thing clatter bang whalop you guessed it we were off the line all wheels the trainee signal man in the box had pulled the points under the engine we made over 12 hours that day,for a place like Workington that was a rare thing,we had to wait to our relief travelled from Egremont and we went home to Workington by train,lucklley we were not blocking the single line for other trains to Workington or the platforms for the Barrow direction, I said to Tom it,s a good job it,s Friday we might have a repeat to morrow better still you stay in bed,never a dull moment on the railways as I found out over the years.

Les Jackson Driver Retired