

Travelling On

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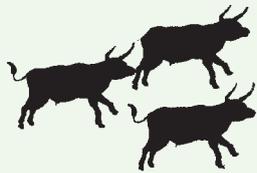
Throughout history, people have moved goods from one place to another.
These texts are about people who travel as part of their jobs.



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Sharon Brown drives lorries for a living, taking goods all over Europe.



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On the Road



Introducing Sharon Brown

Sharon Brown always had an unusual ambition – she wanted to be a lorry driver.

Now, Sharon leads the life of which she has always dreamed. Once or twice a week she drives an LGV (Large Goods Vehicle) across long distances, delivering large loads to distant places.

After years of trying to discourage her, Sharon's friends and family finally gave in, realising how determined she was.

Training for lorry drivers can start only at the age of 21, so Sharon took a course in electrical engineering first and then worked for a haulage company until she was able to start the LGV training. Later on, she took a test that allowed her to drive articulated lorries. She passed all her tests first time.

Nowadays, she's away from home for three to five days at a time, travelling all over Europe.



On the next two pages are extracts from a diary Sharon kept on a journey to Spain, transporting a load of tennis balls for the Spanish Open tennis championship. She wrote a few lines at most of her stopping points.

Monday

05.00 Nottingham Lorry Depot, England

Just picked up lorry. Glad to see that I'll be driving the new Charger, with all the latest equipment. Checked load. 20 crates of tennis balls bound for Barcelona, Spain.

09.15 Dover Ferry Port, England

A really bad start – motorway was painfully slow, but got here in the end. Then STUPID ME – got stuck behind lorry with orange warning plates carrying a full load of a highly dangerous chemical. Had to wait hours for it to be checked, but I was through border control in minutes and allowed on board the ferry.

10.15 On ferry

Met Carl and Eddie. Carl reminded me about our time on the training course years ago – how I'd said then that the idea of working on the move had been my ambition since childhood. Good to see friends and talk about old times.

14.00 Laon, France

Have stopped for lunch at truck stop. At last, fantastic food! Chocolate mousse was heaven. Long stretch ahead of me, want to cover at least 300 km before next stop.

19.00 Limas Lorry Park, France

Just checked the tachograph – don't want to break any laws about how long I spend at the wheel. Have done over 700 km since getting off the ferry and been at the wheel for 7 hours. Time to stop for the night.

20.30 Made soup in microwave – yuck! Phoned home and chatted to kids. All OK. Lorry park very full and getting into bay took a bit of work. Reminded me about the course and how hard some of the training seemed then. Reversing the lorry was like trying to thread a needle with gloves on – now I can do it with my eyes closed! Tuned into some local TV stations on my portable but couldn't understand much, so listened to some French music instead and read my book. Now ready to turn in for the night in my cosy cab. Spain tomorrow.

Tuesday

07.00 E15 Motorway Services, France

Great to be on the move again. Feel like the king of the road, towering 2 metres above the rest of the traffic, with hundreds of miles of empty road ahead and behind me. French motorways great – no traffic. Free as a bird, as long as I get these tennis balls to Barcelona. Days like this remind me why I always wanted to become a lorry driver.



09.00 Somewhere on the E15 Motorway, France

Had to make an unexpected stop as several drivers were flashing their lights at me. Discovered that my right indicator was on the blink. Checked the bulb, fuse and wires. Seems to be all right now.

12.00 Le Boulou (15 km from Spanish border)

Good place for lunch. Will stop here another time. Have just had the best steak and chips since the one I cooked for the kids last Sunday.

17.00 Gerona, Spain

Border control very friendly and let me through without fuss. Hot, sticky weather gave way to a tremendous storm. Had to slow right down – one lorry in front skidded. Parked and sat in cab, safe, dry and comfy, for an hour, watching the fantastic forks of lightning hit the ground all around, the lorry shaking with each clap of thunder. What an experience. Won't delay any longer now, as want to get to Barcelona before dark.

21.00 Barcelona, Spain

Got to Barcelona in the dark – really hard to find your way in a strange place at night, but found it in the end. Unloaded the tennis balls. Exhausted at end of a long day but took the chance to have a quick look round a new city – love seeing new places. Tomorrow start journey home with a full load of oranges. Tonight Spanish food, music and a good night's rest.

The Long Drive

Many years ago, ranch owners needed to send their cattle hundreds of miles to 'cow towns' where they would be sold. Every year it was the cowboys' job to round up all the cattle and take them in large herds to the cow town. This was known as 'the long drive'.

The drive was a challenge for all cowboys. Their day began at 4.00am and ended after dark. Even then some had to stand on guard during the night.

The average herd was made up of about 3000 cattle and the cowboys were responsible for keeping them safe all the way.

The cowboys worked as a team but each had his own job to do (see diagram).



The **trail boss** was in charge. He gave orders, checked the herd and then rode ahead to find water. He decided where the camp would be made and generally took care of the men. He rode at the front of the herd.



The **pointers** were also experienced riders. They led the herd when the trail boss went ahead to look for water or a camp.



The **swing** and **flank** men rode at the side to keep the herd together.



The **drag** men were at the back. This was the worst job because they were covered in dust from the herd in front.



The **wranglers** were the youngest and most inexperienced cowboys on the drive. They carried messages up and down the line and looked after the **remuda**, the spare horses.



The **cook** drove the **chuck wagon** and produced the food for the cowboys wherever they camped.

Difficulties and Dangers

Rounding up the cattle was very dangerous and the cowboys needed to be agile riders. On the long drive, there were many risks.

Rivers

Crossing rivers was often dangerous, especially if they were swollen by rain or there were quicksands.

Stampedes

A sudden noise might make the whole herd of cattle stampede, rushing along out of control. Stopping a stampede was dangerous work – cowboys tried to drive the cattle into a circle to slow them down.

Weather

Blistering hot winds or torrential rain and hailstones often made the conditions unpleasant.

Rustlers

These were people who set out to steal the cattle.

wrangler



remuda

flank



swing



cook



chuck wagon

pointer



drag



drag



drag



trail boss



swing



pointer



flank



On the Plains

Bob Lemmons rounds up mustangs, wild horses that live on the plains in the state of Texas, in the United States, for teams of cowboys to use on the long drive.

It wasn't noon yet, but the sun had already made the Texas plains hotter than an oven. Bob Lemmons pulled his wide-brimmed hat tighter to his head and rode slowly away from the ranch.

'Good luck, Bob!' someone yelled.

Bob didn't respond. His mind was already on the weeks ahead. He walked his horse slowly, being in no particular hurry. That was one thing he had learned early. One didn't capture a herd of mustang horses in a hurry.

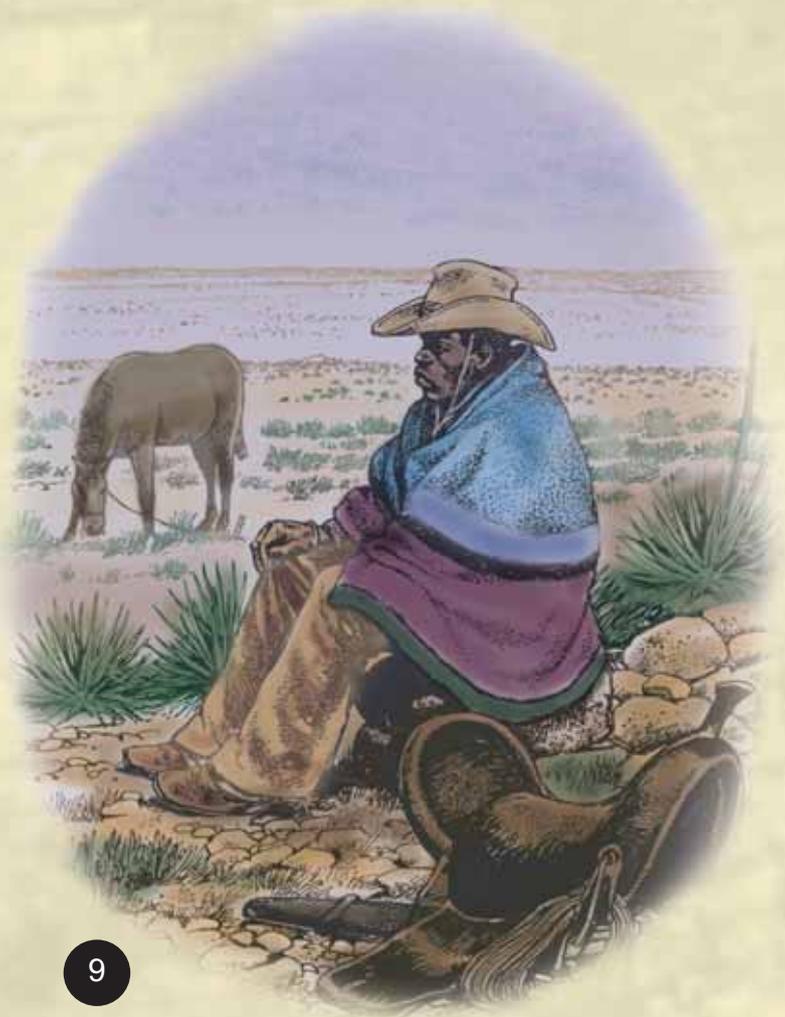
Bob looked around him, and as far as he could see the land was flat, stretching unbroken like the cloudless sky over his head until the two seemed to meet. Nothing appeared to be moving except him on his horse, but he knew that a herd of mustangs could be galloping near the horizon line at that moment and he would be unable to see them until they came much closer.



He rode north that day, seeing no sign of mustangs until close to evening, when he came across some tracks. He stopped and dismounted. For a long while he stared at the tracks until he was able to identify several of the horses. It seemed to be a small herd. The tracks were no more than three days old and he expected to catch sight of the herd in the next day or two. A herd didn't travel in a straight line, but ranged back and forth within what they considered their territory.

He untied his blanket from behind the saddle and laid it out on the ground. Then he removed the saddle from the horse and tied the animal to a post. He took his supper out of the saddlebags and ate slowly as the chilly night air seemed to rise from the plains that a few short hours before had been too hot for a man to walk on. He threw the blanket around his shoulders, wishing he could make a fire. But if he had, the smell of wood smoke in his clothes would have been detected by any herd he got close to.

After eating he laid his head back against his saddle and covered himself with his thick Mexican blanket. The chilliness of the night made the stars look to him like shining slivers of ice. Someone had once told him that the stars were balls of fire, like the sun, but Bob didn't feel them that way.



He thought about the time when he brought in his first herd of mustangs ...

One day several of the cowboys had gone out to capture a herd. The ranch had been short of horses and no one ever thought of buying horses when there were so many wild ones. He had wanted to tell them that he would bring in the horses, but they would have laughed at him. Who'd ever heard of one man bringing in a herd? So he had watched them ride out, saying nothing. A few days later they were back, tired and disgusted. They hadn't even been able to get close to a herd.

That evening Bob had timidly suggested to Mr Hunter that he be allowed to try. Everyone laughed. Bob reminded them that no one on the ranch could handle a horse like he could, that the horses came to him more than anyone else. The cowboys had acknowledged that that was true, but it was impossible for one man to capture a herd. Bob had said nothing else. Early the next morning he had ridden out alone ... Three weeks later the cowboys had been sitting outside the ranch one evening and looked up to see a herd of mustangs galloping towards them, led by Bob. Despite their amazement, they had moved quickly to open the gate and Bob had led the horses in.

The next morning, the sun awakened him even before the first arc of its roundness showed over the horizon. He saddled his horse and rode off, following the tracks he had discovered the previous evening. He followed them west until he was certain they were leading him to the Pecos River. He smiled. He knew the horses would come to that river to drink every day. Mustangs never went too far from water.



Acknowledgements: 'On the Plains' adapted from 'The Man who was a Horse', in *Long Journey Home* by Julius Lester. Published by Puffin Books, 1977.

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