

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.