

Appendix 5

Donkey Express

By the 1850s the Eastern Counties Railway was coming under attack for its poor timekeeping, exorbitant fares, dirty carriages and slow speeds. A memorandum from the inhabitants of Sudbury was issued to the Company listing many faults, and blaming poor timekeeping on the practice of stopping to join luggage trucks to passenger trains during their journeys, while 'the passengers are confined in the carriages, and are constantly shunted about for the space of 20 minutes before leaving.'

In 1856 a challenge was issued to the directors of the Eastern Counties Railway by George Hoy of Bethnal Green, London.

Written in a similar vein to the prospectus mentioned above, he states that their timetable allows up to eight minutes from Cheshunt to Waltham, and he believed that his donkey could do it in four minutes, leaving him time to have breakfast before their train even starts. George challenged the company to race their train against his 15 year old donkey from Cheshunt to London, and to 'have an umpire on a fast horse to see all is fair.'

As far as we know the Eastern Counties Railway did not accept the challenge, so we will never know who would have won!

Source:

<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/exploring-pig-clubs-donkey-express/>

