Women Who Wander
2019
A Female Future
The Project

*Women Who Wander* began in 2018, and has continued to grow, with *Women Who Wander 2019; A Female Future*.

The rail and community rail industries are working towards making rail a more equal, diverse and inclusive place. Crucially, more women are needed to bring their voices to rail, shape the future, and become employees and passengers.

A key aspect of this is engaging with young women from a wide range of backgrounds; not only encouraging them to consider rail and community rail career options, but using their thoughts and opinions to inform and shape the future of these industries with young women’s views in mind.

*Women Who Wander* helps us to work towards this goal; engaging women and girls in experiencing rail use and producing inspiring writing in a wide range of styles, expressing their views. By addressing the gender imbalance in this way, we continue to build the foundation for true equality in rail and community rail.

25 winning pieces were selected from hundreds of entries, and on International Women’s Day 2019, the winners, along with their families, attended the launch event at the Museum of Liverpool, to read their pieces to industry professionals and the Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool.

The theme, ‘A Female Future’, highlights that we were especially keen to read and publish pieces that contain advice or thoughts about how the future of rail may look for and with women, and how we can work towards a positive future.

Special thanks go to the funders of this project, to the operators, educators and groups who gave their time and resources to facilitate it, to all the women and girls who participated, and to Kathryn O’Brien and Carolyn Watson, who were invaluable in selecting the final winning pieces.

*With thanks to the Community Rail Lancashire education team.*

For more information, or to be involved with Women Who Wander 2020, please contact [info@communityraillancashire.co.uk](mailto:info@communityraillancashire.co.uk)

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For more information, please visit: [downtheline.org.uk/projects/women-who-wander/](http://downtheline.org.uk/projects/women-who-wander/)
I have always loved poems and I’ve always loved trains.

Growing up we used to take the train every school holiday from Euston to Lime Street to visit family.

The rhythm of the train is something I always remember. The sound of the track, the chattering in the carriage, the slowing down for stations and sometimes if you’re lucky a whistle. I think this is why the poem Nightmail by W H Auden has, since hearing it as a child, always stayed with me.

After being asked to create a performance piece for the Women who Wander event I knew I somehow had to capture the movement of women to a female future. I started to research and remembered my old favourite poem Nightmail. Reading the powerful descriptions and flowing words sparked something in me but how could I take it from feeling quite stuffy and very much in the tone of a middle class male to a fanfare for a female future? I stayed as close to the original poem as possible and by changing some key words and adding a sentence or two it completely changes the dynamics. I hope you enjoy it.

The poem was performed by the children from Staged Kaos youth theatre, a social enterprise based in Liverpool working to inspire children, families and communities through creative arts and fun educational activities.
This is the female breaking down Borders, 
thanks to all our sisters before us,
we might be rich, we may be the poor,
The girl on the corner, or the girl next door.

Last century’s been, a steady climb: 
The gradient’s against her, but she’s on time.
girls can’t do that, say her olders, 
she feels the world on her shoulders,

Snorting old boys as she passes 
peering at her over their glasses
they turn their heads as she approaches, 
scurry away like cockroaches.

no you cannot turn her course; 
she’s a rebel and feels the force.
open your eyes it’s time to wake, 
now we’re taking our piece of the cake

//
Dawn freshens, Her climb’s not done. 
till there are equal rights for everyone

Towards the metal clouds in a sky of cranes 
together the fields of females, the furnaces 
Set on the dark plain like gigantic Boudicca. 
All the world waits for her: 
In dark corners, behind antique desks 
Men long for news.
Dystopian Future

Hannah

IV

Thousands are still asleep,
Dreaming of terrifying monsters
Or of friendly places where they can be free to do what they want.
Asleep we aren’t scared
we can be the women we want to be asleep in our beds
wake up from your dream jump out of bed
but continue the dream,
send your emails write your letter,
we were failed but we are better
With a a quickening of the heart,
keep on track we’re not going back
we are nearly at our destination
elevate the female nation
come and meet us at the station
For who can bear to feel herself forgotten?

///
lets give thanks, for suffragette pranks,
jump for joy, girl or boy,
Receipted bills and invitations
To inspect new stock or to visit relations,
And applications for situations,
And equal rights declarations,
And new opportunities across all nations,
ever circumstantial, we are financial,
we’re taking charge its time to barge in ,
no longer sub notes in the the margin,
united our sisters, cousins, and aunts,
let’s show them how we wear pants,
Letters of condolence to Highlands and Lowlands
Written on paper of every hue,
old boys’ club we’re coming for you,
we’re chatty, some catty, some boring, some adoring,
we are together in our heart’s outpouring,
Clever, creative, smart and strong,
We’re here to put right all thats wrong.
In a dystopian future one man, with several gifts of high-quality potential in all fields of life, will rise up to become the best engineer ever.

Unfortunately, that man couldn’t make it today. So, I came instead. I am his younger sister, if that’s any help, and like my brother I am interested in engineering…but mainly railroads. I know men don’t think women have power or strength. You know, man qualities.

But many women have made a difference to inspire young girls like me. Against all odds women stood up, and even died, for what they believed in. If they could make such a difference to men back in the 1800’s why can’t I do the same thing now?

The suffragettes. Harriett Tubman. Mary Seacole. The ladies of WWII. Women who took a leap of faith.

I am going to be the hero of this story no matter what the consequences.

Two reasons:

Reason Number 1: Women are just as important as men in all aspects of life.

Reason Number 2: In all aspects of life... Women NEVER take NO for an answer.
While I Wait

5 minutes: Gloves on. Scarf wrapped closely around my neck, peeping above my mouth to keep the morning frost from my lips, I stand. Clutching onto my bag in hope it isn’t lost in the chaos of everyone lunging forward. Glancing at the time on the display. I wait. I stand.

3 minutes: Feels like forever. The ground that was once visible is now a war ground full of soldiers, ready for battle. I maintain my position and remain firmly behind the yellow line. Another glance at the time. I wait. I stand.

Due: The ground begins to rumble, a swift gust of cold air sweeps past my face and I feel my space becoming smaller. I’m ready to go. I position myself so I can be first on the frontline. I can do it. I can make a difference. I can achieve. Every morning, I wait. I stand.
@ilovetrains23
I wish I could be a train driver but I’m a girl :( wish it wasn’t a ‘man’s job’! also, what if I get paid less because I’m a girl?! #heartbroken #trains #women

@feminist101
Replying to @ilovetrains123
Women can do anything a man can do! There is no ‘male jobs’ or female jobs’, only people’s jobs #equality

@hannah_2cw
Replying to @ilovetrains123
If you want to be a train driver then go for it! You should follow your dreams! #dreamer

@rj.bt21
Replying to @ilovetrains123
Don’t let anyone tell you what to do, go for the career that is best for you! A train driver sounds like a great idea!

@park.chim.chim
Replying to @ilovetrains123
Yes! More women wanting to work in rail! Did you know that only 16% of employees in the rail industry are women?! #shocker

@j.jdarcyj.j
Replying to @ilovetrains123
Don’t worry about getting paid less, in England women and men must be paid equally if they work in the same position and started at the same time! #equalpay #genderpaygap

@skz325skz
Replying to @ilovetrains123
yay for women’s rights! A lot has changed in recent times but more still needs to be done, don’t give up on your dreams! Become the train driver you always wanted to be #womensrights
Men have dominated over women for centuries and denied us living our lives to the full. Luckily progress towards gender equality has been made but it’s not enough, for example only 16% of people working at railways are women. We cannot say discrimination in this country has been eradicated until every aspect of our lives is equal.

Growing up, young girls should know gender cannot be assigned to a job and anyone can do the job they wish to, regardless of stereotypes. However, aspirations will never be enough until opportunities are the same for both genders. Women have fought passionately for their rights and have shown they can be conductors, train drivers, engineers and every other job which is deemed as ‘male’ so more women should strive to have these positions.

Women know the struggles of being discriminated against so we should support others that are overlooked. There are so few disabled people working in rail they are not part of the statistics of workers. As a group once disregarded, women should help because we can now use our growing voice for good. Women are strong, women are independent, women can wander.
It all started on a sunny day.

Mum and I had been shopping and bought some of our favourite food, including lots of treats.

We were going to take them home and eat them.

We went for the train at Preston station.

We waited and waited, then the train came.

Mum was standing too close to the edge of the platform.

The train hit mum’s bag.

I shouted, “stand back from the yellow line.”

We lost the snacks but mum was safe.

Always use the train safely.
We can do just as much as you
After it all we’re all the same
Discrimination this discrimination that
It’s all pretty lame
It’s always the men wearing the hat
And women never get a say
The pay gap’s too big
And jobs too stereotypical
We can do just as much as you
Except everyone’s so typical

People pushed out because of their gender, race and sexuality
It’s not fair to be judged by your nationality
Women, men we’re all the same
We can do just as much as you
But the world’s lost in its game

We need to be the ones to change opinions
But how do we do that if we’re their minions
Want a change, want to show
We’re all just as capable
We can do just as much as you
Except we’re all held down by glue
I would attract more women into the rail industry by having more women talk about how much they enjoy working on the railway. Everyone should also learn about it in schools and younger children should be taught.
I am a woman,
A woman who works as a train driver,
This is a choice, a choice I was given,
I am an eagle,
I am an explorer,
Soaring through the trees,
This is a path, a path I will take forever,
It’s a new day, a new day,
I will get people to work,
I will unite families,
I will take children on extraordinary journeys,
I will make a change, a difference,
I will take you to your destination faster than lightning,
Just close your eyes and here we go,
And here we come in the wink of an eye,
I go up and down showing the passengers the mesmerising view,
Take a last glimpse before it’s gone like a bullet,
You won’t have a clue,
I will take you through the daunting dangers,
And I will make sure you’re sheltered,
I will eliminate and discard the monsters,
I’m a fighter,
A survivor,
This is me,
A train driver
There is a beautiful solidarity between women, how we extend to one another the sanctity of just being able to be.
The girls sipping early evening cocktails out of cans On the Skipton to Leeds line on a Friday, the woman sat across from them, idly pretending to read, listening intently as a parade of drunks make small talk predatory, waiting for the moment she might have to be your saviour.
The stepmother of a best friend I ran into at the train station, just before the barrier, dead phone in hand, mobile ticket dead with it, soothing me with a hug and a ticket for the 5:30 service home.
The way I have conditioned myself to be certain, that the last thing I say to a friend before I leave, is “Get home safe”, to put them on a train at night to skip the 15 minute walk in the dark even against insistence that “I’ll be fine”.
Yes, there is a beautiful solidarity between women; the security of knowing that we’ll keep each other safe, as if it comes as second nature, as though we have always been the softest of revolutionaries.
It’s certain
A certain shape
A certain figure
A certain fixed role
A certain set life

Intertwined with predictable and generous despair and twisted with teasing hope.
Every new stop bringing a new chance.
A chance to be accepted or ultimately being told you missed the last train.


The dominant passengers already boarded the train while you were limited as a woman.
Left behind now.
On a solitary journey heading anywhere forsaken.


A certain shape
A certain figure
A certain fixed role
A certain set-up
A painful punishment for a woman
Who just wants to wander
125mph
Does that seem fast to you?
Well it does to me
That is how fast I have to move
Oppression
What is the definition of oppression?
The meaning of oppression is ‘subject to harsh and authoritarian treatment’
I feel oppressed
But the question is,
Does anyone know how I feel?
It is worse if they do because that shows they don’t care
I have been designed to obey my purpose
What is my purpose?
Everyone seems to know but me
No one tells me what my purpose is
But they expect me to know
I see a glimpse of everybody I pass by
I see different personalities, different lives
If something goes right I have done my job
No reward, no recognition
However if something goes wrong I am broken
I have ruined someone’s life
It is my fault
They only seem to realise the bad things
How is it my fault?
They try and fix me if I make one mistake
Do they realise it is their fault?
Not mine, theirs
I carry too much burden
125mph
That is fast,
Isn’t it?
“We are here not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.” Emmeline Pankhurst.

As the engine began, I stared at my reflection in the window. The rain poured over the city, blessing the day. My eyesight was blurred, there was no sight of any female workers. What a surprise! My thoughts make me wonder, wonder where is the equality, what kind of society we live in and why I see no women workers. Women of the past have fought a battle and we fight today, the battle of equality! I began to ponder about those who fought for us, for our rights, for our voices and for our future...

The suffragettes, the feminists, and the extraordinary women who have made an eternal path that brought equality to the forefront. The suffragettes brightened history, Emmeline Pankhurst was one of the women who shook society and demanded a fairer law here, in Manchester. Rosa Parks was no ordinary woman, she refused to give her seat to a person who was considered to be superior and this single act meant she made history. This pivotal role was one of many but made her the mother of the freedom movement.

My thoughts broke as I realised today is 100 years since women got a voice in this patriarchal society. Let’s keep those women with numerous talents in our memory as they fought in the painful past, their lives and our future, their pain, suffering and desires shall never be forgotten. Now let’s create the future of equality. As we will be train drivers, conductors, engineers, managers, the women who will wander...

I would attract more women into the rail industry by creating an event where women become more comfortable in the rail industry. Women who are interested would have work experience in the rail industry. To ensure women become more comfortable there won’t be any men around. Another event linked to this will be letting women shadow men in their daily life in the rail industry.
We are brave,
We are powerful,
We are strong,
We can be whatever we want to,
That isn’t wrong.
Any job of any sort,
We all can do,
Always just believe in you!
We are proud,
We need our voices to be
Heard very loud,
We can all be a part of the
Rail industry.
Women Who Wander, 2019; A Female Future

28k Views

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313 Comments

Sarah
Wow! So cool that women are working in the railway.

Alan
I don’t count that as working.

Sarah
Why not?

Alan
Because they’re just behind a desk instead of physically being on the railway. That’s why men get promoted faster.

Rachel
Yeah and that’s a real problem cause women and men both start working with the same salary!

Sarah
Really?!
They should have also mentioned how only 16% of railway jobs are held by women!

Rachel
That makes me want to work on the railway!

Alan
Don’t bother, you’re just going to end up behind a desk, you might as well just work in an office.

Rachel
There needs to be women in the railway. Women need to wonder about these jobs!

Sarah
Hey! Women who wander!

Alan
Alan is now offline.

Sarah
Hello? Alan?

Rachel
Well at least one person has realised women need to wander!
I wonder, I wonder,
I Wendy, I wonder,
Who is Wendy?
Where is Wendy?
Is she on the platform?
Or is she the one asking for my ticket?
Maybe she’s tucked away at the front of the train.
Wendy often wondered whether she could wander,
People don’t like wanderers,
They can often be mistaken for loiterers.
But I myself wonder as I am sure you do too.
I wonder, I wonder,
Wendy is me, Wendy is you.
I am Wendy
And so are you.
He’s driving a train, she’s helping
She’s driving a train, he’s helping
They’re both working, together in unity

Equality shapes our future
Distant yet visible we are fighting
We are the women who wonder
Who wonder about our beliefs

Increasing the female rail population
Coming together as a generation
Preparing for future exploration
To help us find an explanation
For the lack of integration
Through this rail service demonstration

It’s not about women acting like men
It’s about women acting like women
And being successful

I hope that I inspire women to believe in themselves
And educate women, as women
There is no limit to what we can accomplish!

I would attract more women into the rail industry with equality. Just equality.
How sad is it that we are afraid?
Afraid of the judgement portrayed
In movies and books and songs
On the train of life, chugging along
We are taught, right and wrong
When really we are beautiful swans
How sad is it that we lie
About how we cry?
Every night, hoping to be loved
Hoping to be liked
By those people we actually dislike
All our lives, who judge us
Telling us to be ‘ladylike’ thus
Creating this image, this fabrication,
Ruining young girls’ imaginations
Their dreams replaced with a myth
This thing we are told all our lives
All we need to be are the perfect wives
For our husband or wife, a mother to our child
This thing, it’s insane, it’s wild!
On this it’s strange, it’s unlike
Anything kids should be told.
3 words
4 syllables
“Be more ladylike!”

I would attract more women into the rail industry by letting them know it’s socially acceptable to work on railways – women are more likely to consider working there. Posters promoting women? Showing a woman working a railway job.
I feel a twinkle in my stomach as I wait to walk through the grand entrance.

“Please welcome the special guest of tonight, Emily Walker, the female managing director of the British train industry!”

“When I was 10 years old, I went on my first proper train ride into the countryside to visit my auntie. As much as I loved it, my anger overtook me as I witnessed the women either in the buffet carriage or cleaning, nothing else. This lit a spark in me which set the wheels in motion. At the age of 15 it was my time to shine. I was ready to be the person I wanted to be. Mrs Stoker, the careers officer, was pleased with my intention of working at the train station. Unfortunately, my expectations were derailed. When I went to the station, they told me to serve the tea. Then I asked to shadow the train driver and they laughed hysterically. This moment in time reminded me of when I was 10.

So how did I end up in this room, speaking to you all? Well, after a year of rounding up my friends, chanting outside the company’s head office every weekend and getting my story into the news, finally, someone listened. The train company’s managing director realised that only 3% of the managers were women. He offered me an apprenticeship to become the first female train driver in the history of the company. This was the start of my professional journey, to where you find me now. I want to tell the young generation that even though the track won’t be straight, your dreams should always fuel your adventures. Thank you.”
I am going to tell you what the trains mean to me. About new buildings, meeting new people who you have seen before, learning about how to be safe on the trains and about how to get to new places.

When I see new places it feels like I am living my life and it makes me feel very happy.

I am fully independent at travel training, learning about what trains are like, where there is no traffic.

Sometimes there is traffic where the trains slow down on the track.

I am a young lady and free and I can do it independently.
You can drive a train
so can I!

You can be a doctor
so can I!

You can be an engineer
so can I!

You can give tickets out
so can I!

You can open a barrier
so can I!

Women can do anything when they put their mind to it.

Drive a train, travel far
so use the train, not the car.

You can do it!
Why are women not treated equally?

But times have changed now, thankfully!

Women are 16% of people on the railway.

The only thing we’re allowed to do is open the gateway.

84% are men and that’s just not right.

Don’t be afraid to work at the railway, it’ll be alright.

We can fight for ourselves, for women’s rights.

We should be treated equally, we’ll have to fight.

I would attract more women into the rail industry using flyers and advertisements.
We can do anything.
On the rails we succeed.
More women rule.
Enough is enough.
Nothing and no one can hold us back.

Individuality, diversity, equality.
Not going to be overruled by men.

Remember during the war women kept Britain going.
Aim high ladies, follow the tracks of your dream.
I am strong, I will, I can.
Listen to what women want.

I would attract more women into the rail industry by making a poster of my poem.
Why are men better than me?
That’s not what I believe,
I believe I can be me,
I believe I can be free.

The rail is waiting for me,
So I’ll go chase my dream.

I’ll stand up and make a speech,
the men can go doze off and sleep.
Because my heart is in the station,
and I will tell the whole nation.

So don’t go tell me what to be!
I’ve chosen the rail for me,
why don’t you come follow my lead?

I would attract more women into the rail industry by having more advertising and encouragement!
I can do it but I am a woman.

I am a woman
I can work on a train
We are all equal

I am a woman
I can be a doctor
Making people better

I am a woman
I can be an engineer
Fixing things my way

I am a woman
I can be a conductor
Helping people

I am a woman
I can do it

I would attract more women into the rail industry by using advertising and handing out flyers to women.
I can’t be an engineer; that’s a man’s job.
I can’t work in management; that’s a man’s job.
I can’t be a train driver; that’s a man’s job.

I can’t be scientist, or a project director, or a photographer, or a programmer, or a police officer, or a construction worker; they’re men’s jobs.

We teach each other from the ages of four and five to limit ourselves and our aspirations, having already decided that men are vets and women are receptionists, that men are doctors and women are nurses, that men are bosses and women are assistants. We shouldn’t be told to listen and do as we’re told, not to speak unless spoken to. How have we possibly let this go on for so long?

Teenagers are under so much pressure already, deciding what they want to do with their lives. While simultaneously struggling with mountains of revision and homework, teachers, arguments between friends, and on top of those struggles, we have to learn how to live our lives in the far off future. How is it possibly fair that learning to live our lives involves learning that men are better and will always have better job opportunities, and better chances at living the life they want for themselves?

Women make up just 15% of the railway work force – compared to 51% of the population, and 47% of the workforce as a whole, hugely due to being told that we can’t do it – that’s a man’s job.

We CAN be engineers.
We CAN work in management.
We CAN be train drivers.
We CAN be scientists, project directors, photographers, programmers, police officers, construction workers, we can be tree surgeons and zoologists, and geologists, veterinarians.

We can stand up for ourselves and voice our opinions, follow in the footsteps of legends.
Women Who Wander is a unique writing project that engages women and girls in expressing their views of the rail and community rail industries.

Women Who Wander 2019; A Female Future, is a look to the future of these industries; from imaginative pieces evoking the history of rail, to rousing speeches, triumphant poetry and social media frenzies.

#BalanceforBetter
#WomenWhoWander