

Women Who Wander

North West



2018



Department
for Transport



Transport for
Greater Manchester



International Women's Day



Women in Community Rail
Achieving Change Together

'Women Who Wander' is a unique writing project that engaged women and girls in experiencing rail use; producing written pieces that promote their views of travelling by rail and potentially working in the industry.

The transport industry across the country tends to be heavily male-dominated; we aim to change that by engaging, inspiring and influencing, paving the way for the next generation of strong young women.

This project raises awareness of the gender imbalance in rail, and gave the women who participated an important experience in influencing groups to create change, as well as demonstrating to other women and girls that their views are valid, and that they have a place both comfortably using and employed within the transport industry.

Women from a diverse range of backgrounds participated, including women with additional needs, to accurately reflect female views of rail and, vitally, to inform future development.

Special thanks must go to the funders of this project, to all the women and girls who participated, and to Marion Atkinson and Hazel Bonner, who were invaluable in selecting the final winning pieces to be published.

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For more information, please visit;
downtheline.org.uk/projects/women-who-wander-north-west/

Mehak

Whalley Range 11-18 High School



A Wandering Woman's Story

Hi, my name is Sylvia. This may come as a surprise to you, which it shouldn't; I work on the rail as a train conductor. Not many women work on the rail; only 16% are female and in my department only 20/80 are female/male. My place of work is male dominated, just like most jobs.

Before I became part of the rail, I worked behind a desk from 9 – 5; that wasn't really my thing. I decided that I needed a change, something different, something new. My husband actually gave me the idea to work on a train, as he is a guard at the stations. I've spent 2 and a half years working as a train conductor. It seems that at times it's better being a female on a train. For example, when a female says to men 'don't do something' they'll listen but when a male tells another man then it's a whole different story. I do love my job but I can't have nails on as they'll get caught in something or get chipped because you're moving around a lot.

I recently passed my train driving test, so now I'm trying to become a train driver. My colleagues are supporting me but I do get the odd few jokes, 'because you're a female you'll need more training right' things like that. I know it's a joke but it's still sexist and it shouldn't be like that. Most people whenever I tell them that I work on a train, they're surprised as it's seen as unusual. That's because very few women wander.

This needs to change, become a wandering woman.



Safiyya-El-Diwani
University of Manchester



Late

Late. It's late.

Look-furtively-over-my-shoulder late,
grip-my-keys-even-tighter late,
make-sure-my-friends-know-my-exact-location late,
check-where-the-nearest-exit-is late,
don't-let-my-guard-down late.

Empty. the train is empty.

Each-shadow-looks-suspicious empty,
Are-those-footsteps-behind-me-or-just-machinery empty,
Will-anyone-hear-me-if-I-scream empty,
Would-it-have-been-safer-to-flag-a-taxi empty,

Scared. I'm scared.

Will-anyone-try-to-approach-me scared,
What-if-someone-tries-something scared,
am-I-strong-enough-to-fight-back scared,
I-would-feel-so-much-better-if-I-knew-there-was-a-conductor-around scared,
wish-there-was-another-woman-here scared,
Can't-meet-anyones-eyes-because-they-might-take-it-as-an-invitation scared

Last week. It was only last week.

Creepy-old-man-approached-me last week,
Said-he-bet-I-had-a-hot-body last week,
Asked-me-out-for-a-drink last week,
Tried-to-make-me-give-him-a-hug last week,
Wouldn't-leave-me-alone last week,
Everyone-else-sat-quietly-in-discomfort last week,

I was just minding my own business then.

And if he comes back now,
There is no one at all to be a witness.
Where are the women when you need them?

Lucy
Kirkby High School



Yes I can!

you can't be a train driver!

yes I can!

you can't be an engineer!

yes I can!

you can't be a conductor!

yes I can!

you can't work on the track!

yes I can!

...

I can do anything you can do!

Lily
Kirkby High School



I am

Why am I not good enough?
Why is my voice not heard?
Why can my gender be pushed aside without a single care?

If I want to be me,
If I want to be free,
Why can I be frowned upon, for being something I was born to be?

The railway is my light,
Although it may not be deemed right,
The railway keeps me and my friends together,
The railway is where I want to stay forever.

If she can be brave,
And she can conquer,
Why does anyone have the right, the right to stop her?

I know that I am good enough!
I know that my voice can be heard!
I know that my gender will not be pushed aside without a single care!

I am strong and I am smart,
Independent and ready to start,
Ready to start my journey my journey as a train driver
And this time people will hear me!

Zahra
Whalley Range 11-18 High School



The train was like me

The train was like me,
busy and fast,
always travelling,
always helping people,
sometimes late,
sometimes early,
mostly on time,
Hard to catch,
Full of different personalities.

Train was like me,
stopping for people,
can travel in any direction,
never getting tired,
always energetic,
Through night and day,
fuelled every day,
ready to go,
rested every night,
meeting different people.

The train was like me,
exploring different places,
travelling on a certain path,
controlled by people,
sometimes broken,
sometimes needs fixing,
rushing past surroundings,
never fully seeing anything,
sometimes stopping,
mostly moving.
The train was like me,
welcoming and inviting,
but very expensive,
very friendly,
sometimes too crowded,
sometimes empty,
surrounded by different people,
very comfortable.

The train was like me,
trying to get equal rights,
moving and making improvements,
But not quite there yet,
travelling but not reached its destination,
but stopping to fight against,
people against equal rights.

The train was like me,
fighting for equal wages,
fighting against typical 'male jobs',
fighting against 'physical jobs are for men',
fighting against restrictions on women,
fighting against men are better than women.

The train was like me,
working for more female workers,
more female workers for trains,
more female contractors,
more female drivers,
more female engineers,
more female train attendants,
more female inspectors,
more female station masters.

The train was like me,
never seeing women wandering,
mostly seeing travelling men,
seeing businessmen,
never business women.

The train was like me.

Iona James

The University of the Third Age

Train of Thoughts

I sat on the train and looked at my fellow passengers. It was morning and many were going to work, some were suited, others more casually dressed, many were reading, 'Metro', tablets, books or looking at their phones.

Next to me was a young woman and opposite were two who were obviously colleagues. They were busy talking about work. The young woman opposite me was talking about applying for promotion and was worried about a young man who would also be applying.

"It's a no brainer," her friends assured her, "you are better at dealing with customers, you are more qualified."

"He's a man," came the reply, "but I'll give it my best, 'cos I want it."

I looked out of the window and thought about her situation. I was much older. My mind wandered and drifted back to over a hundred years ago when my grandmother had been born. She lived at home helping on the farm until she married, my mother only worked until she married but I had worked most of my life and was able to have a career but in my work- life had found resistance to female promotion.

Two world wars had helped, proving women could cope and hold responsible jobs. We not only held these jobs but also managed homes and family. I sat back and looked at the three young, confident women secure in the knowledge that women's suffrage was safe.

We arrived at the station. As we got off the train I noticed a man and woman helping and guiding passengers. Yes, the workforce needs women, the world was changing but we still needed to go further.

I followed the three friends and wondered what changes they would see; for the better I hoped. As they disappeared I mentally wished them well.

Libbie
Broadfield Specialist School



Accrington to Blackburn

On Monday, the 5th of February we met Daisy at Accrington train station. It was a freezing day and the platform was as cool as snow. We had to stand waiting for the 150. When it arrived it was two minutes late but it was a quiet train. The engine roared like a lion to tell you when to sit down.

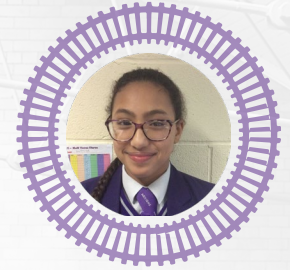
I saw a lot of animals in the green long fields. The seats were so comfy I could fall asleep.

The train slithered into Blackburn like jelly on a plate! When we got off the train the station was so big it was like walking into Buckingham Palace. It was so beautiful like a diamond.

Coming back to Accrington we got the most squeaky train in the whole world. It was a 142 train. On the way home I was thinking about why rail is important, because you can get a train if you don't have a car and you can still get to places.

If I was allowed I will change things so more ramps are available for prams and wheelchair users.

Omayma
Whalley Range 11-18 High School



A Wandering Woman

I am a woman,
a woman who wanders,
powerful and strong just like the thunder.

I follow my dreams and I follow my heart,
using my brain, and the knowledge I've gained,
following the path that the suffragettes paved.

In the far distance I hear the chugging of the train,
such an annoying pain,
despite the amplitude, a show of gratitude,
for taking me to the places I want to go.

After a long journey, a day full of sightseeing,
I climb on the train,
guaranteed to do the same,
all over again.

Danielle
Kirkby High School



So can she

He can drive, so can she.
He can concentrate, so can she.
He can work hard, so can she.

So why is it that he is employed, and she isn't?
Women are underestimated by thousands, millions in fact.

If women weren't as strong as men we wouldn't be here.
If women weren't as strong as men we wouldn't have survived.

Without women nobody would be here, no family, no friends and no workers.
Families consist of males and females, so why don't rail families?

Women are fighting, women are strong,
One day we will be equal, why is that wrong?

Ella
Kirkby High School



Uprising

Dear diary,

It just isn't fair. I can't believe the state of today's society. It is 2018 and still only 16% of people who work in the railway profession are women. I am shocked! I wish that women were treated better! It is so upsetting to know that 84% of the railway's workers are men. I just wish this would change.

I'm only young, but I will do everything I can to change this. It makes me want to cry. Equality is the key to stop discrimination. But at the moment we aren't on the right track. Take the war for example. When the men were at war the women took over. But when they came back they kicked us to the curb. I am ready for an uprising. That uprising is me! And I can't wait! See you tomorrow diary.

Bye! XOXO

Iman
Whalley Range 11-18 High School



Race for the train

A race for the train makes you think,
about patriarchal society,
and how women have strengthened,
over the years

Woe to the man who says,
he is better than any woman, they had it easy,
it was the women who had to fight for themselves,
they were forced to obey any man's demand,
yet in the end they still excelled.

They excelled in leadership more than any man thought they might,
take our very own Emmeline Pankhurst for instance,
she won at the end of the night,
she may not have lived to see it,
but she helped women, yes, she gave them their rights.

Women are so easy to berate,
but all women at heart are the same,
they're thoughtful, beautiful and wise,
how else could men be so successful?
It was their mothers who gave them their name.

At last our rush for the train is ending,
with only a few seconds left to board,
and with the odds ever in our favour,
a woman is our conductor,
it's proof that society is accepting women,
now to equality we can only move towards.

Charlotte
Broadfield Specialist School



Accrington to Blackburn

We went in the car to see Daisy. We walked upstairs into the brand-new station. It was a snowy day so we had to wear our coats so we don't get cold. Then we hopped on the dirty and rotten train. When we sat down we were surprised about the comfy seats. I would have preferred an electric train because it would go faster and be better for the environment. We arrived in Blackburn and it was massive. Then we inspected the station.

When we were in the station I had a brilliant idea! We should have a wonderful party train with lights and music. While we were in Blackburn I heard a terrible noise that sounded like a mouse. It was a squeaky 142! It was old and twisted like a tree.

On the way home there was no traffic because trains have no traffic. On the way home I saw cars that looked like toy cars. We got off the train and I saw men on the train tracks. They work for Network Rail. I would like to work for Network Rail fitting the track. I think rail is important because it takes people to work and is better for the environment.

Asbah

Whalley Range 11-18 High School



Women Who Wonder

As I stepped foot onto the rigid train, I began to wonder. I wonder a lot. Mostly about small things. But this wasn't a small thing. This was huge. This journey really made me think. The screeching sound of the train against the rails made my ears bleed. I sat down. Struggling for comfort. With my head held high, I began to think. Why aren't we all seen as the same. Men and women are literally the same. But some people don't see that. Some people look down on us because we're women. Some think we shouldn't be allowed to do certain things just because we are women. But that's not right. We can all do whatever we put our minds to do. The train stopped and I lifted my head and there it was. Written on a woman's bag. There it was. Written right in front of me. "We should all be feminists."



Emma
Whalley Range 11-18 High School



Wandering Women

The clatter clatter of rail tracks,
pierce my eardrums-
my heart is in my mouth
as they race past me.

Trees, grass, animals blur my eyesight,
but all I see is men!
Men drive vans,
men are engineers,
business builders – thriving in their success.

As we pull up to old rail tracks,
my mind wanders.
These rail roads are from the time when,
men were gone – busy by themselves
we women were train drivers,
mothers – yet are still.
Gardeners, shopkeepers, teachers and engineers.

The speeding carriage reminds me,
of the last 100 years.
The fight for equality,
how everything has changed?

We are the future.
The sky will turn dark,
and the leaves will fall-
I pray.

I pray we will be equal,
we will have a chance,
because we can be leaders,
train drivers, politicians and engineers- shopkeepers also.

We can design new transport and architecture,
and build big companies.
Because we are the women who will experience-
We are the women who wander.

Lily-Ella
Kirkby High School



I can

I can drive a train,
I can be near tracks,
I can be in charge,
I am a woman.
I should be paid,
I should be equal,
I should be employed,
I am a woman.
I can give orders,
I can say my name,
I can fight,
because I am a woman.

Isobel
Kirkby High School



Wonder Woman

Once upon a time when the world was at war,
women went to the railway and took on an extra chore.

Despite caring for children and working on the farm,
they protected our machinery and kept it out of harm.

After years of working hard the war was finally done,
the soldiers got all the praise yet the women got none.

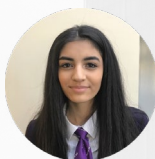
Lillie
Kirkby High School



I can

I am a woman,
I can be powerful,
I can be strong,
I can be brave,
I can be resilient,
I can be fearless,
I can be confident,
I can be a train driver...

We are the women who wander.
We need to fight for our joy.
We have the right to speak out.
We have arrived, "Dreams ahoy!"



Amina

Whalley Range 11-18 High School

For more information, please visit;
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