

## Launch of new children's book to keep children safe around the railway

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*Freightliner shunt driver Bessie Matthews has released her first book educating children how to behave around the railway*

Twenty thousand free copies of a new children's book on how to behave around the railway are being handed out at stations in the UK this week.

"It's such an odd feeling to see such a little idea has all of a sudden become a reality but I hope it will help keep people safe around the railways," said Bessie Matthews, the author and illustrator of Arlo's Adventures There and Back.

The book follows Arlo the badger as he makes his first ever solo trip on the train to see his friends Duskie and Moss, who live a couple of stops away.

The reader helps the trio stay safe by turning to the page they think is the best choice featuring real world scenarios such as level crossings and station platforms, as well a child-friendly glossary of railway terms.

Bessie, who is a recently qualified shunt driver for the Freightliner Group, said: “The idea came about during driver training in August last year. It was a small class of four and all our learning styles were completely different but, we all learnt really well from scenario-based questions.

“I thought if this kind of technique helps adults learning about the railway, then is it something that could help keep children safe around the railway. It doesn’t just say what not to do, but also to explain why they shouldn’t?”

It draws inspiration from the adventure books that Bessie said she used to love to read as a child.

“It appeared in my mind overnight that this is what I’m going to do, although initially I thought about writing comic strips before settling on the idea of a book,” she said.

“I’d never written and published a book before, so I needed some help. I contacted Karen Bennett (Community Rail education development officer) who published 100 Women, 100 Journeys. She was an absolute godsend because I couldn’t have done half of what she had done to help this book come along.”

As well as the important safety messages from the book, Bessie is asking those who get a copy or read it online to donate to the [Railway Children](#), which can be done by [clicking here](#) (when asked what prompted the donation choose ‘other’ and let them know it was Arlo’s Adventures There and Back).

“I’m keen to raise as much money as possible to help with their amazing efforts for children, many of whom have nothing,” said Bessie, who in the past has raised thousands of pounds for the Samaritans with her paintings on ballast.

“Some of the children also use the railway as a place of solace so it is vital that the Railway Children can continue its incredible work in the UK, India and East Africa.”

Arlo’s Adventures has been created thanks to support from Freightliner, Community Rail Network and ScotRail.

Dave Ellis, corporate partnerships manager at Railway Children, said: “There are times within this role where you really are so genuinely humbled and this really has been one of those occasions, after Karen Bennett of Community Rail kindly introduced Bessie Matthews to us.

“The fact that Bessie has focussed her incredible talents to help keep children safe in and around stations is in itself so fantastic, but to then so passionately want to align this with and raise funds for Railway Children and the work we do here in the UK and also overseas, working with children who are also so vulnerable and at risk in and around stations, really has been inspiring.

“I will most certainly be reading the book with both of my sons, while also telling them of the incredible impact it is possible to create for others, when you have the passion and drive that Bessie has. Thank you so much Bessie on behalf of all the children you will help Railway Children to continue to reach.”

For more details about the book, email Bessie at [bessington309@gmail.com](mailto:bessington309@gmail.com)

