

Transcript of Audio Walk for Princetown

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Track 1 – Introduction, High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown (Grid reference SX 591 735)

Hello and welcome to Dartmoor National Park and this audio walk encapsulating the ancient settlements, railways and quarries around Princetown. The town stands at 1400ft above sea level and is surrounded by beautiful open moorland, but is famous, or rather infamous for its prison. Still very much functioning today, and an institution rather dominating the town, we are going to be heading in the opposite direction to the prison, to take in some altogether older artefacts of mankind and nature on this beautiful area of Dartmoor National Park.

As with all the Dartmoor National Park Authority audio walks, we've divided this audio tour into several sections, each one being a separate track for you to download onto your player, and that way you can simply switch off when you are walking, and then start playing the new track at the next point of interest and I'll give you full directions when to do this in the audio itself. You'll also find that the names of each track include the grid reference of where you should be, so that you can follow the tour using a standard Ordnance Survey map – in this case the Explorer OL28 for Dartmoor. Or you can download the accompanying map with this audio walk so that you can have a back-up to the instructions in the audio.

Today's walk is basically a circular one, starting from the High Moorland Visitor Centre in Princetown, and heading initially south-west out of the town along the route of the original Dartmoor and Plymouth railroad and its replacement, the Great Western railway. Sadly, neither of these modes of transport operates today, but they have left a number of interesting remains and a fabulous historical backdrop to the walk.

With great views of Plymouth Sound, we will cross one of the culverts that lead down to the River Meavy and head southwards over the Devil's Bridge and then past the first of several Bronze Age settlements on this walk. After making our way through a Rifle Range, once used by Princetown's prison guards, we reach Hart Tor and head south-westerly through the remnants left by the tin miners and make a crossing of the River Meavy by way of a ford. Then, it's onto the aqueduct which carries the Devonport Leat over the River Meavy – more about that feat of engineering when we get there. Then it's west when we reach the forest by the ruins of Stanlake Farm, heading for the car park on the opposite side of the road. North-west from the car park, leading downhill to the disused railway line and follow it all the way back to Princetown, passing the ruins of Ingra Tor railway halt and Ingra Tor quarry.

So, as always, let's make sure we have firm boots as the terrain is a bit uneven, certainly for the first part of this walk, and remember to take a waterproof coat and suncream – Dartmoor's weather is notoriously changeable!

The walk is approximately 6 miles, that's 10 kilometres, so best allow around 3 ½ hours, depending on whether you intend to have a picnic en route – that way, you can take time to really appreciate what's around you.

Joining us on this walk is Jackie Ridley, Dartmoor National Park Authority's Sustainable Tourism Officer and I have met up with her here at the High Moorland Visitor Centre in the centre of Princetown.

Peter – Jackie, tell me a little bit more about the Visitor Centre itself – it's got some pretty fascinating displays.

Jackie – It has. It's certainly worth making this your first stop when you come to Princetown as it gives a wonderful introduction to the town itself, as well as the National Park. It's got some interactive displays, audio-visual – so you've got a film running all the time, as well as a changing programme of artists' exhibitions, of which there are about eight a year, so there's always something different to see.

The actual Visitor Centre itself has a bit of a varied past – first of all it was an Officer's Mess in about the 1800s (for the prison guards), then it went into disrepair and then James Rowe refurbished it and made it the Duchy Hotel. It actually had Sir Arthur Conan Doyle staying here and it is alleged that this is where he started writing *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, so that's a claim to fame! I think it was a carriage driver that took him out over the Moor that was called Mr Baskerville, so the interesting bits get woven into the story. Then, in 1993, it was opened as the High Moorland Visitor Centre by the National Park, and the Duchy of Cornwall actually have offices here as well.

Peter – Now just before we set off, a word about maps. Always important to have one when walking on Dartmoor. Mine is an Ordnance Survey Explorer, number OL28, titled quite simply "Dartmoor", and Jackie, you're bringing a map you downloaded from the website that accompanies the audio. And having done several of these audio walks now, I know that you can pick up a copy from the High Moorland Visitor Centre.

Jackie – This Centre is open all year round, so you can always pop in and get a copy.

Peter – The grid reference for the Information Centre is SX 591 735 and from here, we'll turn left into Station Road and walk towards the disused railway line?

Jackie – With the High Moorland Visitor Centre behind you, just turn left and take the first left turn which is Station Road and just follow that along. We will get to a gate and then go onto the disused railway line.

Peter – And as we walk out of Princetown, I can tell you that there are a number of stops on this audio tour and probably the best thing to do is simply turn off now, enjoy the walk and we'll see you at our first stop, the old Railway Station, grid reference SX 589 735 if you are following this on a map, just past the Fire Station. Switch on again then and we'll give you a bit more information.

Track Two – Old Railway Station (Grid reference SX 589 735)

Peter – Right, very short walk Jackie. We've reached the sign that says "Disused Railway" pointing left, but there's also a rather nice smell in the air.

Jackie – Indeed, just to your right is the Princetown Brewery, famous for Jail Ale, so after this walk, it might be a good opportunity to try some local fare!

Peter – Well, I'm sure we are going to do that. Now, the sign is pointing along a path, but also towards a building – a fairly small building, which has clearly got something to do with the railways.

Jackie - That's just one of the few remains of the Great Western Railway Station which superceded the horsedrawn tramway in 1884. What we'll do is just walk past that, carry on this disused railway line until we come to a gate, go through that and carry on walking until we get level with the fir plantation on the right.

Peter – And we've got an absolutely beautiful day for a walk – a bit of a breeze, but the sun is completely out and there are no clouds in the sky.

Jackie – No, the weather can be notoriously changeable and it suffers from quite a lot of fog up here, so do come prepared when you do this walk.

Peter – We are just approaching the first gate on this path.

Jackie – Yes, you can see the distinctive catch on this gate – it is particularly for people in wheelchairs – because it is a hard track and people with wheelchairs can get along here. It actually is a very good recreational route, although it is a shame that the railway is not here any more, although it has brought so many other opportunities for walking, cycling and disabled access, so that people who might not otherwise get the opportunity can come along here and be out in the heart of the moor.

Peter – Now on the right we have a couple of fields and some horses enjoying the sun.

Jackie – These enclosed fields actually housed the railway station, so try and imagine what it would have been like here.

Peter – How busy would it have been here?

Jackie – Oh really busy as it was a way of transporting the granite off of Dartmoor, as well as transporting people out of Plymouth up onto Dartmoor, and back again, so it was a really popular line.

Peter – And I suppose the most central station on Dartmoor at the time.

Jackie – Yes, absolutely.

Peter – Now, as we come to the end of these pine trees, just to the left are some granite boulders. One of which looks like it has been manipulated by mankind as there are a couple of holes drilled in it.

Jackie – This is one of the granite sleepers for the original horsedrawn tramway. But you may have noticed as we walked past the field where the old station would have been, there were a couple of upright granite posts on the left. Now, they are actually the boundary stones for the water catchment area, which is leased by the Plymouth Corporation for filling the Burrator Reservoir, which is quite a bit further on from our walk.

Peter – And they were the stones with the pyramid tops on them?

Jackie – Yes, quite distinctive.

Peter – Now we are going to be heading next to the railway bridge. Follow this path, which is a very obvious path that we are on now. Grid reference SX 585 734 and the wind is getting up a bit now as we get away from the trees at Princetown, and we are somewhat exposed. The sun is out as well, so I'm glad I put some suncream on.

Jackie – Just to the right of the plantation up on the right hand side, you will see a very tall mast, and that is actually North Hessary Tor.

Peter – And that's a television mast by the look of it?

Jackie – Yes. You can see that from miles around on a clear day when you are crossing Dartmoor. Okay, so we'll just carry on – you can't go wrong. Stick to the path and meet at the railway bridge.

Peter – Okay, we'll meet you there.

Track Three – Railway Bridge (Grid reference SX 585 734)

Peter – And here is the railway bridge.

Jackie – Yes, you can't miss it. It's a platform with metal railings on either side.

Peter – Actually made from railway lines by the look of it.

Jackie – Yes, it could be. All a bit rusted up now, but very strong.

Peter – What would have gone underneath it? Water?

Jackie – Yes, it is actually over one of the culverts.

Peter – From here, we are going to the Rifle Range, which is grid reference SX 582 724, so we're going a little bit further along this railway line.

Jackie – Probably about 50 metres, so that we can leave this railway track and go down the embankment on the left – it's a bit shallower there, so that's why we will go a bit further. Then we almost come back on ourselves, towards the bridge, and then you will see a well-worn track on the right and it goes a little bit higher. Follow that around, going through tussocky grass.

Peter – Keeping the stream to our left?

Jackie - That's right. And you will see the road and that is where we are heading to – it will take us down to the road and there will be a gravelly lay-by, so you will know you are in the right place. Then go directly across and then you will see from that bank a well-worn track going down, over a little stream, and then up the other side. It is a bit of a clamber to get up that bank, then bear right on another track which will take you all the way along – and then you will see the Rifle Range.

Peter – And what are we going to find? Will there be huts?

Jackie – Well, the Rifle Range – what you'll see on the left is a small stone post with a number 600 on the top. That's the start of the Rifle Range and that would have been the distance recorded from the firing range at Hart Tor.

Peter – Okay, well let's step out and try and find this Rifle Range, which is grid reference SX 582 725.

Track Four – Rifle Range (Grid reference SX 582 725)

Peter – Ah, that is a very, very small stone Jackie. I was expecting something bigger than that! It does indeed say 600 on the top – that's 600 yards presumably to where?

Jackie – Hart Tor, which is right in front of us. Just what you need is a clear line of sight. What we'll do is follow this path, and you will see the stones going 600, 500, 400 etc all the way to the base of Hart Tor. And we'll go up to the top and that's our next meeting place.

Peter – Probably a good place to have a coffee.

Jackie – Yes, I think so.

Peter – The grid reference is SX 581 720. So let's head off, following these markers, counting ourselves down, we can't possibly get lost.

Jackie – You can't and actually en route, you will see remains of roundhouses, or what used to be called hut circles. They will be to the left and to the right of you. This would have been a very prominent settlement, going back to the Bronze Age – about 3,500 years ago. So we've got Rifle Range and Roundhouses!

Peter – All ancient history working together. Let's go and have a look at these roundhouses then.

(Later)

Peter – Well, 50 yards on from the first marker. I know it is 50 yards on as there is another marker which says 550.

Jackie – That's right and here's the first of these roundhouse remains – granite stones all around, grassy covered bank, and there are some reeds growing up and there would have been a roof many years ago.

Peter – And this would have been a dwelling?

Jackie – That's right. Actually you can find roundhouses on their own, or as a cluster. I think because of the evidence further along on this walk where we will see lots of roundhouses, this must have been quite a substantial settlement.

Peter – Yes, I can see another one on the other side of the marker.

Jackie – They will open up as we carry on the walk, following the line of the rifle range towards Hart Tor – you will see loads.

Peter – They must have been hardy people living up here. Today's beautiful with the sun, but it is quite windy. And I guess most of the days it isn't as nice as this up here.

Jackie – No, they were made of sterner stuff.

Peter – Right, let's carry on towards the Tor.

Track Five – Hart Tor (Grid reference SX 581 720)

Peter – Well, here we are at the top of the Tor – just walking through a few reeds. It's amazing how boggy it can be right on the top of a tor. But that is a magnificent view all the way around.

Jackie – Isn't it just!

Peter – Just spend a minute to take this in. Now we came past the end of the Rifle Range, and there was a post you probably saw with a couple of holes in it.

Jackie – That was where the target was – the shooting would happen from the post we have just passed, and they would be able to judge their distances then. That would have been the militia guards, which were the prison guards when Dartmoor prison was a convict prison, about the mid 19th century.

Peter – Well, you would have had to be a good shot, because today is a beautiful day, although quite windy.

Jackie – Yes, there must have been some stray bullets floating around!

Peter – Well the wind is getting up a bit.

Jackie – Let's tuck down in front of those rocks there.

(Later)

Peter – Well, a very much needed cup of coffee there. It was pretty windy on top of the tor, but we have got most spectacular views around us.

Jackie – Directly in front of us you will see the forestry block, which is just above Burrator Reservoir – and that's the direction that we will be going – towards the far right hand corner. Whilst we are here, just appreciate all the tors we can see. Just above the forestry block on the right hand side is Sharpitor and to the left of that is Leather Tor. And if you go further round to the left, you are at Down Tor and then the one with a little outcrop on top of the nearest hill on our left is Cramber Tor. Quite a vista isn't it.

Peter – Absolutely.

Jackie – To the right of us and almost behind us is the mast we saw when we were leaving Princetown.

Peter – Now, we are going to meet next at the Stone Rows, grid reference SX 577 717. How far away from here, just to give us some idear?

Jackie – It shouldn't take any more than 10 minutes from here. We'll just carry on down the tor, and there's a fairly well-worn grassy path, and we will

see before too long, a couple of burial cairns and then we'll pick up the stone rows.

Peter – So we're heading towards the centre of the trees?

Jackie – Yes, I think if you use the forestry block as your indicator, we are heading towards the far right hand side, so if you make that your line of sight and head in that direction, we won't go far wrong.

Peter – Okay, well, we're switch off now and we'll see you there.

Track Six – Stone Rows (Grid reference SX 577 717)

Peter – Right, we've arrived at a couple of stone circles, or are these burial mounds?

Jackie – No, these are burial cairns. There are two of them here, and leading away from them towards the forestry block, you can see a double stone row.

Peter – That's quite impressive, isn't it. It's like a corridor.

Jackie – Yes it is. It can vary - a single stone row, to a double and even a triple, and they frequently terminate in a burial cairn. Now, there are many explanations for what the stone rows could be for - Archaeologists from the National Park err on the side that they were a sort of directional route for the community, so it would be a meeting place where they would hold various ceremonial events and there would be burials here. It would be that focal point for them.

Peter – So we're going to head now between these posts, all the way down to the waterfall, is that right?

Jackie – If we follow the line of the double stone rows, down to the river, and then if we find a suitable crossing point. Last time I did this walk, there was a metal sheet which had very kindly been laid across, which made a nice easy fording there, but if not, there are some stepping stones in the water, so just pick your way across.

Once you are on the other side, stay on the track and it will take you up and then down towards Black Tor Falls – not a huge falls, but you'll hear it and you'll know that you are in the right place.

Peter – Well, I can't really see the waterfall, so I'll take your word for it. But if you need the grid reference for Black Tor Fall, it is SX 575 716, so we'll meet there. A good place for lunch?

Jackie – Yes.

Peter – Sitting by a waterfall – what could be more romantic! Okay, let's switch off now and we'll see you by the falls.

Track Seven – Black Tor Falls (Grid reference SX 575 716)

Peter – Well, this is a very beautiful place. We're arriving at the waterfalls – Black Tor Falls. We couldn't see them from the stone rows ..

Jackie – They are like little hidden gems.

Peter – Yes, just like hidden gems and it's only at the last minute that suddenly you come across these very beautiful waterfalls below you.

Jackie – You wouldn't know it was there, you really wouldn't.

Peter – And also you couldn't hear this water for quite a while, so you could have walked past it actually and not noticed it at all. Now, we've got a lot of remnants of some kind of buildings going on here.

Jackie – This is linked with tin mining. On the opposite bank, you will see quite a distinctive structure – the remains of walls and a slab which has been put across an opening. Now this would have been the Blowing House and would have housed the furnace which would have been powered by the water wheel driven by the waterfall right here.

Peter – A beautiful place to work - I can think of worst places to work! It's idyllic.

Jackie - It's a little oasis and a sheltered spot if you needed to take a break.

Peter – Is it time for another break, we only had one a few minutes ago?

Jackie – Oh, why not! (Laughs)

Peter – Let's sit on these rocks down here.

Jackie – Let's do that.

(Later)

Peter – Well, we've had lunch by the waterfall, now behind us, and we're just retracing our steps just a bit to get back onto high ground. This is a lovely path isn't it.

Jackie – We've come out from the waterfall and retraced our steps up to the main path, turn left and head on and we'll head on and eventually see the Aqueduct on our left.

Peter – Now, I can also see someone coming towards us. Looks like it is a friend of yours.

Jackie – Oh yes, it looks like Simon Dell, one of our Guided Walk Leaders.

Simon – Hello there you two.

Peter – Hi, how are you?

Simon – I'm very well thank you. Where are you heading for next?

Jackie – We're going to go and see the Aqueduct and the Devonport Leat, heading towards Stanlake Farm.

Simon – That's the route I've just come up, from Burrator Woods. When you leave here and you are going downstream, you can see from here the Aqueduct down there. But I always think when I am bringing people out on the Moors, when you are at the Aqueduct, looking downstream along the Devonport Leat, it looks like it's going uphill, doesn't it? It's absolutely fantastic.

Jackie – A trick of the eye, isn't it.

Simon – A real optical illusion. I think it is because the River Meavy, which we are beside now, goes downhill quite steeply, but you don't really notice it and that's why the leat looks like it is going uphill. But there is a little feature on the Leat which you have got to have a look at before you get to the other end – the old Indian's head if you know it?

Jackie – I've certainly heard of it, although I've not seen it myself.

Simon – Right, now there is a trick in finding it. Get to the Aqueduct and there's a really sharp bend – the water's come off the aqueduct and round that really sharp left hand bend and you're walking along the leat. Stay on the right hand side. Walk along and you will go past one clapper bridge, keep carrying on and look to the left of the valley – look across the River Meavy – and you will see a wall coming down from the other side. That wall comes down into the valley and it's when you get opposite that wall, stop, look at the leat and then just there and you will see a little tiny (and it's about the size of an old florin – the old two shilling piece, which you're far too young to remember those), but it is a little piece of bone which has been carved by one of the prisoners of war who were in Dartmoor prison 200 years ago. It is in the shape of an Indian's head and it has been pushed into the pointing in the vertical joints between the granite slabs. Look for that wall coming down the valley and that's where you will find it.

Peter – I'd heard about this thing and I thought it was about 6 foot square!

(All laugh)

Simon – It's only about two inches across.

Jackie – Well, that's our challenge for the day to find it.

Simon – It's very near (it depends what level the water is) the level of the water – between the water and the top of the leaf.

Peter – Well thank you very much for that for that little insight. Happy walking and we'll see you again sometime.

Jackie – Enjoy your walk.

Simon – Look out for that optical illusion. Cheerio.

Peter & Jackie – Bye Simon.

Peter – Well he certainly seems to know his stuff, doesn't he?

Jackie – Oh he does.

Peter – Well, let's switch off now and rendezvous at the Aqueduct – the grid reference for you is SX 574 714. And we'll see you over by the Aqueduct.

Track Eight – Aqueduct (Grid reference SX 574 714)

Peter – Well, what have we got here? This is a very peculiar thing isn't it?

Jackie – It is. It's quite strange looking, but impressive nonetheless.

Peter – So, this is the Aqueduct?

Jackie – Yes on our left, it's bringing lots of water right over that hill and down.

Peter – There's a cascading waterfall all the way down from the top.

Jackie – That would have been the water from the Devonport Leat, which is just over the hill, bringing it down here, and I think, that would have served the naval town of Devonport. But now, it ends its days at Burrator Reservoir, which is just beyond the forestry block in front of us.

Peter – And as we stand here approaching it, we can see what Simon was saying about the leat – it looks like it is flowing uphill.

Jackie – That's incredible.

Peter – You have to see this to believe it. This is very fresh water and I should think, extremely cold as well. Ah, yes and there's the River Meavy below us. Look at this water rushing down and then it curves around and carries on along the leat, which even from here, looks like it is going uphill.

Jackie – It still does, doesn't it?

Peter – And we're following that?

Jackie – We will. Let's take ourselves back to the path and carry on on the right hand side of the leat, and let's look out for that Indian's Head that Simon was telling us about!

(Later)

Peter – Now, we are away from the main water. It is flowing really – it's so clear.

Jackie – It's beautifully clear. I'm keeping my eye out for this elusive Indian's Head, but I haven't seen it yet.

Peter – Could that be it?

Jackie – Ah, hang on, now what did he say? Inset, on the opposite side of the bank wasn't it? That could be it.

Peter – It's very strange. It looks like an ear – a small ear!

Jackie – That's right – it's not huge. It looks different from everything else around it. It's creamy coloured and just stands out.

Peter – It's as he described.

Jackie – Oh well, we may have seen it, we may not have!

Peter – We can't miss this now, can we? We're just going to follow the leat all the way up to the forest I suppose?

Jackie – That's right, it will stop at the forest, and to the left of us over on the other side of the leat, will be the remains of Stanlake Farm. There were quite a few farms in the area, but they all got disused and that was because of the start of Burrator Reservoir. It was thought that they may contaminate the water, so the farms abandoned. You can just see a few remains at the end of the leat here on the left.

Peter – And the grid reference for where we are going to meet next at the forest and Stanlake Farm ruins is SX 573 710, I would say. So, let's just switch off now, enjoy your walk along the leat and we'll see you there.

Track Nine – Stanlake Farm ruins (Grid reference SX 573 710)

Peter – Well, that's the end of the leat, as we know it! It appears to be going off into the forest, is that right?

Jackie – Yes, it now goes into Burrator Reservoir.

Peter – Very different trees now, lots of very tall pine trees, clearly planted by mankind. You can go in there, I can see a stile.

Jackie – Oh yes, there are some lovely walks around both the forest and the reservoir.

Peter – And to our left as we are looking at the trees, we can clearly see the remnants of this farm. As you say closed down because they felt that the output of the farms, might somehow or other, affecting or poisoning the reservoir.

Jackie – So that was abandoned in the 20th century.

Peter – It doesn't take long for nature to encroach, does it?

Jackie – No, it doesn't does it.

Peter – The hawthorns have grown up and there is an oak tree there – a few different trees – a holly possibly. Very grown over with grass and moss – quite beautiful though.

Jackie – What we are going to do now is walk to the wall which encloses the forest, turn right and follow it all the way to the end, but instead of turning left and following the wall down the other way, we are going to head up to the road. It is best that we stay on this side of the road along the grassy bank, but keep your eye out for a double car park and we are looking for the second car park, and it will have a bus stop – so that is the next clue!

Peter – Okay, so the car park, grid reference SX 561 707. Right well let's switch off now and we will see you at the car park.

Track Ten – Car Park (Grid reference SX 561 707)

Peter – We are at the car park and bus stop now. Jackie, you have got the map out.

Jackie – I have, because again this vista has just opened up in front of us, where there are countless tors that we can see, so I just want to try and check which ones we are looking at. I think, in the near distance, that's Vixen Tor, there is a little cottage just in front of it, and then we have got – let's just have a look here – Pew Tor. I know that one in the far, far distance – and you need a very clear day to see it – is like a little pointed hill and that one's Brent Tor and it's got Brent Tor Church on top of it.

Peter – That's quite a long way away, isn't it.

Jackie – Yes. I have been told, on good authority, that on a clear day, you can see as far as Bodmin Moor. It's a little bit hazy today, but still you can bag some tors by looking out right to left.

(Noise from paper rustling)

Peter – Jackie, you are fighting with the map in this wind. It has been quite windy today, hasn't it?

Jackie – Yes, and the map – you've always got to open another leaf of it, haven't you!

Peter – (Laughs) That's right. So we're going to be heading westerly down towards the railway line, but on our right we've got a mound of hill, and you can actually see - it looks like it is on this hill, but it is actually on the far distance - that television mast again, which we've seen on most of this walk.

Jackie – It is a little bit hard to distinguish, but there is a reeve going up to Ingra Tor there, and this is part of the Great Western Reeve. A reeve is local word for a pre-historic land boundary, probably laid out around the middle Bronze Age, so about 3,500 years ago, and they do cover quite an extensive area of the moor and just enclose the land. It does suggest that they were quite a highly organised civilisation and had a system of land division.

Peter – Right, enough fighting with the map. Let's put that away and head off towards the railway line. We'll rendezvous at grid reference SX 556 716 and that is pretty much where this grassy path interjects with the old railway line, and we'll meet again then. Phew, let's get out of this wind.

Track Eleven – Railway Line (Grid reference SX 556 716)

Peter – Well, we've reached the railway line now. We could see it as we were coming down that final couple of hundred yards of the path. Curving round - it would have been a magnificent sight to have seen a steam train.

Jackie – Yes, it would.

Peter – You can imagine it, puffing along. We're going to be turning right now on the railway, heading towards Ingra Tor, which is quite obvious in front of us.

Jackie – You can see the very rocky outcrops on top of a big hill. The railway line will lead us straight past it and onwards towards Ingra Tor Quarry.

Peter – Okay, well let's meet there. The grid reference is SX 556 722, so let's enjoy our walk along the railway line.

Jackie – Indeed, we can't go wrong.

Peter – We can't possibly go wrong now!

Track Twelve – Ingra Tor Quarry (Grid reference SX 556 722)

Peter – Now, the wind has got up again hasn't it, as we came round that corner. We've sort of spiralled around the Tor.

Jackie – We are now at the back of Ingra Tor itself and on our right is the entrance to the quarry, which is well worth a detour, because there's still some remnants of the metal cranes in there.

Peter – And on our left, right opposite the entrance to the quarry is fairly clearly what used to be an old railway station, or halt.

Jackie – That's right. This particular platform was abandoned in 1956 when the railway line was closed and it hasn't been used since then.

Peter – Let's go and poke our heads into this quarry, and get out of this wind if nothing else.

(Walks into the quarry)

Peter - Now, this is like something out of a lost world. Bits of stone workings, these may well have held cranes and such like, do you think?

Jackie – Yes, they would have done. These are enormous stones aren't they? They must have been winched somehow and then over to the railway itself, because that is so close.

Peter – Right, back out again and we'll join the railway and carry on our walk. Now, there's someone coming towards us who's geared up for the weather.

Jackie – That looks like one of our Rangers actually. I think it might be Ella, she looks after this area. Hi Ella.

Ella – Hi there.

Peter – Hi, how are you?

Ella – Very well thanks.

Peter – You're clearly a Ranger, it says so on your jacket!

Ella – It's a bit of a giveaway isn't it.

Peter – What are you doing here then?

Ella – Part of our duties is to check all the Rights of Ways, trails, check that all the gates are in good order and perhaps do strimming throughout the summer months and keep them clear and in good order really.

Jackie – Well Ella, I was just admiring the views here. Can you just tell us what we are looking out onto?

Ella – I know, they are fantastic. We are actually looking down the Walkhampton Valley and you will notice that a lot of that is ancient woodland. In fact, at this time of year (throughout April and May), it is just fantastic for bluebells. There are absolute carpets of bluebells and they are actually one of Britain's iconic flowers. Of course, they are a protected species, so you are not allowed to pick them, but you will notice that we have got the real native ones here. You can tell the difference, because they are either blue, or you get the odd white-bell. If you see anything that might be pink, then that's indicating that it is probably a Spanish variety, so it's a bit of an invader that would have spread.

Jackie – I didn't know that.

Peter – You learn something new every day!

Ella – Yes, so we're looking for real native bluebells. Of course, the UK is believed to hold a quarter, to a half of all the bluebell population.

Peter – Really?

Ella – Yes, so it's a really, really important woodland.

Peter – Well, let's start walking a little bit along this railway line. It's in pretty good condition, but Ella, do you have to do a lot of work for maintenance of footpaths generally on Dartmoor?

Ella – Obviously, it depends where the footpath runs. The open moorland is grazed by stock, so the paths are generally quite clear, but when you've got bridlepaths, like that running from Davytown along the Walkham. That's obviously running through a wooded environment, so that would need to be maintained, checking that there aren't any low overhanging branches of trees. And of course, areas grow up with thinner vegetation in the summer months, and they have to be strimmed to keep them clear.

Peter – So you're kind of protecting – well, people walking on the paths, but also, obviously, the nature on which they are walking.

Ella – We are trying to do that as sensitively as possible – where we can, we work outside of the bird nesting season, but ultimately, we do have to keep the Rights of Way clear.

Peter – And I presume there is quite a lot of animal life here too to take care of?

Ella – Well, in many ways it takes care of itself, but to give it a bit of a helping hand, for example, we've had our Action for Wildlife project working in this valley, specifically looking at biodiversity action plan for species such as the

dormice. We've involved the local community quite a lot, looking around the woodland for evidence of dormice, and that's specifically looking for the hazelnuts that have been eaten in a certain fashion. It's been really popular actually, I mean dormice are really cute and furry animals.

Jackie – Oh, they're lovely.

Ella – And so we've had families out, including young children, searching for the nuts to try and determine whether that would have indeed been eaten by a dormouse, as opposed to a squirrel or a woodmouse.

Peter – Well, Ella, thank you very much. You're obviously geared up for all kinds of weather. Today is a beautiful, sunny day, although a little bit windy. Thanks very much for joining us and hopefully we'll see you again some time soon.

Ella – Yep, no problem. Enjoy the rest of your walk.

Jackie & Peter – Thank you. Bye

Peter – Now, we are going to continue along the railway line - we really can't get lost – all the way back to Princetown.

Jackie – That's right.

Peter – But we are going to stop at Yes Tor Bottom, which I can't wait to see what that is!

Jackie – It's intriguingly named, isn't it? To get to Yes Tor Bottom, we'll continue along this track and we'll go under a really substantial stone bridge and there will be a high embankment on either side. Once we get past that, you will see another pathway on your right hand side. Take that one and it will lead you to Yes Tor Bottom and the brook.

Peter – So we'll meet at Yes Tor Bottom, grid reference SX 565 725.

Jackie – That's right.

Peter – Enjoy the walk along the railway line and we'll see you at Yes Tor Bottom.

Track Thirteen – Yes Tor Bottom (Grid reference SX 565 725)

Peter – Well, we're certainly by a babbling brook here.

Jackie – I know, it's quite a sweet little spot here, isn't it? It's certainly worth a little detour from the main track, and this would have been the route the horse drawn carriages would have taken, whereas the steam train couldn't negotiate the turns and that's why that much straighter railway line was laid. Let's stay here for a few minutes, it's really very pleasant and peaceful, and then just follow the track as it circles round and rejoins the main track, then turn right and carry on. It sort of goes then through a narrow cutting and just as you get past that, on the left hand side, is our next stop, which is Yes Tor Farm – a ruined farm. You will actually see a gate.

Peter – Before we set off, you can see another arch for the brook to go underneath - the "newer" (relatively) railway line that went over the top of it. And we are by a small arch here where the brook comes through, and this is where the horse drawn carriages would have gone – presumably carrying granite?

Jackie – Yes, that's what they would have been doing.

Peter – It's a tough life for them I should think. On a day like today, it would have been alright – a horse carrying granite – but I expect they also did it when it was howling with wind and rain, and cold. Okay, so the grid reference for the ruined farm, which is Yes Tor Farm, is SX 564 728, so let's switch off now, go over the brook and we'll see you there.

Track Fourteen – Ruined Farm (Grid references SX 564 728)

Peter – Now we are at the gate, Jackie, that leads in to this farm. We have walked past it and the gate is just beyond us, if we wanted to get back in and see this disused farm.

Jackie – I don't know if you noticed, but there was a little sign on the gate – a little, white round sign, with a matchstick man in brown. Now this denotes CROW Access Land, which is the Countryside and Rights of Way Act that came into being in 2005 and that has enabled more accessibility to parts of the land – that is Mountain, Moor, Heath and Down land. Now, on Dartmoor, for instance, Common Land, where we have been walking, and much of Dartmoor is already accessible, but this CROW Act land has actually enabled even further exploration of other areas. So, if you would like to go in and have a look around the farm land, that's the sign that enables you to do so.

Peter – Well, we're not going to see the farm, nor are we going to continue on the railway line, or the old disused railway line, that goes round this next tor in front of us, which I think is also a quarry, is that right?

Jackie – Yes, that's right. If you did follow it, it would take you to King's Tor Quarry in a big loop, so it would add about another hour onto your journey.

Peter – Another hour? Right, we are going to take the right turn, which is right opposite the gate with the CROW Act symbol on it. We can see the television mast – it's omnipresent on this walk, isn't it! We're going to follow the path up, over the brow of the hill there, and this eventually joins the railway line on the other side at King's Tor Halt, and the grid reference if you'd like it, is SX 565 733. So, let's turn off now, go over the hill and we'll see you at the halt on the other side.

Jackie – Okay.

Track Fifteen – King’s Tor Halt (Grid reference SX 565 733)

Peter – (Puffing) We’ve taken the short cut. A short cut, but a steep one, it has to be said!

Jackie – (Laughs) That’s right – no pain, no gain. We’ve joined the main railway line again now, and just to your left (and maybe to your right), you will see some remnants of the King’s Tor Halt ruins.

Peter – So, let’s just make it clear – we are turning right once we’ve wheezed our way up that short cut hill and we’re pretty much going all the way back into Princetown now. We’re going to stop at the railway cutting en route and have a little chat about Princetown itself. The railway cutting is grid reference SX 571 732. So let’s switch off now, enjoy the walk along the railway line and imagine you are on a beautiful old steam train doing this – a few years ago – and we’ll see you at the railway cutting.

Track Sixteen – Railway Cutting (Grid reference SX 571 732)

Peter – Now, we are in the railway cutting – a little respite from the wind. And what are these on either side?

Jackie – We've got two boundary markers again – you may remember we saw one as we were starting the walk. They are a distinctive granite pillar, with a distinctive top – almost like a pyramid. And they would have been the boundary markers for this area.

Peter – So, as we are heading back to Princetown, Jackie, tell me a little about the town itself. I know that it is one of the highest on the moor.

Jackie – Princetown actually owes its existence to the vision of one man, Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, and he was actually Secretary to the Prince of Wales ...

Peter – Hence the name?

Jackie – Yes, that's right. As an honour, he named it after him. This was in the late 1700s, about 1785. He actually had the vision – he wanted to have a moorland community up here and thought it might be a good idea to have a lot of agricultural use of the area. Sadly, that dream failed, largely due to the harsh environment. But then, he had another cunning plan of revitalising the community, and built a prison to house the French, and then the American, Prisoners of War.

Peter – And that revitalised the town, didn't it?

Jackie – That's right – and there's still a prison now. You can actually go up to the Prison Museum. There's quite a lot going on in Princetown. When you've finished this walk, you might like to go and have a look at the Prison Museum, or visit the brand new attraction, just opposite the High Moorland Visitor Centre – the Duchy Square Centre for Creativity. And that's going to feature the work of local artists and craftspeople and there will be workshops and studios. There's a couple of tearooms, pubs and a fish and chip shop.

Peter – Cor, this wind is making hard work of the final leg of this walk. Let's switch off now.

Jackie – Yes, let's conserve our energy!

Peter – We'll rendezvous back at the Visitor Centre in Princetown. So we'll just follow this back past the Brewery, the Fire Station, turn right and we're right there?

Jackie – That's it, yes.

Peter – Let's see you back there.

Track Seventeen – Information Centre (Grid reference – SX 591 735)

Peter – Well, we've made it back to the car park at the Visitor Centre and I have to say, Jackie, that I am really quite tired.

Jackie – Me too - it was quite a hike in the end, wasn't it.

Peter – It was, well the wind was against us, particularly on that last stretch on the railway line. In fact, most of the walk, we had a lot of wind.

Jackie – That, coupled with the stoney bit underfoot – it made it a bit hard going. But anyway, it was a great walk all in all.

Peter – Some amazing countryside. Dartmoor is such a very special place, isn't it? Well Jackie, thank you very much for your wonderful insight on this walk

Jackie - My pleasure – I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Peter – And thank YOU for joining us on this Dartmoor National Park Authority audio tour. There are others that you can download from the Dartmoor National Park Authority website.

Jackie – Or the Dartmoor.co.uk website. We've got ones for Haytor, Postbridge and this one for Princetown – and there are a couple more planned, so keep an eye out for those.

Peter – Well, hopefully, we will see you on one of those walks. We'll see you there.