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“CHANGEZ DE TRAIN À EXERGILLOD”

Rob Morrey continues his search for quiet places.

Loaned AL unit at Vers-l' Eglise en-route to Les Diablerets passes “The Bear”

ALL PHOTOS: Rob Morrey

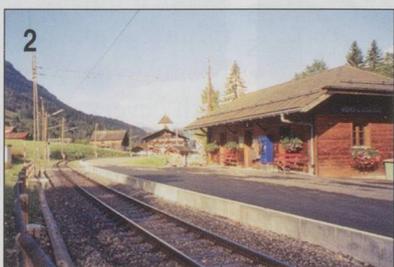
I admit to having been captivated by the delightful picture of the tiny hamlet of Vers-l'Eglise that was on the October page of the 2010 SRS calendar. So whilst on holiday in Vevey early last September I resolved to go and see it for myself, as I seek out Switzerland's quiet places courtesy of my Swiss Pass.

Catching the 07.59 InterRegio from Vevey I arrived at Aigle with the scheduled 5-minute connection into the 08.20 to Les Diablerets and my train was waiting in the bay – but to my astonishment it was a brown-and-cream Aigle-Leysin unit. Despite its identity crisis we left promptly and the Conductor arrived saying “Changez de train à Exergillod”. The questions “Where?” and “Why?” sprang to mind. I shortly discovered the “where”, but it was a lot later before I found out the “why”. At 08.41 we reached the loop at the isolated halt of Exergillod and half-a-dozen souls got off as instructed, to find a place of a basic nature – not even a platform worthy of the name. It was cool and gloomy as the morning sun had not reached that side of the valley. The trees all around did not help – but then it is a branch line!! A



minute or so later the 08.11 ex-Les Diablerets (a real blue and white ASD unit) arrived and passengers were swiftly swapped as the trains waited side by side – though a large group heading to Aigle with mountains of luggage did not find the exchange easy. It was probably a good thing that the Swiss version of our HSE was not observing the activity at Exergillod that morning!

The AL unit then retreated down the valley to its brothers in Aigle, whilst we continued our journey onward and upwards in the ASD train. I pressed the button to indicate that I wanted the request stop at Vers-l'Eglise and the train



duly stopped to unload me. The single platform halt is unstaffed but it has a delightful chalet building that contains immaculate toilets (I mention this in passing). I then walked the few yards to the picturesque village, a haven of peace. The large inn – *The Bear* dating to 1833 – overlooks the line and is next to the medieval Church. Both buildings are fascinating whilst behind the Church is an immaculate graveyard where I lingered a while. I found the tiny area devoted to children's graves very moving.

The ASD set returned to Aigle at 09.51 and silence returned to the village. Nothing moved. Even a cat just lay on a table outside the hostelry enjoying the lovely sunshine – a good place to ‘paws’, obviously. My only activity was to photograph the 10.40 to Les Diablerets which comprised “my” Aigle-Leysin unit. Just eight minutes later it re-appeared, bound for Aigle. I bravely put my hand out and it stopped just for me, bless it. Once on board I was soon being transported back to “civilisation” but happy with my memories of this charming backwater. I even took more than a little notice when we ambled back, this time without stopping, through Exergillod.

I later learned that just a few days prior to my trip up this delightful railway backwater, it had unfortunately been thrust into the Swiss media spotlight following a collision between two trains near Plambuit (see SE 104). The AL unit had been pressed into service to cover for the damaged ASD stock – though why we had to change at Exergillod is still a mystery. +

Editor's note: Rob Morrey explored his A to Z of quiet Switzerland in the December 2008 Swiss Express.

1. ASD-AL Swapmeet at Exergillod. 2. Vers-l' Eglise station. 3. The Bear. 4. Une Vue Vers i' eglise.

