



My Mum loved them

By Robert Josey

Well, I went to Peter Symonds School and when I was eleven or twelve I always used to stop on Andover Road bridge to watch the quarter to nine to Waterloo. And we used to yell, "Scrap it" at it because we'd seen it so many times. Ironic isn't today where we're saying, "Preserve them" and we were yelling "Scrap 'em" because we'd seen them so many times. We used to see the quarter to nine, but purely on – Winchester today is totally different to Winchester City as it was then because the goods platform, which is under now a rather nasty concrete metal car park, which was I think put down in the war to load tanks and things. The signal box, disused today, the new signal box, blocks the view up towards Waterloo. But in my day, it was a small signal box on the London end of the down platform.

So, standing on the goods platform you had a complete unrestricted view of all the proceedings, which was great. And you could see the expresses come through under the Andover Road bridge, or even stop. Coming up from the south you were rather blocked that way by the station buildings but it was good, you could see through and watch the shunting in the goods sidings. There was a resident shunter and a couple of goods trains would call and swap over trucks and things, there was always something going on. And again, I harp on about this but as a boy there was little else, we didn't have computers. We had the great outdoors and catching the minnows on the Water Meadows at Winchester or we were train spotting. I mean, all the boys were there. And of course, we were out of the way and we didn't meddle.

When it rained, if we were very fortunate there was a box van standing in one of the sidings there, against the goods platform, and we would get in there out of the wet. It always seemed that the door would easily open. And the station crew – I mean you used to get a lot of station staff in those days, you had shunters and people like that – they never minded 'cause we were not vandalising anything, we were just there, enjoying watching the trains go by.

I've often wondered to myself how I got interested in trains, besides the obvious of following other boys. But I didn't realise until I was, oh gosh, well it was the end of steam – that it was my mother that was fascinated by trains. She always said when I was very small and couldn't go out on my own, she would take me to Winchester Station. She always said that she knitted yards of knitting while she was on it. But I didn't really realise, she always liked watching the trains go by. And it wasn't until David Shepherd's 9F and – it was the end of steam – and it was running a special from Eastleigh, Chandler's Ford, Romsey. And I said, "Oh I'll go and see the steam loco." And she was there and, wow, she was hanging onto the fence and as 92203 I think it was, anyway the 9F, went through and of course you get that evocative smell of hot oil and what have you, and she was ready, she talked about nothing else. I thought, "That's how I'm involved", you know, she was quite happy to take me to the station.