



## My Perfect Holiday

By Philip Ralls

I have had a passion for steam locomotives for as long as I can remember. I think I caught the bug from my Father. Although I was born on the part of the old Great Eastern that was later to become part of London Transport's Central Line I can remember steam hauled freight and occasional passenger excursions travelling on the line during the late 50s and early 60s.

The highlight of each year was a fortnight's holiday at my Grandma's home at Fareham in Hampshire where from the garden you could see the locos on the bridge over the A27 at Fareham Railway station.

We travelled down by train of course and to me it was something I always looked forward to particularly if we were hauled from Waterloo by one of my favourite Merchant Navy class or one of the light Pacific's. I'm almost ashamed to admit to being disappointed if we had a Lord Nelson or King Arthur on the front. My Dad always used to take us to see what loco we had and we were brought up to thank the footplate crew when we got off the train on arrival at our destination.

Dad used to like using the Meon Valley line and whilst I'm glad to say I've travelled on it, I didn't like the fact that we had to travel to Alton on a Southern electric. I much preferred it when I used to persuade him to go via Eastleigh or better still via Southampton Central where you had a much better chance of a Bulleid.

A Holiday Runabout Ticket and the bonus of being able to see and hear the trains from the house made for the perfect holiday and the memories have stayed with me and I am still an avid lover of all things steam particularly Bulleid Pacific's and feel very fortunate that I'm still able to travel behind them both on the main line and on heritage railways.

I'm so pleased that my Dad passed the 'bug' on to me. I think my eldest son has caught it too!