



Working with Watercress

By David Hole

I have been a farmer all my life. The land I worked went sort of across the Alresford line. The goods train went past at 11 O'clock, that was how we knew the time. The goods train was so much different from the normal carriage lot so we could pick that out. I can remember us watching for the train. There weren't so many watches then, you may have had an old pocket watch between 10 of you. So, you watched for the goods train.

The farm was originally a sheep farm but it went to arable farming after the shepherd past away. They had a good dairy short horn herd at that stage and a side line of watercress. The watercress must have started way back when the Mills first moved here in 1900. In my time watercress was harvested in any month with an 'r' in it – January, February, March, April, September, October, November and December. So, the growing season is May, June, July and August. So, they used to send it all through from September through to April. It was quite a big labour force the watercress, it took quite a few people and the farms had 36 people on the farm.

The train took off because it was so quick to get it from Alresford up to London. It used to go to Birmingham, and Manchester and all over the place from here. I used to take the watercress sometimes. I say we started off with a tractor and trailer and then we had a Land Rover. There was a goods van and possibly there may have been a little trolley on the platform for a small amount to go on there. I think when this one stopped we had to take it to Winchester to put it on the train, not for long though as road transport was coming in by then.