

Hopping in the early 20th century (1)



Hop-pickers at Bough Beech, c.1900.
Photographer: T.A. Flemons. Image: P2003.772

Left: Pickers of all ages working in a hop garden at Bough Beech. Some very stylish ladies around the hop bin, whilst on the left the poke is being held open and filled. The lady marked in red, Mrs Sloan, and the gentleman in the suit are recording the amount picked.

During the 1800s Kent was responsible for around 60% of the UK's total production of hops, peaking in the 1880s when Kent had over 46,000 acres down to hops. By 1914 this had declined to about 22,000 acres. Today about half of British hop production is in the West Midlands and half in the South East, between them growing 31 varieties of hops.



Seal family from Edenbridge in a hop garden, probably at New House Farm, Hever, c.1903. Image: P2002.279



Hop-pickers and tally man in a hop garden, early 20th century. Image: P2018.3449



"Pay Your Footing"
Image: RC023

'Pay your footing'

In Victorian and Edwardian times, it was not uncommon for members of the Gentry to travel to the countryside to visit the hop fields.

The hard-working hop-pickers would use this opportunity to supplement their low income and demand shoe-money or foot-money from any visitors for the privilege of having their shoes wiped with a branch or bundle of hops, and to watch this traditional craft.



Young couple, Sidney Huntley and May Aylward, canoodling in the hop garden at Days Farm, Chiddingstone, c.1916. Image: P2003.739



Small group hop-picking, including Albert Fletcher and his mother, c.1925. Image: P2018.3347