

Hopping in the early 20th century (2)



The Inn at Four Elms with a group of hop-pickers, c.1900-1910.

Image: P2015.2432

Whole families would go hop-picking. Above: A group waiting at the Inn in Four Elms to be picked up, by a Hollands' lorry from Crockham Hill, or a Hodge lorry and taken to pick at Mr Turk's Roodlands Farm or Furnace House Farm.



The Jenner family and friends hop-picking, with the measurer on the right and a man holding the poke for the hops to be tipped into, c.1900.

Image: P2016.2918



Tallyman and binmen with their pole-pullers poles, 1908.

Image: P2002.430

Hop Dog or Pole-Pullers Pole

A 'hop dog' was an implement used when hops were grown up poles. A hook was fitted about 18 inches from the top of a long stave and used to strike the top of the hop pole and pull it down. The implements pictured above are 'pole-pullers poles' which are used to cut the bines or string at the top where hops are grown up strings or otherwise where the hops are entangled at the top.

The Tallyman

A Tallyman kept a numerical record of the amount of hops picked using tally sticks.

Tally sticks were made of wood and were about nine inches long and one inch wide, sawn down the centre to make one piece longer than the other, with a thick piece at the top. This had a hole bored through it, to enable the Tallyman to carry them on a cord hung over his shoulder, in order that he might have both hands free to mark the tallies. Both pieces were numbered for identification, usually with ink, the picker kept the shorter piece. After the hops had been measured, both pieces of wood were fitted together, and notches cut across them with a knife or triangle file. A notch usually denoted five bushels. The odd bushels, if any, were marked on a different part of the stick. Tally sticks were later replaced by hop tokens.

Measuring the Hops

The Measurer was in charge of the hop garden. When the bin was full, the hops would be measured using a bushel basket, then transferred into the poke. A Bushel is a unit of capacity in the British Imperial system of measurement which since 1824 has been defined as 2,219.36 cubic inches (36,375.31 cubic cm) for dry goods. The measurer would be on the lookout for too many leaves or any string amongst the hops, which would identify a 'dirty bin' and may attract a forfeit.



The Tallyman, early 20th century.

Image: RC024