

Hopping in Chiddingstone



Charles and Dolly Lee in the hop garden at Chiddingstone, c.1920. Image: P2002.491

Jean Bennett and her sister, Joan Wells, of Four Elms remember...

“Mother (Dolly) and me (Jean) and Joan went hopping for Mr Hale at Somerden Farm [Chiddingstone], in the hop gardens beside the road from Chequers (Bough Beech) to Chiddingstone Mill.

We walked from Four Elms, taking younger brother in a wooden cart made by father. The school holiday was spent this way, as the holidays were in September.

We remember hurrying along the road to collect the fallen pears from the tree near Roodlands Lane, and apples on the road near How Green Lane. ...

We always picked unless the rain was heavy. If wet, mother wore a sack hood over her head and shoulders.” 1930s-early ‘40s. EVM Archives



Family of hop-pickers picnicking at Brownings Farm, c.1959.

Image: P2003.1040



Cyril Ridley and his grandmother Winifred Naylor, hop-picking at Chiddingstone, 1953. Image: P2008.1469

“... one year in late September it was so cold there was ice on the bines and bonfires were lit to keep the pickers warm.”

As remembered by Jean Bennett and Joan Wells in 1998.

It was mainly locals who picked the hops at farms in Chiddingstone and other hop gardens close to Edenbridge. The pickers were collected by local hauliers in lorries used to transport all manner of things at other times and were dropped off at the various hop gardens. They took their lunch with them, a favourite seems to have been bread pudding.



Family picnicking in the hop garden at Brownings Farm, c.1959.

Image: P2003.1041



Laurie Bear hop-picking at Brownings Farm, with Mark and Jane Taylor, 1959.

Image: P2003.1042