

# Edenbridge Hop-Pickers



Edenbridge hop-pickers mainly worked in the fields around Hever Road and Leydens Lane, but also went to pick at Chiddingstone as the season moved on.

Alan Mills remembers...

*"We were picked up on the main road opposite the Star Inn in Tom Smith's lorry. The lorry had a canvas covered back and there were seats around the edge inside, no seatbelts in those days, so we were thrown about a bit. We were in the second group to be picked up, as the first pick up point was in The Square. W.G. Banks' lorry would do the pick-ups from north of the town and Marlpit Hill."* 1950s



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

Alan Mills remembers... *"Once the Delaware Hop Garden was exhausted, we would move on the next day to Chantlers Hop Garden at Chiddingstone. It was all locals picking the hops, I don't remember any Londoners or Gypsies as seems to have been the case over towards Paddock Wood. The weather wasn't always good, later in the season we would be picking in the early frost and I remember mother wearing fingerless gloves or mittens. Sometimes we'd be sheltering out of the rain under the oasts at Chiddingstone waiting for the lorry to pick us back up. The best thing was the lorry stopping at the shop in the village on our way home - my favourite sweet was the nougat."* 1950s



Edenbridge resident James Mitchell (left) as a youngster hop-picking with his family, 1955-6. Image: P2019.3627\_1



Tom Smith's removal lorry which carried hop-pickers, c.1950. Image: P2002.156



W.G. Banks Removal Lorry, Bough Beech, c.1931. Image: P2002.314

Ford tilted lorry normally used for removals also transported local townsfolk to the hop gardens, and later carried hops from local farms to the London Hop Market.

Margery Braiden remembers...

*They were picked up by lorry (George Hodge - Edenbridge haulier) just before 7am each morning with all their gear and boxes of food - hopping made them all hungry. A staple food was bread pudding, it seemed to be improved by the flavour of hops.*