

Brian Noakes

Memories of hop picking at Park Farm, Bodiam

My family came to Bodiam each year from about 1953 to 1960. I came with my Mother, 'Peg', and my sisters Christine and Janet to pick hops for Mr John Levett at Park Farm, Junction Road, Bodiam (not part of Guinness Hop Farms).

We came from Southend-on-Sea, not London as most of the other 'Hoppers' did.

I remember great times (especially in the Oast House) with the other kids, including the Farmer's two daughters (boarding school girls who seemed very 'posh' to us).

Other names from memory are June Palmer and Eileen -----.

George the Cowman let us help ?? with the milking. He lived in one of the Cottages on the other side of Junction Road opposite Park Farm entrance.

Our Hopper's Hut was in the field to the west of the main Hut site (separated by a small wood) and comprised of one corrugated iron row of about six units, also an open fronted fire shed, and a movable "loo" with sacking door (in the wood !!).

We were collected from 'Junction Halt' by various meansTractor & trailer, Station Wagon and once with the Governess Cart (what a treat !!)

Our beds consisted of straw bales, topped with hay and Hop filled pillow cases.

'Health & Safety' would have a fit nowadays ... using 'eight hour' candles and paraffin lamps. (resting on the wooden framework).

We kids, left the Hop gardens a bit ahead of Mum, in order to get the fire started and collect water (from a tap on the Farm Building wall)

Most Sundays we would walk to Bodiam Castle for a picnic and on the way back pick apples and berries for Mum to cook a pie, in the tin oven over the fire embers (delicious wood smoke !!)

'Google maps' show that the old farm buildings are as I remember them (the Oast excepted !!) It would be great to look around again, especially where our Hut was sited ('Wickham Brook' field in the 'Bodiam Castle Estates' 1917 sales Catalogue)

These are the photos I can find of our time at Park Farm.



Brian, Robert and Unknown



Janet and Christine



Mum and Christine



Mum and Christine (left hand bin) 1960



Mum, Janet, Christine and Brian



Unknown, Christine, Robert, Brian, Unknown and Janet