

WARTIME EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

There had always been young girls and women working in the fields, orchards (and greenhouses in Crockenhill). Many women worked long hours, with less pay than men, but doing quite heavy, tedious work. In wartime their labour was vital to fill the gaps left by men joining the Armed Forces.



Women grape pickers with head covers to protect grape bloom from their hair. The bunches of grapes are overhead above the drapery. The women watered, cared for and picked the grapes in John Wood's Chalk greenhouse, Crockenhill, (now the site of Bransell Close). (l>r) Mrs Randall, ?, Harriet Rogers, ?, Olive Smith

WARTIME EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

From 1916 - Girls over 13 could get licences during the busy farming months to stay home to look after the household, while their mothers went to work

Kent Education Committee encouraged more day nurseries for younger children to be looked after, while mothers worked on the farms.

But in this area, informal arrangements between neighbours were more common, with older women often taking in several children.

Farmers' wives, like Elsie Clements, who had very young children, and who would not normally do farm work, helped in an emergency.

Elsie Clements' diary shows that when her husband was short of pickers
21 June 1915 - She went strawberry picking
25 June 1917- Again short of pickers, Elsie worked until 7 pm
13 July 1917 - So short of pickers Elsie took dinner and tea to all, and stayed to help, while Grace went to fetch Agnes and Blanche to help.

27 March 1917 - Elsie records a more unusual sight.
Had a peep at Mrs Booker leading Harold Lee's horse at plough over the road.

WOMEN WORKING THE LAND



A winter tea break during hoeing, 1912, Crockenhill. 3 standing unknown, front l > r, Mrs Cornwall, Mrs Owen, Mrs Ransome, Mrs Groombridge, Charlotte Spice, ?, Mrs Hills, Mrs Attaway (standing), Janie Greggs

WOMEN WORKING THE LAND



Picking up potatoes on Clayhills (now Newports, Crockenhill), in the 1920s

LOCAL FAMILIES PICKING FRUIT AND HOPS

- Traditionally, many women and their children helped on the farms in the peak times.
- All local Schools planned their holidays round the picking season.
- In June 1916 school heads met to co-ordinate the holidays as follows:-

Christmas	6 days
Easter	7 days
Whitsun	2 days
Fruit/hop picking	35 days
(School reconvening early in October)	

The Packman family posing during fruit picking in the early 1900s. Even toddlers were expected to join in with smaller baskets





Fruit pickers'
tokens -

2 for John Wood
1½d & 1s:

W & E Vinson
(Petham Court)
1s:

2 for W.T.E. =
William Everest
of Crockenhill
4d & 1s:

2 for Thomas
Wood
(Sevenoaks =
Greatness Farm
& of Pedham
Place):
4d & 1s

VISITING FAMILIES PICKING FRUIT AND HOPS

Local pickers were boosted by families coming from London and elsewhere in Kent and these were accommodated in huts provided by the farmers.



Crowd of pickers outside the huts in Stones Cross Road, postcard from Jack to an aunt in Dorking, postmarked 1908

VISITING FAMILIES PICKING FRUIT AND HOPS

During the War, the Medical Officer of Health of Dartford Rural District Council checked the condition of the pickers' huts, some then being occupied all year round because of housing shortage, and the need for more labour on the farms. With flimsy construction, no insulation, running water or electricity and an area of about 10 foot x 10 foot the huts must have made for miserable winter living.

SURVEY OF HUTS IN DARTFORD DISTRICT, 1915

- Messrs G. Miller & Sons, GREAT WESTED FARM - 29 huts
- John Wood, CHURCH ROAD, CROCKENHILL – 60 huts
- Sydney Lee, CROCKENHILL – 12 huts
- John Wood, BUTTON STREET, FARNINGHAM – 16 huts
- Mr Rogers, MAPLESCOMBE, FARNINGHAM – 8 huts

(Other huts were at:

Longfield Hill – 10 huts

St. Margaret's huts, Darenth – 30 huts

Westwood huts – 23 huts

Ash – 6 huts

Stone Cross, Greenhithe – no number given

Stonehill, Wilmington – no number given)

VISITING FAMILIES PICKING FRUIT AND HOPS



John Wood's huts at Church Road. The wash house, with chimney, had copper for washing clothes. Open fronted structures were cook huts, accommodation in long line of huts, just prior to 1st World War

VISITING FAMILIES PICKING FRUIT AND HOPS

1915: Mr A. Miller's huts at Wested needed a cookhouse and adequate privies, and a new tank to be filled regularly with water.

Mr John Wood was prosecuted for not providing decent accommodation.

Many huts were still occupied at the end of November, and farmers were given a month's extension in their use

Still being lived in were:-
Thomas Wood huts at **Button Street & Pedham Place**
Caleb and Sydney Lee huts at **Hulberry & Crockenhill**
W. Roger's huts at **Maplescombe & Horton Kirby**

1916 July: Huts had been cleansed & whitewashed in July ready for use
Mr Miller's huts - some insanitary
Mr John Wood's huts not enough space in front of huts

1917 January: Some huts still occupied

Mr Roger's at **Maplescombe** one hut

Mr Sydney Lee at **Crockenhill** 4 huts, very clean, occupied by elderly people

Mr Miller at **Great Wested**, 3 clean huts occupied by families, dirty outside

Mr Thomas Wood at **Wested**, 2 huts occupied by elderly couples

Mr John Wood at **Crockenhill**, 2 clean huts, one with middle-aged couple, the other with 15 year-old girl who works on the farm