

## Hopgrowing, Maltings & Brewing

These were of great importance to Farnham and as such of its wealth. Hops were believed to have been introduced to Farnham in the late sixteenth century and between the mid nineteenth and the mid twentieth century the town had more Hostelryes per head than any other in the country. Today we still have the 'Hop Blossom' Pub in Long Garden Walk and many will remember 'The Hop Bag' Pub (where an earlier Pub on this site was called 'The Pocket of Hops') in Downing Street facing the William Cobbett.

In 1839 there were 70 Hop Planters listed Pigot and Co.'s Directory and a "considerable manufacture of hop bagging, canvass etc." Basket Makers were kept busy as were looms weaving new 'Hop Pockets' which would wrap the Hops for Market. Charcoal Burners were also a feature in surrounding coppices and woodlands as Charcoal was the favoured fuel for drying the Hops. Thomas Matthews & Co. who are recorded as having won Medals for their Beers in London in 1890, operated from the Lion & Lamb Brewery (the name, also of a Coaching Inn, lives on, along with the lovely wooden Sculpture by Edwin Russell in 1986 following the redevelopment of the area).

Farnham Hops were considered to very superior in quality and as such were once worth "Tuppence a Bushel" more than others. Two good varieties were 'Goldings' (I believe that there are still people in Farnham with this Surname) and 'Fuggles' which are even now grown locally on the Hampton Estate and used in brewing at the Hog's Back Brewery. Farnham's fair and delicately flavoured Hops were much favoured by folk in the Westcountry.

In days gone by Hops were taken by horse and waggon into Hampshire to be sold at the Weyhill Fair.

James Stevens who was born in 1773 started Farnham's first Bank but linked to a London Bank in 1806. This arose from the need to keep his 'Hop Monies' paid to him at Weyhill, safe and to avoid the habitual, often violent 'accostings' when riding home from the Fair. (To learn more see 1970 Farnham Museum Society Newsletter Vol. 2 Research -Rebellion, Disorder -21st century link to Banking crisis - "Some Memories" contributed by Christine Stevens.)

The Families of Stevens and Knight (John Henry Knight the Inventor is of this family) owned, between them, half of the most important Houses and good Hop Ground in Farnham. The Farnham Maltings had been a Tannery in the 1700s but it is thought that Brewing began there when John Barrett bought the premises in 1845. He took advantage of the fact that the Army were in Aldershot in 1850 and expanded by building along the riverfront. Later the business passed to the Sampson Family whose Sign may still be seen on the end of his cottage at 18 Bridge Square. Just near here is a Sarsen Stone which is of very hard sandstone and used by ancient man to mark river crossing places. The River Wey provided a convenient supply of water and it is interesting to reflect that the name 'Farnham' means roughly 'the place where the reeds grow'.

Apart from the Stevens & Knight families other notables of more recent memory were those of Bide, Caesar, Parratt and Tice. Alan Tice who will be remembered by some had the wooden bridge over the Wey at the Maltings dedicated to him after his death - 'Alan Perrett Tice - Hopgrower'. (He used to ride his pony, Joey from Badshot Lea where his Father had Hopland to the Farnham Grammar School through the town as the pony refused to go along Darvills Lane, rather eerie even now, past Snailslynch. He carried a bag on his back with feed for Joey and his Homework. In theory the pony was stabled in an old shed at the School but was frequently seen to be grazing the Cricket Pitch.)

Farnham was said to have gone 'Hopping Mad' in the picking season when all and sundry descended on the town. Many local traditions such as the 'Pole Pullers Procession' are long

forgotten but one important Feast was 'Hop Sunday' which was successfully discouraged in 1829. Rev. Charles Hume, a one time Curate of Farnham has recorded his impressions of the Festival:

*"It was the mid Sunday of the Hop-picking Season, when the town of Farnham was handed over to the dominion of Hop-pickers. Booths for the sale of vast quantities of fruit, stalls piled high with cakes of every description, and presenting mountains of gilded gingerbread were erected early on Sunday morning, as close as they could stand, along both sides of the street, leaving only room for a carriage or the old road waggon of the period with its eight horses and its tinkling bells to pass between them. The Hop Sunday was a sort of Carnival for the neighbourhood for miles around. The countryfolk in gigs or carts, or on foot, flocked into the town, while in Farnham itself there were thousands of hop-pickers congregated from far and near. The streets were thronged with the idle and the profane; and it no uncommon thing to see people as early as nine o'clock on the Sunday morning drunk in the booths, or staggering on the crowded pathway."*

The new Bishop was very dissatisfied with this state of affairs and strove to bring it to an end. It is recorded that Farnham people often burned effigies of those unpopular with them. One such, of Bishop Sumner took place in 1830 shortly after angry crowds had threatened him in Farnham Castle during the Agricultural Riots.

The Hop-picking Season, commonly known as 'Hopping' lasted for about three weeks. I read with astonishment that at such times "the Hop-grounds of Farnham alone would furnish employment to upwards six thousand men, women and children". These all had to be accommodated and in May 1870 'Hoppers' (perhaps aptly named) Barracks were approved in Red Lion Lane. But in September 1872 Mr. Thomas Wonnacott, a West Street Architect, who felt rather strongly about all things of a sleazy nature drew attention to 'the powers that be' and to the general public of the herding together of old and young, married and single, male and female and to the ensuing indecency and immorality. In October Mr. Wonnacott explained the principles of the Earth Closet and advocated its use as an experiment in a 'poor part' but it was not taken up.

Men, often on stilts were needed to erect the poles from which strings were tied along which the Hops were trained. It is noted that as late as 1953 a skilled Hop Stringer, Mr. Smith would string an acre and a half a day in Mr. Tice's Hop Gardens on Guildford Road. Ten miles of imported Coir string were required to string an acre of Hops. Legions of Pickers were needed at the time of harvesting - usually in September. Even children played their part with small children picking up fallen flower bracts in the fields.

It was important for the Pickers to have a good 'Tallyman' - one who was not going to short change them by under-weighting or rejecting the Hops for no good reason. They were also dependent on a Pole Puller, who cut the Hops from the pole upon which they had grown, to keep their baskets plentifully supplied. The Pole Puller, in turn could not be seen to show favouritism - sometimes difficult because some of the 'Hop Poles' would yield better than others and he would not wish necessarily to carry them too far.

There is in Farnham Library (Ref.'Surrey Investigations- Farnham - Palmer / LOC 942-2 FAR) first hand accounts of Hop Picking including one from Barbara Splatt who was taken to the Hop Fields as a Baby and how she went onto to pick Hops every year until 1940. Her Mother aimed at 50 Bushels a day with her Daughter's help. Friends who wished to pick together 'signed on' together. The Pickers were paid two days after the last day when people usually turned up in their 'Sunday Best' - just to prove that they had better than the tatty clothes that they went picking in. Barbara's Mother used to go straight down into Farnham and order - and pay for - her Winter Coal.

Also George Sturt, writing as George Bourne, devotes the last two Chapters of 'The Bettesworth Book' to Hops and Hop Picking.

*Confirm 'Posting Accepted' 28th Feb. '4.35' pm*

*NB - The last time I looked on the Website this piece (Which I think then called "Hops, Brewing & Hosteleries") still does not appear. Sometime ago when I tried to put it in again it said: "You have already said that!"*

*I have recently emailed Joe Michel to this effect.*

*Other things which I have written about which Stephanie may have seen on the Blog are:*

*Harold Falkner (Architect and rebel)*

*John Henry Knight Inventor*

*Mike Hawthorn - World Motor Racing Driver*

*The Tudor Pin Saga - WBC v Metal Detectorist 9in Farnham Park)*

*Inc. Other snippets*