

Spotlight

Issue 31

This issue's keyword is 'Harvest'

Autumn 2011

*Now harvest's done and ended, the corn secure from harm,
All for to go to market, boys, we must thresh in the barn.
Here's a health to all you farmers, likewise to all you men,
I wish you health and happiness till harvest comes again.*

From a traditional song, 'The Reaphook and Sickle'



This issue we celebrate the season of harvest with a selection of harvesting images from The Francis Frith Collection

Hawes, Haymaking 1924 75754t

Haymaking old-style could take three or four days, and fields around every village were busy with workers labouring with scythe, rake and pitchfork. New inventions for agricultural machinery, such as the horse-drawn mower and hay-rake, hastened the process, but robbed haymaking of much of its romance and sense of community.



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Spotlight on 'Harvest'

Frith photographs record all aspects of British life from the mid 19th century to Post War Britain. Thousands of Frith images are searchable by keywords, and an interesting and descriptive text can be supplied for many of the images if required, providing additional information for picture researchers and editors. Some of our images are also available in hand-coloured versions.





Goudhurst, Hop Pickers 1904 52569p

A major part of Kent's economy in the past was the growing of hops, used for flavouring and preserving beer. Hops produce long stems each year, called 'bines', which appear in May and are trained up a trellis-work of poles and wires, to an overhead gantry of wire. In early September the hops are ready for picking. Harvesting the hops is now done by machines, but formerly, the cones were hand-picked by seasonal labourers, either local families or poor people from London taking an annual working holiday.

This classic farming scene depicts an age now long gone. Sheaves of wheat are heaped in wind-blown stooks, and a white-bearded old farmer, resplendent in smock and battered hat, poses with his granddaughter.



Helped by improved fertilisers, increased yields made farming on the Sussex Downs more profitable by the end of the Victorian period; however, arable farming on the chalky downland soils remained difficult. This fascinating photograph shows a rare sight, that of oxen being used to help with the harvest.

During August the wheat, barley and oats are cut and gathered. In 1899 the writer and farmer Rider Haggard reported that he had set his new mechanical reaper to work on a field of oats. 'It is a beautiful thing to see, for it cuts wonderfully clean ...'



Look out for our quarterly Spotlight newsletter.

Each issue Spotlight showcases selected vintage Frith images based on a particular keyword.

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