

Garden Labourers at Broadlands 1800

Amongst some fascinating papers about the management of the gardens at Broadlands, there is one that lists the garden staff in 1800. (Ref: BR103/18/9) It was prepared by head gardener Mr Charles Knight. He first listed seven married men who were John Handcock (sic), Richard Webb, William Simes, Thomas May, William Hack, Abraham Newman and John Bayton. By the side of some of their names he added comments about their families. William Simes was said to have a sickly wife. William Hack had five children ranging in age from 11 years down to 1¼. John Bayton had a six-year old daughter and a wife 'nearly lyeing in'.

In addition, a garden woman, one Mary Webb was employed and a boy, William Woodman. The list finishes with a description of Ezekial or Emos Hains who 'although he is not here at present, is expected soon, and the oldest labourer except one, and has one girl 6, one boy 4, and one girl 1½ years'.

There is no indication of why the list was prepared or to whom it was directed. In an undated memorandum, also drawn up by Knight, (BR103/18/10) he set out how many men would be needed for 'Broadlands Gardens to be kept in the same order as it now stands'. He considered that ten men and one woman would be necessary, the expense of which would be £5 8s 6d per week or £282 2 0d per year. He then tabulated how he would deploy his labour force, thus:

Pleasure Garden including water	
2 men constant and one woman per week	£1 4s 6d
6 men ¼ of a day and one man ½ a day to mow and clean grass, gravel etc, making that to average as 2 men per week	£1
Making it as 5 men and one woman which expense will be per week	£2 14.6d
Kitchen Garden	
One man constant including Sundays	14s
5 men ¾ of a day and one ¼ of a day on making is as 4 men per week	£2 0 0

Making the whole as 5 men per week	£2 14s
Totle (sic) per week	£5 8s 6d
Or per year	£282 2s 0d

I don't quite follow his totals in the first table, but that is how I copied them down.

Knight considered that this sum would 'keep the Gardens in the same order, as they now are, or any other state as might be chosen, as a certain sum per year; to pay all labour, repaires, and other expenses as might attend the same, disposing of whatsoever produce was not wanted in the family'. He added that since there was no season fixed for the family 'being at Broadlands, it would be impossible to say what terms would be advantageous to both parties'. The implications of this are that the garden had to be in a constant state of readiness.

Next time you are watching the Victorian Gardener on TV, just bear in mind our local equivalent at Broadlands.

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