

Kendal Oral History Group Interview R0069

Male born 1903

Interviewed December 1977

Summary Sheet R0069

P.1 Born Levens Hall, 1903. Father foreman and then head gardener from 1891-1919. Ten staff in gardens. Hours worked.  
Trenching the garden.  
Frame garden, glasshouses and greenhouses heated from boiler house.

P.2 Vinery, melon house.  
Open to the public, Thursday afternoons. Mr Nelson, Arnside, came in horse-drawn charabanc.  
In winter Park cleared of leaves and sticks.  
Five staff went to World War I. Two women, three Land Army girls and Mr Penny looked after gardens.

P.3 Rearing pheasants. Two gamekeepers. Beating. Lunch in gamekeeper's cottage. Names of staff.  
Buildings near the bridge.  
The "Welcome": dances, bible class and Conservative meetings.  
Road altered in 1928.  
Captain Bagot, MP for South Westmorland.

P.4 Grandfather made choir stalls and Lady Bagot founded boys' choir at Levens in 1912.  
Special hymn for funeral of Sir Jocelyn Bagot, 1913.  
Levens Institute sold to the village in 1903; Trustees; John Banks, Lawrence House, agent.  
Flower show; dances at the Welcome.

P.5 Famous visitors to Levens Hall - Earl and Countess of Roslyn; Admiral and Lady Beresford; Winston Churchill; Vesta Tilley.  
Decorating the house for Christmas.  
Inside staff.  
Site of laundry.  
Wired for electricity; first telephone.

P.6 Grooms.  
Marriages in the Bagot family. Death of Sir Alan.  
Showpiece gardens; gardeners worked long hours; paid on Saturday afternoons.  
Brewing of Morocco ale stopped about 1900.

P.7 Position of drying ground and greenhouses. Plants grown.  
Sending vegetables to London by train.

P.7/8 Kitchen table.

P.8 Left home at 16 to join RAF. Away during war years '39-45.  
Thomas Sisson, grandfather, maintenance man on estate.  
Agreement drawn up between Thomas Sisson and Alan Bagot detailed duties.  
Closing the gates in the evening.

## Summary Sheet R0069 page two

P.9 Grandfather responsible for lych gate at Levens Church; used a pony and trap to get about estate.  
Horse mowed the lawn wearing leather shoes.  
Levens estate extended as far as Appleby.  
Grandparents were married 73 years.  
Uncle was groom for Lady Bagot.

P.10 Carriage used - launderette.  
Lady Bagot produced play at St. George's.  
Shakespearean plays in the "Wilderness".  
Toll bar.  
Bowling green also used for croquet.

P.11 Holly hedge. Apple loft; onion loft. Peach tree; pear and plum trees.  
Soft fruit garden.

P.12 Shooting down mistletoe.  
Early motor vehicles in Levens.

P12/13 The Wash.

P.13 Stabling/harness room.  
The bothy (in the Park) houses single gardeners doing their own cooking and cleaning.  
Duty gardener responsible for keeping heat up in greenhouses.  
Old bothy came down in 1928 when the road came through.

P.14 Gardeners who were killed in World War I.  
Ornamental shrubbery, coal house and toilet disappeared when road altered.

P.15 Odd job man, Tommy Butler, lived in the stable room which is now part of lodge.  
Keeping pigs. Slaughterhouse; larder for hanging game.  
Father left Levens 1919 and started market garden in Milnthorpe, then moved to Lancaster as jobbing gardener.  
Respondent came out of forces in 1931, worked as insurance agent and then at Libby's. Volunteered in 1939.

P.16 Mr Kellard organised helpers when Levens Hall open to public.  
Respondent helped.  
Deed Room.