

**MADNESS AND THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION:
BETHLEM IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION AND REPUBLIC**

A Thesis

by

JESSICA LEE BILHARTZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2006

Major Subject: History

**MADNESS AND THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION:
BETHLEM IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION AND REPUBLIC**

A Thesis

by

JESSICA LEE BILHARTZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Approved by:

Chair of Committee, James Rosenheim

Committee Members, Leah DeVun

Sylvia Grider

Head of Department, Walter L. Buenger

May 2006

Major Subject: History

ABSTRACT

Madness and the Financial Institution:

Bethlem in the Age of Revolution and Republic. (May 2006)

Jessica Lee Bilhartz, B.S., Texas A&M University;

B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. James Rosenheim

Throughout its long history, the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London, colloquially known as Bedlam, has been the center of rumors of patient abuse and neglect. These rumors continue to permeate the history of madness even though recent studies have tried to depict Bethlem as a misunderstood institution which did the best it could. The truth lies somewhere between these two poles. Historical Bethlem was a place where the insane were indeed mistreated, and 1642 and 1658 were the years when abuse became the norm for centuries to come. The years of the Civil War and Interregnum were of special importance to Bethlem, marking the point when it became not only a hospital with an undeclared policy for the tolerance of patient abuse and neglect, but a financially solvent hospital as well. After the careful examination of the administrative records of the Bethlem Court of Governors for the years 1642-1659, this study reports that not only did abuse occur in Bethlem, but that the administration at the hospital, its Court of Governors, was aware of such abuse and preferred to turn a blind eye to patient abuse and neglect, occasionally becoming party to such offenses themselves if the price was right.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION: DISTINGUISHING BETHLEM FROM BEDLAM 1	
Review of Literature	7
II FINANCE AS A PROBLEM FOR BETHLEM	15
III THE COURT	25
The Presidents	31
IV BLINDED TO THEIR PLIGHT.....	40
V REARRANGING HOSPITAL PRIORITIES: FOCUS ON FINANCE	57
VI CONCLUSIONS: RESULTS, BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE	89
REFERENCES	97
VITA	104

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION:
DISTINGUISHING BETHLEM FROM BEDLAM

“Bedlam” is a term that has been a part of the English vernacular for centuries, a colorful term which can be used to describe “scenes of uproar and confusion” which are chaotic and disorganized to the point of causing melees and erupting into pandemonium.¹ The term bedlam began as a reference to an actual place, a lunatic asylum known as Bethlem Hospital. The first written usage of “Bedlam” to refer to the hospital has been tracked to a will written in 1418.² The further implications of the word, which developed in the sixteenth century, seem natural: the image of an asylum used as a metaphor for confusion in the everyday world. The idea of the asylum as a place not only inhabited by the insane, but a place which itself takes on the characteristics of the many madmen concentrated into one location, is one which has also been around for approximately four centuries. But where did these ideas and images originate, why are they such a strong component of the Anglo-American cultural archive? The answers may in fact lie within the originator of bedlam, Bethlem itself.

Bethlem is the world’s oldest surviving public mental health hospital, created in the thirteenth century, first taking on patients in the fourteenth century, and still in

This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of British Studies*.

¹ *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed. revised, s.v. “bedlam.”

² Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, eds., *Middle English Dictionary*, part B.1, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956), s.v. “bedlam.”

service today. Bethlem was originally founded in 1247 as a religious institution in London, the priory of St. Mary's of Bethlehem, not as a hospital, and certainly not as a hospital which specialized in the care and treatment of the insane. As the institution evolved, however, the residents in religious orders at the priory began to take on poor patients suffering from the plague which hit England and all of Europe in successive waves throughout the fourteenth century, as well as those who were victims of the near-constant fighting between France and England during the same time. Eventually Bethlem, as it began to be called as an abbreviation for Bethlehem, found its niche as a hospital which catered to the insane, a niche it would occupy almost exclusively for centuries to come.³

Bethlem's history is nonetheless much more complicated than this basic timeline implies; Bethlem has a much darker history to it, one which has informed the Anglo-American cultural subconscious for almost as long as Bethlem has existed. Beginning in the sixteenth century, repulsive tales of the abuse that supposedly went on inside of Bethlem began to circulate amongst small segments of London's population, particularly those who attended the theater and those who lived in the immediate area around the hospital. From there, the rumors became even more exaggerated and widespread until eventually everyone in London "knew" what a terrible place Bethlem was, with its daily whippings and the shackling of stark raving lunatics to its dungeon-like walls. This image of Bethlem was a psychological dumping ground for peoples' fears of what happened behind closed doors at the hands of strangers to those who had lost their

³ Jonathan Andrews et al, *The History of Bethlem*, Jonathan Andrews, ed., (New York: Routledge, 1997), 16-17.

minds. Certainly some of the rumors which made their rounds in sixteenth and seventeenth century London were simply not true. They were the results of overactive imaginations, but as with most legends, these began with a foundation of truth. The extent of the abuse at Bethlem and the circumstances surrounding it have been at the center of debate between modern historians and scholars of disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and psychology for many years.

Bethlem had a policy of not receiving what they termed “idiots” into the hospital, since lunacy was thought to be a transient and curable affliction of the mind, whereas idiocy was believed to be a permanent, overall simplemindedness for which nothing could be done. At least with lunatics treatment could be given, however little those giving it believed in it, but with idiots no one expected that anything could be done, and Bethlem did not want to be in the business of lifetime caretaking. At Bethlem there was always meant to be a period to a patient’s stay. In the early modern period, patients were not admitted into Bethlem with the expectation that they would remain in the hospital indefinitely. They were expected to receive specific periods of treatment, and even obtain cures, although things rarely turned out that way in reality.

Those who have studied Bethlem agree that abuse occurred there and that the hospital’s low point took place somewhere in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Exactly how did Bethlem achieve its notoriety? Where did it all begin? And why did abuse become such a hallmark, a permitted pattern of action at an institution which was created and meant to treat and even cure those whom the hospital ended up hurting? Most scholars have turned to the years for which the most copious records exist to search

for answers. Some have focused on post-Restoration Bethlem when more detailed patient records began to be kept; others have turned to eighteenth-century Bethlem when authors and artists like William Hogarth deluged the popular scene with depictions of Bethlem as a hell house. Most have focused on Victorian Bethlem, a time for which the records are abundant and where the contrast of maniacs to the ultimate age of prim and proper constraint seems most alluring. These eras provide interesting insights into Bethlem as a whole and they shed light on Bethlem as a historical institution which still survives. But to get at the core of Bethlem's infamy, this study will show that answers to the above mentioned questions lie in a time which served as a turning point for many institutions and ideological structures in England, an era which was unique to the nation for numerous reasons: the period of the Civil War and the resulting Interregnum. The 1640's and 1650's are the key period in which Bethlem's notorious reputation took root.

Perhaps the question which has been most overlooked by scholars of Bethlem has been: what was "abuse" at Bethlem? Certainly rumors of abuse swirled around the hospital and mutated into tales of torture, and even the Court of Governors' Book of Minutes makes several references to "abuses at Bethlem" between 1642 and 1659. However, when the governors speak of abuse at Bethlem, their language often seems quite generalized and ambiguous, as if they are not discussing abuse in the sense of cruel treatment or violence. Apparently, during the seventeenth century, the word "abuse" was going through a transitional phase itself. Its meaning could have taken on two very different definitions. The sense in which the governors seem to use it most often in the Book of Minutes is in its original meaning, as a noun originating from late Middle

English via the Old French word for misused. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* describes this older use of the word as “the improper use of something.”⁴ The *Middle English Dictionary* further explores this early definition of the word when used as a noun, explaining that from approximately 1439 forwards, abuse meant “improper or corrupt practice.”⁵ Used in this manner, when the governors spoke of abuse they could have been referring to employees making improper use of their positions, not doing their jobs, misappropriating funds, or selling food intended for the patients.

However, abuse could also have meant a variety of other things as well, since its meaning was beginning to change sometime after the year 1470. Abuse in this newer sense, especially when used as a verb, could have meant to a mid-seventeenth century audience “to misuse [or] misapply (funds),” “to abuse sexually,” “to falsify,” “to betray (trust),” “to behave improperly [or] be out of sorts”⁶ or “to treat with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly.”⁷ With so many potential meanings for the word, it is difficult to determine in which sense the governors meant to use it in each case. When noting that it was, “ordered by this Court that the miscarriages and abuses of the Porter & Servants of Bethlem hospitall bee considered of & ordered att the next Court,” the governors most likely were referring to abuse in the sense of employees improperly performing their duties.⁸ However, abuse like that described above could have indeed led easily to abuse as a modern audience would view it. Two of the most common

⁴ *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed. revised, s.v. “abuse.”

⁵ Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, eds., *Middle English Dictionary*, part A.1, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956), s.v. “abus.”

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ OED, “Abuse.”

⁸ Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes (hereafter referred to as BCGM), 26 October 1649, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 454.

complaints pertaining to a servant's abuse of his or her position regarded absenteeism and the improper rationing of food for the patients, either by selling off food or by "wasting the Butter & not makeing use of the Suett (kidney fat)."⁹ By referring to improperly feeding captive patients and irregularly attending their duties, the abuse by employees, as the governors explicitly meant it in the Book of Minutes, as a miscarriage of one's duty, could have also implied abuse as cruel treatment, abuse as it is commonly meant today. It was perhaps through an exposure of misbehavior and abuse at Bethlem that its rumored reputation became its grounded reputation as a notorious institution in the 1640's and 1650's.

Before 1642, when the Civil War began as King Charles I fled London and raised his standard in a declaration of war against Parliamentary forces, the administration of Bethlem, the Court of Governors, found itself in a state of inertia. Facing a budgetary crisis, the hospital was constantly on the verge of insolvency, and the uneven and uninformed interference which was intermittently demanded by the Crown only served to make matters worse. Before the Civil War, Bethlem faced a state of imminent crisis, but through an exceptional set of circumstances, Bethlem was able to bounce back financially during the Civil War and build upon its newfound monetary resources during the Interregnum, due in great part to favorable political conditions in the City of London. Using the records kept by the Court of Governors itself, which detail the matters of business that took place at Bethlem during these years, this study will show how ensuring the hospital's survival, much less turning Bethlem into a self-sufficient and

⁹ BCGM, 27 May 1651, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 551.

confident institution nonetheless came at a serious price. By making the hospital's account ledgers their only cause for concern, the governors of Bethlem inaugurated an unofficial policy of patient neglect which would last well into the nineteenth century.

Review of Literature

Until about twenty years ago not many books were written on the topic of Bethlem as it related to the history of madness and of psychiatry in general, despite its seeming importance. According to the Bethlem archivist, Patricia Allderidge, this was because people, historians in particular, “[did] not want to know about Bethlem as a historical fact because Bethlem as a reach-me-down historical cliché is far more useful.”¹⁰ Indeed, the idea of Bethlem as the stuff of nightmares and the house of horrors, which was even used as the basis for the Boris Karloff film “Bedlam” in 1946, went largely unchallenged for approximately thirty years, even though the lack of scholarship to support such claims should have been alarming.

Some of the published accounts upon which these claims of Bethlem-as-dungeon were based were written by disgruntled former patients of the Georgian and Victorian eras, whose opinions may have been biased by emotion. While useful, these accounts cannot always be taken at face value. Most of the other ideas which informed many modern scholars' ideas of Bethlem were the same rumors of hundreds of years ago. Most of those stories originated in the interpretations of madness and Bethlem on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, though it is generally thought that only a handful of

¹⁰ Patricia Allderidge, “Bedlam: fact or fantasy?,” in *The Anatomy of Madness Volume 2*, eds. W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), 18.

playwrights during those days would have had any first-hand knowledge of the hospital at all, and would have used artistic license to create more entertaining stories and characters.¹¹

As far as published histories of Bethlem are concerned, Thomas Bowen, the chaplain to Bethlem's sister hospital, Bridewell, penned an early institutional history of Bethlem titled *An Historical Account of the Origin, Progress and Present State of Bethlem Hospital* in 1783. Factually unreliable, the book is little more than a glowing propaganda piece which was printed and distributed by the Court of Governors to raise funds for the hospitals of Bethlem and Bridewell at the time.¹² The first book which actually inspected the hospital's archival materials and attempted to recreate an account of Bethlem's history was Edward O'Donoghue's *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from its Foundation in 1247* published on a limited basis in 1914. O'Donoghue was not a historian by trade, he was actually Bethlem's chaplain. His work showed this lack of training and his preference for apocryphal stories. But his book was very valuable in that it was the first to make use of Bethlem's vast library of archives in order to clarify some of the murkier points of Bethlem's long history.¹³

Even though relatively few people would have had access to O'Donoghue's limited release book, the information contained in it became well-known and widespread. This seems surprising since no other books were published on the topic of

¹¹ Thomas Bowen, *An Historical Account of the Origin, Progress and Present State of Bethlem Hospital*, (London: For the Governors, 1783).

¹² E.G O'Donoghue, *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from Its Foundation in 1247*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914); Andrews, 3.

¹³ Andrews, 3. For example, whereas Bowen's earlier work had merely guessed at the date of Bethlem's founding, O'Donoghue's book used archival documents to pinpoint the actual date.

Bethlem for decades, and seminal volumes on the history of psychiatry glossed over Bethlem during the same time. Perhaps this was because, as Patricia Allderidge would later write, “Bethlem as the ultimate symbol of all that is evil is far too useful a space-filler to be risked in the refining fires of academic research.”¹⁴ The only scholars interested in Bethlem were apparently those of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, who, in publishing studies of Bethlem as depicted on the stage, engrained the image of Bethlem-as-dungeon in the eyes of both the public and the scholarly community. Eventually, perhaps because Michel Foucault mentioned England in his history of Europe’s “great confinement” or because Roy Porter called for more research into madness during the Stuart dynasty in his book *Mind Forg’d Manacles*, a new group of scholars began to inspect Bethlem and the myths which surrounded it.¹⁵

Patricia Allderidge, in articles she published throughout the late 1970’s and 1980’s, was one of the first historians to challenge the idea of an evil Bedlam. As the Bethlem archivist, she was able to find documentary support that the abuse at Bethlem did not accord with what the stories had described. In particular, she tried to show in “Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547-1633” that a group of isolated incidents, which had their origins back to problems in the management hierarchy. The incident of Helkiah Crooke’s tenure, mentioned below, played a large part in fostering

¹⁴ Allderidge, 18.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 50; Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), viii.

this impression.¹⁶ During this time Jonathan Andrews also began his quest to debunk the myth of “bad Bethlem,” as he calls it. Beginning with a PhD thesis written in 1991, which later became the basis for what is considered the definitive *History of Bethlem*, published in 1997, Andrews explained away most of the commonly held myths about Bethlem.

The History of Bethlem was written in conjunction with Andrews, Roy Porter, Asa Briggs, Penny Tucker, and Keir Waddington, all considered leading scholars of the history of psychiatry. Its scope encompasses the entirety of Bethlem’s seven hundred and fifty year history, from priory to modern day mental health research institution. The book is divided into four chronological sections, and each part with varying degrees of success covers a wide variety of topics, ranging from administration to architecture to treatment of patients. Even at 752 pages, the book leaves the serious scholar wanting more in many places due to a lack of detail and in some of the parts the book omits much, but it is still useful as an overview of the hospital. And it is all that there is for those who wish to study Bethlem during its less popular years.

Many histories of psychiatry seem to have ignored the hospital despite its seemingly obvious importance to the history of psychiatry. Jonathan Andrews notes that the most glaring omission of Bethlem from a standard history of madness is Michel Foucault’s failure to mention it throughout *Madness and Civilization*.¹⁷ But this is not to say that Foucault is not important to *this* study. In fact, as Michael MacDonald once

¹⁶ Patricia Allderidge, “Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547-1633,” in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 141-169.

¹⁷ Andrews, 6. Andrews’ remarks are not entirely true; Foucault does mention “Bedlam” one time in passing on Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 63.

wrote: “Anyone who writes about the history of insanity in early modern Europe must travel in the spreading wake of Michel Foucault’s famous book, *Madness and Civilization*.”¹⁸

Foucault is undeniably important to the understanding of the history of madness. His theories on the variables which shaped the ways in which people in different times defined madness and the mad are invaluable to modern scholars, but nonetheless, as Roy Porter pointed out, with regard to events in England, Foucault’s timing of the “great confinement,” as he calls the massive movement in Europe to lock away the insane, was off by a few centuries. Porter contends that during what Foucault establishes as the “classical period,” approximately 1650 to 1800, England was not experiencing a great confinement at all.¹⁹ Contrary to Foucault’s claims, the insane for the large part roamed the countryside or were kept at home, not locked away, and even in Bethlem the insane were allowed visitors and were put on interactive display.²⁰ And even those who were kept in Bethlem comprised such a small proportion of the population. During the 1640’s and 1650’s, Bethlem generally housed only about forty patients at a time when the nation itself was populated by millions. The insane were not lumped together with the “disorderly”, the general title given to the other symbols of unreason in an age of reason such as the idle, the unemployed, and the lewd. In fact, different institutions already existed long before the age of reason to house both: Bridewell for the disorderly and Bethlem for the insane, and no one tried to put the insane to work as Foucault states in

¹⁸ Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), xi, quoted in Gary Gutting, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 49.

¹⁹ Roy Porter, “Foucault’s great confinement,” *History of the Human Sciences* 3:1 (1990), 48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Madness and Civilization.²¹ However, *Madness and Civilization* also expressed Foucault's ideas that the insane as abject people were forced to the hinterlands of society as a result of their signification of unreason in an age of reason, a concept which is still meaningful to the study of madness and the history of psychiatry. So, while Foucault's "great confinement" was applicable to the Continent, and his ideas regarding the processes which informed madness are still relevant, he was off the mark when it came to England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Michel Foucault may not have been as precise with his empirical historical data as Roy Porter and others would have liked, but at least Foucault did one thing that hardly any professional historian has done: he mentioned, however briefly, asylum care and treatment of the insane during the English Interregnum.²² Even with so many books and articles being published within the past ten to fifteen years in attempts to debunk or support the "bad Bethlem" myth, none have focused for more than a few pages on Bethlem during the Civil War or Interregnum period.

The standard work, *The History of Bethlem* has an entire section devoted to the period between 1633 and 1783, yet even there the 1640's and 1650's are hardly mentioned. Instead, the book instead focuses on the years of major events in the hospital's history such as 1633, when the position of physician was created, or 1676, when the hospital moved to Moorfields, or even the broader time frame of "Post-Restoration Bethlem," which was a time of rejuvenation for the hospital. Yet it was

²¹ Porter, 49.

²² Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 50.

between the years 1642 and 1659 that Bethlem was able to prepare itself for that post-Restoration renewal, and it was also during this time that Bethlem's administration and its workers set the precedents that allowed patient abuse.

Scholars such as Patricia Allderidge and Jonathan Andrews may argue whether the abuse which occurred at Bethlem warrants the myth of the "bad Bethlem" or even the name Bedlam, but it is not the intent of this study to measure levels of cruelty at Bethlem in the mid-seventeenth century. Records indicate that abuse happened; Andrews, Allderidge, Porter, all mention as much in their writings. The intent here is rather to show that the blame for such abuse between 1642 and 1659 lay equally with the governors of Bethlem, who used their unique situation to set a lasting precedent of simply ignoring abuse in its many manifestations, as it did with the employees who actually perpetrated it. Abuse came before 1642 and abuse came after 1659, but these governors paved the way for acceptable doctor absenteeism and for allowing the servants to lord over a chaotic hospital. Andrews, Porter, and Allderidge may all argue to deemphasize neglect in Bethlem, that it was not such a terrible place after all.

While the levels of abuse did not rise to the levels that the grotesque exaggerations of the horror stories suggest, abuse at historical Bethlem should not be overlooked just because fewer patients actually died, or because few starved everyday, or because no one actually tasted the sting of the cat-o-nine tails. For a part of its history at least, Bethlem actually became its notorious alter-ego Bedlam, as this thesis shows. Bethlem has become an important part of the Anglo-American cultural cache, representing a haunting image of the asylum as the ultimate source of chaos and

upheaval. Though it was a relatively small institution during the 1640's and 1650's, this period was key in the development of Bethlem's infamous reputation. It was during this time that behavior which occurred in the hospital first began to correspond to its reputation; by explaining and understanding Bethlem during England's age of Civil War and Interregnum, only then can scholars begin to have a full understanding of the hospital's cultural and historical importance.

CHAPTER II

FINANCE AS A PROBLEM FOR BETHLEM

The early Stuart era and especially the subsequent periods of Civil War and Interregnum were times of extreme economic hardship for an England which was already in poor financial shape. Inflation was rampant all over Europe, but particularly so in the isles, and the harvests were continually coming in under already pessimistic estimates. This scarcity added to a growing sense of insecurity towards the government, which is never beneficial during times of economic crisis. Across the nation, prices rose as wages either remained stagnant or even fell, greatly compounding the number of those in need of state relief.²³ State relief was itself in a condition of emaciation due to a lack of funding. Because of either resentment or a sheer lack of tender with which to pay, tax strikes were common in the first half of the seventeenth century, meaning that most county and city finances were approaching or were already in deficit and unable to provide even basic support by the 1640's.²⁴ For a hospital which relied heavily on taxes and charitable donations, funding was a special problem for Bethlem during the Civil War and Interregnum, but then money had been a problem for the hospital ever since it came into the hands of the English government after the Reformation.

²³ Harold E. Raynes, *Social Security in Britain: A History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 66.

²⁴ Jeremy Boulton, "London 1540-1700" in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume II 1540-1840*, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 335; Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714: A Narrative History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 230.

Prior to the Reformation, religious institutions for poor relief and other community services were supported by church finances, tithes and alms from parishioners, and the church's hierarchy, which took in, managed, and doled out funds at all levels. For centuries, this system worked mostly without the interference of secular government throughout most of Europe and was basically effective. This is not to say that church-run poor relief was by any means utopian; corruption and mismanagement existed, and indeed the problems of the poor and sick were neither eliminated nor even controlled. However, these services of social relief provided by an outside and at least partially independent group, the church, might have taken some burden from the shoulders of the state. When England finally broke with Rome, matters of social security almost immediately fell to the state from the hands of the more experienced church.

When Henry VIII in 1536 began the dissolution of small monasteries worth less than £200 as part of his assertion of control over the church in England, he started much more than a religious reformation – he also began a social transformation. In 1539, he dissolved the larger monasteries and transferred their land and assets to the Crown. These dissolutions and transfers did not make any exceptions for hospitals founded by religious orders, which were seized as well. London was particularly hard hit by the seizure of its religiously founded hospitals, and of its five original ancient hospitals, only one, St. Bartholomew's, survived past the 1560's.²⁵ Bethlem was saved such a fate due to its complicated and questionably worded charter. Although it was founded as a priory in 1247, it had been seized on nebulous terms by Edward III in the 1370's. Private

²⁵ Andrews, 19.

patrons and keepers had argued for years that *they* were the true owners of the hospital, but the City of London had been making legal claims to it for almost a century.²⁶ As a result, Bethlem was not in immediate danger of being seized by the Crown as a Catholic property while its lineage was being sorted out, but its future was in jeopardy because it was unclear where the ultimate responsibility for its finances fell. If it was a religious organization, it could be dissolved as so many of the other religious hospitals had been, but if it was a City hospital it could be saved.

To those who lived in, worked with, or otherwise significantly relied on England's monasteries and church-run institutions, it seemed as if the dissolutions could not have come at a worse time. The Tudor age was also one of inflation and economic upheaval, and poverty and unemployment rates were soaring. Many of those previously under church protection and those who found themselves displaced by the spreading practice of land enclosure took to the roads as vagrants.²⁷ Previous attempts at controlling the "problem of the poor" had been rudimentary and half hearted prior to the reign of Henry VIII. His councilor, Thomas Cromwell, provided England with one of the first progressive poor laws in its history. The Act of 1536, whose creation Cromwell supervised, was the first to make the important distinction between the sturdy poor, those who were capable of work but could find none or wanted none, and the impotent poor, those who were either too sick or otherwise incapable of work. This distinction was very important for the mentally ill who were sent to Bethlem. Without this distinction,

²⁶ Andrews, 58.

²⁷ Bucholz and Key, 21, note that the number of workers actually displaced by enclosure is debatable since the Black Death may have depleted the working population to begin with.

potential Bethlem patients would have been lumped together with those who were capable of work and severely punished if they did not take to their assigned jobs. The sturdy poor were to be put to work in their parishes or punished for refusing to work, and the impotent poor were to be given licenses to beg.²⁸ Though this law still left much to interpretation, it was to serve as the basis for the future Elizabethan Poor Law, which would be the basis of poor relief for centuries to come.²⁹

In light of the new localized responsibilities outlined by the new poor law and after much negotiation between the City of London and Henry VIII, the City finally received control over St. Bartholomew's, the Church of the Grey Friar's (which later became Christ's Hospital), and Bethlem. In addition it was also given a new hospital, Bridewell, which oddly enough had previously been one of the king's favorite palaces. Now renovated, Bridewell was to serve as a prison/workhouse for the sturdy poor and idle vagrants of London. The Lord Mayor and City councilors initially petitioned the king for approximately twenty hospitals, including those which specialized in the care of the blind, lepers and the poor, but they were denied their request and made do with what they were granted.³⁰ Or rather they struggled to maintain what they were given. While the City tried to maintain the hospitals with charitable donations, within one year the City Council decided that the City would have to force charitable donations with the imposition of a tax on its citizens, in order to keep the doors open in one of its hospitals, St. Bartholomew's.³¹ It became one of the first poor relief taxes imposed on

²⁸ G.R. Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), 189.

²⁹ The 1536 statute only authorized local action, it did not allow for action at the state level.

³⁰ Raynes, 20.

³¹ Raynes, 21.

the English for the use of a public hospital. Like St. Bartholomew's, Bethlem too would struggle with the matter of underfunding for years, as did many hospitals and relief projects throughout the country before the Elizabethan Poor Law was passed in 1601. This was one of the biggest problems with the poor law of 1536: it did not adequately address the major problem of funding the programs which had been abandoned when the church system had been dissolved, because it did not impose mandatory levies.

Several poor law acts were created between 1536 and 1601, including the act of 1572 that allowed poor relief to be funded by unspecified local taxes, perhaps influenced by the fact that London and some other places were already experimenting with the process. The Poor Law of 1601 effectively adopted a national approach for dealing with the poor based on the parish system, formalizing many of the practices mentioned in earlier acts. Since former church lands had passed into common hands upon their sale by the Crown, it seemed only fair that parishes would collect taxes on parishioners in order to take care of the poor for whom the church had previously cared. Each parish was to have two collectors who were to ascertain what each parishioner was to give in tax; should the parishioner refuse to pay his subscribed amount, he could be tossed into jail. The 1601 Poor Law also made special mention of the "lame, impotent, old and blind" who could not work and had to be cared for by the parish. Sometimes this merely meant doling out monies collected by parish officials to said impotent persons, and other times it meant that these unfortunate people were taken care of at local houses of charity which were also funded by poor rates. These almshouses were to take care of those who could not care for themselves or who needed constant supervision. This would have required a

great marshalling of human and financial resources. The maintenance of the impotent poor had the potential to drain a poorer parish's assets quickly, and there was nothing to prevent craftier vagrants from moving to a more prosperous parish and unfairly exploiting its resources. As a safeguard against such efforts, the 1601 Poor Law made the often-controversial provision that the parish in which one was either born or had lived for the last three years was the one responsible for any relief payments to support a poor person. Questions of origin often led to quarrels and legal disputes between parishes and hospitals such as Bethlem.

On rarer occasions, when local almshouses were not equipped to take care of a particular person, as when the person in question was deemed to be "mad," the parish overseers of the poor would often decide to send that person to a facility specializing in the treatment of that person's particular ailment or at least to a place equipped to deal with someone far removed from the average person's experience. In the case of a poor deranged person, Bethlem was the only place to which an overwhelmed parish could outsource its disturbed cases. Parishes of limited means could not send their insane poor anywhere but Bethlem, since it was the only public hospital in England specializing in the care of "lunatics." Private asylums existed by this time, but they did not offer discounted poor rates, as Bethlem did, nor is it likely that their proprietors would have been interested in charity work.³² Even the poorest of parishes was willing to go to extraordinary lengths to get its parishioners into Bethlem. When a parish was already

³² Most private asylums were run by doctors who treated almost exclusively wealthier patients in order to make lofty profits. Though they did exist in small numbers in the 1640's and 1650's, private asylums remained quite rare until after the Restoration.

struggling with very limited means, sending a potential patient and a chaperone/representative to London for a few days without a guarantee of admission would have been a high price for any overseer of the poor to agree to pay, and the fact that they did so suggests the high degree of concern that madness caused.

Being unique in the nation, Bethlem was a highly sought-after locus of care. At a time when London was the only large city in England, Bethlem was only equipped with twenty rooms for patients in the first half of the seventeenth century and as a result could only take in few patients at a time.³³ It needs to be reiterated that Bethlem was a hospital intended first and foremost for the care of the poor insane, meaning a great percentage of its patients were being funded by their parish's poor rates. A few patients were supported by family members or friends and not their parishes, but records indicate that often those people were paying rates just as low as the parish poor rates, and may have been almost as destitute as those supported by their parishes alone.

As a public hospital for the poor, Bethlem was not expected to bring in a profit of any sort. Its balances were meant to fund its continuance, not to line the pockets of its administrators. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Bethlem had little revenue at all. Even as a non-profit hospital, it could hardly afford to operate and underfunding was a constant problem. When Bethlem was handed over to the City of London in 1547, it was placed under the governance of the newly created, much larger, and more opulent Bridewell. In contrast to its apparent superior, Bethlem was small, ancient and decrepit, and as a result it was often forgotten, not just by its Court of

³³ Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes (hereafter referred to as BCGM), 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 96.

Governors, who rarely visited the hospital except when blatant abuses were reported, but by donors as well. It was a common misconception amongst potential donors that since Bridewell and Bethlem were jointly governed a donation to one meant a donation to both. In actuality, when one gave to Bridewell, the entire sum stayed with Bridewell. It was moreover difficult to convince the public to donate their sparse expendable funds to charity when they were already paying poor taxes and it was even harder to convince them to give towards the care of the insane, who were so mysteriously afflicted, when there were children's hospitals and other seemingly more worthy causes which needed their money, too.³⁴ To make matters even worse, the accounts of the Court of the Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem were so primitive and sloppily managed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that even the scant amounts of money meant for Bethlem grew smaller each year, because donations to it were mixed with Bridewell's in the ledgers well into the seventeenth century.³⁵

Bridewell subordinated the asylum in almost every category. Bridewell was a renovated palace, much larger, and more deserving of attention from Londoners both on and off the Court of Governors. The general public may have donated more money more often to Bridewell because of its impressive physical presence and also its charitable image in the streets of London. Not only did Bridewell beadles walk the streets most nights, collecting vagrants and criminals, but they also provided apprenticeships and thus potential future employment for displaced children. They even found jobs for the sturdy poor of greater London. To the common Londoner, the results promised by Bridewell

³⁴ Raynes, 21.

³⁵ Andrews, 171.

must have brightly outshone those of Bethlem, a decaying edifice which could only house a fraction of Bridewell's numbers (it held hundreds of inmates at a time), and even then Bethlem taught no skills and provided no work. While the comparison is unfair, Bridewell having been a provider of sturdy poor relief and Bethlem a provider of impotent poor relief, the perceived difference was definitely made manifest in the financial balances of each hospital. One audit of both hospitals' accounts in October of 1643 showed Bridewell with a balance of £146.0.7 and Bethlem with a mere £7.9.3 balance with exactly £7.9.3 in outstanding bills that the hospital's steward had yet to pay.³⁶

One explanation for Bethlem's weak financial position compared with Bridewell lies in the charitable outreach of the two institutions. Major events in London during the seventeenth century were the Spital Sermons preached every Easter Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before voluminous crowds attended by the monarch, the Lord Mayor and his family, the Bishop of London, the sheriff, the Council of Aldermen, and various other persons of particular importance to the City. The sermons would contain a strong message concerning the importance of charity. They would particularly encourage donations to the City's hospitals, thus the name Spital (from ho-spital) sermons.³⁷ These orations would have been important sources of charitable revenue for London's hospitals, but until the 1640's Bethlem was apparently left out of the Spital Sermons and

³⁶ BCGM, 23 October 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 126.

³⁷ William Hone, "April 5," *The Every-Day Book*, (London: 1825; UAB Online: 2004), ed. Dr. Kyle Grimes, <<http://www.uab.edu/english/hone/etexts/edb/day-pages/095-april05.html>> (5 February 2006).

not even mentioned as a subordinate or footnote to Bridewell.³⁸ The Court of Governor's Book of Minutes in the dwindling days of 1642 shows that the governors finally decided to do something about this omission by writing a short description of Bethlem's duties and needs to provide to the preachers of the upcoming 1643 sermons.³⁹ The governors wanted the preachers particularly to emphasize to the crowds that Bethlem "is an hospitall founded by ittselfe and is not dependant on any other," an obvious attempt at clarifying Bethlem's financial separation from Bridewell.⁴⁰

Following up on the effort of 1642 in a description provided for the 1644 Spital sermons, the governors wanted the listeners to know that in relation to the other London hospitals Bethlem's patients "are of all others the most miserable," since they are diseased not just in the body but in the soul as well.⁴¹ Any increase in donations brought by the mention of Bethlem in the Spital Sermons was nonetheless short-lived because, as seemed to be the hospital's luck, the Spital Sermons were delivered only sporadically during the later days of the Civil War and Commonwealth period, and not at all during the Protectorate. The Spital Sermons would permanently return after the Restoration, and in fact they can still be heard today. But during the period of this study, when Bethlem's financial situation was at the grimmest nadir of its history, the hospital would have to find other ways to get the word out to the public about the worthiness of its cause and its desperate need for donations. The governors would also need to find other ways to bring in money if they wanted Bethlem to ever become a strong, self-sufficient institution.

³⁸ Andrews, 171.

³⁹ Before the switch to the Gregorian calendar in 1752, the New Year would begin on "Lady Day," March 25th, in England. The dwindling days of the year would have come in mid-March.

⁴⁰ BCGM, 24 March 1642, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 80.

⁴¹ BCGM, 17 April 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 155.

CHAPTER III

THE COURT

When Bethlem first came under secular control and even after the king had granted custody of the hospital to the City of London, no one was really sure who was to administer its functions. The hospital had a staff led by a Keeper, who supposedly made sure the patients were still in their rooms every day, but there was no administration in place to manage finances or to oversee the larger aspects of keeping an important city hospital functioning. Jonathan Andrews notes that Christ's Hospital might have assumed a sort of loose administration over Bethlem in the 1560's on an ad hoc basis, and even Bridewell's Court of Governors Book of Minutes did not mention Bethlem until 1574.⁴² Not until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century did the Court of Governors decide that they needed to watch Bethlem more closely. Bethlem was to be administered by the Bridewell and Bethlem Court of Governors; after all, Bethlem had been given to the City along with Bridewell in the first place. It had just taken a few decades for the Bridewell administration to begin to run its sister hospital.

Technically, Bethlem was a servant to two masters. It was a Royally Appointed Hospital granted to the City of London by a charter begun by Henry VIII and finished by Edward VI and thus it was an institution of the Crown. But it also owed allegiance to the City of London during the early seventeenth century, since its Court of Governors was composed almost solely of City notables and since it drew significant funding from London poor rates. The Court met at Bridewell anywhere between one and five times a

⁴² Andrews, 62.

month, depending on how much business of different degrees of importance had to be discussed. Records of the items discussed at each official Court meeting were recorded in the Court's Book of Minutes. Members' terms lasted for one year and members of the Court were elected, or re-elected, to their positions every year by those who were already sitting on the Court, and in order to be considered for a seat on the Court one had to be a citizen of London.⁴³ As for the hierarchy of the Court, the two most important positions were those of the President, as the leader of the Court, followed by the Treasurer, who was responsible for recording Bethlem and Bridewell's finances. Whoever was elected President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem usually had either already been or would soon become the Lord Mayor of London. Apparently this position was seen as one of great importance, philanthropy, exposure or some combination thereof. The qualities which mattered most depended on the aspirations or desires of the given President.

The City government also took an active role in the affairs of Bethlem, as a City hospital. Not only did the Lord Mayor sign warrants which sent numerous wandering vagrants and lunatics to Bridewell and Bethlem respectively, but City officials also had the right to exercise control over the business conducted in Bethlem. The Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen were responsible for City properties, including those of the City hospitals, and this meant they had the right to intervene in matters of finance and governance whenever they saw fit.⁴⁴ Thus it was important for the Court of Governors to have positive relationships with City officials. For this reason it was helpful that so many

⁴³ Andrews, 165.

⁴⁴ Andrews, 159.

of the governors were themselves city notables, some even being aldermen, and the long record of Lord Mayors coming from the Court must have aided in preventing many disputes with the City.

To complicate matters a bit more, the Crown also began to lay claim to its rights over the administration of Bethlem in the early seventeenth century. James I's reign was marked by the king's policy of personal rule. James felt that his predecessors had ceded too much of their royal power and prerogative to people of lower stations in life, particularly to those in local and Parliamentary government. During one of his many attempts to wrest control over London institutions from the City, James found that Bethlem was the only hospital in London with a technical loophole in its charter that allowed the Crown to participate in its administration.⁴⁵ As a result, James, and later Charles, would intermittently involve himself in the administrative decisions of the hospital.⁴⁶ One of the reasons why the Bridewell governors had seen a need to assume control over the administration of Bethlem at the end of the sixteenth century was their realization that under the almost despotic rule of a Keeper, no one but the Keeper controlled admittance into the hospital.⁴⁷ Bethlem had been in danger of becoming a private prison, not a site of public charity. Thus the Court guarded the control over admissions to Bethlem carefully, once it had asserted control over the hospital, and it was troubled when first James I and then Charles I began to exercise their royal

⁴⁵ Andrews, 158.

⁴⁶ Andrews, 279.

⁴⁷ Charles O'Malley, "Helkiah Crooke. MD, FRCP, 1576-1648," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, xlii (1968), 13-14.

prerogative to send to Bethlem as lunatics those they considered dangerous to their rules.⁴⁸

The Lord Mayor and many other City officials sent people for political reasons as potential patients and inmates to both Bethlem and Bridewell on a regular basis as well. In fact records from the Book of Minutes during the Civil War and Interregnum show several cases identical to those of John Ives and Francis Ashton, both of whom were sent to Bridewell on separate warrants in July of 1643 for “speaking words against the Parliament” and for “false and scandalous words against the Parliament.”⁴⁹ Both the City and the Crown used Bethlem and Bridewell for their own political devices. But while the Court did not seem to mind the City’s regular shipments of new inmates, its members seem to have been put off whenever the Crown attempted to do so. At least the City actively participated in Bethlem’s every day activities; City Councils and the Court of Governors often shared members and the Court worked in conjunction with the City on a daily basis either when taking in patients or accepting tax subsidies to pay the bills for patients on poor-rates. In comparison, the Crown only seemed to interfere at the Court of Governors when it had a special interest, be it to install a new patient, to place a favorite into a position at the hospital or generally to supervise the hospital’s finances.

The problem of who ultimately controlled Bethlem was exacerbated because the Court of Governors was composed of exactly the type of men who were not predisposed to accept either James’s or Charles’s attempts at personal rule. Though not an entirely homogenous population, a great percentage of the men who sat on the Court of

⁴⁸ Andrews, 158.

⁴⁹ BCGM, 28 July 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, images 105, 106.

Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem shared common traits. First, they were citizens of London. London, as has been stated, during the early seventeenth century was an important economic capital of Europe. Though there was a depression sweeping the nation at the time, a class of wealthy, self-made merchants was able to find its niche in London commerce and rise above the economic hardships which were devastating people across all other spectrums of life. These men became London's elite. In addition to being citizens of London, many members of the Court shared another common trait in their occupations: most made their livings in London's thriving commercial markets.⁵⁰ It is assumed that the men who sat as governors of Bethlem were Protestants. Those who publicly embraced any other faith were not allowed to hold public offices. As was the case with the affluent merchant class of London, most of the governors were considered Puritans.⁵¹

In addition to being wealthy men of the merchant class who possessed Puritanical religious beliefs, the men of the Court were often politically active men as well. Perhaps it was the two former features that eventually compelled them to become the latter. London had been a center for political activity by the simple fact that it hosted meetings of Parliament for centuries. As politically aware men of self-earned money, the governors were particularly sensitive to the taxes imposed by the king in the years leading up to the Civil War. The resources provided to the Crown by the customs tax revenues coming just from the citizens of London were vital. London was also a City with a high rate of literacy amongst its citizens and as a result, dissemination of printed

⁵⁰ Andrews, 162.

⁵¹ Boulton, 337.

political ideas and calls to action would have been available to many of the governors on a regular basis.⁵² As merchants too, many governors may have developed politically beneficial networking skills through participation in various trade guilds. Many of the guilds in London had developed highly sophisticated methods of dealing with both Crown and City officials by the mid-seventeenth century, and guild-members' abilities to reach into the highest levels of government attracted religious and political radicals to their memberships. As a result, radical ideas regarding politics and trade circulated widely throughout the merchant classes.⁵³

In 1641, John Pym, one of the early leaders of the Parliamentary cause, was able to effect a radical revolution in the City of London. Prior to 1641, City officials, while mostly sympathetic to the anti-Royalist cause, were not entirely homogenous or active concerning the growing conflict between the Crown and its detractors; there still existed some Royalist sympathizers on the Council of Aldermen and on other important City councils. Control over London was important to any monarch, and especially to Charles I, who would have greatly benefited from the assistance of the city's wealthy merchants. When Pym was able to assure a radical takeover of the City and oust most of the Royalist sympathizers from their positions of power, replacing them with Parliamentary supporters, the rest of London's power structure essentially became the stronghold of the Parliamentary forces from that moment forward. By 1642, Pym's Committee of Safety had assured the position of Lord Mayor to the adamant Parliamentary backer Isaac

⁵² Boulton, 340.

⁵³ Boulton, 341.

Penington, who won the mayoral election over the Royalist incumbent Richard Gurney.⁵⁴

Such was the tumultuous political climate surrounding the Court of Governors during the earliest days of the Civil War. As the war progressed, some of the governors became active financial supporters of Parliament, and the Court often granted favors to hapless Parliamentary soldiers who had come to the governors for help. The Book of Minutes details a number of episodes in which patients were either granted abatements or were given special treatment at Bethlem upon mention of their or a family member's service to the Parliamentary Army even years after the end of the war.⁵⁵ In particular, in 1657, the patient Katherine Bodman's weekly rate was cut in half from 6 shillings a week to 3 shillings a week when the Court learned that her husband was in "service of this Comon wealth."⁵⁶ Some governors were rewarded for their contributions to the cause, and one Court President was even created a peer under the Protectorate for his services to the Parliamentary Army, a privilege granted to only a handful of men during the Interregnum.

The Presidents

All of the governors played some part in an event important to the history of Bethlem, but unfortunately history has forgotten many of their personal stories. However, a few governors were men of such prominence both nationally and historically

⁵⁴ Boulton, 342.

⁵⁵ 2 cases can be found on BCGM, 2 September 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 880.

⁵⁶ BCGM, 21 October 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 886.

that their individual stories have survived into modern times. In particular, the two men who served as Presidents of the Court of Governors for the period between 1642 and 1659 were exceptional for a number of reasons. Previous studies of Bethlem have suggested that the Presidents of the Court of Governors were often absent from their positions for most of their terms during early modern times, but both John Wollaston and Christopher Packe were exceptions. Records indicate that Wollaston and Packe were present at a majority of the Court meetings during their respective terms, and the Book of Minutes suggest that each was active as President when present. In addition to having shared several traits which were common to many members of the Court, such as political involvement, merchant class origins, and Protestant religion, Wollaston and Packe each possessed exceptional business skills which aided them in achieving financial success for themselves, for their country, and for Bethlem.

Sir John Wollaston was both a President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem and a Lord Mayor of London. Born in 1585/6, Wollaston moved to London as a boy and found work as a goldsmith's apprentice and made his fortune working for the royal mint as an adult. Through various other enterprises in the trade of precious metals, Wollaston became a very wealthy man by the mid 1630's. As his riches were accumulating, his influence in political circles began to grow, as did his interest in the ideas of the Puritans and eventually Presbyterianism. Through his strategic alliances

with other devout Protestants in the London political scene, Wollaston eventually became associated with and deeply involved in Parliamentarianism.⁵⁷

Wollaston first became an alderman for the City of London in 1639 immediately after finishing his term as sheriff alongside another future Lord Mayor, Isaac Penington; he would serve on the Council of Aldermen until his death. The early 1640's saw Wollaston begin to align himself decisively with Parliament when he refused to release the names of his precinct's wealthier citizens to the Crown so that loans could be forced from them in Charles's attempt to build up his depleted treasury. However, when rioting first began in the streets of London in the early half of 1641, Wollaston took a moderate stand and requested in his official capacity that Charles stay at Whitehall while the rioters were dealt with. Ironically, though Wollaston had previously locked horns with the Crown and decidedly was not a Royalist, his condemnation of the radical rioting in 1641 earned him a knighthood on December 3rd of that year. Less than three weeks later, the newly created Sir John returned the favor by participating in the "revolution in city government," when he effectively secured seats for Parliamentarians in the Common Council over which he presided as Alderman.⁵⁸

Having proven his allegiance to Parliament in the take-over of London in the waning days of 1641, Wollaston was rewarded for his loyalty over the subsequent years with positions of great prominence and opportunities for immense wealth. In January 1642, Sir John was appointed to the London militia committee and was elected President

⁵⁷ Keith Lindley, "Wollaston, Sir John," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* vol. 59, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 988.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

by the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem for the first time that same year. As a commander of the London militia, he was able to prevent Royalist militia troops from retaking the City the spring of 1642 when he used his forces to close off London Bridge. Charles sent a summons for Sir John to join the Royalist forces that summer despite his known affiliations with the Parliament, an order to which Sir John never replied.

The next year saw Wollaston elected to the office of Lord Mayor. His tenure was considered a bit more moderate compared to that of his predecessor, Isaac Penington, but then again Penington was chosen as a radical departure from politics as usual in the City. Wollaston's Parliamentary moderation offered a return to more predictable City order while still maintaining a now requisite level of Parliamentary ideology. The mayoralty was Wollaston's peak as a political player, though he continued to maintain his seat as an alderman until his death, and he remained President of Bethlem's Court until 1649. But throughout the whole of the Civil War and the Interregnum period, Wollaston used his acumen in financial matters to benefit not only the Parliamentary cause, but his own pocketbook as well. Almost from the day Charles's forces raised their standards, Wollaston became one of the biggest financiers of the Parliament's war machine. He served as one of its many treasurers, gave loans to the army (which were to be paid back with interest), and also aided in the administration of its finances. He helped the Parliamentary forces pay for Irish reinforcements, and he presided over the sale of lands seized by the New Model Army.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ibid.

After the fighting of the Civil War subsided and the Commonwealth was established, Wollaston continued his role as a crucial moneyman for the new government. He was given the official title of “indemnity commissioner” and continued in his role as an overseer of land sales for a few more years. His own investments during the war, both in land and in loans to the Parliament, had brought in major returns, and he was able to live more comfortably than he ever had before. During the period of the Protectorate, Wollaston does not seem to have participated in any major political events, but in 1653 he was known to have petitioned for the recalling of the Rump Parliament. As a result of this act and his Presbyterianism, he might have found himself out of favor with Cromwell. Regardless, Wollaston continued in local politics as an Alderman and in charitable administration at Bethlem and Bridewell until 1649 and then as President of Christ’s Hospital from 1649 until his death in 1658.

Another man with a distinguished career in the political and financial realms who was also elected President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem during the 1640’s and 50’s was Sir Christopher Packe, later known as Lord Christopher Packe, and later still as just plain Christopher Packe. Unlike Sir John Wollaston, Packe found his political niche in London during the Protectorate, but just like Wollaston, Packe was able to find his way to the heights of his success through his pecuniary talents. Like Wollaston, Packe was not born in London, but he was able to find his way to the City as an apprenticeship in the textile industry. As an adult, Packe began trading both nationally and internationally with the East India Company and the Company of Merchant Adventurers. His wealth and reputation as a man with a knack for investments

became well known throughout London, yet until 1640 his political involvement did not extend beyond administrative positions in his local merchant guild. However, he began earning so much money that in 1640 he had been marked as a wealthy London merchant to be considered for a forced loan to the Crown. In a way his wealth had begun to force him to take sides in the growing conflict between the Crown and Parliament; he was too wealthy to remain unpressured and unaffected by either side.⁶⁰

Parliament first approached Packe in 1642 to become a small time money collector, and eventually a local tax assessor early the following year. When Packe donated a significant sum towards Parliament's defense of the City in the winter of 1643, officials jumped at the chance to definitively align Packe with their cause. Appointments to common councils and advisory committees flew at Packe from that moment on. Apparently Parliament wanted Packe's entrepreneurial expertise on their side and their placating him with governmental positions worked well to reel in the investor. During the mid to late 1640's, Packe served on committees which were in command of accounts for the whole kingdom, land sales, assessments, and investments.⁶¹

His opportunity for advancement in the political arena presented itself in 1647 when he was serving on the London militia committee. He agreed to serve as a negotiator between the City, Parliament and the army during a tense month of ideological infighting. When the conflict ended, Packe was able to survive no matter which group grew strongest, due to his role as a mediator. As a result, Packe was able to

⁶⁰ Keith Lindley, "Packe, Christopher," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography vol. 42*, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 308.

⁶¹ Ibid.

advance his career and was elected as an Alderman in 1647, holding the position until the Restoration. As an Alderman, Packe made himself very visible during important moments of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, first by attending the official proclamation of the abolition of the monarchy in 1650. That same year Christopher Packe was elected President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem upon the exit of Sir John Wollaston. True to his form as a now ardent Parliamentarian, Christopher Packe, in an act dripping with symbolism, ordered the royal coat of arms removed from the Court of Governors meeting room in Bridewell and replaced it with the new coat of the Commonwealth during his first months as President.⁶²

Packe's political ambition did not stop in 1650 at the age of 51. In 1654 he made an unsuccessful attempt at the first Protectorate Parliamentary elections for London, but undeterred he ran and was elected later that same year to the position of Lord Mayor of London. Though Packe had wanted to advance his career as a MP, it would be his tenure as Lord Mayor that would prove his biggest springboard to national influence yet. As Lord Mayor, Christopher Packe was able to assist Oliver Cromwell in ridding the City power structure of those Cromwell viewed to be his enemies. Also as Lord Mayor Packe was in charge of suppressing Royalist plots originated in London, a charge over which he proved successful. Packe and Cromwell became very close during the former's mayoralty and upon the completion of his term, Cromwell knighted Packe as a show of appreciation.⁶³

⁶² BCGM, 12 September 1650, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 516.

⁶³ Lindley, "Packe, Christopher," 308.

Unlike Wollaston's, Packe's career in politics did not reach its pinnacle with his tenure as Lord Mayor. Packe had not resigned to end his career just then. Almost as soon as he left his position as Mayor, Packe returned to several offices with great financial responsibility, including ones in the admiralty and on several trade committees. In 1656 Packe was elected an MP for London to the second Protectorate Parliament, quickly either joining or being assigned to approximately seventy committees, focused mostly on finance and the City. It was during his term in this Parliament that Packe made his mark on history when in 1657 he presented the House with the "Humble Petition and Advice," a new constitution which proposed both the creation of a second chamber of Parliament and that Cromwell become king. While Packe did not write the "Humble Petition and Advice," his presentation left his name indelibly connected to the document. Apparently Oliver Cromwell could not separate Packe from the document either, and while Cromwell did not become the next King of England, he did create the proposed second chamber of Parliament, calling Packe to it that December as a newly created Lord Packe.⁶⁴

This is where Packe reached his zenith of power. When Packe decided to tie his career in politics to Oliver Cromwell, he may not have foreseen the potential negative consequences that would ensue upon the Lord Protector's death. After the Restoration, Packe was stripped of his Cromwellian titles, was forced to return a portion of the money he had earned as a Protectorate official (though he still remained a substantially wealthy man) and was excluded from holding public office for the rest of his life,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 309.

meaning he was forced to resign as an Alderman and as President of Bridewell and Bethlem. Though disgraced, Packe was fortunate enough to escape the fate of execution or imprisonment that many of his contemporaries faced. Packe continued to invest in the textile trade and in land, and even Charles II's aides came to Packe for credit later: although Packe had been labeled something of a traitor upon the Restoration, his expertise as a financier could not be ignored. In 1669 Packe retired to one of his many estates in Cotes where he died at the age of 83. Though Packe did not conclude his career as the envy of his peers, he was President of Bethlem at the same time as he was his most politically powerful. Throughout his career he was a sought-after ally, known for his exceptional skills with money. He was able to bring himself up from a mere apprentice to one of the wealthiest men in London before he reached the age of forty, and after that his reputation for investments and trade had earned him such an enviable standing in the City of London that government leaders sought his commercial skills until his death.⁶⁵

As these two case studies have shown, the Presidents were equipped with real world experience and exceptional personal knowledge, so that they could find and make money for Bethlem and put the hospital in a more prosperous position. Set at the helm of an institution decaying both physically and financially, these businessmen must have either been embarrassed or become motivated by the challenge and set out to change the hospital's direction. With such great minds on the Court of Governors during the Civil War and Interregnum, Bethlem was set for a financial makeover.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

BLINDED TO THEIR PLIGHT

The new commitment by the Court of Governors to focus on finance built up the pecuniary strength of Bethlem. When Charles I fled London, Bethlem's balances were very low, but by the end of the Interregnum it was a financial powerhouse with the ability to afford many of the things it could not only a few years prior. It was in the process of separating from Bridewell and establishing its self-sufficiency. Within another sixteen years it would move from the decaying edifice where it had struggled to an architectural masterpiece at Moorfields with more rooms and better capabilities. But while the Court from 1642 to 1659 was focusing on finance, it was also turning a blind eye to its patients. In ignoring the patients almost completely, abuse and neglect were established as givens at Bethlem, and for this the governors bear a great deal of responsibility. During the period when, as the direct result of several money-saving and money-making policies, the single-mindedness of the Court overrode consideration for the basic needs of their patients, Bethlem began its transformation into Bedlam.

A great deal of the damage done to the patients resulted from alterations to Bethlem's personnel. When the governors did away with the position of Keeper in 1633, they did so in order to wrest control over admissions from a powerful servant. With control over admissions somewhat more securely situated with the Court, the governors created places for a panel of trained medical experts to bring a sense of professionalism to the admissions and caretaking process. But just as the Court did with its lesser

employees, it would not pay its physicians, surgeons, or apothecaries well, nor would it treat most of them very well personally either, all to the ultimate detriment of the patients of Bethlem.

The physicians of Bethlem were elected to their positions, as was policy with the “superior” servants of the hospital. The first elected physician was Othewell Meverall, a well respected London doctor who had held several prestigious positions with the College of Physicians prior to coming to Bethlem, where he served from 1634 until his death in 1648. The physician who followed him was Dr. Thomas Nurse, another well-respected London physician who also served until his death, in 1668. But being an Oxford educated doctor with impressive credentials, as both were, did not necessarily mean that one was a committed physician who attended to the needs of the Bethlem patients. As was the case with other servants, the Bethlem Court of Governors was extremely frugal when it came to paying the physicians. Not counting gratuities, the yearly salary for Dr. Meverall was listed in Court records as twenty marks, or approximately £13 and change, as for Dr. Nurse, whose listed salary did include approximations for gratuities, he received forty marks per year.⁶⁶

To these highly trained physicians, such sub-par stipends may have suggested that the position was little more than ceremonial, a sinecure at best. Unlike the poor basketmen (similar to hospital orderlies) who came from the lower classes, earned low wages, and toiled everyday at Bethlem, physicians were of elite status. Even though their contracts theoretically required the same regular attendance as other City hospitals, at

⁶⁶ Andrews, 265, 281; According to *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed. revised, s.v. “mark,” In Early Modern England, a mark was equivalent to two-thirds of a pound sterling.

these rates, such expectations might have been unrealistic. And so Bethlem physicians were rarely found at Bethlem. In fact, the only time a governor could be sure that a physician would be at Bethlem was if the doctor was given notice to meet someone there or instructed to examine a particular patient or group of patients. Otherwise, the position was largely ceremonial to them and they viewed their real jobs as elsewhere. Some Bethlem physicians held other positions in addition to the post at Bethlem, and some ran private asylums for wealthy clients, although such physicians were far more common immediately after the tenure of Dr. Nurse.⁶⁷ Dr. Nurse did in fact establish a certification process for admissions to Bethlem, and he occasionally went through Bethlem looking for idiots either alongside or at the behest of a few governors, but as far as any measure of treatment was concerned, the Book of Minutes mentions nothing else that the doctor did for the patients.

As far as physical treatment was concerned, if patients were injured or got sick in Bethlem, treatment was left to the Bethlem surgeons and apothecaries. Bethlem elected only one surgeon and one apothecary at a time, and they were provided with no wages at all. Rather, the surgeon was to be paid per “cure” and the apothecary per potion. Even then the governors were hesitant to pay at all. In June 1644, although John Meredith, Bethlem’s surgeon, had been ordered to go around Bethlem and administer cures, the bill which he later submitted was thought to be too high. The governors introduced a new restriction from that moment forward, that surgeons could “not proceed in the cure of any Prisoner in the said hospitall till Doctor Meverall and Mr. Yardley [the apothecary]

⁶⁷ The Monro family, which ruled over Bethlem for almost 100 years, has been particularly singled out for this by scholars such as Andrews, MacDonald and others.

or some other governors to be appointed by this Courte shall have viewed the wound & agreed wth him for the cure of the same.”⁶⁸ Less than a year later the governors refused to pay another of Mr. Meredith’s bills until a committee which included the physician and apothecary examined it and concluded that his prices were not too high. They also threatened that if Mr. Meredith expected to be paid again, he should get the approval of both Dr. Meverall and Mr. Yardley before he conducted any cures or submitted any bills.⁶⁹ In October 1656, the governors began to look over Meredith’s old bills after his widow came to them seeking payments for bills that the Court had never paid, and, after submitting them to an outside barber-surgeon for examination, the governors came to the conclusion that his costs had indeed been legitimate all those years ago. In typical fashion, however, the governors worked out a settlement with Meredith’s widow by paying her less than she was owed.⁷⁰ They did the same thing to the apothecary, too. One time in late 1645 in particular, Mr. Yardley’s books and bills were seized and a committee was ordered to check his records against those kept in the hospital to make sure that he was not over charging or falsifying any charges. He was not to be paid until all charges could be verified.⁷¹

With the Court keeping such a suspicious eye on its medical staff, the surgeons and apothecaries were probably overly cautious with the Bethlem patients, providing their services only when the cases were especially importunate or when specifically

⁶⁸ BCGM, 6 June 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 176. Note that the minutes refer to the patients as “Prisoners,” a term which had been taboo at Bethlem for decades; the governors must have been particularly angry.

⁶⁹ BCGM, 28 March 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 242.

⁷⁰ BCGM, 24 October 1656, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 826.

⁷¹ BCGM, 19 December 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 285.

asked to do so by the Court. The apothecary was in a particularly sticky situation. One of the few treatments of the patients' insanity was the administration of "physick," medicines which were usually intended to purge the afflicted of bodily fluids, and most of which were made in accordance with Galenic medical theories accepted at the time. The apothecary would have to provide those medications regularly, and as such was probably around more than any other medical staff member. Along with "physick," "dyett" (diet) was the only other thing specifically mentioned as a part of treatment upon a patient's arrival at Bethlem, and the governors took budgetary liberties with it by serving the patients food received free from the City or at discounted rates from local markets and cheesemongers, though part of each patient's maintenance fee was supposed to go towards that person's food budget. While the food at Bethlem was supposed to be medicinal and therapeutic, it was almost identical to the food being served to the prisoners at Bridewell: beef, bread, and beer with the occasional serving of cheese or butter.⁷²

Apothecaries were only paid to mix their potions. They were not paid to nor were they expected to administer any medication to the Bethlem patients. Those tasks were left up to the grossly underpaid and largely unsupervised inferior servants of Bethlem. The positions of porter, matron, and basketmen did not draw from the best sorts in London. In fact, the only requirement for a basketman was that the applicant not be married or have any children. The Court made this requirement because they found the families of their employees to be financial burdens. This was especially true when

⁷² Andrews, 127 note 9.

servants would petition the Court for money when they could not feed their families or upon the servant's death, when their widows tended to stay in the rooms that the hospital provided at the Court's expense. The no-family rule was taken seriously by the Court, too. Basketman Thomas Freckleton was fired and put out of his lodgings the day that the Court became aware of his recent marriage.⁷³ The position of steward was apt to draw applicants from somewhat higher social ranks because it was a position that required one to be a free citizen of London, and it also required a large security bond, due to the fact that the steward would be handling big sums of money for the hospital over the course of his employment. All of the positions were badly paid, and despite petitioning the Court for raises, which were always denied, the inferior servants of Bethlem had to find other ways to make their jobs worthwhile. Unfortunately, most inferior servants found embezzlement, theft, drinking, and the abuse of patients to be the perks which made their jobs tolerable.⁷⁴

A major problem with the servants of Bethlem was that almost all of them stole, even the stewards. One steward in particular, Richard Langley, proved to be a massive problem for the Wollaston Court. On numerous occasions Mr. Langley was charged with having either stolen money set aside for Bethlem groceries or with having sold off food which had already been bought and then pocketing the profits. More than once the Court had to persuade angry butchers and "mealemen" to continue their business with Bethlem

⁷³ BCGM, 16 May 1655, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 757.

⁷⁴ It is important to note that this image of the servants comes from the descriptions provided by the governors in the Book of Minutes.

after Richard Langley's thievery resulted in unpaid bills.⁷⁵ Eventually the Court forced Langley to enter into a legally binding security with which he was supposed to slowly pay back all of the money he owed the hospital, although he died before he paid off his debts.⁷⁶ But before his death he tried to pass off blame to Humfrey Withers, the Bethlem porter, and his wife, Bethlem's matron. Langley claimed that not all of the missing food and money was pocketed by him, but that the Withers were to blame as well. He accused them of stealing money from the Bethlem poor box, of stealing food and of charging admission fees to visitors.⁷⁷ Though it may have been seen as an attempt by Langley to spread his blame, his suggestion that corruption was not an isolated problem at Bethlem might have led the governors to launch an investigation into other such abuses at the hospital. But besides scolding the Withers never to steal from the poor box again, and forbidding them to charge visitors any admission to Bethlem, further investigations into abuses at Bethlem after Langley's death only came when specific reports were made to the governors.

Petty theft and embezzlement continued unabated for years at Bethlem as a supplement to the servants' insufficient incomes. The Court had to keep reminding the servants well into the late 1650's that they were not allowed to charge visitors an admission fee. In July of 1657 the Court further spelled out that the servants could not compel or even ask visitors to pay them at any time, but if a visitor happened to give a servant some money freely after having donated to the poor box, the servants were then

⁷⁵ BCGM, 28 April 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 89; and 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 95.

⁷⁶ BCGM, 4 August 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 109; and 27 April 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 155.

⁷⁷ BCGM, 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 89.

allowed to give the money to the porter, who would divide it up amongst all of the servants. Should there be any remainder, that money would go, of course, to the poor box.⁷⁸ It is doubtful that any of the servants actually followed such orders. Less than a year later, the porter himself was called before the Court for stealing from the poor box.⁷⁹ Despite the fact that almost all of the inferior servants, and even the stewards, habitually stole from the hospital, the Court hardly ever fired anybody. Of the small number of recorded firings in the Book of Minutes, most were due to a servant's requiring replacement because he was no longer physically able to perform his duties, not because of a dereliction of that duty. For example, one man lost his place as steward for being too old and feeble to continue; no need to pay someone to lie around and die.⁸⁰ It was very difficult for one to lose their place at Bethlem for bad behavior. The Court seemed willing to give its employees numerous chances despite repeated reports of abuse, theft and other such egregious misbehavior, only firing servants for conduct infractions if said infractions were particularly disturbing or repetitive.

For all of their misbehavior and dishonesty, the employees at Bethlem do not seem to have mistreated patients to the degree of the horror stories and macabre rumors which circulated at the time, some of which still exist as legends today. The patients at Bethlem during the 1640's and 1650's were not chained to the walls or beaten with rods and whips. In fact, it had been against policy to "give any blowes or Ill language to any of the madd folks" of Bethlem since 1646, though the extent to which this rule was

⁷⁸ BCGM, 31 July 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 877.

⁷⁹ BCGM, 30 April 1658, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 923.

⁸⁰ BCGM, 7 November 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 209.

followed is not known.⁸¹ But they were indeed abused, physically, mentally, and sexually, by servants and strangers alike, despite any such policies, and to top it off they were further neglected by the Court. Servants were commonly admonished but not fired by the Court for being found drunk on the job or absent from their posts, leaving the patients unattended and in danger.⁸² Accusations of physical abuse came before the Court now and then, but it would have been hard to prove such charges even if the Court cared to show their employees to be sadistic. In December of 1647, it was alleged that the porter, Humfrey Withers, the same man whom Richard Langley had accused of stealing, had abused the patient Bridgett Martyn. Ultimately the Court decided that the abuses were pretended and that the alleged victim was “a wooman crazed in her braine & neither knowing nor careing what shee saith of any one & the hospitall to bee much dishonored & the said Humfrey Withers wronged by the said petition.”⁸³

When it came to reports of abuse in Bethlem, the governors took a rather secretive approach to the whole subject in the Book of Minutes. In all cases of reported abuse, no details were given as to what exactly occurred, leaving one to speculate regarding the extent and profundity of such allegations. The governors in their reluctance to discuss abuse in the hospital seem to expose their unwillingness to recognize the mistreatment of patients, giving the impression that given the choice, they would not have even wanted to know about such things. In the Book of Minutes, most references to patient mistreatment are kept short with little detail. This may suggest that when the

⁸¹ BCGM, 18 July 1646, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 323.

⁸² BCGM, 7 November 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 209.

⁸³ BCGM, 24 December 1647, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 382.

Court discovered or even heard about abuse or neglect, the members tried to deal with it themselves in an attempt to keep no permanent record of specific disarray in their hospital. The Bethlem servants did abuse their patients, and word eventually would get around to the Court. If the abuse was troubling enough, the governors requested that a committee, typically a small group of governors ranging from two to five Court members living closest to the hospital, view the hospital and report any signs of abuse at the next meeting. Follow up reports rarely made their way into the Book of Minutes, raising doubts whether anyone bothered to make the visit in the first place.

The reports of abuse which did receive follow up accounts were almost as murky and nondescript as the other initial abuse reports, but the few additional details that they give illustrate a chaotic system of unsupervised servants who, when left to their own devices, turned Bethlem into a nightmare for its patients. The Book of Minutes between 1642 and 1659 is dotted with a number of entries which entreat small groups of governors to look into rumors of abuse, most of which read “It is ordered that a Court shalbee warned & holden at the hospitall of Bethlem att London to consider of the Government of that hospitall & to examine some abuses whereof this Court hath lately received Informacon.”⁸⁴ The fact that such investigations occurred several times over the course of the sixteen years which were examined for this study, while the staff members stayed the same for many of those years, suggests that the abuse continued to happen despite any recourse which the Court may have taken.

⁸⁴ BCGM, 7 May 1651, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 550.

While most Court inspections produced no findings which were entered in the Book of Minutes, a few turned up evidence of larger problems at Bethlem, which required further investigation and resulted in admonitions, implementation of new policies at the hospital, and in heinous cases the loss of a servant's place.⁸⁵ One set of incidents in particular was examined by the Court for months and uncovered serious patient mistreatment. It revealed abuse ranging from absenteeism, theft, drunkenness, to gross levels of patient neglect by almost every servant employed at Bethlem, yet remarkably no one was fired, and in the end, only minute and inconsequential policy changes were made. The punishment, if it can even be considered such, in no way fit the crime.

One record of this ordeal begins on April 23rd, 1651 with a single sentence in the Book of Minutes: "Itt is ordered by this Court that the miscarriages and abuses of the Porter & Servants of Bethlem hospitall bee considered of & ordered att the next Court."⁸⁶ Here the miscarriages and abuses seem to have already been known and no investigation was requested, but a consideration of the abuses was ordered, so the details must have been laid out at the meeting and just omitted from the Book of Minutes. Two meetings later, on the seventh of May, another single sentence entry is found concerning the Bethlem abuses: "It is ordered that a Court shalbee warned & holden at the hospitall of Bethlem att London to consider of the Government of that hospitall & to examine some abuses whereof this Court hath lately received Informacon."⁸⁷ By the time of this

⁸⁵Was it that nothing abusive was found or perhaps that the results were too disturbing for transcription in the Book of Minutes?

⁸⁶ BCGM, 26 October 1649, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 454.

⁸⁷ BCGM, 7 May 1651, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 550.

meeting, the Court may have discovered that the problems lay not only among the lowlier servants, but that they perhaps had to do with the steward: the remark about the “government” of the hospital suggests as much. The Court must have considered whatever information they had to be very serious. Meetings of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem were usually held in the much more spaciouly appointed Bridewell, and convening a special meeting of the Court, much less holding it at Bethlem, which was minuscule in comparison to Bridewell, signified a momentous and somber occasion.

The first two entries regarding the abuse in Bethlem in spring of 1651 were typically nonspecific regarding the events which were assumed to have taken place. But the entry made regarding the miscarriages and abuses discussed at the special Court convened within Bethlem on May 27th 1651 are unique in providing details of what particular forbidden activities had been occurring. First, the governors report that the steward apparently had not been living in Bethlem for quite some time, although residence was a crucial part of his job. His absenteeism was so bad that the patients were not receiving care at night when he should have been there, they were not receiving most of their meals, and the steward had not been buying their provisions with any regularity. The porters and servants were also found to be guilty of various offenses. In particular, they had been wasting food intended for the patients, not feeding them, selling provisions and using the proceeds to stay out for days at alehouses, and then coming

back to the hospital unable to perform their duties, neglecting patients, and other “divers abuses.”⁸⁸

Presented with such a long account of abuse and neglect, theft and actual crime, one might assume that the Court would have used this opportunity to make changes in operations at Bethlem, or at least “consider of the Government” and replace the steward, who had proven to be a miscreant authority figure, and fire some of the other worst offenders. However, after the Court “particularly admonished” the servants and made the empty threat of combining the offices of steward and porter into one position (which they never would have done since Bethlem’s staff of seven was already as small as it could feasibly have been), the governors made the steward promise to move into the house provided for him on the hospital grounds. The porter and servants “promised to reforme & amend.” After the staff received a stiff scolding by the Court and gave promises never to misbehave again, “the Court was pleased to continue them in their Services.”⁸⁹ After an investigation that uncovered such rampant abuse, not only of the employees’ unsupervised positions but of the patients lodged in Bethlem, the Court allowed every single offending employee to stay on with no punishment. The whole incident was never mentioned again in the Book of Minutes, and perhaps the only tangible lingering effect of the entire event was that thereafter, the Court was less lenient with offenses involving alcohol in the hospital.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ BCGM, 27 May 1651, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 551.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ BCGM, 27 May 1651, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 731. Here a basketman was fired for being drunk on the job and surly towards the patients.

Such meaningless admonitions were obviously not the way to put a stop to misbehavior among the staff at Bethlem. Not surprisingly, the reports of abuse and requests for governors to visit and inquire into such reports begin to dot the pages of the Book of Minutes yet again after the conclusion of the events of spring of 1651. In May 1655 the Court seems to have been particularly anxious about reports of abuse in Bethlem. Whereas requests for governor visits to investigate abuse could not be termed rare, they were not frequent and usually were spaced months apart, yet on the sixteenth of May in 1655, two requests were made by the Court for governors to visit Bethlem to look for evidence of abuse, suggesting that something problematic might have been happening at the hospital at that time. At the bottom of a standard lease evaluation entry, added to the end of a sentence, a note appears that after the particular rooms which were to be leased had been viewed, the governors should then “examine what abuses have beene in the hospitall of Bethlem & to report their opinions therein att the next Courte.” Apparently the rental property in question was very close to the hospital.⁹¹ Later in the same Court meeting, on the same page of the Book of Minutes, an entire entry was made concerning a request for the governors to visit Bethlem. It reads, “Alsoe att this Courte the Governors & especially such as dwell neere to the hospitall of Bethlem are intreated to goe as often as they can into the same hospitall there to view & examine how the Lunatiques are used & how the Officers and servants there behave themselves & to report therein to the Courte from time to time.”⁹²

⁹¹ BCGM, 16 May 1655, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 757.

⁹² Ibid.

The language in this entry is striking. Not only are the governors interested in how the staff members are behaving themselves and using the patients, with clear implications of abuse, but the governors are entreated to go “as often as they can,” this phrase implies that the Court not only needs to keep an eye on the staff, but that the Court for whatever reason needs an increased presence amongst their employees. The words seem urgent and grave. Yet if anything was done to try to stop or prevent any abuse at the hospital, it did not last long, because in October of that year, another investigation was requested by the Court to “examine the abuses & misdemeanors of the Officers & servants” at Bethlem.⁹³

If the Court of Governors was so apathetic towards the abuse of patients by the people employed at Bethlem, at least it made some effort to prevent the abuse which came from visitors. The insane must have been easy targets for exploitation. Visiting hours at Bethlem were largely open-ended, visitors could come and go as they wished, and they were generally unsupervised. This lack of supervision is what allowed most of the problems with visitors that led to abuse. In September of 1650, Sunday visits were discontinued due to the fact that “diverse abuses are committed on the Sabbath day by young men & maids...idly and profanely spending their time... troubling the poore Lunatiques.”⁹⁴ Furthermore, the Book of Minutes imply that the visitors to Bethlem were not as likely to physically abuse Bethlem patients as they were to sexually abuse them. The porter was ordered to keep the hospital doors shut to all but those who “bring reliefe to the said poore Lunatiques or come to do them good” and “suffer noe young men

⁹³ BCGM, 3 October 1655, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 772.

⁹⁴ BCGM, 12 September 1650, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, images 515-516.

maidens boyes or girles or any other *loose* people to come into the hospitall on Sabboath Dayes.”⁹⁵ How the porter was to determine the intentions or reputations of any given visitor on a Sunday was left unclear.

Sunday visits seem to have come back into practice after this short ban because by 1657 Sunday visitations seem to have become such a problem that they were banned altogether. Not only visitors, but also patients’ families were forbidden to visit on Sundays. In fact the porter’s explicit orders were to “keepe the doores of the said hospitall carefully locked on every Lords day...& doe not suffer any person or persons to come into the said hospitall upon any prtense whatsoever Except the Doctor Apothecary and Chiurgeon (surgeon) unlesse in case of some present necessity concerning life or sudden danger.”⁹⁶ So it seems that between the ban on Sunday visits in 1650 and the permanent ban in 1657 that the abuse and disruption caused by visitors may have taken on a more serious light.

In this same declaration which banned Sunday visitors, strong alcoholic beverages were also completely banned inside of Bethlem. Drinking had been a problem for some of the servants in times past, but a ban on liquor inside of Bethlem would have done little to prevent their drunkenness, for they could still visit the alehouses which were outside of the hospital. Instead the ban was probably meant to restrict the patients’ access to liquor, which could have been provided by visitors, and it kept visitors from drinking while on a visit. In the same declaration, the Court decided to segregate the male and female patients, making access to female patients more restrictive, which also

⁹⁵ Ibid., image 516. Emphasis added.

⁹⁶ BCGM, 12 June 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 872.

implies that in addition to preventing potential sexual encounters between patients, the Court may have been trying to prevent access to the female patients by the same type of loose young men who spent their time profanely troubling the patients during their visits in 1650.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER V

REARRANGING HOSPITAL PRIORITIES: FOCUS ON FINANCE

Charles I left London and raised his standard in August of 1642, and coincidentally, that same month saw Sir John Wollaston elected President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem. Truly, the Civil War marked the transition into a new era for Bethlem. As the Crown's influence in London waned, Bethlem's administrators found themselves in a position to do as they pleased with the hospital. Bethlem all around was in terrible shape: it was small and overcrowded, it was old and in need of repair, and perhaps worst of all, its accounts were in complete disarray. While the wealthy merchants who met a few times a month in their capacities as governors might not have known how to repair the rotting sewer system or the malfunctioning water pump, they at least had some ideas for bringing money into the hospital's treasury. After all, if anyone in London could have turned Bethlem around financially at this time, many could have been found sitting on the Court from 1642 to 1660.

With the monarch out of direct control in London by September of 1642, the financially motivated revolution in Bethlem was allowed to begin. The oddly worded charter of Bethlem, which granted undefined "custody" of the hospital to the City of London, allowed the monarch a legal loophole through which James I and Charles I interfered with matters of finance, property and the hiring of staff, all issues of importance which required no reciprocal responsibility to be paid by the monarch. James I focused his attention on Bethlem since it was the only hospital in London which still

allowed for Crown participation in its administration. Continuing in his father's footsteps, Charles I used Bethlem to reinforce his method of personal rule and perhaps even to flaunt his rights in front of the powerful City officials on the Court, as when in 1638 he instituted new regulations over how the governors could lease out their properties.⁹⁸

One incident in particular highlights why the Crown presented such a problem for the proper and uninhibited operation of Bethlem as the governors would have seen wanted. When the position of Bethlem Keeper became vacant in 1619, it marked the first time that the Court of Governors was directly involved in the hiring of a replacement. One man stood out for the position, Dr. Helkiah Crooke, especially because he was a trained doctor. From the beginning, however, Crooke showed signs of a lack of regard for the Court, immediately overstepping it and writing directly to James I to solicit the position of Keeper at Bethlem personally. Apparently Crooke and James had already established a relationship via correspondence at least a year before, when Crooke petitioned the King to displace the current Keeper and to give the Keepership to him. The Court was made well aware of James's particular preference for the position, and so Dr. Crooke was elected to the position of Bethlem Keeper in 1619.⁹⁹

But the Court was wary of their new Keeper. Previously, all of Bethlem's Keepers had been men of much lower station, men who would easily take orders from a group of merchants and traders. Perhaps recognizing the potential for conflict with the King's choice of Dr. Crooke, the City of London itself required that before he was

⁹⁸ Andrews, 158.

⁹⁹ Andrews, 63.

allowed to begin as Keeper he agree to follow the instructions of the Court and to give any money that he came across as Keeper to the Court. He was also to abide by various other conditions of employment, a step unprecedented in Bethlem's history. Apparently the Court was suspicious of its new Keeper's capacity to follow orders, suspicions that would unfortunately prove well founded. Eventually, after a lengthy Privy Council investigation that presented Bethlem as a house of corruption and depravity, Crooke was ousted as Keeper, having broken every promise he made as a condition of his employment.

Almost as soon as Crooke began as Keeper, he seemed to turn on the Court. He began demanding more money for everything he did in his capacity as Keeper, even though the Court repeatedly told him there was no more money to give. Fighting was constant between the doctor and the Court for his entire tenure, although besides the constant squabbling there was really no reason to displace or even censure the doctor. After all, he was the first ever medically trained Keeper in charge of Bethlem's patients, and he was a man of a high station. He may have been demanding as an employee, but as long as he was fulfilling the basic requirements of his job, the Court apparently found no reason to do anything harsh. Eventually though, Crooke's complaints about the lack of financing at Bethlem and about the Court itself were heard beyond the walls of the Court and that created controversy. The doctor, harkening back to his days of petitioning James I for his position, went over the heads of the Court officials and formally complained to the City about the lack of money for Bethlem. The resulting visits by City officials and a committee of governors found squalid conditions at Crooke's hospital.

There was no food in the hospital pantry, and the patients were emaciated to the point of starvation. The treasurer somehow managed to increase Bethlem's food allowance, but apparently Crooke was still not pleased.¹⁰⁰

Dr. Crooke next took his complaints against the Court of Governors to his old ally, the Crown. In 1631, he petitioned the Privy Council to investigate Bethlem and complained that he needed more money for the benefit of the poor. The Council at first responded favorably to Crooke's complaints and raised the money allocated to Bethlem slightly by two shillings a week per patient. They also demanded what amounted to an audit of Bethlem's books, starting from its original 1547 grant to the City from the Crown. The Court and the City both became extremely nervous over the prospect of the Crown taking such a close and invasive interest in the hospital. They feared that in an attempt to show his royal prerogative, Charles I might try to take the hospital away from London and out of the control of a citizen-run administration. In retaliation the City and the Court launched their own complaints concerning Bethlem to the Privy Council, this time placing all blame on the Keeper.

In 1633 the final decision of the Privy Council was made. Helkiah Crooke expected the Court of Governors to be punished for under-financing the hospital in his charge, and the City and the Court at least wanted the troublesome doctor to be found guilty of mismanagement so that they could be done with him. When the outcome was made known, Crooke was found guilty of much more than mismanagement.

Examination of the Bethlem ledgers provided by both the Court and Crooke showed that

¹⁰⁰ Andrews, 64.

the doctor had been falsifying Bethlem's accounts for years, embezzling funds set aside for the patients, charging exorbitant admissions fees, and selling food and other provisions meant for his wards. In addition, further investigation showed that Dr. Crooke had hardly ever shown up for work, despite having manipulated both the Court and the Privy Council into increasing funding for patient services, and the Council reported that those kept in Bethlem were "ill ordered and provided for, whilst nothing was done towards their cure."¹⁰¹

The Crooke episode was a wake up call for the Court of Governors. The abuse discovered by the Privy Council investigation convinced them that a change in Bethlem's staff structure was needed and that they, the Court of Governors, needed to assert some kind of control over those put in charge of the hospital. Once Crooke was removed as Keeper of Bethlem, the position of Keeper itself was abolished to make way for a restructuring of Bethlem's top personnel. From that point on, medical staff consisting of a physician, a surgeon and an apothecary managed the treatment side of Bethlem and the inferior officers such as the stewards and porters were to watch over the daily activities of the patients. But spreading out the former duties once incorporated in the Keeper among several positions did not protect the Court from another potential Crooke disaster. The Crown still could exercise its influence in appointments to any of these positions. The position of physician especially was seen as a prized spot and was used as a position for patronage. Indeed, immediately following Crooke's dismissal, the

¹⁰¹ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series*, 1631-33, 424, quoted in Andrews, 65.

very first Bethlem physician appointed in this new capacity was Dr. Othewell Meverall, Charles I's royal physician.¹⁰²

While Dr. Meverall proved to be a better caretaker than Dr. Crooke, the Court was still anxious and wary of the Crown's potential to inject its authority at any given moment, especially with the tension which was to lead to civil war building up in the nation. The Civil War and Interregnum would not eliminate the Court's problems with the Crown forever either; it would merely provide a period of breathing room for the Court where it was unlimited by the interests of the Crown. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, the same problems and fights over royal prerogative began anew with a fresh batch of governors and a new king.¹⁰³

So by the time Sir John Wollaston took his seat as President of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem, it had become painfully obvious to the governors that the Crown's ultimate control over the Court's most important decisions had, in one unfortunate incident, tarnished and almost destroyed the reputations of Bethlem and of the men who governed it. In 1642 with the King having moved his court to Oxford, and with the City of London rather safely in the hands of Parliament, the Court of Governors found themselves in an unprecedented position until: to act as the unchecked and unmonitored rulers of their domain without the Crown's typically mismanaged and

¹⁰² Andrews, 261.

¹⁰³ When the Court of Governors wanted to move Bethlem's facilities to a newer and bigger structure after the Restoration, the governors found themselves again having to appeal to and placate Charles II in order to guarantee the Crown's sanction of the move, and in the 1680's the Crown was able to secure several positions at Bethlem and at other London hospitals for its associates. Corporation of London Records Office at Guildhall, Miscellaneous Records MS 58.26, 7 and 18 Dec. 1683, 22 Jan., 19 Feb., 1 March, 6 May and 1 Nov. 1684, 15 Dec. 1685, 15 June and 27 Nov. 1686, 10 Feb. 1687, 9 and 14 Feb., 5 April, 8 May and 20 Sept. 1688, cited in Andrews, 158.

destructive authority hanging over some of their most important decisions like the sword of Damocles.

After centuries as a diminutive asylum unnoticed on the fringes of London and having been left to decay into the house of starvation and affliction created by Dr. Crooke, Bethlem found itself in an exceptional situation beginning in 1642. Sitting upon its Court of Governors were men with documented minds for finance. When one accomplished businessman left to head another hospital, an even more capable financier immediately took his place. However, once the Court set its sights on finance for Bethlem, it was as if it put on blinders to all of the hospital's other needs. When financial autonomy became the Court's all-encompassing focus, it became so to the ultimate detriment of those the hospital was originally created to serve, its patients.

Historically, Bethlem had in place four fairly stable, though not equally productive, sources of income, the first of which was the payments made by either parish poor taxes or private individuals towards the maintenance of a patient. Second were charitable donations in the form of money given mostly by prominent citizens or goods such as food sometimes donated by the City. The third way in which Bethlem was able to draw a steady income was through income made from its land holdings. Typically the Court would lease or rent out the land it had received from bequests and the earnings would go into the hospital's coffers. Finally, and most profitably, Bethlem was able to earn a significant portion of its funds by renting out to both businesses and private tenants space it owned in buildings which were adjacent to the actual hospital. For years Bethlem had relied on these methods to bring in what little income it was able to scratch

together, and even then it hardly ever managed to stay in the black. As it turned out, what Bethlem would need to become a financially self-reliant institution was a combination of income from these traditionally reliable sources and a handful of new, and ethically questionable, fund-raisers.

The Court's first step was to guarantee the future security of Bethlem's historically established sources of revenue. In doing this the Court came to perhaps their only loggerheads in what were otherwise extremely beneficial conditions of the Commonwealth and Protectorate periods. The breakdown of the monarchy and subsequent attempts at new systems of government during this time meant that the official tax collection system on which Bethlem heavily relied was thrown into a state of disarray. In order to ensure that the hospital consistently received the poor-taxes on which it depended, the governors would often collect poor taxes directly from parish overseers themselves rather than relying on the City to disburse the funds at a later date. Another source of income with which they had real struggles during this time concerned the hospital's land holdings. In July of 1652, Court Treasurer Henry Isaacson and five other governors scrambled to present their case before Commonwealth representatives when a warrant was issued for the seizure of large tracts of land in the manors of Stepney and Hackney, lands declared forfeit as a result of reason of treason by the Royalist Earl of Cleveland and his son Lord Wentworth. Apparently Bethlem held the rights to at least some of the land included in the survey of territory which was to be claimed by the Commonwealth. The governors were adamant in the Court Minutes that all of the land mentioned in the warrant in fact belonged to Bethlem. The minutes do not

record the outcome of the hearing over the Stepney and Hackney lands, but the assured demeanor and language used to describe the overall case seem to show that the governors were confident that they would retain their property.¹⁰⁴

After years of neglect, Bethlem in the 1640's and 1650's was finally receiving some attention and financial maintenance from its new business-minded Court. But harassing tax distributors and preventing the wrongful confiscation of profitable lands did not make the hospital into an economic behemoth. To bring in substantial amounts of revenue, the governors would have to increase the earnings from Bethlem's traditional sources of income and find ways to reduce the hospital's expenditures by adopting an almost parsimonious approach wherever they possibly could. Only then could Bethlem move out of the shadow of Bridewell and become the independent superstructure it was to become by the end of the seventeenth century.

One step which the Bethlem Court took to save money was to allow the wages of the staff at Bethlem to stagnate. Wages were set in 1635 between £2 and £5 per year for the positions of porter and basketmen and were not changed again until 1765, despite massive fluctuations in the costs of living in London over that time.¹⁰⁵ Compared with the other London hospitals, Bethlem paid the worst by far. During this time, low level workers at St. Bartholomew's Hospital were paid £3 more per year than the comparable Bethlem basketmen, and by the end of the century Bridewell workers were already receiving considerably larger incomes than their Bethlem equivalents. The position of

¹⁰⁴ BCGM, 26 July 1652, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, images 613-614.

¹⁰⁵ C.G.A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 39-44.

matron at Bethlem, typically a position filled by the porter's wife, went entirely unpaid.¹⁰⁶ To compound the problem for Bethlem's employees even further, the Civil War and Interregnum occurred in the middle of a much larger period between when, according to economic historians, real wages doubled.¹⁰⁷ It is perhaps small wonder then that the positions of steward, porter and basketman at Bethlem did not attract the best candidates, and even less of a wonder that once these workmen were in place it was not uncommon for them to shirk their duties, steal food and money, and neglect the patients over whom they were hired to watch.

For those working as servants in London during the 1640's and 1650's, wages were typically all that they could rely on for their own maintenance. Wage earners in London did not have land on which they could grow sustenance crops, nor did their inadequate wages provide them with an opportunity for developing any sort of savings at this time.¹⁰⁸ But the governors of Bethlem only had so much money in the budget with which they could pay the staff. In matters concerning wages, the governors took a passively defensive approach to increasing the servants' pay. True, Bethlem paid the worst rates of all the hospitals in the City, but after all, who could blame them for being so low on funds for their workers, considering "the hardnes of the tymes"?¹⁰⁹ The Book of Minutes makes regular note of the lesser servants' petitioning the Court for an increase in wages, but the usual response of the Court is to lament "the hardnes of the tymes" and to send the petitioner away with a one-time gratuity, usually between ten or

¹⁰⁶ Andrews, 293.

¹⁰⁷ E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Appendix 9, 638-44, cited in Andrews, 310, note 60.

¹⁰⁸ Clay, 217-219.

¹⁰⁹ BCGM, 13 March 1649, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 478.

twenty shillings “as a free benevolence of this Court.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, these benevolences were usually given in the expectation of a particular servant’s “better encouragment in their service” at *Bridewell*, not Bethlem.¹¹¹ Regardless, whenever a gratuity was paid or an advance was made to any servant at either Bethlem or Bridewell, the Book of Minutes emphasized the generosity shown by the governors, though without fail all petitions for raises were uniformly rejected throughout the entire period.

Even the Bethlem Steward, who was not typically relegated to the meager wage scale of £2 to £5 due to the higher managerial functions of his position, was exposed to suffering because of inadequate income. The Bethlem accounts show the Steward earning approximately £20 a year between 1642 and 1659, but even the Steward petitioned the Court for a raise or gratuities on many occasions. In July of 1655 the Steward Matthew Benson petitioned the Court for a raise because his wages were insufficient to maintain and feed his family. As was usual for Bethlem servants, his request was denied, but in an unusual show of mercy Benson was given £10 as a gratuity “for his better maintenance & encouragmt in his service.”¹¹²

In these ways the Court stifled the wages of their workers in an attempt to lower overhead costs, but it also found a way to balance Bethlem’s accounts and to increase its revenue at the expense of those the hospital was created to serve, the indigent insane. Perhaps the biggest money maker for the Court from 1642 to 1659 came with a new and unwritten policy of filling Bethlem to capacity, and oftentimes beyond capacity, with

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ BCGM, 20 March 1654, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 702.

¹¹² BCGM, 27 July 1655, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 767.

paying patients. It did not matter to the governors where the patients' payments came from, as long as their rates were coming in. If no one could afford to pay a patient's full costs, the governors could be persuaded to drop the price a little. Retaining patients at reduced rates was far better financially for the hospital than kicking out a partially paying customer. But if no one could afford to pay even a lowered rate for a patient, the governors did not hesitate to turn a mentally ill patient out of Bethlem.

To be admitted as a new patient to Bethlem, potential patients, or their representatives, had to provide a source of regular payment towards their weekly maintenance of food, shelter, clothing, and the like, and one also had to provide two securities in the form of two citizens of London who guaranteed one's payments, should one's initial source of maintenance ever become neglectful. Usually a patient was primarily paid for by his or her parish's poor rates. Typically their parish's Churchwardens or overseers of the poor petitioned the Court to admit that person to the hospital. If a potential patient was poor, but not impoverished enough to qualify for subsidized poor relief, he or she would usually be provided for by family members or friends. Oftentimes, privately maintained patients became a financial burden to their family and friends who often had a difficult time coming up with the money to pay for a patient's maintenance at Bethlem.

"Cures" were not common. More people left the hospital, or, more accurately, were expelled for being found to be "idiots" or for an inability to finance their upkeep at Bethlem than for being cured. Occasionally a few wealthy patients were taken into Bethlem despite the fact that it was a hospital intended for those who were both

impoverished and insane: wealthier patients of course meant more money. For example, the Book of Minutes in April of 1648 describes the admission of John Theobald, “a gentleman” from Kent at the rate of seven shillings a week, a rate significantly higher than the average of three shillings charged to other patients.¹¹³ The practice of cramming bodies into Bethlem and the recurring problem of overcrowding highlight the lengths to which the Court was willing to go in sacrificing patient welfare to make money.

Prior to 1645 Bethlem had only twenty-one rooms meant for housing patients, with an intended maximum capacity of twenty-five patients at any given time.¹¹⁴ Plans were made in 1643 to enlarge the hospital by an additional twenty rooms at the instigation of the Lord Mayor, when a patient he had sent to Bethlem was turned away because of overcrowding. Upon examination of the situation by a City commission, the City recommended that an entirely new wing be added to the hospital, almost doubling its capacity.¹¹⁵ The new rooms would not be complete until early 1645, but apparently that did not stop the governors from treating Bethlem as if the new wing already existed. The April 1644 Spital Sermon report describes Bethlem as providing relief for “44 distracted persons at least continually” during the past year, almost 57% over its maximum capacity.¹¹⁶

Patient numbers are only mentioned in the Book of Minutes on rare occasions. Prior to the Spital Sermons, the Court would typically prepare a small, paragraph-length

¹¹³ BCGM, 21 April 1648, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 397; For other examples see BCGM, 8 February 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 295; and 21 January 1656, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 836.

¹¹⁴ Andrews, 45, 327.

¹¹⁵ BCGM, 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 96.

¹¹⁶ BCGM, 17 April 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 155.

description of the hospital, which included the number of people under its care at that time in an attempt to emphasize why Bethlem should be considered a proper object of charitable donations that Easter. As the Spital Sermons stopped during the years of the Interregnum, patient numbers cease to be reported frequently in the Book of Minutes. In fact, for one of the last regular Spital reports copied in the Book of Minutes in 1645, the number of patients listed was apparently deleted from the record.¹¹⁷ Instances of overcrowding did not end with the creation of the new rooms in 1645. The governors reported Bethlem as full several times and on occasion made the arduous decision to turn paying patients away. In August of 1644, the Churchwardens of St. Bride's attempted to send a woman from their parish to Bethlem, but were told "as yett there is noe roome ready for her." The Churchwardens were advised that they would be notified as soon as the new rooms were made ready, and then they could return for a visit with the treasurer to discuss the terms of taking the new patient into Bethlem.¹¹⁸ Another account of Bethlem's congestion is found in May of 1654 when the governors acknowledge "albeit the hospitall of Bethlem bee very full of Lunatickes" they would be willing to find a spot for another paying patient.¹¹⁹ And in another show of the link between overcrowding and patient payments, the governors explicitly note in a May 1647 entry that "in regard of the great number of distracted persons in Bethlem more then formerly...Itt is ordered by

¹¹⁷ BCGM, 28 March 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 243. For this entry, there is an empty space in the sentence where a number of patients should be; the number appears to have been scratched away.

¹¹⁸ BCGM, 30 August 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 197.

¹¹⁹ BCGM, 24 May 1654, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 713.

this Courte that noe more distracted persons shalbee received into the said hospital for lesse allowance then five shillings per weeke,” a relatively lofty rate for Bethlem.¹²⁰

Judging by the Court’s records, it was fairly common for a new patient to be admitted under a fairly high base rate of around four to five shillings a week. If a patient’s family or parish could manage to continue paying that rate, then that rate was kept, but more often than not, a patient’s family or parish overseers would return to the Court within a year or so of a patient’s initial admittance and petition the Court for abatements in the rate. Abatements were almost always granted in the form of a shilling or two per week, especially if the parish or family member provided a hard-luck reason for their limited means. The typical reason a parish would give for requiring a lowered patient rate was that the parish was overwhelmed with the poor in their area.¹²¹ Other parishes such as the parish of Earles Colne in Essex argued that Bethlem’s rates alone were simply too high to begin with. Earles Colne was able to get the rate of Grace Waites reduced from six shillings a week to four shillings a week, since the former amount pushed the total of the parish’s poor taxes above the amount they paid to the Army in taxes.¹²² Although the average rate for a patient’s weekly stay was low compared to other living expenses, to an already overtaxed parish or destitute family, Bethlem was far from cheap.

The frequency with which patient rates were renegotiated within such a short span of a patient’s initial admittance, and the expediency with which the governors dealt

¹²⁰ BCGM, 28 May 1647, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 361.

¹²¹ BCGM, 24 December 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 894.

¹²² BCGM, 6 December 1654, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 738.

with such abatements as time went on, seems to imply that the governors came to expect payment renegotiations with a majority of their admittees. In 1642, the Court would typically consider rate reductions over the course of more than one meeting, but by 1645 decisions over rate reductions were made immediately. As long as they could keep a paying patient inside of Bethlem's walls, the governors were willing to knock a shilling or two off of someone's weekly payments, if the alternative meant no payment at all. A great deal of energy was spent by the Court, too, in tracking down someone who would pay for a given patient when his or her initial source of maintenance became insolvent. In the case of Edwards Phillips, a patient who was initially sent to Bethlem and paid for by "his friends," the responsibility of his preservation at Bethlem was passed to the husbands of his half sisters, who were better equipped to provide for him monetarily and who also had stronger familial ties to him.¹²³ The governors perhaps assumed that the family members' responsibility to the patient would assure regular payments better than the friends who had previously paid Mr. Phillips's way.

In a few cases, some governors found themselves personally tracking down the parties responsible for patients whose origins were unknown at the time of their presentation to the Court for admittance. Both during and after the Civil War, London was flooded with vagrants displaced by the fighting and soldiers who had either deserted or were newly discharged and were looking for work. Doubtless this was a particular crisis for Bridewell, but in the weekly round-ups of the "wandering souldiers and other vagrant people to the numbr of 100s" the Bridewell beadles would catch every now and

¹²³ BCGM, 28 May 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 167.

then someone who belonged in Bethlem.¹²⁴ When a potential patient either could not or would not tell the Court where he or she came from, it was up to the governors to ascertain who would be responsible for that person's bills.

Tracking down someone's last permanent settlement in early modern England was not a simple task, but when money was at stake, the Bethlem governors proved resourceful and tracked down responsible parishes for a number of seemingly unidentifiable patients. When Sir John Wollaston found Susan Newell "wandering and raging in the streets" of London, he sent her to Bethlem, but when presented for admission, no one there could determine who to bill for her stay. She obviously belonged in Bethlem, but who was going to pay her way? The governors were able to find out that she was born in Odiam in Hampshire,¹²⁵ but since the law required that the parish in which one had last been settled for the three continuous years provide for one's poor relief (rather than the parish of birth), it was necessary to establish if any other parish might be responsible for her upkeep. The governor, Mr. Ham, was put on the case and set to work without delay by contacting the overseers of Hampshire.¹²⁶ Less than six months later, Newell was confirmed as having been a resident of Hampshire, a confirmation that mysteriously coincided with her miraculous recovery of her senses. Once the governors found out where she belonged, they sent her home as soon as possible. Perhaps Susan Newell did not recover her senses at all. More likely Hampshire

¹²⁴ BCGM, 19 March 1650, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 541.

¹²⁵ The town still exists today as Odiham.

¹²⁶ BCGM, 18 December 1646, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, images 338-339.

could not afford or did not want to pay for Susan's stay in Bethlem, and upon hearing of this refusal, the governors sent her home.

It was common for the Court to use threats to get families and parishes to make their payments.¹²⁷ Usually the threats came after a few late payments and resulted in a reduced rate as in the cases mentioned above, but in more than a handful of cases the Court carried out their threats to send patients home when their funds disappeared. Such attempts at coercion were often recorded in detail in the Book of Minutes, and to a parish or family which sent away an insane member, it could have been a scary prospect to face dealing with a dangerous or otherwise unmanageable person. That is why most families or parishes sent people to Bethlem in the first place, as a last resort when the mad could not be cared for by means at their own disposal. For example, when one Mr. Pierson fell behind in his payments for keeping Joan Dunning in Bethlem, he was warned that if he did not start paying, "shee shalbee noe longer kept in Bethlem but bee forthwith taken thence and carryed to and left att the doore of the dwellinge house of the said Mr. Pierson."¹²⁸

For the most part these threats worked, and patients' payments began again or began anew as reduced fees after a bit of coercion by the Court, but the Book of Minutes records several situations in which arrangements could not be made for a given patient's continuation at the hospital. Few patients were lucky enough to simply be sent on their ways and never sued or held for payments by Bethlem: Anne Parrett got to go home for

¹²⁷ Examples can be found in BCGM, 27 April 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 162; 15 February 1655, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 792; and 27 June 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 255.

¹²⁸ BCGM, 4 November 1642, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, images 56-57.

free when her parish made it plain after she was picked up in London that they had no money to provide for her care at Bethlem. So did the elderly Elizabeth Freeze.¹²⁹ Then again, Elizabeth Freeze's husband had petitioned the Court for an abatement in her fees because of financial hardships after his house had "blown down." The governors responded by discharging Mrs. Freeze at no additional charge to Mr. Freeze, who would not be able to pay her fees if she had stayed on as a patient.¹³⁰

Routinely, patients were not ejected without one last battle over money. In the strange case of Thomas Wattee, his parish agreed to pay for his stay in Bethlem only up to a certain date, after which time he was to be released. He was sent home when the money ran out, even though the Court and his parish were warned that he was still very dangerous.¹³¹ The Court admonished his parish to let him stay, though they offered no reduced rates or monetary assistance, but one wonders if its safety concerns were genuine or if it was worried about losing another paying client. If it was decided that a patient was to be sent home, but there was still money owed as back-payments, the Court was not above taking a parish or family before the Sessions to collect the sum due, and they even held patients as virtual hostages until their bills were paid. After Robert Mitchell died in Bethlem, the citizen of London who served as one of his securities, Roger Seares, was sued for payments never made by Mitchell's family when he was alive. At the same Court meeting when the Seares suit was decided upon, the Court decided to threaten a suit against the parish overseers of Oxbridge, Dorset in order to

¹²⁹ BCGM, 25 July 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 257.

¹³⁰ BCGM, 3 December 1647, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 377.

¹³¹ BCGM, 24 May 1654, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 712.

force payments for George Berke, who was to be sent home anyway.¹³² But perhaps the strangest squabble over money when a patient was being sent home occurred in the case of Thomas Joice, whose parish was first threatened with his return if they did not pay for his upkeep. Later it was decided that he would be sent home, but before he was allowed to return to his home parish, the debt incurred by his parish for the time he had spent in Bethlem would have to be paid off or secured by a bond.¹³³ In essence, Thomas Joice would be held by Bethlem until it received its money. In cases concerning delinquent charges and back payments, it can be argued that the Court was merely concerned about obtaining the money rightfully owed to the hospital, but the manner in which the governors frequently chose to ensure late payments bordered on the extreme, as in the case of Robert Joice.

In Susan Newell's case, as mentioned above, she was sent home to Hampshire supposedly recovered of her senses six months after her initial arrival at Bethlem. However, suspicion arises about her alleged "cure" when one considers that her short stay at Bethlem would have allowed very little time for treatment. Perhaps most damning of all, Susan Newell ended up in and out of Bethlem as a patient for years after her supposed cure. Having been sent home recovered of her senses in May 1647, she was back in Bethlem, having been found as a wandering, distracted vagrant in the streets of London in June 1648.¹³⁴ In some cases, the Court sent patients home suggesting that they were cured to make more room for others. In March 1642, at the behest of the

¹³² BCGM, 2 December 1648, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 421.

¹³³ BCGM, 17 April 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 162; 28 May 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 167; and 31 May 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 172.

¹³⁴ BCGM, 16 June 1648, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 401.

Court, Dr. Meverall performed a thorough investigation of the patients and found that three women in particular were no longer so unruly that they were a threat to society. Coincidentally, all three women happened to be supported by London parishes in the districts of Bethlem governors who were also Aldermen, and all three had been longtime patients. They were subsequently ordered released so that their spaces could be potentially used by more dangerous patients.¹³⁵

In June 1644, the same year that Bethlem was so dangerously overcrowded, out of nowhere, with no previous mention in the Book of Minutes of a doctor being sent to examine patients, seven people in Bethlem were found to be “recovered of their former senses” and were sent home, cured.¹³⁶ As with Susan Newell, though, some of these patients’ cures are doubtful because the patients ended up back in Bethlem so quickly. Anne Parrett was one of the seven people who were pronounced recovered in 1644 and released. Although her readmission is not specifically mentioned in the Book of Minutes, her discharge for non-payment in July of 1645 is noted.¹³⁷ Not all claims of cures were entirely suspect. William Shelton was noted to be “recovered of his Lunacy” and was discharged from Bethlem in April of 1654 and never readmitted. The same happened with Thomas Brewen: he was “soe recovered” that he was immediately released to his parents, who of course had agreed to pay his arrears for the time he had spent in Bethlem up to the date of his discharge.¹³⁸ But even if one was found to be cured, it was not always easy to get out of Bethlem if there was money involved. In the

¹³⁵ BCGM, 24 March 1642, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 80.

¹³⁶ BCGM, 21 June 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 182.

¹³⁷ BCGM, 25 July 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 257.

¹³⁸ BCGM, 26 June 1646, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 320.

case of Lucy Kage, she was found to be “soe well recovered of her former sences,” yet until all of her bills were paid, she would not be allowed to go home. Furthermore, if her parish decided to just leave her in Bethlem and ignore the bills, they would be sued.¹³⁹

There were ways to get out of Bethlem without getting entangled in a net of money owed or lawsuits: one could become genuinely recovered, die, or be proven not a true lunatic. Bethlem governors did not want to waste their sparse resources on people for whom those resources were not explicitly meant. When rumors circulated through the Court in the early 1640’s of undeserving patients, people who were not actually insane, filling space at Bethlem, random inspections of patients by the physician occurred from time to time. Before one such inspection the Book of Minutes noted “that many of them [the patients] are rather Idiotte then Lunatiques and not fitt to be kept in the said hospital.”¹⁴⁰ Close attention was paid to make sure that no money was being wasted on an unworthy “idiot” or otherwise diseased person.

The Court of Governors of Bethlem was serious when it came to keeping so-called idiots, i.e. the permanently mentally deficient, out of Bethlem. After centuries of utilizing an informal admissions process, taking in those who seemed insane to the admitting Court and who could also provide payments for their care, sorting out problems concerning idiots and those who were otherwise diseased if and when those concerns ever arose, the Bethlem administration decided to simplify and formalize the admissions process in 1653. On the 16th of November, the governors required that in order for a person to be admitted as a patient to Bethlem Hospital, he or she must first be

¹³⁹ BCGM, 16 January 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 289.

¹⁴⁰ BCGM, 9 November 1649, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 457.

examined or certified by the Bethlem physician. The physician was then to report that person to be a “Lunatike” to the Court, all “to prevent the keeping of Idiotts & sottish people there which are noe Lunatikes.”¹⁴¹ Though the certification process prevented many idiots from entering Bethlem, it did not prevent all, and it did not prevent people from entering Bethlem who were neither idiot nor lunatic but those whose mental disturbances arose from yet-to-be diagnosed organic maladies.

Whether certain patients attempted to convince Bethlem officials that they did not belong there during the 1640’s and 1650’s will probably never be known for certain, but it is known that examinations to weed out those who did not belong were potentially hazardous for those who were investigated. When Dr. Meverall’s successor Dr. Nurse was new to his post, one of his first tasks was to make rounds of Bethlem and look for those who were not proper lunatics. He subsequently reported to the Court that he had found five patients who were “fitt to bee discharged,” but not all were discharged on the grounds that they were cured. Three of the five were merely mistaken as insane: one was found to be a wanted criminal, another was considered idle and dangerous and was sent to Bridewell for hard labor, and the third was found to be lame and diseased, not crazy, and was sent to St. Bartholomew’s. The remaining two were just ordered to be sent home; Dr. Nurse does not say if they were cured or if they were just free to go.¹⁴² In addition to the one lame and diseased patient Dr. Nurse found in his round-up, another case of bodily illness being confused for mental illness was discovered in 1656 in the case of Robert Porter. The Bethlem surgeon found him not to have been insane at all, but

¹⁴¹ BCGM, 16 November 1653, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 684.

¹⁴² BCGM, 13 January 1648, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 423.

to have been suffering the whole time from “the fould disease” otherwise known as venereal disease. Upon this discovery, the Court seems to have panicked, since disease could spread rapidly and disastrously in the close confines of Bethlem, and immediately ordered Mr. Porter discharged.¹⁴³ The governors may not have known this, but syphilis has long since been known to have caused dementia in its last stages. Whether or not this was Mr. Porter’s true affliction is unclear.

Medical examination and the discharge of unworthy patients did not always mean that an ousted patient had some other affliction or terrible fate that awaited him or her, nor did a discharge necessarily mean that dire financial straits awaited one’s family or community on the other side. In two cases from eighteen years of Court records, patients were simply discharged from Bethlem. During Sir John Wollaston’s rule as President in 1645, Elizabeth Heyley who had been admitted for lunacy, was found “not distracted or Lunatique.” Since she therefore obviously did not belong in Bethlem she was ordered discharged.¹⁴⁴ No mention of fees owed or what parish was responsible for her was made. Then under Lord Packe’s tenure it happened again. In May of 1656 Sam Kendricke was simply discharged from the hospital since he was “not Lunatike nor distracted.”¹⁴⁵ That was all that was said of his case, no mention of monies owed or misdiagnosis, simply that he was free to go. It does seem odd, even though these cases are only two in a sea of hundreds, that no money is mentioned in an otherwise extremely diligent Book of Minutes which keeps track of almost every patient’s account, especially

¹⁴³ BCGM, 7 May 1656, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 806.

¹⁴⁴ BCGM, 5 December 1645, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 282.

¹⁴⁵ BCGM, 7 May 1656, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 806.

upon discharge. Were mistakes made and these patients never belonged in Bethlem in the first place, or were they just flukes? Perhaps these two were purely lucky to have gotten out of Bethlem as easily as they did. Other than leaving in a mortuary cart, there had been no other simple way to get out of Bethlem since the brick wall in the hospital's backyard was ordered to be built higher in March of 1642, so that no more patients could climb over it and escape.¹⁴⁶

Considering the governors' concern with funded patients, it is not surprising to find them concerned with other sources of revenue. One of Bethlem's biggest sources of income had historically been its rents, both from land bequests and from leasing out the houses attached to Bethlem as residences and businesses to Londoners. In the 1640's and 1650's, the men who sat as Presidents of the Court were men of particular entrepreneurial skill. Their knowledge in money matters was not to be trifled with, especially when it came to the subject of property. Both Interregnum presidents made substantial portions of their fortunes by investing in real estate and both served as advisors for the state regarding land sales, Wollaston during the Civil War and Packe afterwards. Prior to 1642, rents brought in a respectable amount of income for the hospital, but afterwards, with some adept management and renegotiation, tenant rents not only increased Bethlem's revenues, but financed the new wing of twenty rooms, despite the fact that two rental buildings had to be demolished and tenants evicted to make way for the enlargement.

¹⁴⁶ BCGM, 24 March 1642, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 80.

The decision to enlarge Bethlem in 1643 marks the turning point in rent management for the Court. It was at the Court meeting on June 2nd, 1643 that the governors first hinted about their new policy towards their tenants, which would never be formally written down: to renegotiate for higher rents whenever possible in order to secure higher income for the hospital, and to find ways to cancel low-rate, long-term leases in order to renegotiate those for bigger profits and higher rates.¹⁴⁷ As has been discussed, when Lord Mayor Isaac Penington discovered that Bethlem was too full to accept someone he attempted to have admitted, he in essence told Bethlem to add more space. A new building would cost money to build, and the governors were hesitant to spend Bethlem's already limited funds. At least new rooms would mean the ability to take in more patients and more patients would mean more weekly rates, and spending money on a new wing could have been an investment opportunity, but being penurious, the Court quickly came up with a way to pay for the new rooms without actually having to dip into their own resources.

A letter to the Lord Mayor sums up the plan, to see that “the Charge of new building the same roomes bee raised out of fines wch will come in for renewing some leases of houses belonging to the said hospitall wch in short time wilbee out of lease.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, the governors were willing to renegotiate for higher yearly rates and charge fees for creating new leases on a number of tenements which were conveniently expiring soon. To create room for the new wing, the governors investigated which tenements brought in the least rent and decided to tear down two houses in the worst

¹⁴⁷ BCGM, 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 96.

¹⁴⁸ BCGM, 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 97.

shape to create space for the new building. Unfortunately, one of those houses was currently occupied by a widow; fortunately, the governors were particularly apt at dealing with widows and the elderly, since they hardly ever haggled during rent negotiations or fought with the authority of the Court when evicted. In the case of the widow Defossea, she was easily persuaded to leave her tenement. She even made a personal and humble appearance at the Court and promised to leave her home quietly, but begged it to let her stay until Christmas; the Court decided against letting her stay so long.¹⁴⁹

In deciding to tear down the widow's house to make way for the new hospital rooms, the Court actually went against the City Council's advice to tear down a building being used as both a house and a tavern by one Mr. William Woodcork, a cooper. When the governors initially went to meet with Mr. Woodcork, they were supposed to examine the building and mark it for demolition, but they instead found that the tavern would bring in much rent and that Mr. Woodcork was willing to sign a new lease for a substantially higher sum than he had been paying, in addition to paying a £50 fine for the governors to draw up the new lease.¹⁵⁰ The governors made it known when they visited Mr. Woodcork that they were considering his tenement for demolition, and he still had to allow a small room used as a kitchen (which jutted off of the back of his apartment space) to be demolished.¹⁵¹ But when they left the Woodcork tavern, instead of notifying the owner of his eviction, the governors decided the tavern just was not the best location

¹⁴⁹ BCGM, 16 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 100.

¹⁵⁰ Though the £50 was actually more like a fee, it was called a fine.

¹⁵¹ BCGM, 2 June 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 97.

for the new addition to the hospital. The building where the poor and submissive widow lived would be much better. Did this amount to landlord extortion or was it just good business sense?

As a final part of their strategy for expansion, the governors in 1643 paid attention to a number of leases they knew would soon be up for renewal. They wrote to the Lord Mayor that to underwrite their costs in building the new rooms for Bethlem, they would renew or reassign at higher rates the leases which would come up in the near future. Even if higher rates could not be negotiated, the fines that would come from writing new leases would bring in at least some money. Given the size of the fine that came from Mr. Woodcork, those amounts alone could add up fairly quickly. In February 1644 the leases finally began to come up for renegotiation. Even in cases where the tenants wished to subdivide and sublease their larger buildings, the governors received a fine from each subdivision renter, a percentage of the subdivided lease rent, and an additional donation to the Bethlem poor box. Also by this time, the Court had found a way to evict Mr. Woodcork from his entire tenement because he refused to give up that little kitchen space to make room for an expanded yard for the Bethlem patients. As a result, the governors refunded a small percentage of his original lease fine and repossessed his entire building.¹⁵²

The Court was just as persistent in collecting their rents as they were in collecting their patients' fees. Past due rents often meant a summons for the tenant to appear before the Court to provide just cause for non-payment. If one could provide no

¹⁵² BCGM, 21 February 1644, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 231.

such cause, or failed to appear, a Court rent collector, employed by Bridewell but utilized on occasion by Bethlem, was sent to track the tenant down and force an appearance. Repeat rent delinquents could be evicted or brought up before Sessions and sued. Even when a person died, debts to Bethlem did not disappear, no matter how small. Widows were held accountable for their deceased husbands' rents and were often sued for such money, even when they argued that no funds were left in an estate. The Court seems to have been exceptionally efficient in collecting their longstanding rent debts when compared with Bridewell. In May 1658, the rent rolls of both hospitals were carefully examined and any accounts which had been overdue for several years were brought to the Court's attention. On the accounts, for people who had died, their heirs were to either be contacted to appear before court to pay the amount due, or if it was thought that there was no chance that the amount could ever be collected, the amount would be deleted from the rolls. Compared to Bridewell, which had five longstanding overdue accounts, Bethlem only had one, and it dated back just to 1643.¹⁵³

Another system devised by the Court to bring in money, which proved relatively successful, was that of allowing visitors into Bethlem to view and even interact with the patients. Large and reliable charitable donations were sparse during wartime and only picked up slightly during the economic insecurity under the new governments of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Rare exceptions came when governors' connections to the London elite allowed them intermittently to secure large donations from wealthy friends. Sir Christopher Packe, not yet Lord Packe, was able to flaunt his growing level

¹⁵³ BCGM, 11 May 1658, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 924.

of influence amongst the nation's elite in December 1657 when he announced to the Court that he knew of a certain charitable person who was "willing to disburse four hundred pounds" worth of real estate to Bethlem, but such donations, especially ones so large, were few and far between.¹⁵⁴ Instead the governors fell back on the dependable method of visitation to draw in charitable donations.

Visitors, with the exceptions of patients' family and friends, were quite rare prior to the seventeenth century. Despite what Elizabethan and Jacobean theater may suggest, references to Bethlem in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century compositions were either the products of hearsay or the results of rare visits to Bethlem due to the hospital's close proximity to some of the era's earliest playhouses.¹⁵⁵ Visiting was not something new to Bethlem after 1642, and in fact visitors were routine by the 1630's, but it became very popular to visit the hospital during the Interregnum period. Earlier Courts had already decided to turn Bethlem into an attraction for visitors; the Courts under Wollaston and Packe just continued the idea. It is here that Bethlem departs so drastically from Foucault's account of the history of asylums. The insane kept in Bethlem were not locked away as shameful monsters which represented chaos and idleness in an Age of Reason. Instead, patients in Bethlem were put on display and onlookers were encouraged, visitors were allowed to interact with patients who were not always kept behind bars like animals in a zoo. From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, to see the spectacle of mad men and women at Bethlem was almost as much of

¹⁵⁴ BCGM, 24 December 1657, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 895.

¹⁵⁵ Andrews, 132-133.

an attraction for those who lived in London or were visiting the City as the theaters or any of the public entertainments and bars found along Fleet Street.

Visitors were encouraged at Bethlem by the Court for one basic reason: donations. Upon entering and leaving the main door of the hospital, visitors were faced with a poor box in which they were strongly encouraged, though not required, to leave donations for the benefit of the “poor lunatiques.” Donations to supplement the incomes of the stewards, porters, matrons, and basketmen were also accepted in another box placed at the door. Apparently, some years enough money was gathered at the servants’ box to rival their incomes, even when divided among them all.¹⁵⁶ Visitors could also bring to individual patients gifts or provisions such as food or clothes, of which patients often were in need, but more often than not such gifts were brought to patients only by their families. Sometimes wealthier visitors, propelled by a sense of charity, spirituality, or a desire to see their name listed on the hospital’s charitable roll (on display for all to see), would leave large contributions of money after visiting. Money left in the poor box was left anonymously, but the governors hoped that visiting the hospital would inspire wealthy donors to remember Bethlem at a later date or in their wills, and sometimes that hope paid off. Off-site donations ran the gamut from large bequests to small gifts. For example, Sir James Cambell left £100 in his will for the use of the “poore distracted people harboured & kept in the hospitall of Bethlem” and in 1657 an anonymous donor gave £10 to clothe the “poor lunatiques.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Andrews, 294.

¹⁵⁷ BCGM, 6 October 1643, [CD-ROM], series BCB-09, image 123.

The poor box placed at the entrance to Bethlem collected a great deal of income between 1642 and 1659.¹⁵⁸ Visitation allowed people from many different walks of life to make charitable donations to the hospital, and when enough people made even small offerings, the numbers eventually added up to a respectable fortune. What motivated so many people to visit Bethlem in the seventeenth century is anyone's guess. Impetuses probably ranged from curiosity or even morbidity, but it is almost certain that what was seen by visitors to Bethlem sparked in some a sense of pity or disgust. For while wild rumors of whippings and turmoil were already rampant throughout the populace before visiting became prevalent, many would not have expected to see the signs of abuse and neglect that they most likely did on any given visit.

¹⁵⁸ The exact amounts brought in by visitor donations are not recorded in the Book of Minutes until sometime after the Restoration.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:

RESULTS, BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Bethlem's Court records begin to fade from existence at the end of 1658, fewer notes survive in a noticeably sloppier hand and eventually meetings were held with much less frequency than before. The Book of Minutes cease completely in the middle of 1659, coinciding with the growing anxiety over the downfall of the Protectorate and the possible return of the monarchy. They only resurface again in the spring of 1662 when the initial tumult of the Restoration was over, although the first few years of the Restoration were uncertain for some on the Bethlem Court of Governors, especially the President Lord Packe.¹⁵⁹

Having so closely aligned himself with the Protectorate, to the point that his name was nearly inseparable from the "Humble Petition and Advice," Packe's entire political and public career, even his life, were at stake when Charles II arrived in England in May of 1660. Packe was spared his life with Charles's "Act of Indemnity and Oblivion," which gave amnesty to many of Cromwell's supporters, but at the price of his titles, a portion of his wealth, and all of his public offices. His replacement on the Court by Sir Richard Browne signified an end to the reign of the financial *wunderkinds* over

¹⁵⁹ The notes which exist in the Bethlem Archives for the Court meetings held between 1659 and 1666 are only rough copies of the original Book of Minutes and contain fewer details than the originals. The original copies were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

Bethlem.¹⁶⁰ Also marking an end to the unique period of Court autonomy was the Restoration itself. With a monarch back on the throne, the confounding factor of the Crown was reinjected into the power structure of Bethlem. Although Charles II did not follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather regarding an insistence on strict personal rule and the divine right of kings over all aspects of their kingdoms, he did reinsert himself into the affairs of Bethlem intermittently, preventing the unchecked rule of the Court over the hospital of Bethlem.

If the Courts headed by Sir John Wollaston and Lord Christopher Packe had intended to strengthen the coffers of Bethlem during their presidencies, they certainly succeeded. Whereas Bethlem had once seemed destined to ruination, the men who were in place on the Court when presented with an unprecedented opportunity essentially to do as they pleased were able to place Bethlem on the track to financial independence and confidence. Under the decisive management of Wollaston and Packe, the Court became precisely focused on finance, concentrating intensely on ways in which funds could be brought into Bethlem to repair the hospital's financial situation. To men who had made their fortunes through London's markets and their own personal skills with investments, the task must have been an intriguing challenge: to turn such an embarrassing institutional mess into a public institution of service, which could stand on its own in less than twenty years. Through a series of money-making schemes and creative budgetary renegotiations, whether they were ethical or not, the Court succeeded in its goal.

¹⁶⁰ Sir Richard Browne, a former Parliamentary Major General turned key advisor to Charles II, found his way through the political ranks as a military man.

During the Restoration era, Bethlem continued to become more self-sufficient, based on the policies set forth by those who sat on the Court during the Civil War and Interregnum. Eventually Bethlem developed its own public image as a charitable hospital and moved out from underneath Bridewell's shadow, which had for so long hidden it away from full public view. Beginning in the 1660's the governors were able to make the decision to build a "New Bethlem," something which would have been unimaginable just twenty years earlier, but due to the financial planning and savings of the governors who came before them, such a proposal was possible. The New Bethlem was designed by Robert Hooke, the architectural associate of Christopher Wren (responsible for rebuilding a great deal of London after the Great Fire) and was completed in 1676.¹⁶¹

The new building was a palatial hospital situated in Moorfields on the boundaries of London proper, one of Hooke's greatest masterpieces. The results were considered breathtaking, inspiring poems, prose, and artistic depictions to record its architectural magnificence well into the Augustan Age. Compare this to the "Old Bethlem," of which only one unreliably fragmentary blueprint exists, with prosaic descriptions giving only spatial measurements. Bethlem at Moorfields was not only impressive in sheer size, but it was also eloquently ornamented all along its façade, and its main entrance was framed by Corinthian pediments topped by two iconic statues representing the dichotomy of madness: the raving madman and the melancholic lunatic.¹⁶² If the new building sounded

¹⁶¹ See *The Curious Life of Robert Hooke: The Man Who Measured London* by Lisa Jardine for more on Hooke.

¹⁶² Christine Stevenson, "The Architecture of Bethlem at Moorfields," in *The History of Bethlem*, ed. Jonathan Andrews (London: Routledge, 1997), 238.

extravagant, it was supposed to be. It culminated and recognized, whether consciously or not, the efforts made by the governors of the Interregnum era, who made such a dramatic change in the history of Bethlem possible. If Packe and Wollaston had never been elected to the Court of Governors, if they had not put their business skills to work at Bethlem, and if they had not been presented with such a peculiar and distinctive set of historical circumstances under which they operated, the move to Moorfields simply would not have been possible financially or practically.

Those were the positive results of the Court policies and actions between 1642 and 1659, but with such fervent dedication almost solely to Bethlem's monetary situation, the Court effectively put on blinders to almost all of the other needs of the hospital, especially the needs of its patients. Business was something in which the men of the Court were skilled, and they rarely concerned themselves with the problems of the insane wallowing within the walls of their hospital. In fact, most of the Court's newly instituted financial policies and plots for money-making only made the situations for the people who lived in and depended on Bethlem less bearable.

During this time patient neglect became the norm at Bethlem, and following the examples set in the years before them, the Courts which came after those of Wollaston and Packe did not do much to improve the conditions which their predecessors seemed to think were perfectly normal. As a result, neglect and abuse were mainstays at Bethlem, eventually becoming adjectives inseparable from the name. By underpaying the physicians at Bethlem relative to other London hospitals, the Court effectively reinforced the notion that the position was nothing more than a sinecure and did nothing

to correct that misconception over the course of many years. With this dangerous precedent set, doctors appointed by later Courts used Bethlem as a springboard to launch their own lucrative private asylums in order to supplement their paltry sinecurial incomes at Bethlem. From there, Bethlem entered into an era which employed a string of particularly careless doctors whose neglect harkened back to the days of Helkiah Crooke, all to the detriment of the patients who were supposed to be receiving care and treatment from these men.

With an almost total lack of physician care, any sort of treatment was left more or less entirely up to the untrained, underpaid, and disgruntled inferior staff members who lived at Bethlem alongside the patients. By underpaying the staff in an almost criminal manner, the Court only served to harbor discontent amongst the workers who did the most and had the most interaction with the patients at the hospital. To begin with, the people who were hired to fill the lowlier positions at Bethlem were prone to bouts of drunkenness and thievery. Perhaps feeling forced to steal from the provisions to supplement their disgraceful incomes, many Bethlem servants also, and less understandably, apparently took their aggression out on the patients. Just as neglect seemed to increase under these Courts, so did incidences of patient abuse. Complicating the problem of servants abusing patients even further, the Court of Governors, even when faced with allegations of abuse and the occasional confession to abuse, were reluctant to take any action against their hired personnel, and reports of abuse were often brushed aside and never followed up. It was as if the Court either did not care or had other more important things with which to concern itself.

Bethlem seemed almost to be a fate to which one was ultimately destined, not a hospital to which one was sent for cure. Records well into the eighteenth century show that once a poor distracted patient entered the hospital, health did not really matter, it was one's bill which was the true concern. One did not tend to freely leave Bethlem cured of an affliction, rather one was more likely to leave still a lunatic due to a lack of funding after a series of arguments over money between one's family or parish and the Court, and occasionally one would be tossed out as an idiot or as a last resort, one could leave Bethlem as a corpse. In the end, while Bethlem's administration may have touted cure and treatment as their purpose and goals, it was truly money which fueled the operations of the Bethlem Court and Bethlem itself; patients were incidental.

While this period between 1642 and 1659 was unique for the reasons already mentioned, it was also distinctive in one other way. It was during this period and immediately following its conclusion that Bethlem truly transformed itself into the popular idea of "Bedlam" as a place of confusion and uproar. True, the concept of Bedlam had already existed prior to the Civil War, but it was not until after the Restoration that the exaggerations which had constructed the notion of Bedlam in prior times were transformed from fantastic stories to more plausible tales. In other words, when people described the treatment of patients in Bethlem, what would have once been considered a ghoulish tale of abuse and neglect before the Civil War might have actually occurred during and after the Interregnum. In this manner Bethlem began to reinforce its notorious reputation as Bedlam in popular culture.

In the years following the reign of Charles II and beyond, while its architectural façade was being lauded by poets and artists, Bethlem's interior was being ripped apart as a horrific madhouse, a dungeon of chaos ruled by madness in literature and other popular media such as the eighth plate in William Hogarth's famous series of engravings titled *The Rake's Progress*. Such damning reports would continue for decades throughout the Restoration and into the Augustan Age in accounts which were disseminated widely through magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets, not to mention depictions in theater and word of mouth.

While most of the accounts of torturous whippings and of patients shackled to the walls at Bethlem were wildly exaggerated for dramatic effect and should not be taken at face value, the cases presented here are taken directly from the records of those who would have been the most likely to cover up such injustices. Neglect, absenteeism, starvation, physical and sexual abuse: they all did occur at Bethlem, and those who had the power to put a stop to them were ineffectual because they were concerned more with the hospital as an institution than with those for whom the hospital was supposed to care. In fact, in many cases such abuse and mistreatment came as a direct result of the actions of the Court of Bethlem, and the actions of the Civil War and Interregnum Courts did a great deal to set the standard for Court reactions to abuse for generations to come. Seen in this light, historical Bethlem to a great extent deserves its notoriety. Some have suggested that this notoriety was born of the Crooke scandal of the 1630's, but that incident was not the fault of the Court, and was only the case of one particularly cruel and deceptive employee, who when discovered was removed from office. The true

genesis of Bethlem's notoriety is to be found with the Courts of the Civil War and the Interregnum, where abuse and neglect were acceptable and at best overlooked. Yet strangely it is also in this era that Bethlem's salvation is found, for without those same Courts, Bethlem might not have been able to find the financial resources to survive beyond the continual crises of the seventeenth century.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals. *Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes*, May 1634 – 7

October 1642. [CD-ROM], Series Bcb-08, images 1-848. London: Bethlem

Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, 2004.

Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals. *Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes*, 14 October

1642 – 7 July 1658. [CD-ROM], Series Bcb-09, images 1-943. London: Bethlem

Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, 2004.

Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals. *Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes*, 29 April 1657 –

12 August 1659. [CD-ROM], Series Bcb-10, images 1-293. London: Bethlem

Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, 2004.

Corporation of London Records Office at Guildhall. Misc. MS 58.26. London: London

Metropolitan Archives. Cited in Jonathan Andrews, et al., *The History of*

Bethlem, ed. Jonathan Andrews (New York: Routledge, 1997), 158n11.

Works Cited

Allderidge, Patricia. "Bedlam: Fact or Fantasy?" In *The Anatomy of Madness*, vol. II

edited by W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd, 17-33. New York:

Tavistock Publications, 1985.

———. "Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547-1633." In *Health,*

Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century, edited by Charles Webster,

141-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

- Andrews, Jonathan, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker, and Keir Waddington. *The History of Bethlem*. Edited by Jonathan Andrews. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Boulton, Jeremy. "London 1540-1700." In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume II 1540-1840*, edited by Peter Clark. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Bowen, Thomas. *An Historical Account of the Origin, Progress and Present State of Bethlem Hospital*. London: For the Governors, 1783.
- Bucholz, Robert, and Newton Key. *Early Modern England 1485-1714: A Narrative History*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Clay, C.G.A. *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Elton, G.R. *England under the Tudors*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
- Gutting, Gary, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Hone, William. "The Every-Day Book." London: 1825; UAB Online: 2004. ed. Dr. Kyle Grimes. [Online] <<http://www.uab.edu/english/hone/etexts/edb/day-pages/095-april05.html>> (accessed 5 February 2006).
- Jardine, Lisa. *The Curious Life of Robert Hooke: The Man Who Measured London*. New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

- Karuth, Hans and Sherman M. Kuhn, eds. *Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956. s.v. "abus" and "bedlem."
- Lindley, Keith. "Packe, Christopher." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 307-09. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- . "Wollaston, Sir John." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 988-89. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- MacDonald, Michael. *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- O'Donoghue, E.G. *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from Its Foundation in 1247*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914.
- O'Malley, Charles. "Helkiah Crooke, MD, FRCP, 1576-1648." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* xlii (1968): 13-14.
- Porter, Roy. "Foucault's Great Confinement." *History of the Human Sciences* 3, no. 1 (1990): 47-54.
- . *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Public Record Office, London. "Calendar of State Papers Domestic." 424, 1631-33.
- Raynes, Harold E. *Social Security in Britain: A History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976.

Stevenson, Christine. "The Architecture of Bethlem at Moorfields." In *The History of Bethlem*, edited by Jonathan Andrews, 230-59. London: Routledge, 1997.

Wrigley, E.A. and R.S. Schofield. *The Population History of England 1541-1871*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Selected Bibliography

Andrews, Jonathan. "Bedlam Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital, C. 1634-1770." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1991.

Andrews, Jonathan and Andrew Scull. *Customers and Patrons of the Mad-Trade: The Management of Lunacy in Eighteenth-Century London, with the Complete Text of John Monro's 1766 Case Book*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

———. *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Beier, Lucinda McCray. *Sufferers & Healers: The Experience of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Bynum, W.F., Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, ed. *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*. Vol. XI. New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985.

Clark, Peter, ed. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* 3 vols. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Clay, C.G.A. *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

- Dobson, Mary J. *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Gilman, Sander L. *Seeing the Insane*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1996.
- Herber, Mark D. *Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2000.
- Hudson, Robert P. *Disease and Its Control: The Shaping of Modern Thought*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- I, Charles. *Orders for the Better Administration of Justice*. London: Robert Barker, 1630.
- Jones, K. "Scull's Dilemma." *British Journal of Psychiatry* 141 (1982): 221-26.
- Jütte, Robert. *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Leonard, E.M. *The Early History of English Poor Relief*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965.
- MacDonald, Michael. "Religion, Social Change and Psychological Healing in England 1600-1800." In *The Church and Healing*, edited by W. Sheils, 101-26. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
- McCullough, P.E. "Isaacson, Henry." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 414-15. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Nicholls, Sir George. *A History of the English Poor Law*. Revised ed. 3 vols. Vol. 1. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1967.
- Porter, Dorothy and Roy Porter. *Doctors, Politics and Society: Historical Essays*. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1993.
- . *In Sickness and in Health: The British Experience, 1650-1850*. London: Fourth Estate, 1988.
- . *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth Century England*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985.
- Porter, Roy. *Disease, Medicine and Society in England 1550-1860*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1993.
- . *Health for Sale: Quack Medicine in England, 1660-1850*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.
- . "Madness and Its Institutions." In *Medicine in Society*, edited by Andrew Wear, 277-301. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below." *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 175-98.
- . "Shutting People Up." *Social Studies of Science* 12 (1982): 467-76.
- , ed. *The Faber Book of Madness*. London: Faber & Faber, 1991.
- , ed. *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- , ed. *The Popularization of Medicine, 1650-1850*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Porter, Roy and Andrew Wear. *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine*.

London: Croom Helm, 1987.

Scull, Andrew. *Madhouses, Mad-Doctors and Madmen*. London: Athlone Press, 1981.

———. *Museums of Madness*. London: Allen Lane, 1979.

Scull, Andrew, Charlotte MacKenzie and Nicholas Hervey. *Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Wear, Andrew, ed. *Medicine in Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Webb, Sidney, and Beatrice Webb. *English Local Government, English Poor Law History Part I: The Old Poor Law*. Vol. 1. London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1927.

VITA

Name: Jessica Lee Bilhartz

Address: 1126 Frost Hollow, DeSoto, TX 75115

Email Address: jlbilhartz2@tamu.edu

Education: B.S., Psychology, Texas A&M University, 2004
B.A., History, Texas A&M University, 2004
M.A., History, Texas A&M University, 2006