The History of Bethlem

Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington

THE HISTORY OF BETHLEM

'Stunning. At last Bethlem has the comprehensive history it deserves, firmly grounded in a wider social and political context. With a deft touch the authors have unpicked the tapestry of myth and misconception surrounding Bethlem, to reveal the intricate twists and turns of its various existences. Psychiatric historiography has been considerably enriched.'

Nick Hervey, co-author of *Masters of Bedlam, The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade*

Bethlem Hospital is a unique institution. Now seven hundred and fifty years old, it has been continuously involved in the care of the mentally ill since at least 1400 – as such it has a strong claim to be the oldest foundation in Europe with an unbroken history of sheltering and treating the mentally disturbed. *The History of Bethlem* is a scholarly history of this key establishment, looking at Bethlem's role within the caring institutions of London and Britain and its place in the history of psychiatry.

Bethlem is not simply Europe's oldest psychiatric establishment; it is the most famous and the most notorious, assuming many guises over its 750-year history. It began as a religious foundation in the context of the Crusades. It became a hospital for the insane by chance, survived complex battles between Crown and Papacy, Parliament and the Corporation of the City of London, and gained great prominence for many years as Britain's only lunatic hospital.

The name of Bethlem turned into everyday speech and became part of a national culture. From Shakespeare's time, 'Bedlam' was becoming detached from the institution and assuming a life and a persona of its own, with connotations of turmoil, confusion and cacophony.

Bethlem transcended locality and became a national and international institution. Based upon a full use of the Bethlem archives, *The History of Bethlem* is a long overdue re-evaluation of its history. This comprehensive volume explores Bethlem in the context of the history of Britain, London, hospitals and psychiatry.

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It remains to say that the interpretations offered in the ensuing book are those of the authors alone; the Bethlem and Maudsley NHS Trust is in no way responsible for the opinions that follow.

ABBREVIATIONS

AR	*Annual Register*
BAR	*Bethlem Admission Registers*
BCGM	Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes
BGCM	Bethlem Grand Committee Minutes
BIAR	Bethlem Incurables' Admission Registers
BL	British Library
BMA	British Medical Association
BMJ	*British Medical Journal*
BRH	Bethlem Royal Hospital, Monks Orchard Road, Eden Park, Beckenham, Kent
BRHA	Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives (at BRH address)
BSA	*Bethlem Steward's Accounts*
BSB	Bethlem Salary Books
BSCM	Bethlem Sub Committee Minutes
BwellGCM	Bridewell General Committee Minutes
CA Rep.	Court of Aldermen Repertories
CGJ	*The Covent Garden Journal*
Citizen	*The Citizen Of The World*
CLRO	Corporation of London Records Office, Guildhall
CSPD	*Calendar of State Papers Domestic*
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
DPM	Diploma in Psychological Medicine
EMS	Emergency Medical Service
GCCM	*Guy's Hospital Court of Committee Minutes*
Ghall	Guildhall Library, London
GLRO	Greater London Record Office
GM	*The Gentleman's Magazine*
GNC	General Nursing Council
GPI	General Paralysis of the Insane
JMS	*Journal of Mental Science*

LCC	London County Council
LEP	*The London Evening Post*
MEC	Medical Executive Committee
MIETS	Mental Impairment Evaluation and Treatment Service
MRC	Medical Research Council
MPA	Medico-Psychological Association
MTO	Management Team of Officers
NHS	National Health Service
OUP	Oxford University Press
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PCR	Privy Council Registers
PP	*Parliamentary Papers*
PRO	Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London
PRO Kew	Public Record Office, Kew Gardens
q.n.	Quire number
RAWP	Resources Allocation Working Party
RC	Royal Commission
RHB	Regional Health/Hospital Board
SEMRHB	South East Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board
SETRHA	South East Thames Regional Health Authority
SHA	Special Health Authority
SLGCM	St Luke's Hospital General Committee Minutes
SLHCM	St Luke's House Committee Minutes
SM	London Sessions Minutes
SP	*State Papers Domestic*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bethlem is a unique institution. Now seven hundred and fifty years old, it has been continuously involved in the care of the mentally ill since at least the 1400s – in other words for nearly six hundred years. As such it has a strong claim to be the oldest foundation in Europe with an unbroken history of sheltering and treating the mentally disturbed. Facilities for the mad were set up in Spain from the early fifteenth century, beginning in Valencia in 1409, but such establishments were not to enjoy a continuous thread. In most of Western Europe it was the sixteenth century which brought comparable developments, and some regions did not develop independent psychiatric facilities until the nineteenth century. Many medieval institutions housed mad people from time to time, but few specialized in their care and won a reputation for it.[1]

Bethlem is not simply Europe's oldest psychiatric establishment; it is the most famous – or, what for long amounted to the same thing, the most notorious. Certain psychiatric hospitals were to achieve prominence within the profession – the York Retreat, or Illenau in the German state of Baden, both in their distinctive ways regarded as model environments at particular moments in the evolution of psychiatry. Some have provided the stage for dramatic episodes in the history of psychiatry – for instance Bicêtre in Paris, where Philippe Pinel supposedly struck the chains off the lunatics in a magnificent emancipatory gesture during the French Revolution.[2] Others, so to speak, had greatness thrust upon them because of the illustrious patients who happened to have been detained there – the name of Charenton is now indelibly printed upon the public mind thanks to its association with the Marquis de Sade. Nevertheless, it is arguably only the name of Bethlem that has actually turned into everyday speech and become part of a national culture. In English parlance 'Bedlam' – as in 'Bedlam mad' or later expressions like 'utter bedlam' – was becoming, from around Shakespeare's time, detached from the institution and assuming a life and a persona of its own, with connotations of turmoil, confusion and cacophony. It was perfectly natural in the early years of the Industrial Revolution for a blast-furnace in the West Midlands – well over a hundred miles away from Bethlem Hospital itself – to be christened 'Bedlam', just as it is still utterly natural to speak, for example, of the rush-hour or the January sales as being 'like Bedlam'.[3] While English-speakers give these usages no thought, it is interesting that equivalent sayings barely

exist as commonplaces in any other language or culture. A resident of Berlin, Bordeaux or Boston can of course speak colloquially of someone being about to be packed off to this or that local asylum, but that is the point: it seems that only Bethlem transcended locality and became a 'national institution' – in both senses of that term.

Indeed, more than national – *international.* For over a century Bethlem was one of the sights of London on any serious tourist's itinerary, along with the Tower and Westminster Abbey; and it is easy to find examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century continental psychiatrists invoking the example of the Hospital, mainly in a positive light and often as part of a propaganda campaign to encourage their own prince or burgermasters to endow a comparably imposing establishment.

Given that Bethlem became a national institution – indeed became *Bedlam* – it is very odd that its history has been so little studied and that beyond a limited repertoire of lurid incidents, so little is known about its real history. Its archivist, Patricia Allderidge, has offered a plausible explanation for this: 'historians of psychiatry', she has observed, 'actually do not want to know about Bethlem as a historical fact because Bethlem as a reach-me-down cliché is far more useful. It has, after all, fulfilled this role in the popular imagination throughout much of its existence'. There is, in other words, an assumption that the truth about Bethlem is, somehow, almost instinctively too familiar to need any real investigation – and that goes with the supposition that all the hand-me-down tales *must* somehow be true otherwise they wouldn't be so widely in circulation.[4]

Dangers lurk here. In the Middle Ages everyone knew that the Jews poisoned the wells, thus causing the Black Death. In the early modern period everyone knew that witches went off on their orgiastic sabbaths with Satan;[5] under the *ancien régime* everyone knew the Bastille was crammed with political prisoners, oppressed by torture and torments. And in much the same way every schoolperson proverbially knows that Bethlem was a scandalous hellhole that systematically neglected its patients and, when it was not neglecting them, inflicted upon them cruel and unnatural therapies. Ten years back, as Allderidge also noted, a reviewer wrote of Bethlem's staff that 'they did not even pretend to offer either refuge, good care, or cure': a statement at first blush so bizarre – a hospital that didn't even *pretend* to look after its patients? – that it could only have been written in the unspoken belief that nothing could be too bad to say about the Hospital.

All sorts of pseudo-facts reinforce the 'bad Bethlem' myth. Take sightseeing; that was indeed openly permitted back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as is documented below in Chapter 13 – in 1610 Lord Percy recorded going to see the lions in the Tower, the show of Bethlem, and the fireworks at the Artillery Gardens. In those days there was nothing odd about permitting or encouraging such a spectacle: all the world was a stage and visiting Bethlem was regarded as edifying for the same reasons as attending hangings. But distinguished scholars have taken this one stage further and computed that in the seventeenth century the hospital entertained as many as 96,000 visitors a year. Here, as Allderidge has pointed out, we must pause. How do we know? There were no turnstiles or visitors' books. It's a figure arrived at by some foolish deductions from the finances – inflated to absurd proportions, one suspects, so as to highlight the sense of freakshow. The result is that such

facts become articles of faith, repeated like mantras, from one book to another. Very recently the following appeared:

> As late as 1815, the Bethlehem madhouse exhibited lunatics every Sunday, admission one penny. The annual revenue from these visits amounted to £400, which amounts to an astonishing 96,000 admissions a year.[6]

Not one single 'fact' in that statement happens to be factual.

It is particularly intriguing that little serious historical investigation has been conducted into Bethlem, given that histories of Bethlem actually started very early – over two hundred years ago, which is, of course, long before most asylums were founded let alone acquired a history that could be written up. In 1783 there appeared *An Historical Account of the Origin, Progress and Present State of Bethlem Hospital*, penned by the Revd Thomas Bowen, who was the chaplain to Bridewell (see Chapter 20). This was, however, less a real history than the Georgian version of a glossy promotional coffee-table work, a public-relations exercise setting Bethlem in a shining light for fund-raising purposes.[7]

The first full-length history was the work of a Bethlem chaplain, the Revd Edward O'Donoghue, whose *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from its Foundation in 1247* came out in 1914, was never reprinted, and so is rather rare.[8] O'Donoghue was a quirky and superstitious man. A one-time member of the Charity Organization Society, he was a sympathetic listener and friend of the patients and a keen journalist who played a major role in keeping the Hospital's journal going.

His *Story of Bethlehem* is a curiosity, written in a style by turns affected, archaic, chatty and condescending; the historian takes sides, turns history into a pageant of saints and sinners, parades his whimsical prejudices and comes up with some bizarre speculations. Yet, while largely neglecting the institution's later records, his work had the very real merit of delving into the early archival sources, casting light on much that had been quite obscure. The Governors, rather than have the murkier episodes of its history raked over yet again, wanted generally to let sleeping dogs lie. Although they judged the book unsuitable to be given to the patients, they did order some 2,000 copies for distribution.

Perhaps because of the existence of O'Donoghue's leisurely look at the byways of Bethlem, its history then attracted virtually no attention for half a century, though a pot-boiling and often inaccurate book came out in 1972,[9] and growing attention was paid to Bethlem's image by literary scholars, for instance by R. R. Reed in his *Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage*.[10] During the last twenty years Patricia Allderidge has herself published a number of original and challenging articles, both debunking old Bethlem myths and exploring aspects of its history, and Jonathan Andrews has produced a doctoral dissertation covering the years 1634 to 1770, strongly arguing that the time is long overdue for a serious re-evaluation. David Russell's *Scenes from Bedlam* has developed these ideas, focusing on patients and their carers from the mid-sixteenth century. While he does not attempt to write a history of Bethlem he does give a broad overview, although less is said about Bethlem in the twentieth century where the focus is on the Maudsley, training and research.[11] Yet, despite the fact that British psychiatry without Bethlem is like Hamlet without the mad prince, Bethlem has remained essentially ignored.

Psychiatry's history has enjoyed a remarkable surge of interest in the last couple of decades – in part due to the intense public debates over the state of psychiatry itself and particularly the future and fate of psychiatric institutions.[12] Professional historians have argued that psychiatric history as traditionally written by (practising or retired) psychiatrists has tended to be 'Whiggish', that is to say anachronistic and triumphalist, interpreting and judging the past in terms of the present, and complacently taking for granted a tale of progress; psychiatrists have countered that such revisionist or radical historians are no less anachronistically judgmental in their often highly critical stance. Such debates continue to rage, and doubtless the information provided by this book might be used to lend support to either side.[13]

But it is important to stress at the outset that current historical controversies respecting psychiatric hospitals since around 1800 – questions of institutionalization and subsequent deinstitutionalization – are not, and should not be central to this history of Bethlem. That is to some degree because Bethlem was not, of course, founded as a lunatic asylum. During its first century it had no deranged people at all; and at least till the Reformation it served a variety of other purposes as well as giving shelter to the mad. It is also because, even with respect to the insane, Bethlem does not fit into the patterns standardly visible elsewhere. True, since around 1850 Bethlem has in most ways integrated itself within the British psychiatric world, yet major differences remained; while many public institutions were growing huge, housing thousands of patients, Bethlem stayed very small indeed.

The history of a typical British lunatic asylum or psychiatric history might run like this. Mumerset County Asylum was founded in the first half of the nineteenth century in response to the stresses and strains of an urbanizing society with a rapidly rising population; the medical profession gradually imposed its authority on the institution – even their vision of what asylums 'ought to be', to borrow part of the title of Dr W. A. F. Browne's early-Victorian book.[14] The asylum rose in prominence, it grew in numbers of inmates, and daunting problems emerged, including the counter-productive effects of institutionalization and expansion themselves. Stagnation followed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, punctuated after the First World War by intermittent attempts at reform, with attempts to integrate it better within the community, leading perhaps, as a result of internal and external pressures, to closure in the late 1980s.[15]

If this thumbnail sketch might serve as a recognizable asylum profile, the crucial point is that Bethlem corresponds to it in almost no respect at all. It would be pointless to recite at this juncture all the ways in which Bethlem breaks the mould – that is one of the aims of the body of the book. The point is not simply one of its exceptional longevity – of the fact that Bethlem has a past that long antedates the average private asylum or county asylum, and hence established traditions of its own and carved out a unique niche for itself within the 'trade in lunacy'.[16] It is also that even during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Bethlem was often conspicuous in its attempts to be distinctive from and independent of other institutions. This is a path it has followed with considerable success; in an age in which many institutions have closed down, Bethlem is very much alive and well – and growing. There are clichés about Bethlem which may be confirmed by the research set out in this book; but few stereotypes about asylums in general apply to Bethlem.

This may be put another way: this history of Bethlem is intended not solely or even primarily as a contribution to the history of psychiatry, for much of Bethlem's history impinges only marginally on the rise of psychiatry as such (a term in this country only a century old). The nuts and bolts of Bethlem's functioning – its administration, finances, officials, entrance policies, charity regulations and so forth – have been almost totally neglected. Historians have hitherto concentrated on the image of Bethlem – on *Bedlam*. This book focuses on the institution itself and how it operated, as well as on the dialogue between institution and image. It thus inaugurates the proper historical analysis of the institution; and not least, unlike many accounts of psychiatic institutions, it takes the story right up to the present day.

That most English of Marxist historians, E. P. Thompson, once wrote of the 'peculiarities of the English';[17] while avoiding a nostalgic evocation of eccentricity he thereby pointed to certain extremely distinctive features of English history. It is in that spirit that we offer this study of an institution which, like so many other English institutions (one thinks of the monarchy or of Parliament), has gradually evolved under a multitude of pressures and tensions, has changed and changed again almost out of recognition, yet still has maintained a certain strand of continuity, captured not least in ambiguous attitudes towards its own past. Our aim is neither to apply a coat of whitewash nor to paint it black; it is to show what has made one particular institution live and assume a series of personalities.

NOTES

1 Of course assorted hospitals and monasteries took in the occasional lunatic before Bethlem. What is here being discussed is the emergence of an institution that came to be recognized as specializing in the insane. For the mad in early medieval Europe see Penelope E. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974); Christopher Paul Philo, 'The Space Reserved for Insanity: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Mad-Business in England and Wales' (University of Cambridge, Ph.D. thesis, 1990). Islam developed hospitals for the insane before Christendom: see Michael W. Dols, 'Insanity and Its Treatment in Islamic Society', *Medical History*, xxxi (1987), 1–14; *idem*, *Manjūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); the early Spanish asylums developed under Islamic stimulus.

For the chronology of the founding of institutions for the insane, see J. G. Howells (ed.), *World History of Psychiatry* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1968); Roy Porter, 'Madness and its Institutions', in Andrew Wear (ed.), *Medicine in Society* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 277–301. The village of Geel in the Netherlands was boarding mad people as an adjunct to its religious shrine from perhaps the twelfth century: William Llewellyn Parry-Jones, 'The Model of Geel Lunatic Colony and its Influence on the Nineteenth Century Asylum System in Britain', in Andrew Scull (ed.), *Madhouses, Mad-Doctors and Madmen* (London: Athlone Press; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 201–17.

2 That this is an essentially fictitious event is demonstrated by Dora B. Weiner, '"*Le Geste de Pinel*": The History of a Psychiatric Myth', in Mark S. Micale and Roy Porter (eds), *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1994), 343–7.

3 The great water-colourist John Sell Cotman painted the Bedlam Furnace near Madeley in the Severn Gorge; his painting is reproduced in Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 82. The Methodist preacher John Fletcher of Madeley was famous for his millennial prophesies, saying 'our earth's the bedlam of the universe, where reason (undiseas'd in heaven) runs

mad' (quoted in Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 70). For further examples of metaphoric, proverbial and jesting uses of the term see Roy Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles: Madness and Psychiatry in England from Restoration to Regency* (London, Athlone Press, 1987; paperback edition, Penguin, 1990); Natsu Hattori, '"The Pleasure of your Bedlam"; The Theatre of Madness in the Renaissance', *History of Psychiatry*, vi (1995), 283–308.

4 Patricia H. Allderidge, 'Bedlam: Fact or Fantasy?', in W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd (eds), *The Anatomy of Madness*, vol. 2 (London: Tavistock, 1985), 17–33, esp. pp. 18–21.

5 And, it should be added, many radical American feminists today know that around nine million witches were burnt to death in Europe in the early modern period as part of the witch-craze. For an account of how this ludicrous figure – the real figure is probably under 100,000 (which is of course 100,000 too many) – achieved prominence amongst modern feminists, see James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), 169f.; and Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 288f.

6 Robert Youngson and Ian Scott, *Medical Blunders* (London: Robinson, 1995), 286. The book might better have been named *Historical Blunders.*

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

8 E. G. O'Donoghue, *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from its Foundation in 1247* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914). Edward O'Donoghue (or Gerald, as he preferred to be known) went on to write the history of Bethlem's sister institution: *Bridewell Hospital, Palace, Prison Schools from the Earliest Times to the End of the Reign of Elizabeth* (London: Bodley Head, 1923).

9 A. Masters, *Bedlam* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972). It is remarkable that Bethlem isn't even mentioned in certain standard histories, for instance Franz G. Alexander and Sheldon T. Selesnick's *The History of Psychiatry: An Evaluation of Psychiatric Thought and Practice from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967). The oddest omission of all is the entire neglect of Bethlem in Michel Foucault's *La Folie et la Déraison: Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1961); trans. and abridged as *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965; London: Tavistock Publications, 1967).

10 R. R. Reed, *Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); this was followed by works like Max Byrd's *Visits to Bedlam: Madness and Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974); more recently see Natsu Hattori, *op. cit.*, and her 'Performing Cures: Practice and Interplay in Theatre and Medicine of the English Renaissance' (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1995).

11 Patricia Allderidge, 'Richard Dadd 1817–1886: Painter and Patient', *Medical History*, xiv (1970), 308–13; *eadem*, 'Criminal Insanity: Bethlem to Broadmoor', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, lxvii (1974), 897–904; *eadem*, 'Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547–1633', in Charles Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), 141–64; *eadem*, 'Hospitals, Madhouses and Asylums: Cycles in the Care of the Insane', *British Journal for Psychiatry*, cxxxiv (1979), 321–34, reprinted in R. M. Murray and T. H. Turner (eds), *Lectures on the History of Psychiatry* (London: Gaskell, 1990), 28–46; *eadem*, 'The Foundation of the Maudsley Hospital', in German E. Berrios and Hugh Freeman (eds), *150 Years of British Psychiatry, 1841–1991* (London: Gaskell, 1991), 79–88; *eadem*, 'Sketches in Bedlam', in Leonie de Goei and Joost Vijselaar (eds), *Proceedings of the 1st European Congress on the History of Psychiatry and Mental Health Care* (Rotterdam: Erasmus, 1993), 76–82; Jonathan Andrews, 'Bedlam Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital *c.* 1634–*c.* 1770' (Ph.D. diss., London University, 1991). D. Russell, *Scenes from Bedlam* (London: Baillière Tindall, 1996) provides a further account.

12 The most thorough attempt to explore new directions in the history of psychiatry is Mark Micale and Roy Porter (eds), *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* (New York: OUP, 1994).

13 See for instance H. Mersky, 'Somatic Treatments, Ignorance and the Historiography of

Psychiatry', *History of Psychiatry*, v (1994), 387–92; J. L. Crammer, 'English Asylums and English Doctors: Where Scull is Wrong', *History of Psychiatry*, v (1994), 103–16; Andrew Scull, 'Psychiatrists and Historical "Facts": Part One: The Historiography of Somatic Treatments', *History of Psychiatry*, v (1995), 225–41; *idem*, 'Psychiatrists and Historical "Facts": Part Two: Re-writing the History of Asylumdom', *History of Psychiatry*, v (1995), 387–94.

14 W. A. F. Browne, *What Asylums Were, Are and Ought to Be: Being the Substance of Five Lectures Delivered Before the Managers of the Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum* (Edinburgh: Black, 1837; reprinted Routledge, 1991, with an introduction by Andrew Scull).

15 For evidence from particular asylum histories that confirm this general vignette see, for example, Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700–1900* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1993) and his *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant – A Radical View*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Polity Press; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1984).

16 William Llewellyn Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

17 See E. P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 35–91. For some reflections on such myth-making see Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds), *The Myths We Live By* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Roy Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

PART I

1247–1633

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Why should anyone, other than historians or perhaps just medical historians, trouble to read about the very early history of Bethlem Hospital?

The simple answer is that institutions, just as much as individuals and nations, are shaped by their history. This shaping process generates an organizational mentality which has to be understood by anyone seeking to work in or with, or to change, the organization. And in order to understand the organization and what makes it tick, one must understand how it has become what it is today: its history.

But does one really need to look back hundreds of years, to a time when Bethlem was a completely different institution – in fact, not really an 'institution' at all? The alternative might be to choose some other starting-point, and an argument could be made for the 1630s. It was from 1633, when the Hospital was first managed by an employee of the City of London instead of being granted to an individual who made what profits he could from it, and when the Physicianship (medical management) and Keepership (administration) became distinct and separate offices, that Bethlem began to take a more modern form. But 1633 certainly did not represent a complete break with the past. Much of what happened afterwards was a consequence of previous attitudes of mind and ways of doing things. In 1633, Bethlem already had a 'corporate culture', and it is impossible to grasp why its Governors acted as they did in the seventeenth century and beyond without appreciating what that culture was.

Second, one of the things which makes Bethlem so fascinating is that this ancient institution is like an old lady with a very strong and distinctly perverse character. Throughout Bethlem's history, patterns weave. One such pattern is that Bethlem has its *alter ego*, Bedlam. Down the years, at least since the early seventeenth century, 'Bethlem' and 'Bedlam' have danced together, if not always in harmony. It is possible that it was partly as a result of a decision taken by the Governors in the 1590s to encourage visiting that Bedlam, the metaphor for a world gone mad (as opposed to a familiar name for the place, or a word for madhouses generally), developed at all. In our own century, we find those Governors' successors doing their utmost to obliterate the unwelcome associations which the Hospital's *alter ego* conjured up in the popular mind.

And of course in a looking-glass world, things do not happen as expected.

Bethlem's history is full of the unexpected. It owes its existence to the unlikely combination of a London alderman, Simon fitzMary, whose political career was, even by the standards of the mid-thirteenth century, turbulent, and the Italian holder of a near-eastern episcopate. It owes its present specialization, as far as one can tell, to an accident. The process by which the modern Royal Hospital became the great psychiatric institution it is today is obscure, was unpredictable at the outset, and was directed by chance rather than intent.

Aspects of Bethlem's development can be understood only if one appreciates the accidental, and sometimes rather eccentric, nature of that development. Because Bethlem was not designed for the role it eventually assumed, administrative development tended to lag behind functional changes, creating mismatches. It is moreover important to understand, and to keep in mind, just how small Bethlem was at the outset, and how poor, compared to other London religious institutions which later became the great City hospitals. Its development was inevitably constricted by its early poverty, just as its small size resulted in its government being delegated to the Governors, first, of Christ's Hospital, and then of Bridewell, the City's first great reformatory. Another of the constant themes of Bethlem's history is the way that it has for so much of its existence been the little sister of some larger or in other ways dominant institution.

Finally, the very particular circumstances and concerns of the mid-thirteenth century, and the way that society had developed in the two or three centuries beforehand, are critical both to the fact that Bethlem was founded at all, and to the form that foundation took. Some of the background circumstances and concerns arose as a result of large matters: international warfare, dissent within the Catholic Church, the emergence of societies which needed warriors to defend and project their power, and suffered from internal violence. Others were personal, and can now only be guessed at. Factors of this type continued to play a major part in Bethlem's history for several more centuries. Again, it is the large matters which have left the most obvious traces and can most easily be identified today. These included the wars between England and France; the tensions which arose because the claims of popes to universal authority and to financial support from churches throughout Christendom came increasingly to conflict with nationalistic ideas and the desire of English kings, churchmen and peoples alike to escape papal interference and demands; and disputes between English kings and the City of London over control of the Hospital, its revenues and its offices. Individual motives, largely invisible though they are to us, probably had even more impact on the way Bethlem developed. Bethlem cannot be understood in isolation from its history; and its history cannot be understood in isolation from that of the world around it.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Europe, 900–1247

The world into which Bethlem Hospital was born is a difficult one for us to imagine today. Its birthyear, 1247, sits about halfway through the Middle Ages (say, 900 to

1500). This of itself lends it no especial importance. If one had to choose one moment of particular significance in the Middle Ages, it would not be the mid-thirteenth century, but the mid-fourteenth – when as much as half of the population of Europe was wiped out by the Black Death. The social, economic, political, moral and even cultural changes that followed the first and greatest assault of the Plague were profound. That was indeed a time of transformation.

But if the mid-thirteenth century saw less dramatic changes, it none the less stood at the culmination of several centuries of rapid development. After the Roman Empire had collapsed, Europe as a whole had experienced successive waves of invasions from lands which had never been conquered by the Romans. In the south, Roman practices, habits of thought and even institutions lingered on, if in bastardized forms. But in some places – England, for example – so complete had been the break with the past that an Anglo-Saxon poet could look at the ruins of Roman cities like Bath, and wonder what race of giants had inhabited them. It now no longer seems certain to historians that the Romano-British population was completely destroyed or driven into the 'Celtic fringes' of Wales and Cornwall by the Anglo-Saxons; but if the descendants of the Romano-British survived physically, memories of that culture did not. And even where, elsewhere in Europe, clouded memories did survive, civilization seemed a very fragile thing, liable at any moment to be swamped by yet one more, and greater, wave of invaders.

In 900, the population of Europe was tiny, huddled together and scattered amid a great wilderness of forests and marshes. Trade had not entirely died out, but it was uncertain and much reduced since the fall of the Roman Empire. There was very little money; most low-level trading involved barter. Above all, although the ghost of the Roman Empire was still flitting around the European corridors of power into modern times, in reality 'emperors', kings, princes and counts exercised infinitely less authority, over much smaller areas, and infinitely less firmly, than had been the case in Rome's heyday. Three hundred and fifty years later, by contrast, numbers had increased dramatically. In England, a population which may still have been under a million in 1100, by 1300 may have exceeded six million. Even six million is small by today's standards; but not by the standards of history. Not until the eighteenth century was the population to rise above this level. Historically speaking, then, it was a demographic explosion. Growth of this order was enough to act as a sharp stimulant to the market, leading to a sustained attack on forested and marginal lands by a land-hungry populace, encouraging trade, and prompting the development of an economy in which coin, and even substitutes like the written bond (IOU) which could be passed from hand to hand, played an ever-larger role. It led directly to a growth in government and to its centralization, as successive kings of England tried to find ways of tapping into these new volumes and types of wealth.[1]

In England, particularly, a number of factors had helped to ensure that government was comparatively centralized, well-developed and effective by 1247: the fact that William of Normandy took the throne as a conqueror in 1066; that England was physically small compared to the lands that contemporary French kings, for example, attempted to rule; that there was already in place a fairly well-developed administration; and that William's followers acquired their holdings where they could, often piecemeal. The growth of royal government and comparatively rapid and successful

assertion of royal authority can at least partly be explained by the ruthlessness with which William the Conqueror's youngest son, Henry I, enforced his claim to the English throne and by the absence of serious and protracted disturbances, particularly after the civil wars of the first half of the twelfth century were settled by the accession of Henry I's grandson, King Henry II, in 1154. Unaccustomed peace acted like sunshine after frost, allowing the economy to blossom.

Culturally, England may have been a bit of a backwater. It was certainly not isolated or intellectually backward. Many of its great men, including its kings, held lands across the Channel. Its scholars were educated abroad. When St Thomas à Becket's biographer, William fitzStephen, wrote his account of the saint's life and death in about the 1170s, he interlaced it with quotes (learned at secondhand, admittedly) from Horace, Ovid and Virgil. In his day, so he says, pupils at the London schools would compete on holy days at speechifying, poetry, grammar and making witty epigrams. Like scholars of all ages, they would ridicule their rivals, or even their masters – naming no names, of course.[2]

The fact that the population was rising sharply at this period and that the economy was very active produced, in the end, a society of extreme conditions. At the lowest end, peasants had to pay dear, and on their lords' terms, for what little land they could get. Some settled in the less productive uplands. Other difficult types of terrain, like cleared woodland and drained marshes, were also invaded in the search for more agricultural land. Workers came cheap, and modern economic historians have struggled to explain how those right at the bottom of the thirteenth-century heap managed to survive at all.[3] Meanwhile, the rich were becoming very rich indeed. Consequently, social divisions and differences in wealth were much more marked at this period than earlier.

Churchmen had their own use for the surplus of men, and offered them a legitimate cause in which to spend their energies. The centre, indeed the heart, of the Christian world was Jerusalem. And in the first century or two of the second millennium Christians fought successfully to establish what became known as the Latin Kingdom in the Near East (which included, at various times, much of modern Palestine and Syria). Land which had been won in the early crusades and other military expeditions then had to be defended against rival powers: above all, against the rival religious might of Islam. Although the Muslim leaders were often divided among themselves and were then prepared to ally with Christians against their co-religionists, there were times when a single sultan was able to gather large areas under his rule, presenting a serious threat to the Latin Kingdom. Defending the Latin Kingdom required considerable resources of manpower and cash, as well as organization and a degree of pacification and common purpose in the countries of origin. The insatiable demand for men and money to defend the Latin Kingdom sought to tap the resources of the Christian West at all levels, and therefore had to inspire ordinary people with the desire to secure Christ's birthplace against 'heathen' attackers.[4]

It was undoubtedly a violent age. Little more than a decade after Bethlem's foundation, dissensions between King Henry III and some of his leading barons led to an attempt by the latter to seize control of the government and, subsequently, to outright civil war. Notoriously, Henry III's final victory at Evesham in 1265 over the

rebellious Simon de Montfort – his brother-in-law – was 'hideously celebrated' by the dismemberment of the dead man's body, Montfort's head, arms, genitals and feet being cut off. But the violence was mixed with religiosity. When Montfort's body was stripped in preparation for mutilation, he was found to be wearing a hair shirt.[5] Simon de Montfort was certainly not unique among his generation in combining a genuine and intellectual Christianity with martial ardour. It was the spirit of the age. King Louis of France (St Louis) was to die in the Holy Land. After Richard I, no reigning English king got round to fulfilling his vow to participate in a crusade; but they were not necessarily being hypocritical when they expressed an intention to do so. Nor was the crusading spirit confined to the great and the wealthy. Some of the early expeditions were little more than mass movements of the poor and the young, most of whom, unprepared and defenceless as they were, died miserably along the way.[6] And there is little doubt that a similar desire to protect Christ's birthplace was one of the reasons why, in 1247, the London Alderman, Simon fitzMary, decided to give some of his properties to the Bishop of Bethlehem, for the foundation of a priory, or dependent house, of the Order of Bethlehem.

The years of transformation: 1247 to 1633

Almost exactly a hundred years after the foundation of the Priory of St Mary of Bethlehem, England suffered the first onslaught of the Plague, popularly known as the Black Death. Its recurrent attacks over the next century, in particular, had profound social, economic, political and psychological effects. A population which had been growing until about 1300, by 1400 had reduced by at least a third, and quite possibly by a half. A social structure which had become very stratified even by the standards of the time, became less so, with greater social mobility and a lessening of the enormous divide between the very rich and the very poor. The economic effects were mixed. There was less demand overall, but for better-quality goods and services. Small and medium-sized towns which had grown up to serve the needs of an increasing population, withered with it. But that left the field open to the survivors, and London in particular came to dominate a much more concentrated trade network.[7]

Politically, those lower down the social order began to have the strength and the desire to improve their lot yet further. Some contemporary commentators attributed the 'Peasants' Revolt' of 1381, which seems in fact to have involved townsmen and quite prosperous individuals as well as the poorer countryfolk, to the comparatively good standard of living enjoyed by the participants.[8]

But perhaps the greatest consequence of the Black Death was psychological. In an age when it was generally believed that God intervened both directly and indirectly, through natural phenomena, to warn human beings about their conduct, a devasting epidemic like the Plague seemed clearly to be an expression of divine anger. Its occurrence could very easily be interpreted as a sign that society was rotten from the top down: 'these pestilences were purely [the product of] sin', as the fourteenth-century poet, William Langland, had his preacher, Reason, prove. It seems amusing to us now that some of Langland's contemporaries, like the chronicler John of Reading, should ascribe the coming of the Plague at least in part to the 'emptyheadedness of

the English [who] began to wear useless hoods [and] extremely short garments . . . which failed to conceal their arses or their private parts'. But wanton and immoderate dress was merely one of the outward symbols of an inward flight from godliness. Moreover, the corruption was worst where it should have been entirely absent. The Church was rotten, and therefore her intercessions had failed and her flock had remained untended and vulnerable. Kings, princes and nobles were corrupt, indifferent to the miseries created by their greed and warfare, too ignoble to perform their duty of protecting the rest of society. In the words of an Italian lawyer, Gabriele de' Mussia, 'because those I appointed to be shepherds of the world have behaved towards their flocks like ravening wolves . . . I shall take a savage revenge upon them'. The family had shown itself to be a weak support, with children refusing to tend their sick parents, and parents rejecting their sick children. Social organizations had likewise proved to be unable to provide the security, shelter and support people needed during the plague years. The individual died or survived alone.[9]

The Black Death did not create individualism and egalitarianism, but it fertilized the social soil, enabling such ideas to flourish. Together with all the other more measurable effects on medieval society, the psychological consequences encouraged different ways of thinking and different aspirations. In due course, these effects in combination were to alter society profoundly. They tended to undermine whatever was orthodox or received wisdom, to raise the value of the individual as against the community, and generally to encourage the survivors of the epidemics, particularly the first great pandemic of the late 1340s, to feel rather as do those who have had 'near-death' experiences. Having 'escaped and regained the world', they viewed that world through very different eyes.

The 1340s also saw the outbreak of another chronic affliction: the wars between England and France which, although they had been going on for over a century beforehand and were to continue in a desultory fashion into the sixteenth century, have become known as the Hundred Years War. As an international political figure as well as the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope was inevitably involved in conflicts between European Christian nations. At this period, however, matters were made much more difficult by the fact that the papal court was located at Avignon, on the borders with France, and that the majority of cardinals, like successive popes, were French. By the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the effect of internal dissent and international pressure had produced a split in the Papacy (the Schism), with rival French and Italian popes. Although this state of affairs only lasted until 1418, the result of the perceived francophilia of the papal court, rising nationalism, and, later, the Schism, was that there were periods after 1340 of considerable hostility in England towards the Papacy and the international Church.[10]

The more sceptical attitudes towards the Church and organized religion generally engendered by the social changes of the later fourteenth century thus acquired a nationalistic justification. They also acquired a practical one, in that Edward III followed the example of his father and grandfather by seizing control of the 'alien priories', or religious houses dependent on a mother-house based in France. This enabled him to exploit their revenues. Unlike his predecessors, he held onto these priories for over thirty years in total, from 1337 to 1360, and again from 1369 to his death in 1377.[11]

The last two decades of the fourteenth century saw a distinct shift in attitudes towards the wars with France, at least among the King and courtiers. There is more than a touch of anti-war sentiment in the poems of John Gower, for instance: to him, the 'kyng that wolde be the worthieste,/The more he myghte our dedly werre [war] cesse'. Even those who did not want to see the wars abandoned were despondent at the inability of the English to recapture the glory days of the mid-century, and attributed it to the moral weakness of their generation: 'Synne is the cause of this gret myscheff.'[12] No doubt it was lack of success combined with war-weariness which produced these pacifist or fatalistic sentiments, because the mood changed again following the accession of Henry V in 1413. The glory days were back with a vengeance, at least for the better part of a decade.

Bethlem was considerably affected by the seizure of the alien priories, of which, as a dependent house of the Order of Bethlehem, based at Clamecy in France, it was one. It was almost certainly in the second half of the fourteenth century that Bethlem found itself a new purpose and new ways of achieving that purpose. The social and psychological upheaval provoked by the Black Death also had its effect. For Bethlem, now a hospital and beginning to specialize in the care of the insane, the peacemaking of Richard II in the 1380s and 1390s and the warmaking of Henry V in the second decade of the fifteenth century alike offered stability and a greater degree of security. Both kings saw themselves as protectors of the Church. This was, however, something of a double-edged sword, involving both an assertion of royal rights over institutions like Bethlem and active support for them against religious dissent and would-be predators. Henry V in particular was, according to Thomas Hoccleve, the 'piler [pillar] of our feith and wareyour [warrior]/Ageyn the heresies bitter galle'. He involved the Church closely in his attempts to ensure that the country at large was behind his French campaigns. The able churchmen who formed an important part of his administration seem consciously to have enhanced and exploited the high emotional state of the period to counter the intellectual criticisms made of the Church: they encouraged faithfulness in their congregations, not by philosophical argument, but by inspiring them with the beauty of holiness – enrapturing them with glittering processions, abundant incense, and wonderful music.[13]

The second major landmark in Bethlem's history occurred exactly three hundred years after its foundation, in 1547, when the City of London acquired control over its administration. Many of the long-term effects of the social and attitudinal changes encouraged by the fourteenth-century epidemics and wars were by then clearly in evidence. As far as the position of the Church was concerned, it was probably the *reactions* to novel and contentious ideas, as much as or more than the ideas themselves, which had had the greatest impact. The protection provided to the Church by earlier kings, and in particular the way that dissent had been suppressed in the fifteenth century, had rendered it much more vulnerable to criticism in the longer term than it might otherwise have been. First, the role of the King as protector of the Church had been enhanced. This protection was bought at a price: and part of that price was that the Church supported kings by providing royal servants with (usually several) remunerative positions and offices. Of twenty-six men given permission to hold London livings in addition to others (in plurality) between 1534 and 1546, eighteen were chaplains to Henry VIII or to other great ecclesiastical or lay lords. Pluralism,

and the way that absent holders of livings tended to employ ill-trained and ill-paid curates in their place, was one of the abuses most strongly criticized by religious reformers. Secondly, as a result of the State's involvement in anti-heresy activities, heresy had become closely identified with treason, and there was a tendency during the fifteenth century to interpret any form of doubt, criticism or intellectual discussion as dissidence. Even using rational arguments against dissenters could leave the proponent open to accusations of heresy, as happened to Bishop Reginald Pecock of Chichester in 1457. Thirdly, the exaltation of spirituality over rationality left the Church exceptionally vulnerable to criticisms that its practices were exploiting the credulity and fear of a gullible laity when the dissenting attacks were openly renewed, in the early sixteenth century.[14]

By 1547, the year in which Henry VIII died, the Reformation of the English Church was well under way; Bethlem itself was seized for a time by the King. The Reformation was important in many ways, but to suppose that it was generally welcomed by a populace which had long grown sick of the abuses and corruption of the Catholic Church, as English historians – Anglicans, at least – once tended to do, would be mistaken. Certainly, private religion – how ordinary men and women worshipped – had changed significantly since Bethlem was founded. Private religious life was now increasingly focused on individual intercommunication with God and on practical works of charity. None the less, the Church and the communal worship of the parish remained important. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, individuals in search of an early release from Purgatory had been ever less inclined to leave bequests of land or money to monasteries or other religious institutions. Instead, if they could afford to do so, they endowed temporary or perpetual chantries in which, so the founders hoped, priests prayed for the release of the founder's soul from torment. Even on the eve of the Reformation, this way of attempting to mitigate the pains of Purgatory remained popular. A 1546 survey identified well over three hundred chantry priests in London alone, and half the wills of wealthier Londoners in the early 1520s contained bequests to pay for chantry priests to sing for the soul of the testator.[15]

Probably the best evidence for the success of the Church in responding to the needs of its flock comes, oddly enough, from the hostile comments of royal Commissioners reporting back on the innumerable examples they found of what they regarded as superstitious practices and idolatry. These same reports also show clearly why a successful Church was at the same time so vulnerable to reasoned criticism: much of what had been done to accommodate the needs of worshippers, to inculcate a sense of awe and mystery, involved practices which were at best somewhat deceptive, at worst, downright fraudulent. Sir Thomas More was probably right to warn that the great strength of the dissenters lay, not in their own numbers, but in the weakness of the Church once exposed to their criticisms. It also lay, as chance would have it, in a coincidence between King Henry VIII's needs and desires, the political goals of his advisers, and some of the dissenters' aims.[16]

In 1536, the dissolution of all religious houses worth less than £200 a year was authorized by Parliament. Hospitals were neither specifically included nor exempted, and, as many were linked to other religious institutions, a number were surrendered.

London was more affected than places at a greater distance from Westminster. All of its surviving older hospitals (St Mary within Cripplegate, usually known as Elsing Spital after its founder; the 'New Hospital' of St Mary without Bishopsgate; St Thomas of Acon; St Bartholomew's; and St Anthony's) were in the Crown's hands by 1560, and of these only St Bartholomew's survived as a hospital. Even Henry VII's Savoy Hospital was dissolved, and had to be re-founded by his granddaughter Queen Mary in 1556.[17]

Between the early sixteenth century and the early seventeenth, a period of great political and religious upheaval and intellectual discovery, the overriding concern of leaders of society remained, as ever, social stability. Increasingly assertive oligarchies have been detected in almost every town in the land from the later fifteenth century onwards.[18] Kings and nobles sought to stress the God-given privileges of their status, in the face of evidence of the permeability of social structures. Perhaps it is simply the greater opportunities for recording ideas, and their greater survival rate, resulting from the use of printing, which makes the sixteenth and early seventeenth century appear a time of incessant debate and questioning, and almost paranoid reaction. But there was reason to fear the consequences of new ideas: just after the end of our period, Charles I's execution heralded the start of a radical constitutional experiment, the Commonwealth. This is the period during which the third great landmark in Bethlem's history occurred: the moment which signalled the end of the medieval Hospital and of the old ways of doing things.

NOTES

1 J. L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150–1500* (London: Dent, 1980), ch. 2, especially Figure 2.1, 65; R. Woods, *The Population of Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (London: The Economic History Society and Macmillan Education, 1992), ch. 2, especially Table 1, 22.

2 *Norman London by William FitzStephen*, with commentary by Sir Frank Stenton, introduction by F. D. Logan (New York: Italica Press, 1990), 51.

3 For example, Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: CUP, 1989), 257.

4 See, for example, Christopher Marshall, *Warfare in the Latin East, 1192–1291* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: CUP, 1992).

5 Michael T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066–1272* (London: Fontana Press, paperback, 1989), 280.

6 Richard Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050–1320* (London: Routledge, paperback, 1993), 119–24.

7 On the immediate impact of the Black Death from a contemporary perspective, see Henry Knighton's account in R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, paperback, 1993), 59–63; for a modern analysis of its longer-term effects, see, for example, Dyer, *op. cit.* chs 5, 6, 7.

8 On causes of the 1381 revolt, see Dobson, *op. cit.* part vii, especially 370.

9 For contemporary reactions to the Black Death, see R. Horrox (ed. and trans.), *The Black Death* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, paperback, 1994), especially 132–4 (on lewd dress/sin), 135 (Langland), 306–9 (the Archbishop of Canterbury's criticisms of the 'unbridled' greed of the lower clergy), 15, 128–30 (the failures of the Church and lay princes), 2–3, 30–3 (on abandonment by families and neighbours), 271 (on priests refusing to confess the dying); and for an analysis of its impact and of historians' (changing) assessment of that impact: *ibid.* 229–47.

10 John Barnie, *War in Medieval Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War 1337–99* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), 12.

11 See, for example, Peter Heath, *Church and Realm 1272–1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crisis* (London: Fontana Press, paperback, 1988), ch. 3, especially 123–4; for the Schism, 260–1; for the seizures, 112–13.

12 *Ibid.* 109, Gerald L. Harriss, 'Introduction: The Exemplar of Kingship', in *idem* (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, paperback, 1993), 1–29, especially 2–5; Barnie, *op. cit.* 28.

13 Harris, *op. cit.* 24; Heath, *op. cit.* 108–10, 209–22, 273–96; Jeremy Catto, 'Religious Change under Henry V', *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, 97–115, especially 102–5.

14 Susan Brigden, *London in the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 53–6; and see, for example, Robert N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, paperback, 1993), ch. 7, 309–61.

15 Brigden, *op. cit.* 47, 34. The wills concerned were those proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

16 *Ibid.* 289, 7–12, 82–3, 1.

17 Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital 1070–1570* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 156–7, 161. By contrast with London's experience, 'most of the working hospitals and almshouses which had escaped the dissolutions of Henry VIII – a very large body . . . survived into the post-Reformation era': *ibid.* 160–1.

18 E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (Harmondsworth and Victoria: Penguin, 1970), especially 26; Stephen Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy in Late Medieval England', in John A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), 62–106, and the sources cited therein.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PRIORY OF ST MARY OF BETHLEHEM

INTRODUCTION

> *Gentleman.* By whom was these fields [Moorfields, an expanse of marshy ground immediately to the west of the future Bethlem site] given to the citty?
> *Citizen.* Marry, sir, by two mayds, the only daughters of Sir *William Fines*, a knight of the Rhodes, in the time of Edward the Confessor, ... *Mary* and *Katherine*; who ... became two Nuns in the Monastery of Bedlem ... The Monasterie (now ruinated) was builded by their father, Sir *William Fines* ... Likewise, here in *Bedlem*, is now scituated an hospital for the cure of distracted people, which in former times, about the yeare 1246, was founded by *Simon Fitzmarie*, one of the sheriffes of London, of the same house and kindred, naming it the priory of *Saint Marie de Bethlem*, after the elder of the two sisters.[1]

Much of this early seventeenth-century account of Bethlem's foundation is nonsense: the product of a little knowledge and a lot of guesswork. This is not surprising. Sources of evidence for London as a whole in the first half of the thirteenth century are scant. The early records of the Priory or House, later Hospital, of St Mary of Bethlem have vanished; the foundation charter survives only in a copy, embedded in the record of an early fifteenth-century visitation. The earliest London chronicles tell us something, but only about matters which seemed important to the chroniclers. To make matters worse, chroniclers had their biases. It is on the basis of hostile chronicle evidence that the character of the founder, Simon fitzMary, has been judged and his motives deduced. Almost everything we know about him comes from a London chronicle attributed to an alderman who served a few decades after fitzMary's time, Arnold fitzThedmar. In the opinion of one of its editors, this chronicle was written – or, more probably, written down in its present form – in 1274, some fifteen years after fitzMary was forced out of the city political scene.[2] The chronicler was certainly partisan, though not blindly so, in his championship of the City and its privileges, and he has been used largely uncritically by historians of London politics. On the basis of fitzThedmar's account, fitzMary has been portrayed by modern historians as a royalist trojan horse within the City's walls, prepared to allow himself to be used in Henry III's several assaults on the City's privileges and liberties.[3]

Sometimes the administrative and legal records allow one to check the accuracy of statements in the chronicles. Unfortunately, even the central records are incomplete. There is, for instance, a gap in the Curia Regis (King's Court) rolls between 1244/5 and 1248/9 which neatly encompasses the time when a contentious legal case involving fitzMary was before the King and Council. Had this record survived, it might have provided a valuable check on the reliability of the city chronicler's account. But it does not. As a result of losses like this, there are serious difficulties in reconstructing the background and activities of the Hospital's thirteenth-century founder.

It is not all doom and gloom, however. Even impressions of fitzMary's seal survive incidentally among the ancient deeds in the Public Record Office and Guildhall Library (see Plates 3.1 and 3.2). He bought and sold property, and on a couple of occasions mentioned members of his family. His activities in an official capacity brought him to public notice and record, and he also witnessed the acts of others in what was apparently a private capacity. It is true that fitzMary the man has to be reconstructed from a few bare bones of fact, with much of the skeleton missing, and fleshed out with some educated guesses. But the activity is not wasted effort. Something recognizable and of some value emerges. The result does not entirely support the chronicler's interpretation of fitzMary's career. What it does do is offer some clues as to the founder's motives in donating his lands for the establishment of the future Priory of St Mary of Bethlem.

Plate 3.1 Simon fitzMary's seal: obverse, portraying the Virgin and Child (text unclear). Reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral; deposited at the Guildhall Library.

Plate 3.2 Simon fitzMary's seal: reverse, portraying a boar's head, text 'SI: FILII MARIE'. Reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral; deposited at the Guildhall Library.

To understand fitzMary's motives, one needs some insight into the social and political milieu in which he lived and worked. London and its often-fraught relationship with the King, Henry III, form an influential background to fitzMary's story. But this chapter is not just about Simon fitzMary. Without his donation, Bethlem might never have been built, it is true. He may quite possibly have been toying for some time with the idea of endowing some sort of a religious institution: he seems to have had no sons, and his only daughter was apparently outlawed for her part in a murder which, although it was committed about a decade after Bethlem was founded, may merely have been the nadir of the kind of career that most fathers would prefer their daughters not to embark upon. All the same, it is unlikely, though not impossible, that the particular form the foundation took was fitzMary's idea. He was probably persuaded to make his donation by a chance meeting with the Bishop-elect of Bethlehem, an Italian called Goffredo de Prefetti, in the late autumn of 1247. De Prefetti's motives are therefore no less important a part of the story, as is the reason why he was in England in the first place.

THIRTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

On the whole, London seems to have done well from the economic and social developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The modern image of medieval towns is of crowded, noisy, smelly places in which pedestrians were constantly at risk of having the contents of chamber-pots thrown over them. There is some truth in the image: medieval London had more in common with modern Third World towns than with First World cities. In the 1240s, its inhabitants had plenty of complaints about nuisances caused by people blocking the drains, noxious butchers' stalls, and extensions to houses which encroached into and obstructed the streets. But the very fact that they complained about their neighbours' unsanitary practices, about polluted air and about overcrowding suggests that they aspired to better things – and, no doubt, in part achieved them. By about 1250, the City had its own water-supply system, running through pipes from springs at Tyburn, to the west of the City (one conduit head stood just to the north of a property at Charing Cross, the Stone House, which Bethlem subsequently acquired). The climate, which became colder and wetter in the later Middle Ages, was still benign. William fitzStephen's London in the late twelfth century was a place in which the inhabitants were never far from gardens, trees, pastures and forests. Even in Alderman fitzMary's day, over half a century later, parts of the City may have been relatively empty and rural. The name of one relatively central street and ward, Cornhill, may preserve an earlier reality, and the marshy nature of the central and north-eastern areas may have discouraged development there for some time. Even if fitzStephen was exaggerating just a little when he claimed that 'the matrons of London are very Sabines' (models of virtue), his praise of the City as a whole was probably not entirely misplaced.[4]

By 1247, London had developed enormously, both in physical size and complexity and in its governmental organization. The great City was, in William fitzStephen's description, a busy hub of trade. Its population, like that of much of Europe, grew greatly, almost certainly reaching 70,000, and perhaps even 100,000, by the end of the

thirteenth century. At that point, people may have been being driven away from their rural homes by a combination of a worsening climate, increased competition for land, and lack of employment, rather than lured to London by the realistic prospect of good conditions. But in the first half of the thirteenth century it may have been the carrot rather than the stick which drew them to the City. As trade increased and specialisms developed, so employment opportunities improved. In 1247, London had for well over a century been attracting merchants and traders from France and Germany. It already boasted a large number of distinct trades (the Weavers Company got its first charter at about the same time as the City obtained its first recorded one, in the late twelfth century). This reflected both the trend towards diversification and the growing reliance on craftsmen to produce what might otherwise have been produced at home. A hundred parish churches served its burgeoning population: though some, admittedly, were small by later standards.[5]

Politically, London had also been developing strongly in the hundred years or so before the foundation of the Priory of St Mary of Bethlem. Some of its institutions, like the great Folkmoot when all citizens met together to witness if not actually participate actively in major civic events and elections, or the Court of Husting, which had had administrative functions but gradually came to be almost entirely a court of law and record, seem to have been pre-Conquest in origin. The division of the City into some twenty-four 'wards' or areas with fixed boundaries, probably for defensive purposes, seems to have occurred shortly after the Conquest. Certainly the wards were in place by 1127 (see Figure 3.1). The aldermanic office, with (broadly

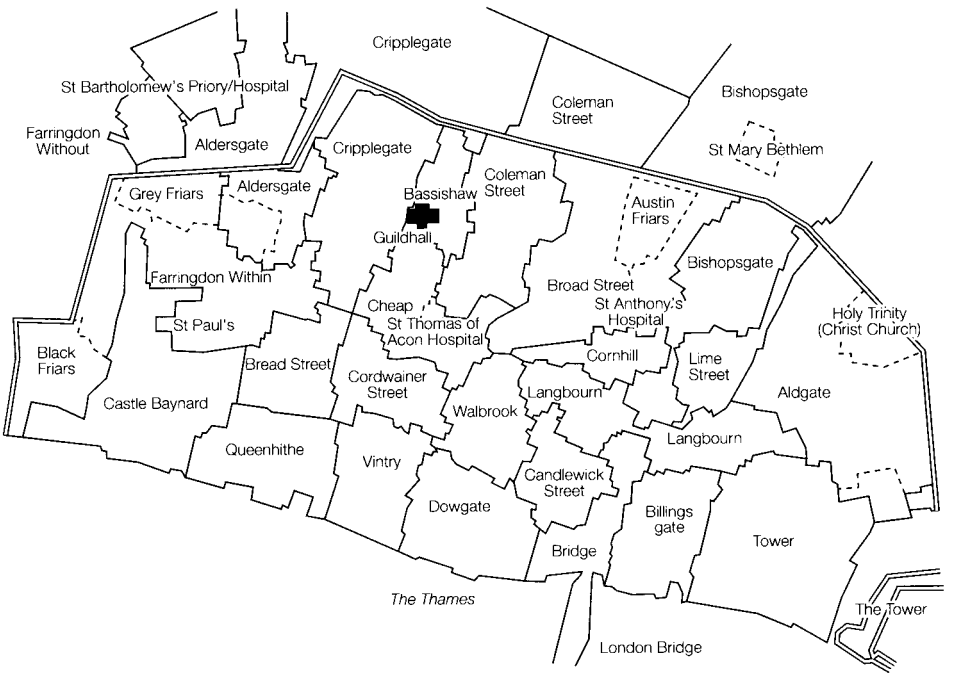

Figure 3.1 The wards of London *c.* 1127

speaking) one Alderman having responsibility for each Ward, seems to have developed at much the same time. During the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, however, the City was steadily increasing the privileges it obtained from successive kings and was as steadily building up an independent hierarchy of government. Since the early twelfth century, the City had had the right to elect its own Sheriffs. In the first decade of the thirteenth century it was granted the right to have a Mayor.[6]

This process was not entirely smooth. Londoners tended to regard the City's privileges and liberties, once obtained, as a perpetual right. Any intervention in the conduct of civic government by the King or royal officials was much resented: as Simon fitzMary was to discover to his cost. The fact, however, was that any grant was at the King's pleasure. Any individual King could take away what he or his forebears had granted. In practice, if he was in a strong enough position, he could do so on a whim; and in theory he could do so at any stage if the City abused its rights or offended him in some way. As late as Richard II's reign, at the end of the fourteenth century, London found itself paying a very heavy price for incurring the King's displeasure. And yet the assertion of civic privilege could be very effective indeed. In 1403, two men commissioned by Chancery to conduct a visitation of the then Hospital of St Mary of Bethlem attempted to summon a jury of Londoners to inform them about alleged alienations of hospital property. The Londoners protested that they were not bound to serve on juries summoned outside the City or by external authorities, save in particular circumstances, and flatly – and successfully – refused to cooperate. The Commissioners withdrew, defeated.

The consistent efforts made by Londoners to defend and if possible extend their City's privileges and liberties, and the fact that the King and royal officials were normally keen to ensure that London did not escape royal supervision and control, quite often led to clashes. On several occasions during Henry III's reign the Mayor and Aldermen found themselves being summoned before an irate King to explain their attitude or behaviour. There were times when matters reached such a pass that the City was 'taken into the King's hands', and a warden or wardens appointed to govern it in the place of the Mayor and Aldermen until one side or the other backed down. The City was also drawn into the civil wars of the period: the barons who opposed King John are said to have replaced one London mayor with another in 1214/15, and the City was actively involved in the violent disputes between Henry III and his barons during the 1250s and 1260s.[7] It is possible that another of Simon fitzMary's motives for offering his land just outside Bishopsgate for the foundation of a priory was that he hoped to gratify King Henry by doing so. Or possibly he thought this would be a suitably grand gesture with which to set the seal to a civic career which – as he was probably already aware – would shortly be coming to an end. If so, political ambition and personal pride, as well as religious zeal, formed part of the motivation for the foundation.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PUBLIC AIMS OF THE FOUNDATION

Bethlem was intended, 'not as a mad-house, but as a link between England and the Holy Land, part of a wider movement in which the cathedral church of the Nativity

at Bethlehem and its bishops sought land, alms and hospitality in western Europe'.[8] The motive for the foundation appears straightforward: religious and crusading zeal. Three years earlier, the town of Bethlehem and its cathedral church, which had been recovered from the Saracens (Arabian Muslims) in 1229, had fallen to the Turks. Unlike the Saracens, the Turks appear to have inflicted considerable damage on the places they over-ran. The See of Bethlehem had also suffered considerable alienations of its possessions during the episcopate of its previous Bishop, John 'Romanus'. Bishop John was removed in 1244, and was succeeded by Goffredo de Prefetti. De Prefetti seems to have spent the years following his election in attempting to recover the possessions alienated by his predecessor and to restore the financial position of his see. It seems to have been at about this time that the Order of Bethlehem developed as a distinct entity, with alms-raising as a major aim. In 1245, a mere month after de Prefetti's election, the canons of Bethlehem were granted a general protection by the Pope to enable them to seek alms in England. Then, in 1246, the Bishop-elect himself was sent as papal envoy to Scotland. From there, he travelled south to join the English court of Henry III. He remained in England for about a year. Towards the end of his stay, in September 1247, King Henry issued an unlimited protection to the 'brethren of the house of Betleem', again perhaps in connection with their alms-raising activities.[9] Exactly a month later, on 23 October, Simon fitzMary granted the Bishop and the Church of Bethlehem his lands and tenements in the parish of St Botolph's, Bishopsgate Ward, in the north-eastern suburbs of London.

It may be wrong, however, to assume that it was the difficulties faced by the Church of Bethlehem which alone prompted the foundation. The name of the founder and Bishop de Prefetti's background suggest the possibility that other influences may have encouraged the two men to found this particular priory at this particular time. The first half of the thirteenth century was a time of internal as well as external struggle for the Catholic Church. Schismatic or heretic sects, like the Cathars, attracted many, including those in high places. In its developed form, Catharism was a dualist creed, its followers believing that the existence of evil in a world created by a good God was explained by the fact that God had his evil mirror-image, the anti-God, Satan. As Catharism diverged more widely from heterodoxy, it came increasingly to deny the central doctrines of the Catholic Church, including the traditional teaching about Christ in the New Testament: the Incarnation (and hence Mary's motherhood of God-made-flesh), the Redemption and the Resurrection.[10]

As part of its response, the Catholic Church launched a programme of religious education and sought to involve the laity more actively than before in the defence of its dogma. In Italy, this drive was at first led by movements and organizations like the Franciscan Order of Penitence and the Society of Faith: the latter played a specifically anti-heretic role. In time, however, these were complemented and succeeded by lay confraternities. Two of the earliest were founded by an ex-Cathar, the Milanese inquisitor Peter the Martyr, in 1232 and 1244. Both these companies were devoted to Mary. This was probably deliberately done: 'As an ex-Cathar himself, Peter realized that it was possible to capitalize on the growing popularity of Mary in face of the Cathars' denial of her divine motherhood.'[11]

Apart from the fact that from 1232–3 de Prefetti helped negotiate a truce between

the communes of Sienna, Orvieto and Florence, and that it was in Florence that the second of the confraternities associated with Peter the Martyr was established, there seems to be nothing to link de Prefetti closely with either the education campaign or the Marian societies. But he would certainly have been aware of the policy and of the means being used to further it. Perhaps, having encountered Sheriff fitzMary in the latter's official capacity while he was staying at Westminster, the Bishop was prompted by fitzMary's matronymic ('son of Mary') to talk to him of the need to defend not only Bethlehem from the Infidel but also Mary from heretic attacks. It may therefore be that the foundation of the Priory of St Mary of Bethlem owed something to a wish to protect the Church from internal dissent as well as to the intention to fund its fight against external enemies.

FitzMary's grant was designed to provide the physical basis of the foundation of a priory which would offer hospitality to the poor, and for the Bishop and any other members or representatives of the Order of Bethlehem when they visited England. The aim was to give the Order both a permanent home from which the English brothers could routinely seek funds for the support of the Order overseas, and a temporary base for those visiting from abroad in order to make special collections. This was probably the first 'house' of the Church of Bethlehem to be founded in England.[12]

THE FOUNDER AND HIS PERSONAL MOTIVES

FitzMary's background: family, friends, and wealth

The motives of de Prefetti were probably exactly what one would expect in the circumstances: he wanted to generate in England regular sources of income for the Order of Bethlehem and to obtain support for the crusade announced in the year of his election. What, though, of Alderman Simon fitzMary?

It would almost certainly make it easier to gain some insight into Simon fitzMary's personal or political motivations if one knew something about his family background. Was he, for example, a member of one of the dynasties which ruled London during the thirteenth century? If so, he would have started with a great advantage in civic public life. Or was he a 'self-made man'? In that case, he made his way in civic life against the odds, lacking the advantage of many of his peers: presumably he was a particularly able, fortunate or ruthless man.

The date of his birth is unknown, but he seems to have lived until 1269 at the earliest, and had reached his majority by 1228 or 1229 at the latest. So he was probably born in about 1200. Bethlem's historian, Rev. E. G. O'Donoghue, discussed the possibility that he was illegitimate, a thought suggested by the fact that he bore a matronymic. That in turn led to speculations about the possibility that his humble, or, at least, irregular origins might have contributed to fitzMary's political aims, encouraging him to develop into a champion of the 'proletariat' against the ruling dynasts.[13] What is clear is that fitzMary knew who his father was: in one of his deeds he names him as Walter of Fulham, and says that they jointly held some property in Bread Street Ward, London. As Walter did not join his son in authorizing the

transaction, it is likely that he was dead by this time (the early 1230s). A witness to an earlier transaction relating to the land in Bread Street Ward was a man called Alan de Balun, probably the Alderman of that name who was serving in about 1215. FitzMary was related by blood or marriage to the Baluns, who were a substantial London family. He had a nephew called Alan Balun, although there is no evidence that the two Alans were closely connected.[14] The evidence, such as it is, gives the impression that fitzMary's father was a man of middling status, but that the family had some grander connections. Perhaps Walter's wife (Mary?) was a Balun, and their son's surname reflects her higher status.

FitzMary himself may have been married twice. His wife is called Avice in 1241 and (if the man concerned is our Simon fitzMary, which seems likely) Edith in Leicestershire records of 1262 and 1269. There is no evidence in his various deeds that he had any children. However, as was mentioned earlier, he does in fact seem to have had a daughter, Joan. We only know about Joan because she was accused of involvement in the murder of another woman's husband in 1357–8.[15]

The two families with which fitzMary seems to have been most closely associated were the Aswys and the Viels. Both were leading London families, with shrievalties and even mayoralties to their credit. In 1234, Ralph Aswy III and William Aswy, together with another man, undertook to prosecute the men alleged to have murdered their father, Ralph Aswy II. FitzMary was one of their pledges; in other words, he promised to pay a sum to the King if the Aswys failed to pursue the prosecution. At some unknown date, John Viel senior and two of his sons witnessed a deed of fitzMary's. In November 1246 fitzMary was said to have 'stood openly with Margery [Viel, John's widow]' in a controversial law suit. In so doing, he put his civic career on the line. It is possible to identify some of his other friends, too. In his foundation charter, he requested prayers for three men and three women: they were, in addition to Ralph Aswy III and his wife Dionysia, Guy de Merlaw and his wife Mathilda, and John Durant and his wife Margery. John Durant is described as a *narrator* or pleader (a lawyer who argued his client's case in law, as opposed to an attorney who simply took the client's place for the duration of the case) and was evidently a man of some standing.[16]

FitzMary does seem to have been fairly wealthy, possibly even meriting the description of 'a great landowner'. His earliest surviving property transaction is from the late 1220s, when he sold property in Cripplegate Ward (to the north of Bread Street Ward) and Westminster for 10s. This is not a particularly large sum. In the course of the next twelve years, however, fitzMary sold over £10-worth of properties or rents. To put this in some sort of perspective, in the 1240s the King ordered that all men holding property worth £20 a year were to be knighted. This is about eight times the income fitzMary would have received from the lands and rents he sold between 1228/9 and 1240/1.[17]

By the 1240s, fitzMary was more often to be found purchasing than selling property. In 1246 he made a valuable purchase, paying £20 for a property in Walbrook Ward. Two years later, he bought thirty-five acres of land and the rents of two tenements in Shoreditch. Again, he paid £20 for these properties and rents. At some stage he also acquired property in the parish of St Laurence Jewry, though its value is unknown. Unless he sold the Walbrook tenements to fund his later purchases, his

investment in land and rents by the late 1240s must have amounted to at least £40, giving him an income of at least £10 a year. And of course he had, sometime before 1247, acquired the properties in Bishopsgate Ward which he granted to the Order of Bethlehem.[18]

There is no evidence of any further transactions in the 1250s, and by the 1260s he had probably left London. At any rate, he bought writs directed to the Sheriff of that county in 1262 and 1269. Unfortunately, the record does not say what the Sheriff of Leicestershire was required to do. But evidently fitzMary had some interest in that region, and it may well be that he was buying or defending the acquisition of property there.[19]

FitzMary's political career

Despite his influential friends and acquaintances, fitzMary remained just below the highest levels of civic life, never becoming Mayor, for instance, despite being an Alderman and twice serving as a Sheriff. Whether this reflected the fact that his social standing and connections were not quite good enough, or whether it was merely that his political attitudes and behaviour prevented him climbing even higher, it is unfortunately impossible to tell.

This is despite the fact that fitzMary's career was controversial and was therefore better recorded than the careers of many other Aldermen of his period. He first emerged into historical view when, according to fitzThedmar's account, as Sheriff he wasted the City's 'goods' so seriously that the receipt of the farm of the City was removed from him by the Mayor and given into the control of the Sheriffs' Clerks (the 'farm' was a fixed sum paid, in this case, to the Exchequer, the 'farmers', the Sheriffs, keeping any surplus profits they managed to make while in office). There is no way of judging how much truth there is in this story.[20] There are however reasons for suspecting that fitzThedmar might have got it slightly wrong. FitzMary was 'the King's Chamberlain of England', in 1232/3 or 1234. One possibility is that fitz-Thedmar confused criticism of fitzMary's conduct as King's Chamberlain with that concerning his conduct as Sheriff. Moreover, part of the function of the King's Chamberlain was to supervise the conduct of the Sheriffs, with whom he was associated in various inquests. The fact that fitzMary occupied these offices together for a period, holding one inquest as both King's Chamberlain and Sheriff, may well have been regarded as unsatisfactory, with the result that the Chamberlainship was taken from him.[21]

Whatever problems fitzMary may have had during his Shrievalty, he contrived to be elected Alderman of Walbrook Ward in 1237, together with Ralph Aswy III and Robert de Cornhill, said to be 'a prominent loyalist'. In view of the known connections between fitzMary and the Aswys, it is quite possible that these elections represented an increase in power by one of the City's political factions. There can certainly be no doubting the politically provocative nature of fitzMary's next move. In 1239, he obtained royal letters appointing him Sheriff for a second time. As London had for many years been electing its Sheriffs, instead of having them appointed by the King, the City refused to admit him. Henry III promptly suspended the City's liberties for three months. None the less, the immediate victory went to

London, or at least to the other party: the Aldermen in due course chose the Sheriffs, and fitzMary was not one of them.[22]

In September 1246, fitzMary finally secured a second term as Sheriff. Thus far, his career had been like the proverbial curate's egg – good in parts. He was almost certainly regarded with suspicion and hostility by some of his fellow Aldermen, but most of his actions, though controversial, had been technically correct. His enemies were eventually to get the upper hand, however. The seeds of his downfall were sown during his second Shrievalty. In the spring of 1247, a notorious case involving Margery, widow of the former Alderman, John Viel senior, was adjudged in the City's Court of Husting, at this time the main City court for trying civil (private) cases. The Viel case involved the rules applied in the City in actions for dower. City custom normally allowed the widow one-third of the late husband's possessions; more, if there were no children. In Mrs Viel's case, however, it was decided that widows to whom a specific dowry had been assigned as part of the marriage settlement were only entitled to that property, unless their late husbands had chosen to leave them more. Mrs Viel was seeking the usual third part of John Viel's goods. Under the rules as they had now been interpreted, she was evidently going to get considerably less than this. She therefore appealed to the King.

Although there is no mention of fitzMary in the passage in which fitzThedmar deals with the Viel case, a memorandum further on in the chronicle notes that he openly supported Margery. On account of this and what fitzThedmar unhelpfully describes as the 'many other wicked and detestible acts which he had secretly perpetrated against the city', he was judged to have breached conditions placed upon him in 1244 for opposing the Mayor's attempt to appoint a Sheriff for a second consecutive term, and in March 1249 he finally lost his Aldermanry.[23] There are no further references to him in the city chronicles after this date. On 22 August 1261, his property in St Lawrence Jewry was described as 'late of Simon fitzMary'. As already mentioned, he may have retired to Leicestershire.

FitzMary's character and motives

Even if fitzMary was not a financially incompetent Sheriff as fitzThedmar alleges, and even if the Mayor did not interfere in his exercise of the Shrievalty for this reason, he clearly made enemies. The surviving legal sources also suggest that he may have abused his position in a number of ways while he was Sheriff. Among the complaints made during the course of the judicial visitation (eyre) of 1244 was the allegation that fitzMary, together with one Robert de Herbintun, had seized an orphan from the widow of the boy's lawful guardian and had kept him imprisoned until he died. FitzMary and Herbintun claimed that they 'had possession' and that the boy had 'died lawfully in Robert's custody': in other words, they were claiming guardianship of the boy. Unfortunately, no outcome is recorded, but the case probably amounted to no more than a straightforward dispute over who should act as the boy's guardian, now that the man to whom his care had been committed had died.[24]

A case which looks, at first sight, even more unsavoury led to fitzMary being mentioned during an investigation in 1234 into oppressions of the London Jewish community by royal officials and others. However, in this instance fitzMary probably

merely, as Sheriff, took over the custody of certain deeds and charters which had allegedly been stolen from the complainant for the duration of the dispute. There is no suggestion that he himself accepted bribes or was involved in any direct wrongdoing.[25]

The 1244 eyre also provides some evidence which needs to be taken into account when considering whether fitzMary was merely a royalist stooge. In the course of one enquiry, he offered a hundred marks (£67), pledged against all his goods, that 'the pleas of the City might be held and pleaded as they were pleaded in the time of King Richard and King John' (in other words, that the limit of precedent be set at 1189). FitzMary's offer probably saved 'all the barons', or leading men, from a corporate fine. Similarly, during his second Shrievalty, he and his fellow-Sheriff had the misfortune to incur swingeing fines of £20 each for distraining (seizing goods in order to force compliance with a court order) a woman after they had received a royal writ ordering them not to do so. Almost certainly the Sheriffs acted as they did because a case was pending against the woman in the city courts. The probability is that the City was trying to insist that actions begun in its courts should not be stayed by ones subsequently initiated in the King's Court. If so, fitzMary and his colleague were attempting to defend or assert an important civic privilege.[26]

FitzThedmar provides some evidence to show that fitzMary was keen to protect the City's customs and practices against attack, whatever the source. In 1245, the chronicler tells us, 'there arose the greatest dissension in the City through the agency of Simon FitzMary, who, hearing that the Mayor wanted to admit Nicholas Bat [the serving sheriff] for the following year', pointed out that this was forbidden by an ordinance made fifteen years previously. The Mayor managed to force the election of Bat through, despite the Aldermen's objections. It required the King's intervention to correct this piece of civic despotism. FitzMary himself was forced to resign his Aldermanry, 'out of reverence for the Mayor'(!), although he was subsequently readmitted on condition that he do nothing further 'contrary to the city's liberties'. It was his alleged breach of this condition which was used to justify his permanent dismissal from the Aldermanry in 1249.[27]

Finally, there is the Viel case. If fitzThedmar is to be believed, this was an instance of unjustified royal intervention in city affairs. Again, however, all may not be quite as it appears. Margery Viel's main champion was, according to the chronicler, one Henry de la Mare, who is spoken of as though he was simply a friend or supporter of the widow. He was in fact 'the most distinguished Surrey man in the royal service in the 13th century'. In October 1247 he had been appointed justice of the King's Court. Whether de la Mare was acting for the King or as Margery's counsel is unclear. Either way, heavy guns were being brought to bear on the City.

This does not mean that the City was being unfairly treated. In early August 1248, the Chief Justice, Henry of Bath, sat at St Martin le Grand to examine the case (undoubtedly on error; in other words, Mrs Viel was alleging a technical fault in the way that her case had been dealt with). That the case involved important principles is certain, although this does not emerge clearly from fitzThedmar's account. According to the chronicler, Henry of Bath said that the judgment itself was not false, but that the process was defective in that Margery's opponents had not been duly summoned; and that, since John Viel had made a testament, the matter was in any

event subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Certainly in this respect the City's defence (that Margery's opponents were on permanent standby to answer, and that the parties had consented to have the matter determined in Husting) was weak. Moreover, fitzThedmar may well have misreported Henry of Bath. The King himself described it as a 'false judgment'. Despite the chronicler's assertions, therefore, the Viel case was almost certainly not an instance of high-handed royal interference in the City's courts, but of the City attempting and failing to get away with evading the supervisory jurisdiction of the royal justices.[28]

It was while the Viel case was still being fought out, in October 1247, just after his second Shrievalty ended, that fitzMary sealed the charter granting his lands in Bishopsgate Ward for the foundation of the Priory of St Mary of Bethlehem. This endowment may possibly have overstretched his resources; by early spring 1248, his two sureties for £33 13s 4d owed to the Exchequer were seeking protection against the possibility of being distrained because of his default – although they clearly believed that he had sufficient to cover the debt himself.[29]

CONCLUSION

What does all this evidence suggest about fitzMary's background, career, personality and character, and, by extension, about his motives for founding the Priory?

As far as his financial position is concerned, the surviving deeds and fines clearly do not account for all his holdings. All the same, it is apparent that he inherited fairly valuable property, or acquired it, relatively early in life. He may also have enjoyed the income from other properties in right of his wife or wives: the Camberwell lands sold in the early 1240s may well have been his wife Avice's, since not only Simon and Avice, but also Avice's heirs, offered a guarantee to the purchaser. He may none the less have been in some financial embarrassment in the early 1230s. But if he did get into difficulties in the early years of his civic career, he seems to have recovered. By the late 1240s, he was undoubtedly a wealthy man.

On the basis of the few known facts about fitzMary's family, it does not really seem true to say of him that he was one of the London dynasts. He appears neither to have belonged to, nor founded, a city dynasty. The most that can be said, assuming that his nephew was related in some way to Alderman Balun, is that fitzMary was connected by blood or marriage to an aldermanic family. On the other hand, there seems to be no good reason to suppose that he was illegitimate, or to attribute to this circumstance his conduct in political life. As O'Donoghue himself pointed out, other factors could result in the use of the mother's name: inheritance from the mother rather than the father, for example. Several prominent Londoners of this period were known by matronyms (for example, William fitzIsabel and William fitzAlice, who were Sheriffs in 1194/5 and 1201/2 respectively). Even if fitzMary himself did not belong to one of the city dynasties, however, he moved in those circles, and he had some powerful friends to whom he appears to have been close, or, at least, loyal.

When it comes to assessing his career and motivations, much depends on fitz-Thedmar's reliability on the subject of events which had occurred some forty years before the probable date of the compilation of his chronicle, and, indeed, on his

veracity. There is little doubt that fitzThedmar was sometimes accidentally or deliberately misleading. The allegation about fitzMary's financial mismanagement may be one example. The account of the Viel case, and the statement that this was merely one more instance of fitzMary's manifold wrongdoings, is certainly another. And the very fact that the statement about fitzMary's involvement in this case is misplaced in the narrative, and appears merely as a justification for his eventual dismissal, suggests that he did not so much fall as a result of the outrage generated immediately by his conduct, as that the Viel episode was used in a later political *coup* as an excuse to oust him.

Overall, therefore, if fitzMary was a royalist agent, it seems that he was so only intermittently. On two occasions, he acted to promote City interests, not the King's. Even when he behaved in ways which were considered disrespectful to the Mayor or disadvantageous to the City, he was not necessarily prompted by a desire to please the King. His attitude over the improper re-election of Sheriff Bat was justified. The Mayor was quite clearly in the wrong. FitzMary may not have been actuated by high moral principles, of course; city politics may have prompted him to oppose Bat's re-election. On the other hand, if he did indeed support Margery Viel openly, his attitude may well have been based on a mixture of personal loyalty (to the Viels) and on the strict justice of the case. There is no evidence that he benefited from it, or could have done so. Margery remained a widow to the end of her days, so he was evidently not planning to marry her.[30] Nor does it seem all that probable that fitzMary was using the case for some political end of Henry III's. This was not a case of 'royal' courts trying to poach litigation from city ones; Henry of Bath stated explicitly that jurisdiction belonged to the Church courts.

What the evidence suggests is that fitzMary was a man of uncompromising nature. If some of the things he did were to the King's advantage, others were not. He was almost certainly not simply the King's puppet. Possibly his family background prevented him from having the success in civic life which he felt he ought to have had, and he resented this. He probably was a difficult man. It is clear that he made enemies who eventually managed to destroy him as a political force. But he was not a lone wolf. He had influential friends, and he seems to have been loyal to them. If he realized, as presumably he must have done, what the reaction to his support of Margery Viel was likely to be, he was prepared to make considerable sacrifices on their behalves.

His known behaviour suggests that his motive for founding the Priory may have been genuinely religious: the product of a rather aggressive concern to do what was right. It may not be too fanciful to see in him something of the muscular Christianity that motivated his much greater contemporary and namesake, Simon de Montfort. And no doubt, as Geoffrey O'Donoghue suggested, his matronymic provided at least part of his motivation, as a devoted son of Mary.

NOTES

1 [Richard Johnson], *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields: Being the Gift of Two Sisters, Now Beautified, to the Continuing Fame of this Worthy Citty* (London: Henry Gosson, 1607), 6, 13.

2 T. Stapledon (ed.), *De Antiquis Legibus Liber: Cronica Maiorum et Vicecomitum Londoniam et quedam, que contingebant temporibus illis ab anno MCLXXVIII° ad annum MCCLXXIV^m^*,

Camden Society, First Series, xxxiv (1846), 7, and (in English) H. T. Riley (ed. and trans.), *Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London AD 1189 to AD 1274 . . . [and] The French Chronicle of London, AD 1259 to AD 1343* (London: Trubner, 1863), p. i.

3 Gwynn A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London: University of London/Athlone Press, 1963), 202–7.

4 H. M. Chew and M. Weinbaum (eds), *The London Eyre of 1244*, London Record Society, vi (1970); C. M. Barron, 'The Later Middle Ages: 1270–1520', in M. D. Lobel (ed.), *The City of London: From Prehistoric Times to c. 1520*, 2nd edn, *The British Atlas of Historic Towns*, iii (Oxford: OUP/The Historic Towns Trust, 1991), 42–56, especially 45; C. Brooke, 'The Central Middle Ages: 800–1270', *The City of London: From Prehistoric Times to c. 1520*, 30–41, especially 34; *Norman London by William FitzStephen*, with commentary by Sir Frank Stenton, introduction by F. D. Lozan (New York: Italica Press, 1990), 50.

5 Bruce M. S. Campbell, James A. Galloway, Derek Keene and Margaret Murphy, *A Medieval Capital and its Grain Supply: Agrarian Production in the London Region c. 1300*, Historical Geography Research Series, xxx (The Queen's University of Belfast/Centre for Metropolitan History, University of London, 1993), 31–2, 34–7; Brooke, *op. cit.*, 8–12; George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London: Methuen, 1908), 43.

6 Christopher N. L. Brooke and Gillian Keir, *London 800–1216: The Shaping of a City* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), 168–70; H. T. Riley (ed. and trans.), *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London* (London: R. Griffin, 1861), 114, 119.

7 [E. Tyrrell and N. H. Nicolas (eds)], *Chronicle of London, from 1089 to 1483 . . .* (1827; reprinted, Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1995), 8.

8 Nicholas Vincent, 'Goffredo de Prefetti and the Church of Bethlehem in England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (forthcoming, January 1998). We are most grateful to Dr Vincent for allowing us sight of this article, which throws considerable light on the circumstances of Bethlem's foundation. What follows, unless otherwise stated, is based on his account.

9 *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1232–1247*, 510.

10 On Catharism and responses to it, see, for example, Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050–1320* (London and New York: Routledge, paperback, 1993), 183–92.

11 John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press/OUP, 1994), 27–8.

12 There is a reference from 1223 to the procurator of 'domus Sancte Marie de Bethleem in Anglia', but the meaning is probably that the Procurator, not the House, was in England: *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1216–25*, 371.

13 Edward G. O'Donoghue, *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital from its Foundation in 1247* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), 5.

14 M. S. Guiseppe, H. Jenkinson and the Reverend W. Hudson (eds), *Chertsey Abbey Cartularies, Volume II, Part I*, Surrey Record Society, xii (1958), 300–1; *ibid.* 299 and 297–8 (items 1209 and 1207); Alan Balun junior is described as 'son of William, son of Richard'; N. J. M. Kerling (ed.), *The Cartulary of St Bartholomew's Hospital: founded 1123, a Calendar* (London: St Bartholomew's/Lund Humphries, 1973), 77 and 72 (items 744 and 682).

15 PRO Surrey Feet of Fines, CP25/1/226/11 item 235; C. Roberts (ed.), *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londoniensi Asservatis, Henrico Tertio Regis, AD 1216–1272*, 2 volumes (London: Record Commission, 1835–6), ii, 376, 496 (it is however possible that 'Avice' and 'Edith' are variant forms of the one name); M. Weinbaum (ed.), *The London Eyre of 1276*, London Record Society, xii (1976), 25 (item 84).

16 *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry 3, AD 1227–1231* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1902), 92; *Ghall*, Ancient Deeds, MS 25121/1070; *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 15; PRO, Chancery, Ecclesiastical Miscellanea, C270/22, m 5; *The London Eyre of 1276*, 145, 148 (items 669 and 715). A Robert Duraunt was one of the wardens of London in 1196/7.

17 Williams, *op. cit.* 202; PRO, Ancient Deeds, C210/3160 (the date is based on an endorsement in a later hand); *Chertsey Abbey Cartularies, II, I*, 300–1; PRO, Surrey Feet of Fines, CP25/1/226/11, item 235; *Ghall*, St Paul's Ancient Deeds, MS 25121/1070; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1237–42*, 428, 434–5, etc.

18 *Ghall*, St Paul's Ancient Deeds, MS 25121/214; *Cartulary of St Bartholomew's*, 74 (item 699);

Calendar of Charter Rolls, Volume I: Henry 3, AD 1226–1257 (London, 1903), 307; PRO, Feet of Fines, London and Middlesex, CP25/1/147/15, item 275, and *Ghall*, St Paul's Ancient Deeds, MS 25121/1704; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1257–1300*, 38.

19 *Excerpta e Rotuli Finium*, ii, 376, 496.

20 *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 7. There was no evident effect on the proffers, or initial payments in, made by fitzMary and his fellow-Sheriff when they were first called to account at the Exchequer; their immediate proffer against the farm was of over £52. However, this is not conclusive. His clerks may simply have done their job well: PRO, Pipe Roll, E372/78.

21 According to the London records, fitzMary was superseded as King's Chamberlain by John de Colemere sometime between late September 1233 and early September 1234. However, the Exchequer records show that Colemere succeeded Richard Reynger. Therefore fitzMary may in fact have been Reynger's deputy: *The London Eyre of 1244*, 35–6 and 37–8 (nos. 84 and 89); *Calendar of Close Rolls 1231–34*, 386; W. Kellaway, 'The Coroner in Medieval London', in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History Presented to P. E. Jones* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969), 75–91, especially 76–7, 87; *Ghall*, MS 111/5 mm. 827, 817, 830. *The London Eyre of 1244*, 2–3 (item 4) and note; *ibid.* 35–6 and 37–8 (items 84 and 89).

22 Williams, *op. cit.* 203–5; *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 8, 7; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1237–42*, 254.

23 *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 15; Williams, *op. cit.* 207; *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1257–1300*, 38.

24 *The London Eyre of 1244*, 73–4 (item 184); printed in *Liber Albus*, 95–6, under 'pleas of the 27th year [of Henry III]', i.e. 1242–3.

25 *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry 3: vol XV: 17 to 21 Henry 3 (1233–1237)*, 257–8 (item 1110).

26 *The London Eyre of 1244*, 9–10 (item 36), and p. xx, pledge pardoned, May 1245: *Calendar of Close Rolls 1242–47*, 307; *Curia Regis Rolls, 1233–37*, 470 (item 1876) (this is a curious, even a suspicious-looking, entry, added at the end of the roll, but misplaced by ten years. Presumably a clerk at some much later date decided that the record should be amended, and mistook 'xx Henry III' for 'xxx Henry III'); *Calendar of Liberate Rolls 1245–51*, 113.

27 *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 10–11, 15; and see 6, for the ordinance he was quoting.

28 C. A. F. Meekings and D. Crook (eds), *The 1235 Surrey Eyre*, Surrey Record Society (2 vols, 1979), i, 220 (We are grateful to Dr Crook for this reference); *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, 12–15; *ibid.* 12–14; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1247–51*, 79.

29 *Calendar of Close Rolls 1247–51*, 32 and 33.

30 *CLRO* MCFP 78 (Husting Roll 2, case 153), the acknowledgement in early 1260s of a bond made in favour of Margery Viel and her sister, Dionisia de Bufle.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BETHLEM PRECINCT

INTRODUCTION

Most of what we know about the early development of Bethlem relates to its property holdings and transactions. Over the years, its precinct underwent enormous development. By the 1630s there were nearly sixty houses, a couple of them being very substantial ones, occupying between an acre and an acre and a half of space (smaller than a football pitch). The precinct had changed from an open area, in which a few buildings were dotted about, to a crowded urban plot in which every foot of ground which was not used as a thoroughfare was occupied by a house, a yard or garden, or outbuildings.

Together with the physical changes went a considerable change of character. Early Bethlem was almost certainly a quiet backwater; by the 1630s it was a busy community. The insistence by Bethlem's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Governors that the Porter should close the gates at a set hour, and thereafter only admit those with a very good reason to enter, has a Canutian air to it: the tides of time would soon sweep away the last vestiges of separateness.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO *c.* 1400

Although Bethlem lay outside the City walls, it was inside the 'bars' or barriers which marked the City boundaries. It stood moreover beside the highway which linked the City with the Great North Road and ran on southwards to London Bridge (see Figure 4.1). It was thus well-placed for its original purpose of offering a base and accommodation for members of the Order of Bethlem when they set out on or returned from their fund-raising journeys. It was also, as it happened, a good site for a hospital, as alms could be solicited from passers-by. Later, visiting Bethlem became a popular pastime, in part at least because the Hospital was close to the first Elizabethan theatres and other sources of entertainment. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, casual visitors contributed quite substantial sums to the income of the Hospital and its staff.

The general appearance of the area immediately around Bethlem is shown in

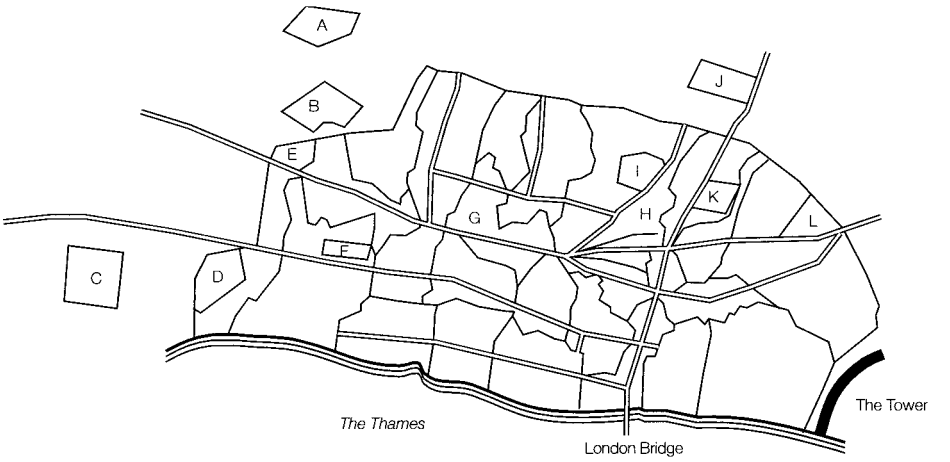

Figure 4.1 The main thoroughfares of London, *c.* 1400

Key: A Charterhouse
B St Bartholomew's Priory/Hospital
C White Friars
D Black Friars
E Grey Friars
F St Paul's
G St Thomas of Acon Hospital
H St Anthony's Hospital
I Austin Friars
J St Mary Bethlem
K St Helen's Priory
L Holy Trinity Priory (Christ Church)

Plate 4.1. Moorfields, the large open expanse to the west, remained marshy until it was drained in the sixteenth century. Before that, Bishopsgate Without largely retained its character as a stopping-place for travellers, with 'a large Inne for the receit of travellers . . . called the *Dolphin*' directly opposite Bethlem on Bishopsgate Street and, heading northwards towards the site of the 'New Hospital' of St Mary Without Bishopsgate, 'many fair houses builded, for receipt and lodging of worshipful persons' (the 'New Hospital' was in fact older than Bethlem by a half-century, and got its misnomer when it was re-founded). Suburban wards tended to be occupied by tradesmen whose occupations were unacceptable within the City walls: butchery, trades involving fire or highly inflammable materials and processes, and the like. Bishopsgate does not however appear to have become associated with any particular trade during the medieval period, unlike neighbouring Portsoken where the bell-founders congregated. By the early seventeenth century, 'noxious' trades were certainly practised there, but the impression is that the area remained relatively under-developed commercially before then. Indeed, it seems to have been mainly a place of resort and entertainment. Access to Moorfields had been made easier by the opening up of Moorgate in the late fifteenth century, and within a century the area offered all sorts of amusements to Londoners and travellers alike, from promenades and theatres (briefly) to archery and artillery-practice grounds.

By the time the city chronicler and antiquarian John Stow was writing his *Survey* of London in the last decades of the sixteenth century, however, Bishopsgate Without was getting overcrowded. The western side of Bishopsgate Street, beyond

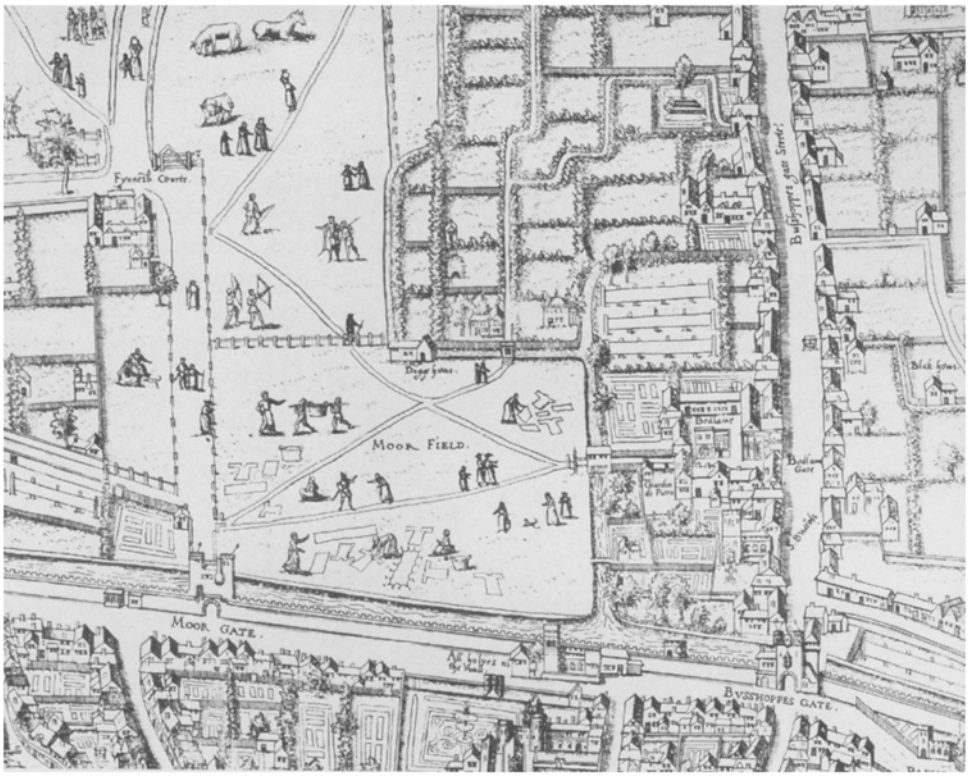

Plate 4.1 The Moorfields area: section of 'Copperplate Map', *c.* 1559. Reproduced by kind permission of the Museum of London.

Bethlem precinct, was densely packed with 'many houses . . . builded with Allies backward . . . [which were] too much pesterd with people . . . up to the Bars'. Stow also complained about the way that houses had been built on a causeway along the north bank of the City Ditch between St Botolph's Church and Petty France, with the result that household refuse blocked the Ditch 'to the danger of empoisoning the whole city'. The failure of successive city governments to keep the City Ditch clear was a favourite theme of Stow's, but there is no reason to doubt that the problem existed.[1]

The site of the first Bethlem was directly to the north of St Botolph's Church, which itself lay a short distance outside Bishopsgate, on the west side of Bishopsgate Street. Simon fitzMary's foundation charter seems at first sight to give some indication of what exactly he was granting to the future priory: 'all that I had or might have there, in houses, gardens, orchards, fishponds, ditches, marshes, and all other appurtenances [within boundaries which stretch] in length from the king's highway [Bishopsgate Street] eastwards to the ditch to the west called depeditch, and in breadth from the lands which are Ralph Dunnyng's in the north and to the land of St Botolph's Church in the south.' Unfortunately, although the boundaries mean something, there is no guarantee that the site of the future priory contained any, let alone

every one, of the features listed in the charter. The catalogue may well be no more than a catch-all.[2]

If fitzMary's plot was undeveloped when it was granted, it cannot have remained so for long. Precinct walls were probably built or erected at an early stage. Excavations carried out in 1986 to the west of the precinct have revealed the probable position of the Deep Ditch and what are described as wooden revetments or retaining walls running east to west which, it is suggested, may have marked the southern perimeter of the precinct.[3] Judging by late seventeenth-century maps of London, the precinct walls enclosed an area of about 6,000 square yards: just under 120 yards on the northern edge and just over 100 yards on the southern, with the Bishopsgate frontage and western perimeter extending for 50–60 yards. Open ground belonging to Bethlem surrounded the precinct on three sides. The property as a whole probably covered about three and a quarter acres.

The Church of St Mary of Bethlehem may well also have been built shortly after the foundation of the Priory (see Figure 4.2 for this and other, probably early, buildings). According to a mid-sixteenth-century rental, it stood near the East Gate, the main entrance to the precinct off Bishopsgate Street. A map of the same date, the Copperplate Map, and another derived from it (the 'Agas' Map, *c.* 1560–70) show in this position a tall, towerless, crenellated building with features which appear to be buttresses and three large windows. There is however also a building in a west-central position which looks like an early church tower, but without a nave. In 1403, the Bethlem Porter was occupying a ground-floor room in the Hospital's West Gate, described as being separated from the 'high altar' of the Hospital by a garden. 'High

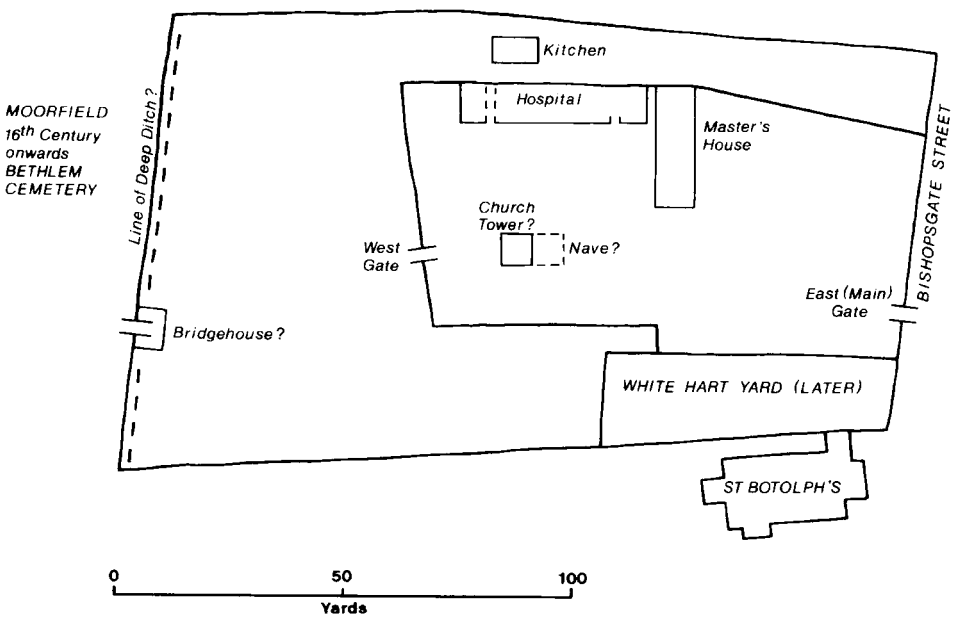

Figure 4.2 Reconstruction of the principal buildings in Bethlem precinct, *c.* 1300

altar' presumably means the Church. If so, the Church was the naveless western building. As both these buildings were referred to indifferently from the late fourteenth century onwards as chapels, it may be that confusion arose over time. By the early sixteenth century it was believed that Bethlem had begun life as a monastery, which indicates that there was considerable uncertainty by this stage over its origins. The solution to the riddle may therefore be that the westernmost building was indeed originally the Church, but that its nave was destroyed in the 1390s to make way for a churchyard which was laid out and consecrated then. By this time the Chapel had been built and could offer more spacious as well as more prestigious accommodation. As a result, it tended to be regarded, not merely as the 'Great Chapel', but also as 'Bethlem Church'.[4]

Another early building must have been some form of accommodation for the Master, the brethren, and their visitors. Possibly the Long House mentioned in later documents and shown in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps as forming or abutting the northern perimeter of the precinct served this purpose from the outset, or replaced an earlier building on the same site. The Master may from an early stage have occupied a separate building which stood at right angles to the Long House at its eastern end: the Master's right to the tenancy of a house in this position had been established by the sixteenth century at the latest. The East Gate must have existed from the start, though no doubt its appearance and the accommodation it offered changed over time. It seems very likely, too, that there was from the beginning a west gate allowing access to the open ground between the precinct and the Deep Ditch.

By the late fourteenth century, if not before, the precinct was being developed as a source of income. There is evidence to suggest that Bethlem accommodated quite a few individuals who were neither inmates nor 'staff': at least eight, and possibly twelve in 1403 (of whom the two women were relatives of the Master). In 1391, for example, there is a mention of 'chambers newly built between the church and chapel as soon as they shall be finished', one of which was granted to Robert Baron and his wife. Sixteenth-century maps show nothing lying directly between the Church and Chapel. Conceivably the chambers were never built, the graveyard taking their place. However, it seems more likely that the chambers planned in 1391 were built somewhere in the previously open area between the Chapel, the Churchyard and the Church, but were poorly constructed and did not survive into the sixteenth century.

If so, the 'chambers' were not the only private buildings constructed during this period. When Robert Baron died, the land he had acquired under a second grant, by now containing a room with a private parlour or bedroom over it, was let out again. Baron may also have sublet a third tenement to someone he describes only as 'Sire Hugh'. Moreover, Baron, his wife and their subtenants were almost certainly not the only private tenants in the precinct. The London fishmonger, Hugh Bartelot, who died in 1413 'within Bedlem', was probably also a tenant of the Hospital rather than an inmate, since his will was registered and proved in the London Commissary Court.[5]

The re-grant of Robert Baron's land incidentally reveals the existence of another building which was probably erected at an early stage. It describes Baron's property as lying 'on the north side of the chief kitchen of the hospital'. There is nothing to indicate where this kitchen was (other than that it was close to and somewhere to

the south of 'the great garden'). Possibly, however, it was the old kitchen which stood in a yard just behind (to the north of) the Hospital building in the seventeenth century.[6]

The main focus of development between 1350 and 1400 was the new Chapel. Considerable effort and, no doubt, money, was expended on its construction. This venture led to friction with the Rector of the local parish church, St Botolph's, Bishopsgate, in 1361. A year later, the Master had to pay the Rector 13s 4d and undertake to allow him 'peaceably to enjoy' the profits of that Church, in return for which the rector withdrew his objection to the erection of the Chapel. This seems not to have resolved the situation, however. In 1364 the Master obtained a royal writ of protection, alleging that 'some evildoers try by armed force to dispute his possession of the hospital, and prevent him from completing the chapel and other buildings begun by him in the hospital'. Two years later, the project was threatened from another direction (but possibly from the same motive). The Mayor and Aldermen were persuaded to write to the Bishop of Bethlehem and one of his advisers saying that they had heard that the Bishop intended to let the Hospital to farm, and that the Master and brethren had started 'a great work of a chapel there, which work they would be unable to accomplish and carry out successfully without the charitable assistance of the mayor and aldermen and other good folk of [London]'. Despite all the opposition to the building of the Chapel, however, the work was eventually completed. By 1403, and in fact probably by the early 1380s, the Hospital rejoiced in what were then known as the Great and the Little Chapel.[7] Figure 4.3 shows the positions of the major buildings which existed by the early fifteenth century.

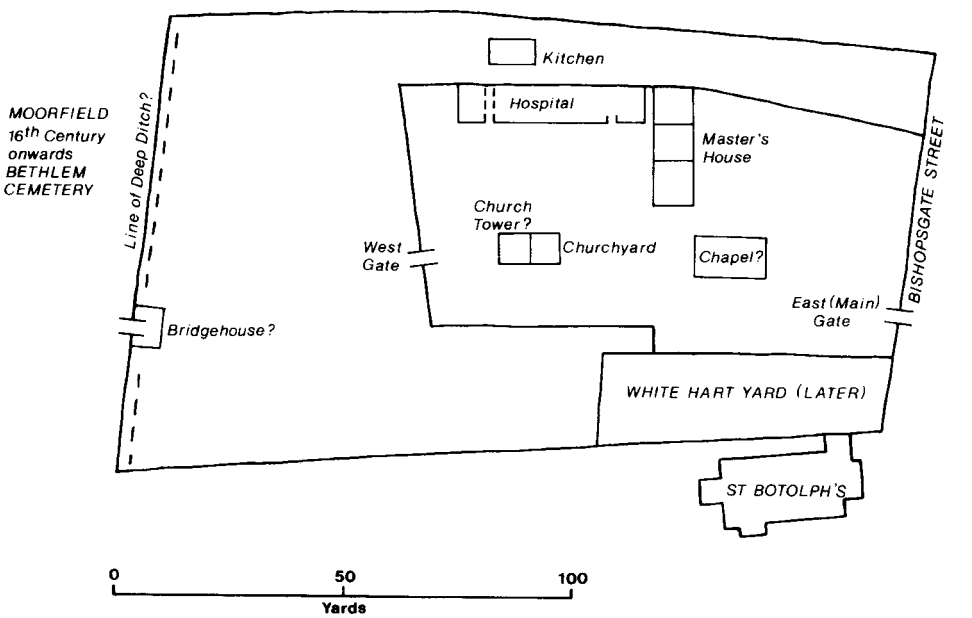

Figure 4.3 Reconstruction of the principal buildings in Bethlem precinct, *c.* 1400

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE, *c.* 1400–1633

All this, though tantalizing, hardly enables one to map out the precinct and its buildings with any degree of confidence. It is not until the sixteenth century that it begins to be possible to picture the area. The map of London known as the 'Copperplate Map' (see Plate 4.1), probably surveyed in the late 1550s, shows sixteen substantial buildings in addition to the old Hospital or Long House, the Church, and the Chapel. The scale of the Map at this point is about 25 inches to the mile. Just how reliable the Map is, is however open to question. The precinct was clearly not really about 100 to 120 yards square, as it appears to be on the Copperplate Map, and it seems certain that the old Hospital building did not occupy anything like as much of the northern perimeter as the Map suggests. Even more disturbingly, most of the buildings have dimensions which are multiples of a standard length and width. That the Map is to some extent inaccurate is therefore certain. On the other hand, it seems not to be entirely fanciful: certainly the northern and southern edges of the perimeter seem to be about the right length. The question therefore is whether or not the number, orientation and relative size of the buildings offer an indication of the appearance of the precinct during Elizabeth I's reign.[8]

Fortunately, it is possible to cross-check the reliability of the Copperplate Map against other evidence. A royal grant confirming the transfer of control of the Hospital to the City, made in 1555, lists all the properties involved. It also states their income value, which gives some indication of the relative size or importance of the properties. It is thus possible to make a direct and contemporaneous comparison with the Map.

The 1555 grant starts by listing four tenements, two with gardens, held for between £1 6s 8d and £2 a year. Leaving these aside for the moment, there follows 'the greate Gardines withe a litle lodge in the same, one tenemente therunto adioyninge in the tenure of Peter DeSaylle [de Saville]. Also one Tenement with a stable under the weste gate of the said House of Bethlem . . .'. According to the Copperplate Map, to the south and south-west of the precinct lies a large garden, subdivided into plots, orchards, and a substantial walled area which on the map is described as 'Giardin di Piero'. In the north-west corner of 'Peter's Garden' is a small house, and a much more substantial house, which lies between the west gate and the south-west corner of the precinct, juts out into it. Judging by the description, it seems very likely indeed that this is a bloc formed by Peter de Saville's house, his stabling and a tenement in the west gate, and his garden with its little lodge to the west. Indeed, there is other evidence to confirm it. When the same properties were leased anew in 1561, they were described as 'the litell house or lodge sett and beinge in th'one of the said greate gardens on the *west* parte of Bethlem [emphasis added] . . . And also one tenement adioyninge the said lodge nowe or of late in the tenure of Peter Dessavaille . . .'.

The grant next mentions 'iij Tenementes withe iij Gardines to the same belonging'. These probably form the range of buildings along the southern side of the precinct. Then there is 'one greate Tenement with a greate yarde or voyde place, and all the Roomes over the East gate to the same Tenement belongynge'. Assuming, as seems likely, that we are being taken round the precinct in a logical order, this probably refers to the large house which, according to the Map, lies between the south-east

corner of the precinct and the east gate. That this is so is proved by the 1561 lease already mentioned, which describes the same property as being 'sett and edified next unto the king's highway or streate called Bisshopsgate'.

Then there are two further houses, held at lowish rents (20s and £1 13s 4d respectively), followed by a house and garden occupied by the then Keeper (as the City-appointed Masters were known), Edward Alleyn, for £2 10s a year. The first two are probably represented on the Map by the two roofs and chimneys just visible between the Chapel/'Church' and Bishopsgate Street, immediately to the north of the main gate. The Master's House is, almost certainly, the large building abutting the east end of the old Hospital building, since in 1575 Edward Alleyn's house was described as lying between 'the said great olde chapell ther on the Southe' and another property held by one of the Queen's Yeomen of the Guard to the north.[9]

Finally, to return to the four houses which were listed first in the grant, the only remaining candidates are the four houses located between the west end of the old Hospital and the West Gate, with gardens beyond them. The grant mentions a further house and garden, let for a mere 10s a year, as lying outside the precinct itself in the parish of St Botolph's, Bishopsgate. Presumably, this is what was later described as a 'faire Tenement with a garden to it situate on the other side of the Street over against this place [opposite Bethlem]'; if so, it was a bargain.[10]

By this stage, the Hospital had acquired a house at Charing Cross, usually described as 'the Stone House', which the Master was accused in 1403 of having alienated. This probably means that it had been let out and its income appropriated by the Master, whereas the profits ought properly to have remained to the Hospital as a whole. Certainly the house was still in the Hospital's possession in 1555, when it brought in £3 a year. In fact, the Stone House had already (before 1545) been divided into three tenements, with the tenants subletting it to others. Royal Commissioners in 1632 surmised that part of it had been lost to the Hospital in the second half of the sixteenth century, in circumstances which aroused Geoffrey O'Donoghue to a positive fury of indignation.

The Commissioners' surmise was based on depositions made in the course of an Exchequer Chamber case of 1609–10. However, royal Commissioners seem almost as a matter of routine to have suspected that alienation had occurred or that property rights had not been properly protected (the same suspicion led to a confrontation between the 1403 Commissioners and the London jurors, who refused to cooperate with the Commission). It appears in fact that one of the three parcels of land concerned had belonged to Westminster Abbey since the fifteenth century at the latest, and in 1493 the third plot of land was described as 'the garden of the Mews'. The second plot was in the 1630s tenanted by the same people as the 'Mews garden', and also belonged to the Crown. So it seems that none of the properties which Bethlem's Governors, prompted presumably by the Commissioners' report, attempted to 'recover' in 1649 had ever been part of the Stone House site.[11]

Within the precinct, development continued. In 1575, a couple of builders were granted permission to redevelop two tenements on the southern side of the precinct, described as lying between Peter de Saville's house to the west and a house to the east which had been let to Mrs Margaret Johnson and her husband. The builders were also given permission to erect as many dwellings as they thought appropriate on the site

of the 'greate old chapell', re-using any materials they found.[12] By this stage the 'Great Chapel' or 'Church' was clearly ruinous. It had been granted to the Parish Clerks company for their meetings in 1552, suggesting that it was then in fair order. But when in May 1568 it was proposed to let it again, the lead from its roof was reserved for the use of Bridewell (despite all the assurances that the Court of Aldermen had offered to the Bishop of London in 1556 'concernynge the repayringe of the said Churche and ornaments thereof').[13]

By the late sixteenth century the precinct was probably already looking very different from the way it had appeared in the 1550s. If the redevelopment had not yet reached the extent shown in a map in the 1650s (see Plate 4.2), it is likely that a good deal of infilling had taken place. The builders managed to fit no fewer than fourteen 'tenements and dwelling houses' in the two sites granted to them in 1575. Mrs Johnson's tenement was rebuilt by her successor as two. By the early seventeenth century, most of the centre of the precinct was probably occupied by houses and their gardens or yards. In 1618, at least ten houses were described as being in the 'Middle rowe' of Bethlem. These houses evidently stood on and between the former Church and Chapel sites.[14]

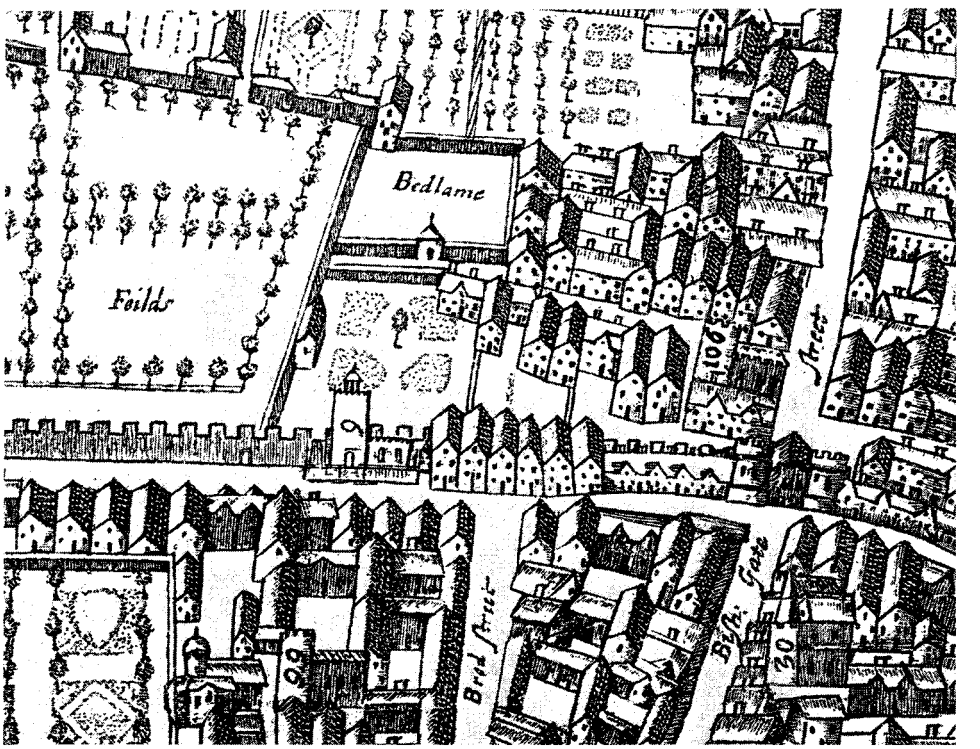

Plate 4.2 Bethlem and its vicinity: section of a map by William Faithhorne and Richard Newcourt, 1658. Reproduced by kind permission of the Museum of London.

THE 'OLD HOSPITAL' IN 1633

In 1632, we finally get a glimpse of the layout of the Hospital itself. Then 'Bethlem house wherein the poore distracted persons are kept' consisted of 'the old house' with, on the ground floor, a parlour, kitchen, two larders, 'a long entrie throughout the house' and twenty-one rooms occupied by the inmates. Upstairs were eight rooms for servants and inmates, and a long room, then derelict but being refurbished to provide eight further rooms for inmates. 'Room' at this period did not mean what it now means: rather, it was a place, space or office (as in the 'room' of an attorney in the Mayor's Court). The inmates, and indeed those who looked after them, may therefore have inhabited a single large chamber on each floor, partitioned into cubicles. Quite what the 'long entrie' was is unclear. It sounds like a corridor running the full length of the building, but might equally have gone from front to rear. The Copperplate Map shows two doorways at either end of the building, one of which certainly led to such a passage. In 1561 a tenant was granted rights of access 'through the Entrie sett and beinge on the west ende of the longe house of Bethlem' to the stables and common lavatory at the rear.

In 1632, there was also a brick house 'being newly added unto the old roomes' which contained a cellar, kitchen, hall, four chambers and a garret. This formed, or more probably formed part of, the range of buildings which ran southwards from the east end of the main Hospital, judging by a 1626 reference which stated that the Brick House was to be built to replace a 'little house next Bethlem'. In April 1632, the Privy Council had suggested that this new house, which was not yet leased out, should be used to accommodate 'suche poore lunaticks as eyther shall bee sicke or in a nearer hope of recovery'. The Bridewell Governors, who had control of Bethlem's administration and who had originally planned to use the house for this purpose, subsequently decided otherwise, despite the Privy Councillors' advice. By October, it was tenanted, if not occupied, by the Keeper (it will be recalled that the Master's House had long formed part of the same range). It is possible, of course, that the Keeper was himself using it to accommodate some of the inmates.[15]

The Copperplate Map probably gives a fair impression of the appearance of the Hospital building even in the early seventeenth century. It shows what appears to be a single-storey house, possibly with some small windows directly under the eaves, and eight windows at ground-floor level between the two doors. In 1629, the Bridewell Governors ordered that iron bars should be provided for the house and its cellar, together with casements for eight windows, six of which were to be glazed. Presumably the windows had previously been secured by shutters at night time; the window bars appear to have been a novelty.[16]

Even more promising, apparently, is a detailed description of the Hospital given in a lease of the old Bethlem site, dated 1677. The lessee undertook to redevelop 'All that ruinous and decayed building lately called the old Hospital of Bethlem', including two tenements to the east formerly occupied by the Hospital's Steward and Porter (part of the former Master's House range), and to erect new houses on the site. The site also included an area (a yard) to the north which contained 'a great chimney and barn'.

The document goes on to say that 'the same is more particularly set forth and described by a Map . . . to these presents annexed'. The annex (Plate 4.3) shows the

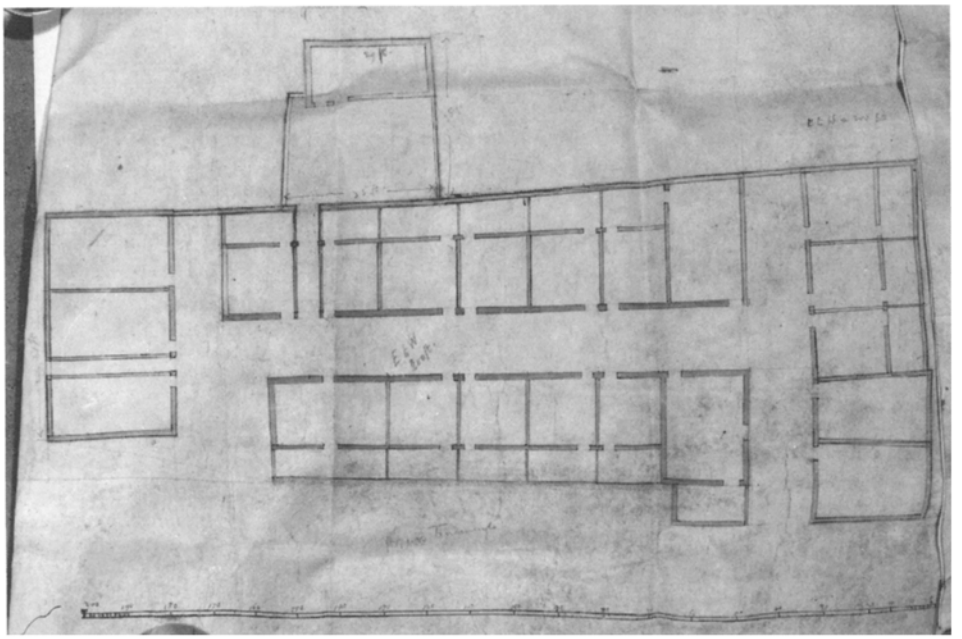

Plate 4.3 'Ground Plan of Bethlem Hospital': annex to agreement between the Mayor and Commonalty of London and William Bates, 1677. Reproduced by permission of the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum.

ground-plan of what appear to be two long buildings running east to west. The northernmost is about one hundred and twenty feet long, the southern about ten feet shorter. There is also a range of rooms or individual houses to the east and a smaller range to the west. These measure, respectively, about 80 and about 51 feet, north–south. To the north is a walled plot with an internal wall, probably of a building; its measurements are exactly those of the yard. All but the southern building are outlined in yellow on the original.[17]

Although the plan is of the Hospital site in 1677, it is possible to work out what was likely to have existed forty or fifty years earlier. We know, for example, that in 1643 the Bridewell Governors decided to pull down 'two little tenements . . . scituate at the west end of Bethlem house . . . and ranging straight westwards with the same' in order, at last, to build a substantial extension to house the Hospital's inmates. Despite the implication that the new building would be an extension on the same east–west axis as the Hospital, in fact the site ran southwards, being 49 feet north to south and a mere 26 feet east to west. Almost certainly the western range shown in the 1677 plan is the 1643 building, even though, at around 51 by 30 feet, it is slightly larger than the two houses it replaced. In 1633, therefore, although something of roughly similar dimensions to the western range existed, it did not form part of the Hospital building. The east range, as has already been mentioned, consisted in part of the house 'builded of bricke . . . newly added unto the old roomes' in 1632; even if it was used to house inmates from 1632 onwards, which is not certain, it was undoubtedly privately occupied before that time.[18] Thus, at least until 1632, the Hospital

consisted merely of the central (northern) block, which may well have been the last surviving remnant of the original Long House.

It has to be said that Geoffrey O'Donoghue saw matters differently. He took it for granted that everything on the plan was both to be included in the redevelopment and formed part of the Hospital buildings. On this basis, he proceeded to make what sense he could of what he believed was the ground-plan of old Bethlem, using the 1632 description of its layout (see Figure 4.4). He suggested that the northern building was an extension built sometime before 1662, and referred to by the Bridewell Governors in 1669 as 'that part of the hospitall house of Bethlem last built Northward'. The long southern building he took to be the original Hospital building, which, like the northern building, contained pairs of bedrooms and 'corridors'.[19]

The present Bethlem Archivist, Patricia Allderidge, long ago spotted some improbable features in all this. To begin with, the long, narrow spaces which O'Donoghue thought were 'corridors' ('C') do not connect or lead anywhere; with some being as large as five feet by twenty-five, they would have been a considerable waste of space. The 'rooms' ('D'), too, none of which interconnect, are unlikely to have housed individual inmates. The smallest is about twelve feet by fifteen. The 'porter's lodge' ('E') is over twenty feet by fifteen.

In fact, O'Donoghue probably misread the evidence. The yellow outlining on the plan may well have been intended to delineate the site available for redevelopment. The long southern building on the 1677 plan was probably the range described in the deed as Thomas Hopper's tenements. Where, then, is 'that part of the hospitall house

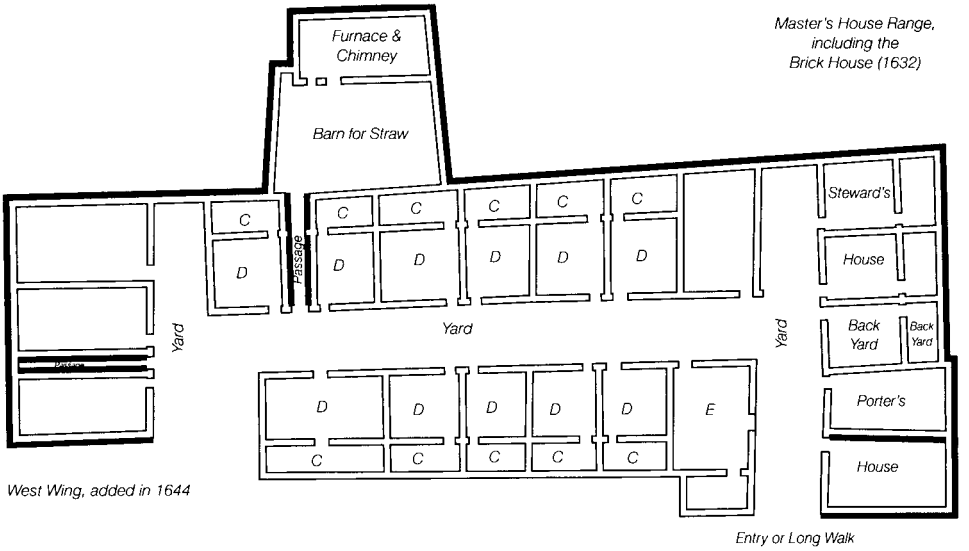

Figure 4.4 'Ground-plan of Bethlem Hospital': Geoffrey O'Donoghue's interpretation of the annex to the 1677 Agreement
Type of text used: *O'Donoghue's notes*
Additional notes
C Corridors D Room E Porter's Lodge
(probably marking the area available for redevelopment)

of Bethlem last built Northwards', mentioned in 1669? It may in fact be the yard, with its chimney and barn, which protrudes to the north, as the 1669 entry goes on immediately to discuss the state of the 'Straw Rome' and 'the wall on the backeside of the Hospitall'. Although O'Donoghue assumed that the new construction referred to in 1669 was the same as the 'Roomes in the last new buildings' mentioned in 1663, which were to be used to house the most distracted female patients, it is more likely that the 1643 building was meant.[20]

Even if this is correct, however, it does not explain those curious groupings of 'corridors' and 'rooms' in the 1677 plan. They seem impossible to reconcile with the 1632 description of the Hospital's layout, even allowing generously for alterations meanwhile. Nor does the layout of the east wing fit the description of the 1632 Brick House. The answer may in fact be simple: this is *not* a ground-plan of the old Hospital. The indenture may be one of the several known *post hoc* grants made by the City, and merely recorded what the grantee had already done, or, at the very least, planned to do shortly. In other words, this may be the ground-plan of one-up, one-down terraced houses with narrow yards at the back.

On the basis of the 1677 ground-plan, the only parts of the original layout of the Hospital which one can feel at all confident were unchanged were the boundaries of, and the rights-of-way through, the property (identified by bold line). Intriguingly, however, late seventeenth-century maps continued to show a long building with a northern protrusion, very similar in appearance to the northern central block and yard, but about 160 feet long instead of 120 feet. In the map produced by Ogilby and Morgan at the time of the move to Moorfields, this building is shown 'double Hatch'd' in the fashion of 'Churches and Eminent Buildings' (see Plate 4.4), although the same building is not so distinguished in Morgan's map of the early 1680s (see Plate 4.5).[21] A possible explanation is that the two northernmost rooms of the eastern range (the 1632 Brick House?) were incorporated into the central block before the rest was demolished or redeveloped. The length of the building in Ogilby and Morgan's map is virtually identical to that of the central building plus the two rooms of the eastern range, as shown on the 1677 ground-plan.

This raises the possibility that, whatever redevelopment of the site took place in the late 1670s, it did not obliterate the oldest part of the Hospital. The Long House, together with the early seventeenth-century Brick House, may have survived for some while after the move to Moorfields with its external appearance, at least, intact. However, bearing in mind that the Bridewell Governors ordered several major repairs to the structure, perhaps one should not exaggerate the antiquity of what survived.[22] 'Old Bethlem' may well have been very much like grandfather's axe: still as good as new after two replacement shafts and three replacement heads.

THE CHARACTER AND ATMOSPHERE OF SIXTEENTH- AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BETHLEM

Passing references to Bethlem in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century records give the impression of a place which was accessible and largely indistinguishable

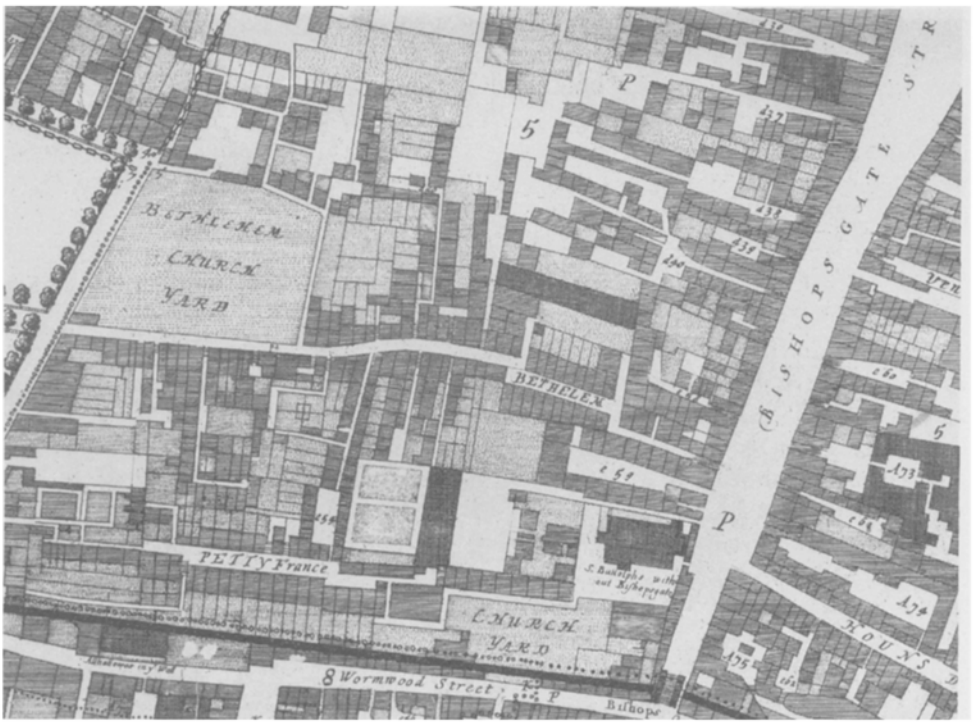

Plate 4.4 Bethlem and its vicinity: section of map by John Ogilby and William Morgan, 1677. Reproduced by kind permission of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

in character from the rest of Bishopsgate. Possibly the closing of the main gates at set hours in the evening limited the amount of coming and going after nine or ten o'clock at night. Otherwise, the precinct seems to have been wide open to the population at large. A witness before the Bridewell Court in October 1579 described how he and a couple of his friends 'dogged [his sister and her lover] through Bedlem' and were eventually rewarded by finding them 'in thalley of a garden goenge to Shorditche . . . abusinge their bodyes'. In another case, a young woman testified that Mr Lee, who had slept with her in her father's house 'And promysed her ij or iij Angells [the large sum of 20s or 30s] but he gave her not', unsurprisingly proved elusive thereafter: 'last weike she sawe hym in Bedlam and he ran away into a house.'

Passers-by may have been attracted in by the fact that there was at least one inn in the precinct itself by the late sixteenth century, the Black Bull. There was also a property known 'by the sign of the Cocke' which may have been an inn, and was probably inside the precinct. By the early 1640s, a house immediately to the north-west of the main Hospital building was tenanted by a distiller who used the premises as a tavern – much to the Bridewell Governors' disapproval; when the lease came up for renewal, the tenant was forbidden to continue with this part of his trade.[23]

Other aspects of the Bethlem tenants' and visitors' conduct came to the Governors'

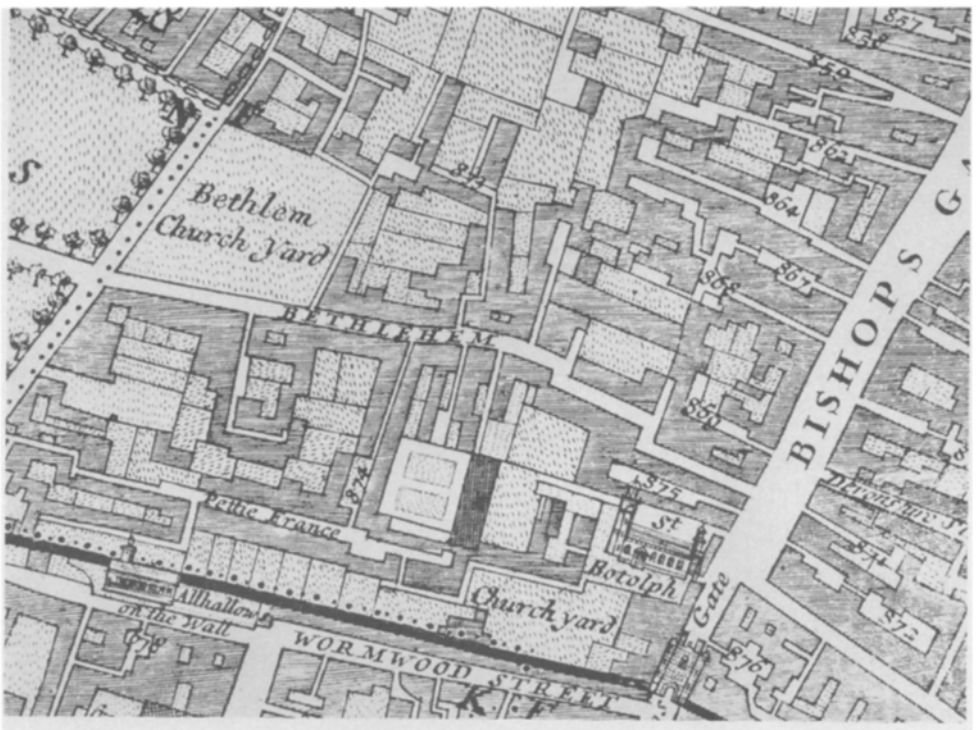

Plate 4.5 Bethlem and its vicinity: section of map by William Morgan, 1681/2. Reproduced by kind permission of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

disapproving notice. In May 1578, they decided to set free Joane Medcalfe, 'a commen Bedlem harlott which of longe tyme hath ben in Bedlem', after she promised to reform her way of life. A month later, an Italian was accused before the Court of keeping his mistress (in a house) in Bethlem. In a similar vein, another Bridewell Court witness reported (one can hear her saying it) that 'Dick Comes used a had the three yonge men to agone with him to a douchewomans in bedlem this last somer'.[24]

Whether Bethlem precinct was any worse in this respect than any other city precinct of similar size and similar location, there seems to be no way of knowing. Certainly it was not just a place of entertainment. Quite a number of the precinct properties seem to have been used as industrial sites. Sometime before 1574 the Chapel was leased to a founder, and in that year the forge of 'goodwife Ventris' was let out anew, with a blacksmith as surety for the payments. The Chapel was eventually re-leased to a painter, after a mason failed for some reason to secure the tenancy. In 1619, the Bridewell Governors were concerned by the threat of fire posed by a chimney newly constructed by a hop boiler, and by the fact that the chimney stood very close to a chandler's shop. The general environment was affected by commercial activities immediately outside the precinct as well as within. In 1612, the Governors were informed that the 'garden place' at the back (to the north) of the Hospital building 'standeth full of Filth and stincking water which is

verry noisome to the prisoners [inmates]'; a ditch had become clogged with the rubbish or sewage from the nearby houses of a dyer and a vintner. Probably this was industrial waste.[25]

That these activities could create public nuisances, or, at least, generate noise and pungent or offensive smells, is clear. Rapid development and infilling of the precinct of itself created problems. Public and private privy vaults left unemptied until the last minute, and the flooding or stagnant water created when new building interfered with existing drainage arrangements, must certainly have created temporary unpleasantness. However, the Bridewell Governors did try to ensure that hazards were kept to a minimum.[26] Reactive though the arrangements were, problems were dealt with once they were noticed. It would be wrong to conclude that nobody ever disposed of waste without polluting the neighbourhood, or that the medieval and early-modern precinct invariably stank of urine and rotting rubbish. Bethlem precinct may not have been a model of hygiene and civic morality, certainly by the late sixteenth century, but it was not a dungheap either.

What of the Hospital itself? One point worth stressing is that it was an open building. Raving lunatics were certainly chained up, and in some cases they were shut up too. But otherwise inmates seem to have been free to wander about the house. They may also have been able to wander about the precinct, judging by the case of Katherine Fletcher, who scandalized passers-by with her immodest behaviour in 1575 (see Chapter 10). Inhabitants of the precinct may not have been in the habit of going into the Hospital building, but they certainly had access to its immediate surroundings. In the 1560s, and probably long before that, those tenants who did not possess their own lavatories were required to traipse through 'the west end of the long house of Bethlem' to reach the 'comon Jaques' which were located behind the Hospital. Even if these tenants paid as little attention as possible to the inmates, they cannot have been entirely unaware of the conditions within. Indeed, in the late fourteenth century corrodians ('pensioners': see Chapter 6 for a discussion of these arrangements) were sometimes lodged in what were described as 'decent chambers' in the Hospital building until other accommodation was available, although this practice may have ceased once the Hospital began to take in the insane.[27]

It appears, moreover, that friends and relatives of the inmates were not only allowed to visit, but, in the case of the poor, were expected to do so in order to bring in food and other necessities. That would be in keeping with the practices found in developing countries today, and with the free access which was clearly permitted to visitors to Bethlem in the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth century. When Robert Baron and his wife were granted a corrody in the 1390s, it was agreed that they could have additional foodstuff brought in if they liked, in the same way as the poor inmates did.[28]

None of this alters the fact that Bethlem Hospital, once it started to specialize in accommodating the mad, cannot have been anything other than noisy and unpleasant. Donald Lupton wrote in the 1630s of the 'cryings, screechings, roarings, brawlings, shaking of chaines, swearings, frettings, chaffings' which made Bethlem a place liable to send a sane man mad. Lady Eleanor Davies, who was confined in Bethlem as a lunatic in the late 1630s after a period spent in prison, described the experience as being 'as it were, to exchange the grave for hell, such were the blasphemies and the

noisome scents' (she was in fact kept in the Master's House, not even in the main Hospital). Even if Lupton's witty commentaries and Lady Eleanor's pathetic petition were exaggerated for effect, the fact that Bethlem tended to take particularly troubled and difficult madmen and madwomen means that there must be some truth in their accounts.[29]

CONCLUSION

Between 1247 and 1350, Bethlem precinct seems to have remained largely undeveloped. Such buildings as there were, in addition to the two main access points to the east and west and the Church, lay along or close to the northern perimeter. A few rooms may have been let out privately, but otherwise the buildings were for the use of members of the Order of Bethlem.

In the second half of the fourteenth century there is evidence of the commercial development of the precinct. Individuals were allowed to occupy rooms in the main building and to buy plots of land on which to build houses. The major construction away from the perimeter, however, was the new Chapel, which was probably completed in the early 1380s. Otherwise, building work seems to have been largely confined to the perimeter. It was probably in this period that the first of the privately tenanted houses on the western, southern and eastern sides of the precinct were built. Although it is not clear exactly what was constructed when, the whole perimeter of the precinct had been built upon by the 1550s. Some of the houses were small, but others were large properties occupied by individuals of some consequence. Like Bishopsgate Without as a whole, Bethlem precinct seems in the later fifteenth century and early sixteenth century to have been an area which attracted some fairly wealthy inhabitants.

Further rapid development in the second half of the sixteenth century altered the character of the precinct. Its whole appearance underwent a change, with considerable infilling of what had previously been the almost empty central area. Commercial rents became commonplace, and larger houses were divided up – as indeed were not-so-large houses. If Bethlem was quite a prestigious address in the 1520s, it was clearly not very prestigious at all fifty years later. By the 1630s, everything in the precinct, including the extended Hospital building, was beginning to bulge at the seams. The precinct had been transformed from a quiet, enclosed world to a lively, noisy, and probably much more stressful one.

NOTES

1 *The Survey of London: Contayning The Originall, Increase, Moderne Estate, and Government of that City . . . Begunne first by the Paines and Industry of Iohn Stovv, in the yeere 1598* . . . (London: Elizabeth Purslow, 1633), 176, 175, 173. The Dolphin Inn belonged in the fifteenth century to John Styward or Steward, tallow-chandler, whose connection with Bethlem is discussed in the next chapter: Randall Monter-Williams, *The Tallow Chandlers of London*, 4 volumes (London: Kaye & Ward, 1970–7), iii, 37.

2 FitzMary's charter: PRO Chancery, Ecclesiastical Miscellanea, C270/22, especially mm. 5 and 4. It is transcribed and translated in, among other places, Stow's *Survey*, 173–4.

3 Museum of London, Department of Urban Archaeology Archive Catalogue ed. John Schofield, Gillian Dunn and Charlotte Harding, London, The Museum, 1987, 169.

4 M. D. Lobel (ed.), *The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c. 1520*, The British Atlas of Historic Towns, iii (Oxford: OUP/The Historic Towns Trust, 2nd edn, 1991), Maps Section, 'City of London c. 1520, Map 4'; *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 58, 58*v*; PRO C270/22, m. 3; for the eastern side being described as the 'great old Chapell', see *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 61–2; for Johnson, see Chapter 2; Fredson Bower (ed.), *Thomas Dekker: The Dramatic Works*, 4 volumes (Cambridge: CUP, 1953–61), ii, 100.

5 PRO C270/22, m. 3; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1388–92*, 484; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1401–1405*, 316 (this plot, too, was 40 by 20 feet); *Ghall* MS 9171, London Commissary Court Wills, Register 1, fol. 463*v*; *ibid.* Register 2, fol. 269*v*; PRO C270/22, m. 1. The question of who had the right to prove the testaments of precinct residents was a bone of contention, Robert Lincoln having complained bitterly to the Visitation Commissioners ten years earlier that the Commissary's activities were contrary to the rights and privileges of the hospital. The Commissioners did not answer this point, and as the wills of Bethlem tenants and chaplains continued to be proved before the Commissary, it appears that Lincoln's bid for control failed.

6 *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1401–1405*, 316; *BCGM* volume 9, fol. 45.

7 *Ghall* MS 142, 163–74, especially 164; *Ghall* MS 25121/837, St Paul's Ancient Deeds; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361–64*, 477; R. R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of London c. AD 1350–1370* . . . (London: J. C. Francis, 1885), 145–6; PRO C270/22, m. 1.

8 *A Collection of Early London Maps, 1553–1667*, introduction by John Fisher (Lympne Castle: Harry Margary/Guildhall Library, 1981).

9 *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 30–30*v*, 58, 62.

10 PRO SP 16/224 no. 21, m. 2.

11 *Report of the Commissioners . . . concerning Charities in England and Wales* . . . (32 volumes, London: W. Clowes & Sons/HMSO, 1819–40), xxxii, part vi, 478; Edward G. O'Donoghue, *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital From its Foundation in 1247* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), 114–19; Sir George Gater and Walter H. Godfrey, *Survey of London, Issued by the Joint Publishing Committee Representing The London County Council and the London Survey Committee*, xxi, *Trafalgar Square and Neighbourhood (Parish of St Martin's in the Fields, part iii)* (London 1940), published for the London County Council by Country Life, 10–13.

12 *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 61–4 and 50*v*. In 1595 Mrs Johnson's tenement was said to measure 15 feet 4 inches in length 'east to west by the street side' – which probably means on the south front, the opposite side from the precinct – and 20 feet in depth: *ibid.* fol. 91.

13 *CA Rep.* 16, fols 364*v* and 365; Reginald H. Adams, *The Parish Clerks of London: A History of the Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks of London* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1971), 30. Although the Court of Aldermen stayed the 1568 lease of the Church shortly after, unsure whether 'the same chapell may conveniently be granted by lease or not', there is no reason to suppose that the building survived in its original form for much longer. For the assurances given to the Bishop of London: *CA Rep.* 13/2, fol. 443.

14 *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 91 and 103*v*–4; *BCGM* volume 6, fols 53*v*–4 (where there is a reference to a house 'in the Chappell in the Middle Rowe'), 206.

15 *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fols 208, 58*v*; *BCGM* volume 6, fol. 423v; *Acts of the Privy Council 1630–1*, 285 (item 821); *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fol. 208; *BCGM* volume 7, fol. 69.

16 *BCGM* volume 7, fol. 137*v*.

17 *BRHA*, indenture of 16 March 1677 between the Mayor and Commonalty and citizens of London and William Bates, citizen and fletcher of London.

18 *BCGM* volume 9, fol. 43; *ibid.* volume 6, fol. 423*v*.

19 O'Donoghue, *op. cit.* 194–5 and 200–1.

20 *BCGM* 1666–76, 148*v*; *BCGM* (Rough Court Book) 1662–4, fol. 30*v*.

21 Unfortunately, late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century mapmakers continued to rely on the work done by Morgan and his associates in the 1670s and 1680s. Not until John Rocque issued his map in 1746 does there appear to have been an extensive re-survey of the

City. By this stage, the features evident in the Morgan series of maps are no longer visible. When they disappeared, however, it is impossible to say.

22 For example, 11 December 1577, 4 December 1598, 18 July 1609, 14 October 1620, 23 April 1628, 31 July 1629, [illegible] June 1643: *BCGM* volume 3, fol. 259*v*; *ibid.* volume 4, fol. 51; *ibid.* volume 5, fol. 365*v*; *ibid.* volume 6, fol. 22; *ibid.* volume 7, fols 69, 137*v*; *ibid.* volume 9, fol. 43.

23 *BCGM* volume 3, fols 223, 429*v*, 158*v*, 160, 224; *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fol. 93; *BCGM* volume 4, fol. 18. There are also references to bowling-alleys in Bethlem by the early seventeenth century: O'Donoghue, *op. cit.* 145–6.

24 *BCGM* volume 3, fols 305*v*, 317*v*, 247*v*; *ibid.* volume 8, fol. 336*v*.

25 *BCGM* volume 2, fols 35*v*, 72*v*, 70*v*, 72; *ibid.* volume 5, fol. 198.

26 For orders to clean vaults, see: *BCGM* volume 4, fols 51*v*, 449*v*; *ibid.* volume 6, fol. 128; *ibid.* volume 7, fol. 183. For drainage problems, see: *ibid.* volume 3, fol. 288; *ibid.* volume 4, fol. 51.

27 *BRHA*, Muniment Book, fol. 58*v*; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1388–92*, 484.

28 *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1388–92*, 484.

29 *London and the Countrey Carbonadoed and Quartred into Seuerall Characters by D. Lupton (1632)*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh: Aungervyle Society, 1883), ii, 25; *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Part i, Report and Appendix* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1877), 197; *BCGM* volume 8, fol. 133.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICS AND PATRONAGE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter and the next are mainly about money. What appear, on the surface, to be political manoeuvres and power struggles, prove upon closer inspection to have had money as their motive. The Priory of St Mary of Bethlem was founded in order to raise money. Bethlem was seized for the King in the 1370s, and quite possibly in the 1340s as well, in order to prevent money reaching the papal court at Avignon and thence finding its way into the hands of the French. The whole purpose of Bethlem probably changed after 1350 because it was prevented from raising money for its mother-house and, in so doing, for its own support. The need to find new sources of support altered the behaviour of its Masters, who from the late fourteenth century onwards were royal clerks or other royal servants who delegated the business of administering the Hospital to laymen. Money was behind the tussles over who had the right to appoint to the Mastership (patronage) of the fourteenth-century Hospital; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, patronage enabled kings and civic magistrates to reward their servants and to buy new friends at someone else's expense. It was money which provoked the very serious quarrels between the Governors of the Hospital of Bethlem and its last independent Master, Dr Helkiah or Hilkiah Crooke. Money, it could be said, ultimately led the City to opt for direct management of Bethlem, and thus to make the first move towards a more modern-looking institution.

But that is not how those involved in these various contests saw matters. To them, there was a principle involved: who had the right to the Hospital, its patronage or its revenues? Who was best-placed to ensure that it served the purpose for which it was, from the later fourteenth century onwards at any rate, intended?

WHOSE HOSPITAL IS IT, ANYWAY?

Relationships between Bethlem Hospital, the Crown and the City of London, 1247–*c.* 1500

To Geoffrey O'Donoghue, there was no doubt at all whose Hospital Bethlem was. 'In 1547 – to be frank – the city bought back the "custody and patronage" of the hospital

which she had already acquired in 1346 in legal form and on equitable terms.' 'It is the generosity of the brigand' he added, meaning Henry VIII, 'to permit his victim to buy back his own property.'[1]

The reason O'Donoghue was so confident that the City owned the Hospital is that in 1346 letters under the common seal of London were issued, taking Bethlem 'under the patronage and protection of the mayor and aldermen of the city of London'. The letters also recorded an agreement between Mayor Richard Lacer and the Master, John Matheu 'called de Nortone', concerning 'the manner of the election of two Aldermen on St. Mathew's Day . . . in connexion with the maintenance and government of the said house'. On this basis, so O'Donoghue believed, London's governors almost immediately attempted to exercise the right of presentation to the Mastership: that, on the death of John de Nortone in 1350, the Mayor and Aldermen 'at once took the hospital into their own hands'. His reference, however, relates to an order to one of the City's Sergeants at Mace to take over either 'the house' of St Mary of Bethlem as a whole, or a specific part of it described in a preceding entry, on the death of John de Nortone, who is called 'the tenant'. There is no evidence that the City either claimed or attempted to exercise a right to present to the vacant Mastership in 1350.[2]

None the less, it made the claim at a later stage, and one can see why. The 1346 agreement does indeed give the impression that the City had assumed responsibility for, perhaps even control of, the Hospital. But appearances are probably misleading. The conflict over the right to appoint the Master of Bethlem echoes tussles between the City and the Crown for control of leper houses in the London area. In the thirteenth century the City made a vigorous attempt to claim both the advowson of the Chapel of St Giles-in-the-Fields, one of the suburban leper houses, and the right to appoint to the Mastership. On these issues, the King emerged victorious. What the City did eventually manage to assert, in 1354, was a claim to supervise St Giles's revenues. The fact that this occurred at about the same time as the Master of Bethlem commended his Hospital to the protection of London's governors suggests that the civic authorities were following a policy. The details of the arrangement with John de Nortone echo the appointment of overseers (or viewers, or supervisors) of the leper houses by the civic authorities.[3]

The order issued in 1350, on Nortone's death, was prompted by the fact that in 1346 the City had undertaken to supervise the Hospital's affairs, and in particular the administration of its revenues and properties. The City did without doubt subsequently supervise Bethlem's finances. In October 1454 the Mayor, Stephen Forster, was named in a bond by which two London citizens undertook to pay him £50 if they failed to carry out faithfully and in full an agreement made previously with the Master of Bethlem, Edward Atherton. What they had agreed with Atherton to do was to 'farm' the profits of Bethlem: in other words, they paid the Master £50 a year, and in return they made what they could from collecting the rents and from other profits arising out of the rights of the Hospital. The two men concerned, John Styward or Steward, tallow-chandler, and John Tate senior, mercer, were prominent citizens. Both served as Common Councilmen (the Common Council was the next level of civic government below the Aldermanry). Tate was Common Councilman and, from 1463 onwards, Alderman, of his home ward, Tower; Styward was Common

Councilman for Bishopsgate Ward itself in the 1450s if not earlier, and almost certainly lived there.[4]

There seems to be no evidence that the elections of Bethlem supervisors, as anticipated in the 1346 letters, were ever held. But the fact that appointments of supervisors are never recorded does not prove that such appointments never occurred. Relatively minor appointments were not always entered in the main civic records. It is, for instance, only because he was called upon to protect them in 1468 that the name of the Alderman then charged with overseeing the interests of the group of London-based alien merchants called the Hanse, Ralph Josselyn, is known.[5]

A piece of evidence which suggests that the City maintained a general oversight of the Hospital is an entry in the civic records, dated April 1436. This noted that William Mawere tailor (with a marginal note, 'Will'i Marowe') had been discharged from serving on civic juries and carrying out other civic duties by the Mayor 'owing to his constant attention to the poor mad lunatics of the Hospital of St. Mary de Bedlem without Bishopsgate'. The nature and wording of this concession is very similar to those granted to the overseers of the leper houses.[6] It could be that Mawere/Marowe was just what he appears at first sight to have been, namely an attendant. But it is quite likely that he was the man who became an Alderman in 1449, despite the fact that Alderman William Marowe was a grocer, not a tailor, by the time he reached the Bench. At least 10 per cent of fifteenth-century Aldermen changed to a more prestigious Company before achieving election, and the Tailors were considerably less prestigious than the Grocers at the time. Certainly Alderman Marowe took some interest in the Hospital. The fact that he himself left a bequest is not surprising, as he was a resident of Bishopsgate Ward at the time of his death. Somewhat more unusual is the fact that his widow also left a modest legacy to Bethlem.[7]

Whether or not the City supervised and protected the Hospital as it said it would in 1346, the question remains, why did John de Nortone seek to be taken under the City's wing? Was it a response to the royal seizure of alien priories? The fourteenth-century Masters of the Hospital of St Mary of Bethlem would have had good cause to feel anxious about the possibility that their house might suffer from anti-alien sentiment or that the revenues which were normally sent abroad might be appropriated. Bethlem was in fact seized for the King, as noted on p. 58. On the face of it, 1346 seems a curious moment for the Master to act: one would expect him to have sought the City's protection almost a decade earlier (assuming, that is, that the City was able to do anything to protect alien priories from seizure). However, in the late 1340s there occur for the first time in both civic and royal records descriptions of the Order of Bethlem as 'the order of brethren of the *knighthood* of St Mary of Bethlehem'. The Order was not in fact a military one. None the less, the myth seems to have grown up during the fourteenth century that it was one, and that it was founded during the lifetime of the famous Crusader and first ruler of Jerusalem, Godfrey de Bouillon, in the second half of the eleventh century. (This may explain why in the early sixteenth century it was believed that the 'Monastery' of Bethlem had been founded before the Conquest by Sir William Fines, a 'knight of Rhodes', and that Simon fitzMary had merely founded the Hospital.) This myth was linked by a would-be patron in 1381 to Edward III's custom of granting the patronage of Bethlem to knights. So perhaps the first of these knightly patrons had just been granted the right

to present to the Mastership, and John de Nortone, who had been succeeded by John de Wilton by 1347, feared that he was about to be ousted.[8]

Without doubt, the City had its own motives for agreeing to supervise the Hospital's affairs. It could even be that the petition was not a spontaneous approach by de Nortone, but was in fact prompted by the civic authorities. If so, their aim may have been to protect the charitable support provided for particularly vulnerable groups, like lepers and lunatics, at a time when this support was reducing. Charitable provision appears to have declined considerably in the second half of the fourteenth century, partly because of reduced demand in the wake of the mid-century epidemics, but also because 'income fell, especially that which came from tithes and offerings, while expenses grew as wages and prices rose'. By the late 1380s, for instance, the leper house of St Giles was described as 'miserably depressed and in debt'.[9] The City may also have had other objects in view. Even if the Mayor and Aldermen did not delude themselves, in 1346, that they had obtained overall control of the Hospital from John de Nortone, they might well have regarded their agreement with him as a valuable foot in the door, one which could perhaps be exploited more actively by their successors.

In any event, the fact that the Hospital was taken 'under the patronage' of the City does not mean that the City obtained the patronage of the Mastership. Nor is it at all likely that the current Master was free to dispose of it in this way. Later, in 1364, the then Master, Robert Mannyel, described himself as holding the Hospital 'for life under a lease of Durand, late bishop of Bedlem, for a farm of twenty florins of Florence to be paid to the bishop and his successors'. No doubt the Bishop of Bethlehem believed that it was he who had the right of patronage. Whether, given the international political situation during Edward III's reign, he was often able to exercise that right is another question.[10]

What seems certain is that Edward III took control of Bethlem in the mid-1370s. The Hospital's muniment book contains a copy of a return to a writ *certiorari*, requiring the 'vicar' of the Hospital to state what Bethlem was worth. The copy is marginated '48 E. 3', that is, sometime between 25 January 1374 and 24 January 1375, and states that the Hospital was then 'in the king's hand' as an alien priory. Although the original writ and return do not appear to survive in the Public Record Office, there is no reason to doubt that they once existed. For some while, then, Bethlem was seized for the King. Whether this made much difference to its day-to-day life is doubtful: even the Master, if he had been appointed under a royal grant of patronage, was probably left in peaceful occupation – though perhaps with the title 'vicar' (deputy or stand-in) rather than Master. On the other hand, the seizure may well mark the point at which the Bishop of Bethlem lost his right of patronage permanently and payments to him finally and completely ceased. If so, this would no doubt have encouraged the perception, on the part of royal servants at least, that the Hospital was held from the King.[11]

Without doubt, however, there was scope for dispute and misunderstanding. The wording of the City's letters patent to John de Nortone could be, and soon was, interpreted as conveying the right of patronage to the City. In April 1381, the City appointed John Gardyner, chaplain, to be 'warden or master' of the Hospital. This was challenged immediately by one William Welles, who presented a petition to Parliament complaining that, 'whereas the king had given him the keeping of the

hospital of Bedelem without Bishopsgate', the citizens of London were claiming it for themselves. Welles stated that 'the king and his ancestors had always previously presented to the hospital', adding, as mentioned earlier, that all the previous holders of the delegated right of presentment had been knights.[12] No royal grants of the right of appointment to anyone, including the three men mentioned by Welles (Sir John Darcy, Sir John Beauchamp and Sir James Audley), appear to survive from Edward III's reign. This seems on the face of it to damn Welles's claim. On the other hand, no record of any grant to Welles himself is extant either. He would have had to be impudent indeed to present a petition in Parliament claiming a recent grant which he had not received. It is highly unlikely that Welles would have made his story up. O'Donoghue speculated that a reference to one of the Hospital's patrons called 'Saudalee' in a document of 1361 was a mis-transcription for 'Daudalee', and that this in turn might be a phonetic spelling of 'De Audley'. He was correct about the mis-transcription: 'Daudalee' it is, and it is safe to assume that the modern spelling would be 'De Audley' or 'd'Audley'.[13]

Undoubtedly the youthful Richard II's advisers took the view that the patronage was the King's to grant. What the immediate outcome of Welles's petition was is uncertain. But it looks as though the City was able, in the tense circumstances of 1381, the year of the 'Peasants' Revolt', to fend him off. Almost eight years later the Mayor and Aldermen stated that their nominee of 1381, John Gardyner, occupied what they called the Keepership, and for the first time made their claim that the patronage belonged to the City. They were responding to royal writs ordering them to induct Robert Lincoln, issued in January 1389. This time the King was in a much stronger position, and the City's attempt at resistance clearly failed: Lincoln must have obtained the office almost immediately, since in 1403 he was described as having held the Mastership for about thirteen years.[14] For over a century after that, successive kings and queens exercised their right as patrons of the Hospital to appoint its Masters without any attempt at contradiction.

Towards a City Hospital, *c.* 1500–1633

Being what lawyers call an incorporeal thing and therefore immortal, the City could afford to bide its time. Moreover, its memory was almost as long-lasting as its invisible body. Early in 1504, the Court of Aldermen recollected the old claim to Bethlem, and ordered that anything in the City's records relating to the Hospital and its patronage should be produced to it at the next (Mayor's) Court day. Nothing apparently came of this, nor of a further search ordered a decade later. So the Mayor and Aldermen decided to try another tack. On 28 September 1518 it was agreed that a committee consisting of the Mayor, the Recorder (the City's senior legal officer), two Aldermen and six Common Councilmen would be 'solicitors to the kings grace and his most honorable counsell for the hospitall of Bethlem withoute Bysshoppesgate to the which the cite hath Ryght &c'. This, too, failed to achieve the desired results, perhaps because the Aldermen's insistence that London was entitled to Bethlem weakened their case by leading them to demand what, in reality, they could not prove was rightfully the City's.[15]

Almost twenty years later, in 1537, the city authorities finally accepted that they

were not going to be able to talk their way into control of the Hospital. The Court of Aldermen authorized the Mayor to open negotiations with the then patron, Sir Peter Mewtys, to see whether and upon what terms he would (as the City insisted on phrasing it) 'restore the possession of the patronage of Bedlem whiche of Right belongeth to this city'. This did not produce instant results. But finally, four years later, the Mayor was able to report to his fellows that he had persuaded Mewtys to relinquish his life-interest in the Hospital's patronage for £100, and had also struck a deal with Mewtys's deputy, the mercer Thomas Scopeham.[16]

At much the same time as the City accepted the need to buy Mewtys out, it made another attempt to persuade Henry VIII to grant it four recently suppressed religious foundations, the New Hospital of St Mary without Bishopsgate, the Hospitals of St Bartholomew and St Thomas Southwark, and the 'New Abbey on Tower Hill' (the Minories, or the Abbey of Minoresses), for the benefit of its sick poor. After many delays, Henry VIII finally, in late 1546, agreed to grant the City St Bartholomew's Hospital. Included in the grant, made on 13 January 1547, was the concession of the 'custody, order and governance of [Bethlem]' and of its occupants and revenues.[17]

The wording is curious. In effect, Henry VIII seems to have granted the City, which of course could never die, the Mastership in perpetuity, subject to the King's pleasure. Why did the King give St Bartholomew's to the City, but baulk at an outright grant of the much less valuable Bethlem Hospital?

Perhaps it was simply a matter of principle, or a reaction to the City's attitude, after two centuries of conflict over the right of patronage. However, political or religious considerations – the two were at this period largely indistinguishable – may well have played a part. The Master of Bethlem from 1529 until his spectacular downfall and execution in May 1536 was George Bulleyn or Boleyn, Queen Anne's brother. Like his sister, Bulleyn was a supporter of the evangelicals, the religious reformers whose activities, led and orchestrated by that well-known London citizen, Thomas Cromwell, had already produced the break with Rome and the beginning of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. There is some evidence to suggest that Bethlem became a focus for evangelicals under Bulleyn. After his fall, the radical preacher Dr Robert Barnes tried to persuade Cromwell to support him in his bid for the Mastership (worth £40 a year, and more desirable to him than a bishopric, so Barnes said).

It is moreover possible that Bethlem had been a battleground over which the evangelicals and the conservatives had been fighting for some time. John Cavalari, the Master succeeded by Bulleyn, was a Luccan (Italian) merchant who had received papers of denization for himself and his children only in 1513, the year he obtained the Mastership. He seems an odd choice for Master: given the usual relationship between Italian merchants and English kings, one would normally suspect that the Mastership was a way of paying off royal debts. But when in 1543 Charles 'Cavallary' of St Helen's Bishopsgate (a large parish to the south-east of St Botolph's) made his last will and testament, he named as his executors another Luccan merchant, Anthony Bonvisi, and Sir Thomas More's son-in-law, William Roper. Roper had been won over by the reformers' views at one stage, but More had won him back. And Bonvisi was an ardent Catholic and perhaps More's staunchest friend from his old humanist circle, supporting him in his last days: Sir Thomas then had looked forward to seeing his old

friend in Heaven, 'where no wall shall dissever us, where no porter shall keep us from talking together'. Charles Cavallary was very probably a member of John Cavalari's family, perhaps his son. While Cavalari was Master of Bethlem, More was living nearby in Crosby Place and was a member of the Skinners' Fraternity, with its links with Bethlem Chapel.

The existence of a strongly anti-reformist circle in the area may help to explain why a Harwich curate opposed to the reforms, Thomas Corthop, was to be found preaching at Bethlem in 1535. His audience, which included some prominent reformers, promptly reported him for criticizing royal policy. At the time, Corthop's words were dangerous. Yet it may well be that King Henry, once he had repudiated Anne Boleyn's influence, began to fear that Corthop was right when he said that the evangelicals 'have made and brought in such divisions and seditions among us as was never seen in the realm'. For this reason, perhaps, Dr Barnes did not get the Mastership; it went instead to Mewtys, Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, who was presumably a 'safe pair of hands'. If Bethlem was by the late 1530s associated with a religious radicalism which was itself beginning to smell of political radicalism, the King might well have been reluctant to hand it over completely to London's governors, even on his deathbed (he died on 28 January 1547).[18]

In practice, the City seems to have been left in undisturbed occupation for some time thereafter, and in the long term it managed quietly to convert control into ownership. But its title remained vulnerable for some time, and the Mayor and Aldermen clearly were conscious of that vulnerability. It was with some foreboding that a group of Aldermen who had been summoned before the Commissioners Spiritual 'for th'answerying of the Cytyes matters concernynge Bethelem and the ponyshemente of harlottes and bawdes' went to the meeting. Their relief at finding the Commissioners 'reasonably and frendely-inclynyd and mynded towardes the saide Cytye nor seakynge or covetynge to restrayne breake or infrynge any parte of [its] liberties' is patent.[19]

It is not entirely clear who 'governed' Bethlem in the early years of the City's control. There is a reference in September 1550 to the (unspecified) 'governors' of Bethlem. Despite this, initially the Court of Aldermen seems to have administered the Hospital itself. Although no record of the appointment survives, the Mayor and Aldermen probably appointed the first Keeper, Edward Alleyn; they certainly appointed his successor. (The word 'Keeper' itself indicates that Alleyn held the position equivalent to the Masters' deputies of former days, and that the City was in effect acting as the 'Master'.) They also required the City's Chamberlain to receive, dispense and account to the Court for the Hospital's revenues and expenditure, which is strong evidence in favour of central civic control.[20]

In January 1556, however, two Aldermen and the Chamberlain were ordered to check the Keeper's accounts up to Michaelmas (29 September) last. This was in preparation for a transfer of administrative control. Edward VI had just granted to the City three institutions for its poor: Christ's Hospital, which 'hath bene erected for the vertuous bringinge up of the myserable youth, and St Thomas hospitall for the relevynge of the neadye and deseased, and Bridewell for thenforcinge of the lewde and naughtie sorte to labor and worke'. Christ's was ordered to assume the 'governaunce of the saide house of Beathelem and of the keeper and other

officers thereof ... and Receyve theire Reaconyngs and Accomptes ... and not the Chamberlayne of this Cytie'. According to the 1837 Charity Commissioners, the administration of Bethlem did not remain with the Governors of Christ's Hospital for long. The Commissioners believed that, on 27 September 1557, the Governors of the three hospitals granted to the City by Edward VI decided both to include St Bartholomew's in the administrative arrangements then being approved and also to put Bethlem under the wing of Bridewell. Bridewell, the splendid palace built for Henry VIII less than a quarter-century before, was now, rather ignominiously, a 'house of correction' for petty offenders, vagrants, and immoral persons.[21]

It is in fact doubtful whether Christ's ever actually administered Bethlem. There is no mention of Bethlem in the Christ's Hospital Court Minute books before June 1561, when a decision was taken to offer a lease of some Bethlem tenements. This decision was taken, not at a Christ's Hospital Court, but at a 'General Court' of all the city hospitals. In September 1561, the Court of Aldermen ordered the 'Comptroller General' of the Hospitals, Alderman Martin Bowes, another senior Aldermen and four Common Councilmen to take over 'the orderynge grauntynge & lettyng to ferme' of Bethlem and its lands and possessions, a responsibility they were still exercising under instructions from the Court of Aldermen until at least the following spring. On 23 September 1562, Bowes was asked to arrange for the making of a silver seal with which leases and other legal documents relating to Bethlem's property could be sealed. Four days earlier, Bowes had been tasked to produce a seal for the City's other hospitals, which was to be used indifferently for sealing the deeds of any one of them. This suggests that Bethlem was still being administered separately from the rest of the hospitals, and on a rather *ad hoc* basis, well into the 1560s.

There is indeed no evidence that the Bridewell had responsibility for Bethlem before 28 August 1574, when the Bridewell Governors agreed that John Mell, the third Keeper of Bethlem, should have 'the Romes which were letten to Mr Agare before any other at suche tyme as it is to be letten'. From that point on, it is clear that it was the Governors of Bridewell who were both supervising admissions to the Hospital and handling its revenues and property. Moreover, it was in 1579 that the Bridewell Governors appear first to have attempted to control appointments to the Keepership, when they dismissed John Mell on the grounds that he had withheld legacies left to Bethlem. Mell replied, very pertinently, that 'he was admytted to [his office] by my L maior and Court of Aldermen. And if by them he shalbe myslyked then he will be content to departe'. So it seems likely that the real point at which the Bridewell Governors assumed control of Bethlem's affairs was well after 1557; quite possibly, not much before the mid-1570s (unfortunately, there seems to be nothing in the Court of Aldermen records to indicate precisely when this happened, and the Bridewell Court of Governors Minute Books covering 1562 to 1574 do not survive).[22]

Why then did the 1837 Charity Commissioners assert so confidently that Bethlem's administration had passed to Bridewell at the General Court held on 27 September 1557? Probably because of a confusion resulting from a statement in a work published in 1836, *Memoranda, References and Documents Relating to the Royal Hospitals of the City of London.* This included a copy of the 1557 ordinances, together with the

comment that disputes which had arisen over them had been resolved in 1782, when it was decided that the London Common Council would appoint forty-eight Governors, of which 'twelve shall be sent to St Bartholomew's Hospital, twelve to the united Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem'.[23]

The reluctance of the Mayor and Aldermen to yield their control of admission to the Bethlem Keepership, despite the fact that the Bridewell Governors seem from the outset to have controlled admissions to all the Bridewell offices, may reflect the long struggle to obtain the right to appoint to the office in the first place. The Keepership was also useful for purposes of patronage, as a way of rewarding city officers for good service. On three occasions at least the office was granted to one of the Mayor's officers or at the Mayor's request.[24]

It was none the less anomalous that the Keepership was not in the hands of the Bridewell Governors. In October 1607 the Steward of Bridewell clearly assumed that the office must be controlled by the Governors, as it was one of several positions he suggested as possible appointments for his son (the others being his own office and the Portership of Bridewell). He was too precipitate, however. The first time the Bridewell Governors were involved in choosing the Keeper was in April 1619, when Dr Helkiah Crooke was elected in a two-horse contest in a session of the Court of Governors attended by the Mayor and the Recorder. (As the other contestant, John Pirie, may well have been the Bridewell Governor of that name, the 'two-horse contest' may in fact have been no contest at all.) Crooke had laid complaints against the serving Keeper, Thomas Jenner, in the autumn of 1618, having previously petitioned King James I for the Keepership. The knowledge that the King was taking an interest in the outcome may well have prompted an unusually formal procedure, and at least the pretence of an election.[25]

If the Governors thought that they would from then on have the same sort of control over the Keeper of Bethlem as they had over the Steward of Bridewell, however, they were mistaken. Dr Crooke was a man of altogether different standing from his sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century predecessors. Clearly the City recognized this, for Crooke was required to swear to a set of articles on admission, which bound him, among other things, to be 'subiect to the direccon and controll of the Governors of this hospitall, for the time beinge and accompt to them' and to accept that he would hold office only so long as he conducted himself well. Moreover, the Governors attempted to pre-empt a long-standing source of disputes by ordering that any charitable gifts, no doubt including bequests, made to Bethlem should be delivered first to the Bridewell Treasurer before being passed to Crooke 'att the discreccon of the Governors'.[26] It took more than that to tie down a man of Crooke's calibre, however.

At first the relationship seems to have been amicable enough. Crooke was a demanding Keeper, and the Court of Governors gave in to his demands. A small committee was appointed to view the state of Bethlem House in May; a larger committee, to do the same, in June. Just over a week later, several Governors were asked to join the President at the Guildhall. The Treasurer and Clerk were to meet him beforehand, 'to acquaint him with some writings and notes for his better instruction touchyng this buisnes'. Ten days later it was agreed that 'a sluce shalbe made for the conveyance of water out of the vaulte at Bethlem'. Four days after that,

'fittinge dressers and shelves' were ordered to be installed in the kitchen at Bethlem House.[27]

Thus far, Crooke had been an 'improving' Keeper, and the Governors had obliged him. But the honeymoon period did not last for long. By November 1619, the differences between the Bridewell Governors and Crooke were sufficient to require the attention of an aldermanic committee. The Governors continued to be troubled on and off throughout 1620 over 'doctor Crooks busines'; Crooke was evidently bidding for an increase in the allowance made for inmates supported by Bridewell, despite having sworn on admission not to do so.[28]

The Governors responded by being much readier than they might otherwise have been to hear complaints against the Keeper. In April 1620, a committee was appointed to hear the complaints made by a Mr Slater about his daughter's mistreatment and abuses in general; in July, three Governors were ordered to discuss and investigate further alleged abuses. If the Governors hoped by this means to discourage Crooke from pursuing his complaints, they were disappointed. By June 1621, there was another source of disagreement. Like a number of his predecessors, Crooke did not accept that he was bound to hand over to the Bridewell Treasurer any gifts or bequests made to Bethlem, and (according to the Bridewell Clerk) 'violently averred to the Governors that hee would give noe accompt' for sums he had received from these sources. Typically, he began by trying to bring heavy guns to bear: the Bridewell Governors found themselves having to explain themselves to the Earl of Arundel, the Earl-Marshal and a Privy Councillor. The dispute was referred back to the Mayor and Aldermen, but the temperature was by now high, with the Bridewell Governors referring to the Keeper's 'scandalous peticiones'. Even when summoned again before Lord Arundel, the Governors stood firm and refused to accept that they owed Crooke the £7 he was then claiming from them.[29] Arundel appears to have been persuaded by the City's arguments, and for a time Crooke and his complaints disappeared from the records, to be replaced by a controversy over new buildings at Bethlem.[30]

No further major problems arose until towards the end of the decade, although the Governors did find themselves having to intervene in order to ensure that two Hospital servants were paid by the Keeper. In early 1628, however, an aldermanic committee was formed to consider Crooke's proposals 'concerninge some reformacion in the house of Bethelem and . . . his bill entended to be proffered to the house of Parliament'. In November 1630, the Bridewell Clerk was ordered to keep separate accounts for Bethlem and Bridewell. Less than a week later, Crooke again petitioned for an increase in the poor inmates' allowance. Although the Governors did not respond immediately, in February 1631 a visiting Bridewell committee found that there was almost no food in the Hospital and reported that 'it was complayned unto them that the poore were likely to starve'. This visit does not seem to have been ordered by the Court, and may indeed have been solicited by Crooke as part of his campaign to prove how inadequate the inmates' allowance was. In any event, the Governors merely ordered a committee headed by the Treasurer to make what improvements it thought appropriate.[31]

If the February visit was instigated by Crooke, it clearly did not achieve his aims. The following month, probably as a result, the Mayor and Aldermen found