

A
MANIFESTO



FOR
BETHLEHEM

A declaration from the poor oppressed people of England directed to all that call themselves, or are called lords of manors, through this nation; that have begun to cut, or that through fear and covetousness, do intend to cut down the woods and trees that grow upon the common sand waste land.



Bee on Hawthorn Blossom, Bethlem



We are resolved to be cheated no longer, nor be held under the slavish fear of you no longer, seing the Earth was made for us, as well as for you. And in this Earth is our Royal site of Bethlem covenented to our Governors by the ~~The~~ Mayor and Commanality and Citizens of the City of London on the feast of Michael the Archangel, made the twentieth day of November one thousand nine hundred and thirty one, for seven hundred and forty nine years, at the yearly rent of six shillings, for the sole use of the reception of people of unsound mind.



We speak now as those of the aforementioned unsound mind: if the Common Land belongs to us who are the poor oppressed, surely the woods that grow upon the Commons belong to us likewise: therefore we are resolved to try the uttermost in the light of reason, to know whether we shall be free men, or slaves. If we lie still, and let you steale away our Birthrights, we perish; and if we Petition we perish also, though we have paid taxes, given free quarter, and ventured our lives to preserve the Nations freedom as much as you, and therefore by the law of contract with you, freedom in the land is our portion as well as yours, equal with you: And if we strive for freedom, and your murdering, governing Laws destroy us by denying our access to work on the meadows and the woods, we can but perish in our souls.



Therefore we require, and we resolve to take both Common Land, and Common woods to be a livelihood for us, and look upon you as equal with us, not above us, knowing very well, that England the land of our Nativity, is to be a common Treasury of livelihood to all, without respect of persons.



The Meadow, Mown, Autumn



Haymaking in the South Field, Monks Orchard,
with the Apple Orchard Behind



Therefore we hope all Woodmongers who come to this site of The Royal Bethlem Hospital and steal with impunity, will disown all such private merchandise, as being a robbing of the poor oppressed, and take notice, that they have been told our resolution: But if any of you that are Woodmongers, will buy it of the poor, and for their use, to stock the Commons, from such as may be appointed by us to sell it, you shall have it quietly, without diminution; but if you will slight us in this thing, blame us not, if we make stop of the Carts you send and convert the Woods to our own use, as need requires, it being our own, equal with him that calls himself the Lord of the Mannor, and not his peculiar right, shutting us out, but he shall share with us as a fellow creature.



We declare that the burden of proof shall be placed upon the lords of the manor and the governors of this Royal Bethlem to say to us why these resources, these lands and woods shall be denied to us of unsound mind, why the burden and responsibility, borne lightly, could not be carried equally to care, and love this place and instead is denigrated as a management problem and so left in abeyance.



And thus in love we have declared the purpose of our hearts plainly, without flatterie, expecting love, and the same sincerity from you, without grumbling or quarreling, being Creatures of your own Image and mould, intending no other matter herein, but to observe the Law of righteous action.

Bethlem Gallery is funded by Wellcome to provide public engagement for research into mental health and justice. The public programme influences, and is influenced by, the Mental Health & Justice (mhj.org.uk) research team which is comprised of six interrelated research strands involving clinical experts,

lawyers, philosophers, neuroscientists, social scientists and service users. Commissioned artists bring people together across these multidisciplinary strands and across the delineations of service user, clinician, patient, public, artist and researcher to encourage conversations and learning through art practices.

Cover Image:
The Building of Bethlem,
taken from an image
in the archives of
the Bethlem Museum
of the Mind

