



Records from the Bethlem Royal Hospital, 1559-1932

Collection Summary

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Main Street, East Ardsley, Wakefield, WF3 2AP, UK

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RECORDS FROM THE BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITAL, 1559-1932

Bethlem Royal Hospital is a psychiatric facility in London. It was established as a general hospital in 1247, before becoming an asylum for the mentally ill sometime in the 14th century. Often referred to colloquially as '**Bedlam**'—and generally accepted to be the origin of the eponymous noun—past incarnations of the institution are infamous for their questionable diagnosis of mental illness and poor treatment of patients.

This collection, which has been curated in association with **Find My Past** and the **Museum of the Mind**, contains four centuries and **130,000 images** worth of records from Bethlem. The records are diverse in both form and subject matter. They include: voluntary and criminal admission registers; discharge and death registers; male and female patient casebooks; minutes of the Court of Governors; and staff salary books.

Scholars and students alike will find that, together, the records provide a unique insight into the evolution of so-called **lunacy reform**, from an early reliance on control of the mentally ill through coercion and restraint to the later emergence of doctrines of self-discipline and moral management.

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