TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE LORD FAIRFAX
AND THE COUNSELL OF WARRE THE
BROTHERLY REQUEST OF THOSE THAT
ARE CALLED DIGGERS SHEWETH

That whereas wee have begun to digg upon the Commons
for a livelihood, and have declared to your Excellency and
the whole world our reasons, which are four. First, from the
righteous law of Creation that gives the earth freely to one as well
as to another without respect of persons. Secondly, by vertue of yours
and our victory over the King, whereby the enslaved people of Eng-
land have recovered themselves from under the Norman Conquest;
though wee doe not as yet enjoy the benefitt of our victories, nor can-
not soe long as the use of the Common land is held from the younger
brethren by the Lords of Mannours, that as yet sitte in the Norman
chaire, and uphold that tyranny as if the kingly power were in force
still; and a third reason that moved us to digg was the perswasion of
our hartes that the Parliament and Army would make good their
bargaine with us; for you promised that if wee would adventure per-
son and purse to recover England from under that Norman oppres-
sion you would make us a free people, and you have obtained the vic-
tory by your owne and our assistance, and there is nothing wanting
from you to us but making good your bargaine to us, for by the law
of reason and contract wee have bought our freedom of the Parlia-
ment and Army, who have the power of the sword in your hands, by
our blood, taxes, and free quarter. And wee are perswaded of your
faithfullness to us for two reasons. First, your promises, which as you
are Gospell professours wee expect you will make good, and soe give
us our freedome, which wee have dearely paid for, and you have re-
ceived our moneys the fruits of our labours. Secondly, your Covenant
to God, unto whom first we kept fasting days, and praiied him to help and deliver this oppressed Nation, and then after any victory over our oppressour Charles you apointed daies of thanks-giving unto God. Now in the third place, God expects from you and the Parliament to performe your Covenant in deed and worke as well as in words, and let the oppressed goe free unto whom you promised freedome; and though you have fought for it, yet wee have paid for it, and soe have purchased that same freedome with you, that is that wee may live in the earth without poverty; for (fourthly) wee digg upon the Common to make the earth a common treasury, because our necessity for food and payment require it.

Now Sirs, divers repulses wee have had from some of the Lords of Manours and their servants, with whom wee are patient and loving, not doubting but at last they will grant liberty quietly to live by them; and though your tenderness have moved us to bee requesting your protection against them, yet wee have forborne, and rather waited upon God with patience till hee quell their unruly spirits, and of prosecuting Sauls to make them righteous Pauls; and in regard likewise the soulidiers did not molest us, for that you tolde us when some of us were before you, that you had given command to your soulidiers not to meddle with us, but resolved to leave us to the Gentlemen of the Cuntry and to the law of the Land to deale with us; which wee were satisfied with, and for this halfe year past your soulidiers have not meddled with us.

But now Sirs, this last weeke upon the 28th of November, there came a party of soulidiers commanded by a cornet, and some of them of your owne Regiment, and by their threatneing words forced 3 labouring men to helpe them to pull downe our 2 houses, and carried away the wood in a cart to a Gentleman’s house who hath bin a Cavaller all our tyme of warrs, and cast 2 or 3 old people out who lived in those houses to lye in the open feild this cold weather, (an action more becomeing the Turks to deale with Christians then for one Christian to deale with another); but if you inquire into the business you will finde that the Gentlemen that sette the soulidayrs on are enemies to you, for some of the cheife had hands in the Kentish rising against the Parliament, and wee know, and you will finde it true if you trust them so far, that [they] love you but from the teeth outward.

Therefore our request to you is this, that you would call your soulidiers to account for attempting to abuse us without your commission, that the Cuntry may know that you had no hand in such an unrighteous and cruell act. Likewise wee desire that you would continue your former kindnesse and promise to give commission to your soulidiers not to meddle with us without your order, and wee shall bee very thankfull to you and remayne

Yours and England true borne sonnes and frends.

John Heyman
An: Wrenn
Hen: Barton
Jo* Coulton
Robert Cosler
John Palmer
Jacob Heard

in the behalfe of others called the Diggers.
TO MY LORD GENERALL AND HIS COUNCELL OF WARR

SIR,

I understand that Mr. Parson Platt 1 with some other Gentlemen, have made report to you, and the Councell of State, that wee that are called Diggers are a riotous people, and that wee will not bee ruled by the Justices, and that wee hold a mans house by violence from him, and that wee have 4 guns in it, to secure ourselves, and that wee are drunkards, and Cavaleers waiteing an opportunity to helpe to bringe in the Prince, and such like.

Truely Sir, these are all untrue reports, and as false as those which Haman of old raised against sincere harted Mordecai to incense Kinge Ahasuerus against him. The conversacion of the diggers is not such as they report, wee are peaceable men, and walke in the light of righteousness to the utmost of our power. Our enemies have sent divers tymes to beate us, and to pull downe our houses, yet wee never gave them bad language, nor resisted againe, but tooke all their abuses patiently, waiteing upon God till hee make their harts quiett, that wee may live in peace by them; but trulye the same things that they falsely report of us, wee and all the people round about us, can and would prove to their faces, if you should call us face to face, some of them were alwayes Cavaleers, and had a hand in the Kentish rising, and were cheife promoters of the offensive Surry petition; but wee doe not speake this to ripp up old quarrells, neither doe I desire to mention their names, least you should thinke wee were enemies; for truely it is our desire to conquer them with love, though they much abuse us that have alwayes bin your friends, as the enemy themselves, if they were face to face, can say not otherwise.

Now Sir, the end of our digging and ploughing upon the common land is this, that wee and all the impoverish poore in the land may gett a comfortable livelyhood by our righteous labours thereupon; which wee conceive wee have a right unto, (I speake in the name of all the poore commoners) by vertue of the conquest over the King, for while hee was in power hee was the successour over [i.e., of] William the Conquerour, and held the land as a conquerour from us, and all Lords of Mannours held ytтьle to the common Lands from him; but seeing the common people of England by ioynt consent of person and purse, have caste out Charles our Norman oppressour, wee have by this victory recovered ourselves from under his Norman yoke, and the lande now is to returne into the ioynt hands of those who have conquered, that is the commonours, and the land is to be held noe longer from the use of them by the hand of anye who<se those> will uphold the Norman and Kingly power still; and if soe, then wee that are impoverisherd by sticking to the Parliament and you, shall loose the benefitt of all our taxes, free quarter, and blood, and remayne slaves still to the kingly power in the hands of Lords of Mannours, which wee have cast out of the hands of Charles.

Therefore wee poore oppressed Commoners claime freedom in the common land, by virtue of the Parliaments promises and engagement, and of the armes actinge; for wee did beleive and rely theerupon, being as wee conceive it a firme bargaine between you and us; for you and the Parliament in effect said to us, 'Give us your taxes, free quarter, excise, and adventure your lives with us to cast out the oppressour Charles, and wee will make you a free people', therefore by the law of contract as wee expected was firmly made and confirmed on our part by performance, wee claime this freedom to enjoy the common land for our livelihood, for wee have bought it by our bloud and money.

Secondly, wee claime this freedom by equality in the conquest over the Kinge, for the Parliament told us what they did they did it for the safety and peace of the whole nation, the army told us they fought not for themselves, but for the safety and peace of the whole Nation, and yow and wee joyned our forces together to procure our freedome, and have obeyned it; therefore if there bee a spoyle of the

1 John Platt became rector of West Horsley in 1643 when the incumbent was ejected by the Presbyterians. He was a member, in 1647, of the Guildford Clasis and a "tirer" for Surrey. He was ejected from the living by the Act of Conformity in 1662, and died at Westbrook in 1670. As Winstanley says, he was lord of the manor of Cobham "by marriage"; i.e., to Margaret, the daughter of Sir Humphrey Lynde. There is a biographical note on Platt in Calamy Revised, by A. G. Matthews (1934), p. 391.
common land to be gathered, as there is, it is to bee equally devided betweene yow that went to warr, and wee thatstay'd at home and paid you, that is, as the Gentry have their inclosure free to themselves, soe wee the poore impoverisht commoners claime freedome in the common land by vertue of this conquest over the Kinge, which is gotten by our joynct consent.

Thirdly, wee know that England cannot bee a free Commonwealth, unless all the poore commoners have a free use and benefit of the land; for if this freedome bee not granted, wee that are the poore commoners are in a worse case then we were in the King's dayes, for then wee had some estate about us, though we were under oppression, but now our estates are spent to purchase freedome, and wee are under oppression still of Lords of Mannours tyranny; therefore [unless] wee that are poore commoners have some part of the land to live upon freely, as well as the Gentry it cannot bee a common wealth, neither can the kingly power bee removed soe longe as this kingly power in the hands of Lords of Mannours rules over us.

Now Sir, if you and the Counsell will quietly grant us this freedome, which is our owne right, and sett us free from the kingly power of Lords of Mannours, that violently now as in the Kings dayes hold the commons from us, (as if wee had obteyned noe conquest at all over the kingly power), then the poore that ly under the great burden of poverty, and are always complaining for want, and their miseries increased because they see noe meane of releife found out, and therefore cry out continually to you and the Parliament for releife and to make good your promises, wil bee quietted.

Wee desire noe more of yow then freedome to worke, and to enjoy the benefit of our labours—for here is vast land enough and to spare to supply all our wants—but if yow deny this freedome, then in righteousness wee must raise collections for the poore out of the estates, and a mass of money will not supply their wants; because many are in want that are ashamed to take collection money, and therefore they are desperate, and will rather rob and steal, and disturb the land, and others that are ashamed to beg would doe any worke for to live, as it is the case of many of our diggers that have bin good housekeepers; but if this freedome were granted to improve the common lands then there would bee a supply to answer every ones inquire, and the murmurnings of the people against yow and the

Parliament would cease, and within a few yeares wee should have noe beggers nor idle persons in the land.

Secondly, hereby England would bee enriched with all commodty with in it selfe which they each would afford; and truly this is a stayne to Christian religion in England, that wee have see much landly wast, and see many starve for want; and further, if this freedome bee granted, the whole land wil bee united in love and strength, that if a forraigne enemy like an army of rats and mice come to take our inheritance from us, wee shall all rise as one man to defend it.

Then lastly, if you will grant the poore commoners this quiet freedome to improve the common land for our livelyhood, we shall reioyce in yow and the army in protecting our worke, and wee and our worke wil bee ready to secure that, and wee hope there will not bee any kingly power over us, to rule at will and wee to bee slaves, as the power has bin, but that you will rule in love as Moses and Joshua did the Children of Israel before any kingly power came in, and that the Parliament wil bee as the Elders of Israel, chosen freely by the people to advise for and assist both yow and us.

And thus in the name of the rest of these called Diggers and Commonners through the land, I have in short declared our mynde and cause to you in the light of righteousness, which will prove all these reports made against us to bee false and distructive to the uniteing of England into peace.

Per me Gerrard Winstanley for my selfe and in the behalfe of my Fellow Commoners.

December the 8th, 1649.