

# BLAKE'S COTTAGE, FELPHAM FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

## Reflections towards a Vision Statement

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We are not turning Blake's Cottage into a Museum. The aim would be rather to make of it the Forges of Los to bring forward Blakean vision: Imagination and Dissent.

That there are virtually no extant personal objects that belonged to Blake offers an interesting symbol for reflection about the way he built his life, created his work and the destiny he fulfilled. That in spite of his significance in British and the world's culture he's still buried in an unmarked grave, most of the houses he's lived in have been demolished and there is no object of his to display in a museum may suggest that the energy that drove his art and life burnt through creation and constant transformation, and was not of the kind to be tamed in the form of a museum or institutionalized culture.

Now to preserve the Cottage as a symbol of Blake's legacy we need to work with institutions, create some sort of organisation and administrate. How are we going to do that while respecting this essence of Blake's life and work, so powerful that it left for posterity its recognisable mark in the form of no personal possessions?

To start with then, the Cottage should not be possessed by anyone. It ought to be administered, and opened up, by a board with representatives of the parties involved, who yet would be there to further Blake's vision, rather than to represent their own organisations. The function of the Cottage's open door could be interesting. What if the emphasis shifts from a door open for people to get in, to one open so that the fruits of Imagination go *out*? Thought of as Los's forges, the Cottage's physically finite centre can become an infinite source of energy made manifest through creation, in the arts and literature, in thought, in mental fight for freedom, in true science.

The organisations involved would therefore have the challenge to think of imaginative ways of honouring Blake through the organisms they represent, without betraying those organisms but mainly without betraying Blake's spirit, without bending the functions of the Cottage to fit their own interests. We would have to learn to think in terms of integrating the vision of all those organisms for a single purpose instead of thinking of their own separate interests – the organisations involved would have to dispense with their selfhoods and concentrate on building a forge.

The connections with South Molton Street, if we keep access to it, the University of Chichester, the Felpham Festival, the Tate, etc., would then work not so much through bringing all of them physically into the Cottage, but in taking to them the fruits of what is conceived in the Cottage. The Cottage would host special events of everyone involved: book launches, talks, small exhibitions, but the stress would be on what is born there to go outside. People with specific projects would gather there and give them shape. Resident writers or artists for specific periods would create works to give to the world. Perhaps a programme of monthly conversations around Blakean subjects may be started, limited to a few people so that conversation is truly possible (booked on a first-come first-served basis).