

What Happened with the Blake Cottage Appeal

Chapter VII

In the previous chapter we saw how Mr Heath insisted on withholding all information from me about the Cottage campaign when we had already missed our deadline to launch the crowdfunding appeal, on 19 September.

We were soon to have a Committee meeting. Mr Heath sent round the agenda without mentioning my pending resignation nor the problems around the Cottage appeal, so I tried to contact him again:

We will need to talk about my resignation and about the Cottage project so please add those two points to the meeting's agenda.

His response? More refusal to respond to my questions, more manipulation, and more bullying:

Thank you for your text, voicemail and email.

The origination, leadership and decision making over the Cottage project rests ultimately with me.

As I said clearly to you when we last met, I am deeply concerned at your volatility - the reputation of the Blake Society nurtured over 30 years can easily be destroyed in a few reckless moments.

So please refer all further communications concerning the Cottage to me by email before issuing them.

I answered:

I won't accept any manipulation, or unethical exercise of power.

We know how this *collaborative* project started and developed, it is not of your property --the Cottage is not the Blake Society, which is certainly not of your property either but where you have been able to get away with more. Much more people are involved here and they are witness of how much the project owes to me.

It is bullying to say that you are deeply concerned at my volatility, after you have been pushing me to the edge for the past weeks, after your refusal to let me know what is going on with our work, after procrastinating things, when no work agreement was respected and after having handed over our collective effort to someone who had nothing to do with it because of personal reasons.

True, I am more volatile because I am under a lot: I have pleaded with you several times, in the kindest of terms, to please not push me to the edge, knowing I am ill, [very hard up and therefore indeed stressed. I have apologised for my outbursts of anger; I have asked you to be reasonable and fair, and you have refused to listen, let alone to apologise yourself for your very erratic behaviour.

You cannot push me out of this because I am co-responsible for this project. I still want to know what the problem is, when are we going online and when am I going to see the progress on the contents of the page as we had agreed. And I insist on the issue regarding the board of trustees.

You are the one who is destroying the reputation of the Blake Society and if you refer to what happened at Dr Johnson's House as a "reckless moment", you'd rather stop and think whose was the recklessness and the provocation. You have to learn that you cannot go on humiliating and offending people without facing the consequences of your actions.

The real threat to the Blake Society's reputation is what you are doing now. As I have said to you several times, you are putting at risk the work of your lifetime, and are betraying the good will of far too many people.

Everybody in the Blake Society knows the value of my work, and everyone who knows about the Cottage project knows how much it owes to me.

Throughout our fighting these past weeks I have tried to make peace endless times, have tried to make you see why I have been so angry and have entreated you to talk with me about all the work issues that made me so frustrated while you were at your retreat and on your return, so that we could clear

misunderstandings and be able to work well again. You cannot say I have not tried. Every single time I have tried to clear things with you, you have refused to listen or to talk.

It is not too late: we can still talk about all those very concrete work issues, from the time of your retreat and your return. Let's disentangle this, understand why we have both been so angry, work out a way to finish our work with dignity and fairness, like responsible adults. But we need to communicate to do this, we need to talk, we cannot throw dirt at this project through sheer ill will and abuse of power.

Wake up Tim, you are putting so much at stake. Talk with someone you respect about what you're doing and perhaps that will help you see if your behaviour is being ethical at all.

Do send me the contents of the page. I must see it and that is what we agreed on, I have your emails saying so. Do tell me what the problem is so that I can answer when people ask. Do tell me when we're going online. Make sure that I will protect our work, and that I will not accept your bullying.

He didn't respond. I wrote to Mrs and Mr Vinall telling them what was happening, forwarding to them all the emails that had gone unanswered. I desperately needed witnesses to what was going on.

I met in person with fellow Trustee Rod Tweedy, who had become, I thought, a friend and whom I thought I could trust. He also had a long list of grievances against the Chair. After telling me that he wondered what Ms Morgan was doing in the Blake Society Committee in the first place, he glossed over the lack of ethics in what had just happened, advised me to leave them alone for the time being, surely Mr Heath felt more at ease doing things with her?, and told me that the really important thing was what happened when the Cottage was acquired, because he thought that I would make a wonderful curator. Then he jokingly talked about us having "not a revolution, but a coup".

I was so distressed, so exhausted, that I held to the sympathy of the few Trustees I thought that I could trust. And yet I wondered why Mr Tweedy didn't challenge Mr Heath either, what on earth did he think a Trustee's responsibility was.

Meanwhile Mr Antony Vinall, who had always had concerns about the Chair's recklessness and the Blake Society's reputation, was by now extremely worried, as Mrs Vinall herself told me on the phone; he shared my disbelief at the Chair's proposed agenda leaving the Cottage as the last item, and decided to write to him with copy to the Committee. The reader must remember that in all these months, despite being running a public campaign for which the Blake Society was responsible, we hadn't had a single Committee meeting. Mr Vinall's letter said:

With the cottage fundraising getting going, it's an opportune moment for a meeting, especially as the Society (and hence the Trustees) seems now much more directly involved in the project than was previously envisaged. May I suggest a substantive agenda item on this? It would be good to clarify how the relationship between the Society and the cottage should operate. I take it that a separate legal entity holds the option to take ownership of the property?

I see that the links in the press articles direct potential donors to the Society's website, where they're invited to send their contributions to the Society - and also to become members. Is this now intended to be the main vehicle for gathering funds, or is there a separate effort through one of the crowdfunding websites? (My web searching skills are admittedly rudimentary, but I've been unable to locate one yet). It would be useful to know where best to direct enquiries.

If the Society is now to be receiving all the funds for acquiring the cottage, we need to make sure we have proper arrangements in place to keep them separate from our other funds. I'm slightly concerned that donations intended for the cottage which are given direct to the Society could be considered donations

to the Society, and thus in theory available for other purposes. Are we being fair to donors by doing this? As I understand it, under a crowdfunding scheme no money changes hands unless the target is met - donors make pledges rather than payments. But Just Giving collects money directly. What happens to donations to the Society if the target isn't met?

Forgive me for raising points which may already have been dealt with - but it's part of a Trustee's role.

That day, with Mr Heath still refusing to communicate with me, and feeling by then very near total collapse, I sent a letter to him by post, thinking it might be harder to ignore:

Dear Tim,

When you broke the news of your decision to bring someone else into the Cottage appeal, I gave you the benefit of the doubt. I thought it unwise, but tried to believe that you knew what you were doing and were certain we could all work driven by the right motivations: to acquire William Blake's Cottage so that we can give it to everyone as a centre for creation and sanctuary, for generations to come. I gave credit to the ways in which you try to have people share in the Society's projects, considered your probable wish to believe everything would be OK, and your practical reasons. In the email in which I welcomed Paige, with copy to you, I expressed my sincere wish that we could work guided by such principles. I tried not to judge, and to believe that we could work things out. I have done the best I can.

Since 2011 I have urged you on several occasions to let the Committee know how we could help to preserve the Cottage and the House in South Molton Street, and have suggested events to point in their direction. I do not need to tell you how much I care for those buildings and what they represent as the places where Blake lived and created: you know that very well. Though my work for the Blake Society is often performed in painful and tense isolation due to problems between us, my care and commitment have never wavered.

You know I felt horribly betrayed when you started working on the project with Henry behind my back, using the work I had already done. I listened to your position, your concern about how could I work if I were to leave the Society next year, and assumed any responsibility I might have had in the misunderstanding. I told you as much and tried to clarify things. Since then, we learned to join efforts (enormous) between ourselves and with other people in order to pull this project through for the simple, unequivocal reason that we do believe in it, that we share an idea, and an ideal, of what this place should be. That enthusiasm cannot be faked –it is transmitted to the people we talk to. I have been told as much and that was perceived too in the launch at Parliament.

Having invested so much of your time and life in this yourself, you cannot fail to be aware not of the hours, but entire days each has dedicated to work on the project with commitment, passion and without thoughts of personal gain of any kind. All that is reflected in the formulation of the project and in every single step we have painstakingly taken. It is a work of devotion that merits to be treated with care and respect.

Throughout our very difficult relationship, we have concluded several times that despite broken love, in not a few occasions even broken friendship, and immoderate amounts of sorrow, one thing we could do was work together –to have the nobility of heart and purpose to do so against all odds, to work for what we believe it is worth working for, to give to others something that may transcend our little personal lives and sorry anecdotes. That is the only way that people's lives stop being little and sorry –by striving to have an effect, however humble, in the world through generosity, belief in an ideal, the joy in creating something that has truth and beauty in

it.

I think that is why our work together for the Cottage had opened up an unexpected space of peace between us in which we had slowly been learning to talk again to the actual human being standing before us. There was great worth in having been able to do so despite so many problems and so much pain, and we should learn to appreciate such things in life, respect their value and understand the delicacy with which we should treat them. They are gifts, little miracles of transformation in (our) human spirit. We have no right to throw mud at them.

So even if I thought it was extraordinarily misguided of you to involve your personal life in this project that had been built so far with much clarity of purpose despite the difficult circumstances, I hoped that it could in fact turn into a good thing –that we would learn to value all the work and ideals involved in it, that are its core and foundations, from a more insightful and generous perspective. I had my doubts, but I tried to believe.

Within a week of the experiment I had already been exposed to the old kind of demeaning communications to which I, and the Society's work, should have never been exposed. I made clear I would not work like that and things improved. Paige felt obviously insecure, for the reasons we know and because she knew nothing of the project. I went out of my way to make things easy for her, make her ideas feel welcome. I did the work she was supposed to do for the webpage for her (for the sake of the project as the page had to be right) without rubbing it on her face, rather making her feel she was contributing something. She was grateful. Then she disappeared, work was procrastinated and you two started working in secrecy and pushing me out of the campaign.

I remember vividly the joy that night, after a couple of hours finishing off Paige's document and sending it back to her, because we were being able to be generous enough to overcome all personal stories and animosity in order to create something greater than us, and do it with dignity. I was free of all the pain and misgivings I had had in the past because of all the aggressions received from both of you and your disloyalty. I was generous, and happy about it. I welcomed her wholeheartedly. I was free, and was perhaps naïve to believe we were all getting there.

Now we are facing a situation of dishonesty, bullying and corruption that is about to destroy the Cottage project and the Blake Society. You, as chairman, and even more so as a human being, must awake, become aware of what you are doing and of the consequences of your actions. For the soiling is not to be laid at somebody else's door: you are responsible for it.

Just as you cannot, hard as you may try, strip another human being of what you respect, admire or indeed love in them, nor of their innate worth, you cannot give vicariously to others what is not in them, you cannot force others into being what they are not, and in the attempt at doing so you end up deceiving, and harming, everybody. You should remember that who you give power to over your personal life is one matter; yielding that into the space where you work with other people –let alone a campaign of the import we are engaged in now– is quite another. I am sure you do know the word that best describes what that amounts to, and again, the responsibility is much more yours than of those that you mislead into believing themselves entitled to that power by virtue of their relationship to you.

You were recently welcomed into the space of a community that holds ethical principles in high regard. I hope you find in that community the support needed to wonder about your own

integrity, and whether if you can indeed be one day a free man.

I received, of course, no answer.

The following day I entered our Wordpress administration in order to update our webpage. Then I remembered about the test for the Just Giving info email, and checked: I then realized that it had been cut off my email address and was now linked, apart from Mr Heath's, to Ms Morgan's.

It was the last straw. Apart from the obvious lack of principles involved in this action, and the further bullying to myself that it implied, it was a potential disaster: Ms Morgan simply had no idea of what the Cottage project was, or its ideals, as it had been amply demonstrated during her brief involvement. She also had as scant a sense of ethics as Mr Heath. We had worked with much care on the wording of the information we gave to the public so that it reflected the aims of our project. Ms Morgan didn't care for it, she couldn't possibly be now in charge of communications with the public. It was a total disgrace. I wrote again to the Chair:

I have seen who that test with the emails was for.

What is that email for? If it is regarding the campaign I should know so answer to this now, and answer too my other questions: when are we going online. What is the problem. Send me the page.

You should answer to my calls. I am in charge of this project too. I am the Secretary of the Blake Society. It is childish and wrong not to talk to me.

You should be informing me about all this. We are supposed to be working together. When Paige came in I did my best, I trusted you both might be willing to do this transparently, with no cunning. We were copying emails among the three of us then suddenly she disappeared and her participation went into secrecy, when you handed the project over to her.

You cannot hand it, or the communications of the campaign, over to her. She had not a clue about the project when she came in. She does not have any ideal about it, it was clear from the beginning she does not care about the Cottage and is in the project only for the reasons that we know. She is not the right voice to be talking to people about this.

You are jeopardising the project. Communication about it should be in the hands of the people who conceived it and believe in it, who have an ideal about the Cottage and who have strong principles

Wake up Tim. What you are doing is so wrong it begs belief.

Don't you realise that the cunning you both are showing here can be turned against the project itself at any moment, as it is indeed happening now, and destroy it? That people who do things without principles won't think it twice to soil something if they think that will suit their ends? You both have soiled the Cottage already, please don't take it any further.

Don't betray us all Tim, be responsible, you still have time. Stop, *seek help*, stop what you are doing, it is sheer destruction.

I truly have no words to describe what I was going through. It was weeks in a perpetual state of shock, fear, anger and endless concerns about our public responsibility. On top of that misery there was yet another reason for woe. I knew Mr Heath very well. Like many bullies, he is a very fragile man. Thus far though, his erratic behaviour had been held within reasonable limits. What he was doing now was so destructive, on so many levels, that I started fearing it was a last, spectacular display of self-destruction. I was sick with worry about myself, since by then I was so ill, distressed and exhausted; sick with worry about the project, our donors, the money we had received, the Blake Society's reputation, our supporters... and I was also beside myself with worry about Mr Heath, whose

behaviour was, even by his standards, misguided beyond recognition. What was happening *was* evil, and it was indeed hell. I felt engulfed in a darkness of which I felt I'd never be able to walk out.

Mr Heath sent an appeasing email to Mr Vinall with copy to the Committee. He reassured Mr Vinall about the only thing that the latter seemed to care about: liability if the Blake Society went wrong. He guaranteed that we "were in safe hands" because he had hired some of the leading solicitors in charitable law (Bircham Dyson Bell). What he in fact was saying was that *he* was, or thought he was, in safe hands, by having found the protection of such a powerful firm of lawyers. Then he said another lie, this time to apportion blame to the Big Blake Project:

Alas, however well briefed a journalist may be, there is no control over what appears in the Press. Additionally the organisers of the Felpham Festival have been briefing journalists in a self-serving way. This has contributed to inaccuracies in some of the reports, and unhelpfully, their articles have appeared before the crowd funding appeal is ready to be launched.

As Antony has properly indicated, it is not possible to entirely separate the creation of a new trust from its genesis in the Blake Society.

He was raising against the Big Blake Project the same accusation that he had raised against me: to give people information before the crowdfunding appeal was ready, despite all of us having agreed from the beginning on a deadline that he had pretended to be honouring ***up to the day before*** our supposed launch. He was also accusing them of being self-serving, and I believe that his intention of elbowing them out as soon as the Cottage was acquired was already firmly established.

Mr Vinall meekly accepted his explanations. He didn't raise the issue of what I had already been informing him regarding Mr Heath's behaviour and Ms Morgan's involvement. It seems to me that Mr Vinall has only truly cared, throughout his years as a Trustee, about the Society's potential liability. He certainly has proved not to have the capacity to understand that unscrupulous behaviour jeopardizes an organisation's reputation and stability no matter how many lawyers are turning the screws, and no matter how many times problems are brushed under the carpet.

My contacts were still waiting for our link to the crowdfunding appeal and, confused by our silence, were sending around the Just Giving link instead. On 23 September I wrote to Mr Heath, who still refused to communicate with me, to warn him about this again:

Tim, just to let you know that some of my contacts have written to say that, as they did not hear from me, they have started sharing on twitter the Just Giving link.

So I want you to be aware of the confusion already created, of the damage that has already been done to the campaign.

My contacts will still write to me, I do not have the right information to give to them.

I did not receive the email you sent to the Committee regarding the campaign, I only saw it through Antony's response.

What exactly do you think you are doing? You are destroying all this effort. Be aware of it.

After this email Mr Heath called me, accused me again of being unstable, said that working with me was draining. He gave a lame excuse for having missed the deadline for our crowdfunding appeal – that he had been waiting for the results of a grant application –, and when I asked him why then he had refused all those weeks to inform me of what was going on, he hung up the phone on me again. I simply could not let such abuse pass. I warned him again:

I appreciate you called. Yet I see that you are still unwilling to accept even the possibility of any mistake, let alone wrongdoing, on your part.

I leave it to you. Just be aware that rather serious bullying and dishonesty have been involved here, and it has to stop.

Think how much easier everything would have been if you had told me, say ten days ago, "Adriana, we're not going on line on the 19th because I'd rather wait for the [. . .] grant resolution". You would have been spared many phone calls, many emails asking how things are going.

I have asked you many times to talk about the particular work issues that caused this bitter state of affairs, and you have refused.

I don't want to fight, the campaign is very important and it is a risk, and you know very well how much I care for it. I know you are under stress by it. Just be aware that you have no right to treat me, or anyone, as you do, that you have no right to manipulate or insult people, and that I won't let you do that.

Pushing people to the edge, then accusing them of instability when they have had enough, blaming the problems in their life and labelling their genuine anger as madness, is a very well-known trait of bullying. No one likes that. So please be careful of the things you do provoke, and try to be responsible for your own actions. Perhaps you are under too much stress as well and have not been able to see what you are doing, so I am telling you now.

If after the campaign is launched you are willing to hear me out, about the inconsistencies and problems in work with you that have made so frustrated, I will be grateful.

His response was:

The Cottage is a part of a visionary multimillion pound project that necessitates clear leadership, and occasionally, difficult decisions. When they are required, they are based on a broad, and I hope wise, consultation. However when such a decision is needed, it is my call, my judgement and ultimately my responsibility.

If you cannot accept leadership, then your gifts are of no use to this project.

I responded:

I understand what you are saying, and I have accepted your leadership in good will. You cannot possibly say I have not.

However what you have been doing has nothing to do with that. The problems have been very concrete issues of lack of the most essential communication, about the most elemental, common sense, practical aspects of our work together in this campaign.

A "visionary multimillion pound project" is by necessity a collaborative project. A collaborative project implies by necessity respect for the people involved in it, and for their work, which has been lacking.

I am glad you mention "clear leadership". I have several examples, some of them backed by your own emails, that show that such clarity has, at moments, been lacking, and as much as I respect your work and have supported it with honesty and loyalty all these years, you do make mistakes, and in this particular project those mistakes have been very much on the side of inconsistency and lack of clarity.

I have tried to talk to you in terms of the most essential human dignity and decency --what would indeed honour Blake's spirit. You insist on the threats of dropping me off, the bullying and the disparaging of my work and my person.

You simply cannot say that my gifts are of no use to this project, it is too late for that. My gifts, the gifts that I have brought into the Cottage appeal, *are already an essential part of the project.*

I will not let you trample on me, so be very careful. As you advised me, I advise you: behave, indeed, like a civil servant, working for the service of others, and abstain from unethical behaviour. I will have none of it, and William Blake's Cottage deserves to be treated with respect stemming from strong ethical grounds.

I have tried not to fight, I have tried to sort things out in all possible ways. I have told you before that what is at stake here is enormous, and the good will of the people supporting us is enormous too. It is about time that you learn that, when you lose respect for people and their work, when you manipulate work according to your own private reasons, you may not be able to have your way, and that there are things that you simply have no right to do.

So once again I entreat you: be honest to yourself, think of what you are doing, respect me, my work, and respect the good will of all these people by behaving ethically. Be clear and transparent with the whole team of people working on this. As I said in the letter I posted to you, which I hope you read and understood, I have no problems at all in working with Paige, and I have shown it with much generosity, but working behind my back and pushing me off the loop was wrong and it will have to be redressed. Stop the manipulation and the bullying. Stop saying that mine are emotional reactions, because every single argument we have had for the past month or so has had to do with a very concrete work issue that you have failed to be clear about, and I have our correspondence to show to you in case you have any doubt and need a reminder.

Once again too, it is rather you own emotions, bottled up if you want, but still your emotions, what have made you behave in such an unethical manner, as the contradictions and secrecy in everything regarding our work together during the past weeks clearly show.

You said today I'll certainly see the contents of the page before it goes online, you've said that in written too and I expect you to honour that pledge. I expect you to include me again in the communications regarding the campaign.

So take a break, think carefully of what you are doing and what you plan to do, think too of the work and legacy of William Blake and of the high ideals and principles with which we started this campaign. I entreat you again to stop the war and come back to your better self. I am still willing to work in peace and in honesty, as I have been all along, but that won't ever include accepting insults, humiliations, dishonesty and bullying. People are fully aware of my contribution to the campaign. I cannot be any clearer than this.

He ignored this email completely; on the following day he wrote to me only to ask whether if we had received a letter from the Heritage Lottery Fund clarifying when we could start using the grant – as we will see, he was in a rush to set up the Blake Cottage Trust. I answered giving him the information he asked for.

I was still receiving emails from people asking about other ways to donate to the campaign, since there was no crowdfunding link available. I wrote to Mr Heath to agree on an answer but he still refused to answer to my questions.

Meanwhile Mrs Searle, from the Big Blake Project, wrote to tell us about the results of the festival that they had organized in Felpham, focused on the campaign. Despite all the inconsistencies and rudeness that the BBP had also been receiving from Mr Heath, hers was a kind, well-meaning email.

On 25 September Mrs Christina Vinall and I, along with a workshop leader, would be running the workshop with the Kids Company children in preparation for the Tyger event. That morning I called Mr Heath to ask, again, about the contents of the crowdfunding page that I still hadn't seen. He refused to answer the phone.

Something happened then that I found rather sinister. I called to his mobile and left a message: no answer, so I left a message. I called to his landline: no answer. **Exactly at the time when the phone was ringing**, he sent an email to me and Mrs Vinall:

Dear Christina and Adriana,

Good luck today with the workshop at Kids Company !

Burning Bright

How could someone send a seemingly well-meaning email *on the very same instants* when he was incurring in his bullying tactics, and just after having bullied me on the phone and having hanged up on me, was beyond me. I started to feel very afraid – more than I already was. This was serious “state of error” behaviour! I felt unsafe so I made sure that my response was copied to Mrs Vinall as well. I needed witnesses:

Thank you for your good wishes.

I for myself don't need them: I am doing this work for the Blake Society against all odds, being bullied and receiving no respect or appreciation for my work whatsoever, rather having it mishandled through seriously unethical practices.

If this message is meant as a sign to show other trustees that all is well, it is a lame attempt and it in fact may contribute to the bullying - to make the other person appear as mad while you are being kind, when in fact you are sending this and other apparently normal work emails in the very minutes you are refusing to answer the telephone to me and explain quite a few things. You, and other people in the Society, have a lot to be answerable for.

As I said in my message this morning, you are still on time to redress this and for all of us to work together, with honesty and transparency, saving the name of the Society and doing our work with some human decency that shows respect for the good will of so many people towards us and our projects.

But if you are not willing to do that, at least stop the farce and the attempt at making things look well in front of the other Trustees.

That is not professional, nor is it I am sure what William Blake would expect from us.

No response.

I then received another email from one of my contacts, who had supported the campaign much, and whom I had seen the day before the supposed crowdfunding launch:

Do send me a live link, ADriana, so's we can donate! & do let me know when you might like to come and spend a day or few in [. . .] . If you will pardon my saying so, you looked as if you could use a rest...

I read it and broke down... Though of course I couldn't do so for long: we had the Tyger workshop in a few hours. On the way from the tube to Kids Company with Mrs Vinall, I updated her about the horror that was going on. I shared my concerns about Mr Heath; I truly believed he was having some sort of breakdown himself in order to behave like that. I also expressed the fears I was now feeling about my personal safety. I had started to wonder whether if I'd be safe in our next Committee meeting. She clearly expressed her sympathy and her disapproval for Mr Heath's actions.

The workshop went well, it was in fact quite beautiful, though I don't know how I managed. The workshop leader told me when it was finished I looked very ill. One of the children had told me at some point: “You are very sad”.

However much I will always be grateful to Mrs Vinall for her sympathy and kindness, however much affection I did have for her, I will never understand why she didn't raise the alarm of what was going on with the Committee right away.

On the same day Mr Heath forwarded me his latest correspondence with Mrs Searle and added this incongruous message:

Dear Adriana,

For the Cottage campaign to succeed, a little luck is needed, together with faith and trust.

I look forward to seeing you at the Committee Meeting on Tuesday.

Meanwhile please be patient,

My response was:

You are not addressing a single one of the concrete issues I have been talking about.

I do not want to corner you, but you are cornering me.

I have lost all grounds to trust you. If it were only about me, I'd just disappear. Have you understood though that I do not trust the project anymore, that I do not feel I have the right to lead people's good will and support into the hands of persons with no scruples? Do you understand just how serious that is?

I have a proposal for Tuesday. So if by then things have not been redressed, with a written admittance of the "mistake" of what you and Paige have done, and written commitment to work from now on with honesty, transparency, respect and honouring our agreements, I will make my proposal.

It will expose you to the Committee (and a degree of exposure is now inevitable), but at least it may very well save both the face of the Blake Society, of the project, while at the same time securing that people's support to the campaign will not be betrayed.

If we do not come to an agreement then I will have to speak out to my contacts, because even if I leave the campaign, that has now been soiled like this, I simply cannot do so knowing that it is now being handled by people who are not respecting its original purpose, its ideal, its principles nor the way it was created, people with not enough ethical principles to be trusted.

So again, think carefully of what you are doing. Do not make this bigger. I do not want this war, I did not seek it. I am not the one who threw mud at the campaign.

Please Tim, *please*, think, clean up all this mess.

I was keeping Mr and Mrs Vinall, and Mr Eliot, updated about what was going on, but they took no action.

I think it will be by now fairly clear to the reader that I didn't want to expose Mr Heath and Ms Morgan to the rest of the Committee, and that I didn't want things to reach such an ugly outcome. By then it was not only fear, rage, illness what was drowning me. I was overwhelmed by grief. I still called Mr Heath to ask him to please not force me to expose him. He didn't answer, and our meeting would take place in a few days. So I wrote to him again:

Tim, I called you this morning to tell you, calmly, that you still have time to come to your senses, that it is not too late.

You still refuse to answer the phone to me: the person who, along with you, is publicly responsible for the campaign --a campaign created by you, Henry and myself, and which simply would not exist without my very substantial contribution.

I still don't know when are we going online, about how the rewards stand now, the contents of the crowdfunding page, the setting up of the Board of Trustees. I am still off the loop even though I have

entreated you, and warned you, several times, that we must return to a form of work that is transparent and honest.

At the moment, the campaign has been corrupted, has been used to seriously bully the person who, apart from you, has worked hardest on it and with whom you started working on this even last year, when we contacted English PEN. At the moment the campaign is being handled by two unprincipled persons, and given the dimensions of the project, this is very serious indeed.

At the very same time that I have been trying to communicate with you on the phone you are sending supposedly kind, normal work messages to make things look all right, you send me an unnecessary, part-of-the-bullying copy of your response regarding the Journal --another issue you and Paige have lots to answer for--, and you are still pushing me out of the campaign for no reason.

You are trying to make me appear as mad, which is rule number one of bullying, particularly against women, something any man, but particularly one who claims to understand Blake, should be very ashamed of.

Now I see why you were so very angry by that email of mine, in which I told you not to do things you'd have reasons to regret, and asked if you were pushing me out of the campaign. You were so mad because that was exactly what you were doing.

If what you want is to prove to me at last that you live in hell indeed and are perfectly capable of being vicious and drawing on the sources of the deepest darkness, you have succeeded, and I don't want you anywhere near me.

That still does not invalidate the other side of the coin: you are still a good, kind and generous man, drawn to beauty and to honesty. You are both. The incredibly despicable, wicked things you are doing now will never convince me that you are not also the kind-hearted man that people can trust, the honest generous beautiful man I knew and loved.

What you are doing here is one of the most spectacular attempts at self-destruction I have ever seen. But you have no right to drag others along with it.

Seek help. Spiritual, psychological, both. You are still on time, but barely. *Seek help*. You simply have no right to do what you are doing, and you can still stop it, you can still redress the damage done.

Meanwhile I kept on being asked by people how the campaign was going. The situation was impossible. I felt that cornering Mr Heath and Ms Morgan would do no good, but remaining in the position I was would send me to hospital. And of course, I was torn by the ethical dilemma regarding the public, donors, supporters. I had contributed to draw hundreds of them to our appeal, yet the appeal was now corrupted. I couldn't simply walk out and wash my hands off it. I tried to reason with Mr Heath yet again:

I have received another message from one of my contacts, asking for the crowdfunding link in order to donate.

Not only I do not know when will it be ready. I do not know if I should draw them to donate. Do you understand?

You know me Tim, I do have high ethical standards. If things are going to be like this, if you do not come to your senses, if you definitely cut me off the campaign and keep on handling it in secrecy with Paige, if you insist on such an act of corruption that stems from what are your private affairs only and should remain your private affairs, that means that the campaign has been stolen from its legitimate foundations and is now being handled by two persons with no principles.

What right do I have to go on supporting it, drawing people into believing it is right to donate their money? *Do you understand what I am saying?*

It is an ethical dilemma that is not fair that I should be facing. If I withdraw from the campaign I will have to say to my contacts that I do so because I do not agree with the way it is being handled. Of course I will not

go into details, but I will have to say that I was pushed out of it and do not believe the ideals and principles that made us start it are being honoured.

I do not want to do that. I have been pleading with you, let us not allow that to happen, and you don't listen! I want us to go back to work together honestly. Paige can be there if she goes back to work that is honest and transparent, we can work together if we want to. But it has to be done *now*.

Today, Meanwhile I simply do not know what to answer to people. This is making me very ill, far more ill than I was already. Please talk to me, please stop this, come to your senses, you are soiling and destroying all the work we've done, *the work you love*, Tim, the work of your lifetime.

I received no response, so I decided to show him that I was being serious by writing to him along with the other three Trustees that already knew what was going on: Mr and Mrs Vinall and Mr Eliot:

Dear Antony, Christina, Henry, Tim,

I write to you prior to our meeting to give you a bit more information of what we have to talk about.

As you know, Tim pushed me out of the campaign to hand over work to Paige, who came into the campaign in August, an unwise decision as she did know nothing about the project nor had any discernible interest in the Cottage. I have all the documents and emails that back what I am saying.

Since Tim came back from his retreat he refused to give me information about the progress of our work, then refused to answer my phone calls or emails asking him what was going on and when he finally answered he said I was angry because I have many problems and hung up on me. He has been bullying me for some three weeks now. The bullying includes an attempt at humiliating me in public in Dr Johnson's House, in an event I invited him to as it might be good for the campaign. I saw his intentions coming and I warned him about it, I have emails backing that too. Now he's using my legitimate anger on that occasion to say I am "emotional" and am destroying the reputation of the Society because I do not control my anger.

All this is a very recognisable pattern of bullying, of a degree that would cause anyone very serious problems in any workplace.

As you all know now, the reputation of the Society is being destroyed by Tim, by Paige and by what they are doing just now. I have entreated Tim in all possible ways to avoid it, to stop what he is doing, to go back to work all together with transparency and honesty in order to avoid scandal and disaster, and he has not responded to a single one of those pleas.

Last Thursday, the night before we were supposed to go online with the crowdfunding campaign, he still refused to tell me what was going on. I have been on the verge of breakdown with the stress of not knowing what to tell to my contacts when they ask me about the campaign. Only last Monday did Tim deign to give me some partial information, and that only when I sent an email to the whole Committee wondering if I had been left out of a message he sent.

Last Saturday he sent me "by mistake" a test of a new email address for public communications. I asked him what it was about and he did not answer. I asked again and he said it had been a mistake and it had been corrected. Then I saw in our Dreamhost page that that address was for him and Paige. I wrote to him telling him that if it was for the Campaign it was wrong, that Paige could simply not be the voice for the campaign as she has no interest in it, did not create it, does not understand it and furthermore has been brought in there unscrupulously and both Tim and her have been behaving in the most unprincipled manner, leaving me out of the campaign with no explanation and working in secrecy.

That email address is now on the Just Giving page, so Tim and Paige are now the persons with whom people will communicate.

I urge you to tell Tim to remove Paige from that address.

This is very serious. It is not only that she does not understand the campaign, care about it or is a voice that can represent it. She has amply shown to have no principles whatsoever. Tim doesn't seem to have many either but at least he created the campaign --along with Henry and myself--, at least he does care

about the Cottage. Paige has to be out, now. This cannot wait for the meeting, meanwhile they keep on communicating with people and we go on receiving money. We are talking about the good will, and the money, of far too many people.

I have just called Tim to tell him this but again he refuses to answer the phone to me: this has been going on since the very days prior to the supposed launch of the campaign. I was in charge of the campaign with him since Henry stepped out, I sustained much of it while he was away, we are its public faces, we were supposedly still working together and I am the Secretary of the Blake Society, yet he refuses to answer the phone to me. So I left him a message, but I know he will not heed it.

Please understand what I am saying. I am thinking of the best way to leave this very soon myself and I have a proposal for the best way to do so, and for having someone monitor what is going on, and what happens with every single penny we receive, before the whole Blake Society and the whole project are publicly soiled by this. But Paige has to go too and she has to do it now.

This is a matter of corruption. It is very serious and cannot wait.

I didn't receive any answer, so I started to think of how to bring up the subject in our impending meeting and of a proposal for a solution. I wrote to Mr Heath so that he was aware of what I was thinking and what steps I was planning to take. The extra caution and consideration I was taking obeyed my feeling that this was a work crisis around a public project but also a major crisis in human terms, and a very dangerous one. I felt I needed to deal with Mr Heath as with someone who was the danger himself, yet was incapable to assume responsibility, in the hope that he would wake up to the need to face up to the consequences of his actions. And the only way I felt I could do that was by reminding him also of the good in him, that was just as real. Isn't that the case with all of us after all, when Albion sleeps?

There is no point in repeating all the reasons I have for anger, hurt and fear.

I have been forced into a position in which my response can only be extremely painful, whatever I do. I am stunned by the awfulness of the whole mess.

The reasons to defend myself are quite simple: if I saw somebody doing to another person what is being done to me, I would not stand by and watch --I would defend that person.

Yet you must understand that my response has to go even beyond that. True, something very beautiful, and noble, to which I have devoted infinite work, passion and care, has been snatched away from me.

But the fact is, it has been snatched away from too many other people too. Whatever happens with the Cottage now, whether if the campaign succeeds or not, the original project, the nobility and beauty of its purpose, are gone. None of that is left, and far too many people are being betrayed.

We created this together and we have a responsibility towards it. I cannot simply walk away and wash my hands of it. That is why I have spoken out.

Knowing me, my commitment to the Blake Society and my passion for all my projects, my love for the Cottage project, and also my respect for your work, my loyalty as a colleague and as a friend, and the love I have had for you, you must know very well how this is tearing me apart. It feels almost as if part of the cruelty in the harm done willingly includes leaving me in this awful position.

You have cared for the destiny of South Molton Street and the Cottage more than anybody else; I will know till the day I die that despite all this mess, your work to preserve and celebrate Blake's legacy has been admirable and born from a generosity and beauty of heart that are very rare to find in this world.

I don't need to say here why you are behaving so appallingly, for we both know it. But it is very sad. And though my fury, my pain and fear are great indeed and come and go in awful burning waves, I am also sad beyond words for what you are doing here to the beautiful, extraordinary and generous work of decades of your own life.

On Tuesday I will propose a solution that I think is the least harmful. The harm already done is enormous so there is no perfect solution now, but I will propose what I think least damaging. I hope that you can be calm enough from here till then as to consider how much is at stake and how much can still be saved.

It feels almost as if with this spectacular self-destructive, mindless act of treachery you were trying to prove just how awful you can really be. I wish you knew there's no need to prove anything like that.

In what this display touches me, I think there is the possibility that all my attempts at preserving loyalty and friendship between us, insisting on the beauty of our affection and trust and the beauty of who you are, were too much for you and you may have wanted to prove me wrong once and for all. For whatever distress and pain I have ever caused you, both in trying to preserve the affection and in all my misguided reactions to so much pain and hurt, I am sorry and I hope that you will forgive me one day.

You knew we were parting soon anyway, it is just sad that you could not wait for it to happen in a dignified and caring way, and after having built something beautiful for others --a tangible fruit of a friendship that we should have been grateful for.

My heart is broken beyond what is expressible and I am too stunned by the dimensions of what is happening as to understand it fully just now. There is just one last thing then, one that I hope you do remember and understand and may guide your actions now: *you are in essence a good man.*

It didn't seem to have any effect on Mr Heath, who sent to the Committee an agenda for a meeting that looked blissfully normal, as if there was nothing amiss at all. The Cottage was left at the end of the agenda. He was even in the mood to make jokes!

Dear Committee,

Look forward to seeing you all at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 30 September at 17SMS.
Dress : informal (there are builders at work) !

best wishes

Tim

Agenda

0. Minutes of last Meeting
1. Treasurer's Summary of our financial position
2. Event planning - War is Energy Enslav'd
3. Debriefing on completed activities : Milton at Sutton Courtenay; Gathering at Grave; Tithe Grant; Walking Blake's London
4. Check on upcoming events : Tyger Tiger; Blake as Shaman; Mapping Golgonooza; Anatomy of Imagination
5. Legal structure - identifying CIO issues to be put to AGM
6. Planning for 2015
7. House and Cottage
8. AOB

I felt in the need to warn him again:

Dear Tim,

As I said in my telephone message, this agenda seems too long to me when there are such serious issues to be discussed. I don't think the Cottage point should be left last because it is a rather serious one and it will need plenty of time to be dealt with properly.

You must of course include the issue of my resignation that, as you know, is closely linked to the Cottage campaign.

I will mention something briefly about the Tyger budget.

Since you keep on refusing to answer my calls or emails and I have no idea whether if you heed at all anything I say, if by 3 pm today you have not changed the Agenda yourself I will send these points to the Committee myself.

Thank you.

He ignored that as well, invoking "etiquette":

Each of the items you propose falls within the structure, timing and etiquette of the Agenda.

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

I insisted:

I do not think that is the case. I have much to say regarding both the Cottage and my resignation and I don't think it right to leave it for the last minute when we are all tired.

There is too much at stake, so I insist, please amend the agenda. It must mention my resignation as Secretary. I will not put myself into a position in which you give a report on the Cottage arguing that you are asking me to leave the campaign or the Blake Society. You know that is not the case.

I have spent the past two weeks trying to talk with you about this and entreating you to sort things out instead of exposing such unfortunate issues before the Committee and you have refused to acknowledge all calls and emails in that respect. You have left me no choice and I won't be manipulated into your own agenda.

I will talk exclusively about the work-related reasons why I am leaving both the campaign and the Society. I have no intention to mention the personal issues that lie behind your behaviour that the Committee as a whole should be spared and that would do the Society great damage, so it is up to you whether if you allow the problem grow bigger. You will therefore show much sense if you do not carry the bullying forward into the meeting.

Please do amend the agenda.

He ignored me, so I wrote again with copy to the whole Committee:

Dear Tim,

Thank you for sending us the Agenda for our meeting.

As I have told you in my emails today, I believe it should be amended. There are rather serious issues to talk about tomorrow that should not be left at the end, as they will take us some time.

We need to discuss those issues most carefully, as there is a lot at stake for the Society.

I am sorry to disagree with your opinion that the items I propose "fall within the structure, timing and etiquette of the Agenda."

Therefore, I ask you again to amend the Agenda and move up the item of the Cottage as number 2, followed by my resignation as Secretary of the Blake Society. As you know, I asked you to include that item several days ago.

As all my attempts at dialogue had been ignored, and Mr Heath and Ms Morgan were clearly bent on continuing working in secrecy, I proceeded to work on a proposal for a solution and sent it to Mr and Mrs Vinall and Mr Eliot. Mr Eliot, curiously enough, had already said that he could not attend that particular meeting.

Dear Antony, Christina, Henry,

I write to let you know about the proposal of a solution to the campaign that I will make tomorrow at our meeting, drafted in the attached document. I know you are concerned about this whole unfortunate issue, and Henry, I am concerned about the way it might affect you as you worked so hard on the campaign, were its public face along with Tim and me and contacted so many people, including some of the big names that endorse it. (I am sorry that you may not be able to attend tomorrow.)

This morning I had an appointment with Lucy Winkett at St James's. She agrees that my position is very hard indeed and believes that my proposal is sound and fair. She is fully aware of the dimensions of the public responsibility involved and therefore of my legitimate concern about the integrity of the campaign now.

On Friday I texted Tim with the broadest terms of my proposal. On Saturday I wrote to him explaining why I am in the need to speak out, how painful it is to me to be in such a position, how much I have tried to avoid it, and for the past ten days or so I have entreated him to redress the harm done, to talk with me, to avoid the exposure of the whole mess before the Committee. I have received no response whatsoever.

I tell you this because I want you to know that I have done all that is humanly possible to avert damage to the Blake Society and our work, and to the Campaign.

I have asked Tim to amend the meeting Agenda so that it includes my resignation. He has refused so I will be in the painful position to do it myself --things being as they are, I fear he may try to turn it into a matter of him asking me to leave, which is not the case at all and I asked him to include the item of my resignation several days ago.

As I have already told Tim, I have no intention of mentioning tomorrow the personal story involved, I will stick to the issues regarding the violation of work ethics.

He will have to be sensible too. He must refrain from continuing the bullying in the meeting.

I am aware that the strong line of his "defence", and of his bullying, lies on arguing I am volatile, unstable, emotional, because of my personal problems (health-related and financial).

I have an abundance of correspondence and documents that back my position, and I hope that you will know that I have done everything anyone could possibly do to avert this awful situation, and that I have served the Society with passion, good will, loyalty, commitment and joy.

The said proposal can be found in the Documents section in this webpage (<https://blakecottage.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/proposal-of-a-solution.pdf>). It seemed to me a priority to make sure that Ms Morgan stayed away from the governance of the Cottage, so one of the clauses of my proposal was to guarantee that. I knew that Mr Heath and indeed Ms Morgan herself would never allow that to happen if I was a Trustee of the new consortium, so I was willing even to sacrifice my position there in order to guarantee the safety of the new organisation. I thought that if Mr Heath's involvement of his personal life with his work around Blake was the main problem, the problem would disappear if both I and Ms Morgan went away. Then he'd have to learn to stick responsibly to work itself. I knew far too well that he was in a position of power that he would not relinquish, and that with a Committee as lethargic as the Blake Society's was proving to be, talking about him leaving the project was out of the question. Those considerations, and my well-being, were behind the original terms of my proposal, that was ignored by the Committee.

I was including Mr Eliot in these communications for the simple reason that he had been part of the Cottage appeal at the beginning. He did answer, and in a rather extraordinary fashion.

Remember Mr Eliot, from a previous chapter? The dutiful Trustee, always ready to obey Mr Heath and who had been working with him on the appeal behind my back? He had just joined the Committee that year, had hardly any knowledge at all of Ms Morgan, who, let's remember, lived in the USA, and who had been particularly inactive during 2014. Yet he immediately jumped in her defence – no one else in the Committee did that; rather the opposite, and as we will see, several of the Trustees who did have years of experience of working with Ms Morgan expressed to me their reservations in private. Mr Eliot in fact pretended to minimize what had happened and wrote to me with a sense of entitlement that didn't become him:

I'm very sorry that things have come to this. Your resignation will be a huge loss to the cottage campaign and the society. I hope there might be a solution that would mean you'd feel able to stay involved but I appreciate this may now be impossible.

I'm afraid I won't be able to make the meeting tomorrow. I've read the document you attached and a lot of it makes sense to me, but there are some things on which I disagree. Here are three thoughts:

- Personally I don't feel that the ideals of the cottage campaign have been compromised. If the campaign succeeds we'll be very lucky and so I feel all available avenues are justifiable at this stage. Once the cottage is secured, then we can afford to be more thoughtful about how the cottage is run.

- I'm afraid I can't agree with your comments about Paige. She is a fellow volunteer trustee on the BS committee, and as such I am very grateful for the time she has put in to the campaign. I think it is unfair to criticise her knowledge about and her passion for Blake.

- And finally I would strongly recommend that you do not write to your contacts as you suggest. This could only damage the campaign which I'm sure you do not wish to do. If you do feel you need to step down, I would suggest passing all your contacts to Tim so that he can write to them as their new main point of contact.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Adriana. Again, I sincerely hope there may be a way to avoid your resignation. I am - and the whole committee is - very aware of your deep passion for Blake and your tireless work for the society. It will be a great shame to lose your enthusiasm and contribution.

I found alarming that he thought that "all avenues were justifiable", and that only after the Cottage was secured could we afford to "be more thoughtful", i.e., think of integrity. Mr Eliot's response was in fact a defence of corruption. It was also extraordinary that he was "very grateful" for Ms Morgan's work for the campaign, first, because that work, as we have seen, had been practically non-existent and the little she had done was badly done and left unfinished, but also because Mr Eliot had left the campaign a long time before Ms Morgan was pushed in, so he simply had no idea of what Ms Morgan had done or not. I felt that his "strong recommendation" that I did not write to my contacts read very much like a threat, and an accusation that it was I who would then damage the campaign, and I found it indeed extraordinary that he had the nerve to "suggest" that I passed all my contacts to Mr Heath.

I had no doubt that Mr Eliot, who had just joined the Committee and had certainly no right to such a feeling of entitlement, had been talking to Mr Heath before writing to me. So I responded:

Thank you so much for your thoughtful email, this is all very sad indeed and your appreciation of my work is of great support.

I don't know how the ideals of the campaign have *not* been compromised if the campaign is now being handled in an unethical manner, and one of the persons who has done most towards its formulation and shown a genuine care for the whole project has been cut off it this way.

I appreciate that you do not know the details of how this has been done. It is all documented. If something like this is done, and furthermore for the reasons that we do know and that are best left unmentioned, the *integrity* of the campaign has been already seriously damaged.

The whole project was conceived with integrity at its core. I try to think for instance, what would Heather, the actual owner of the Cottage, might feel if she knew what is happening (and please don't take me wrong, I have no intention whatsoever to let her know). I think she would be furious and broken-hearted at the way that this has already thrown mud at the Cottage. She's one of the persons I think of as most betrayed by this, in a frankly horrendous way that we should be ashamed of.

I believe that when people handle things with no principles, ideals are indeed betrayed. The Cottage campaign has been soiled and that will never go away.

As for Paige's work, she has done a lot and we are all grateful. She has also been unreliable in a few things and I have been in the Committee with her for a few years now. I have received complaints about the Journal and there is a lot regarding the Journal that has been inconsistent and not made clear at all to the rest of the Committee. Important as the Blake Society's Journal is, the Cottage is of far greater import, it cannot be treated the same way.

I am sorry but if my proposal is not accepted I will write to my contacts, because that is what is right. All these people are being betrayed, it is not only me.

I appreciate profoundly the need to protect the Society, to avoid scandal. I have done all in my power regarding that, and I have as I said an abundance of correspondence that backs my efforts. I have been understandably very angry at moments, but I have behaved impeccably.

I have tried to convey my concern --if Tim and Paige have been willing to do what they have done with the campaign, what grounds do we have to trust their integrity in this project? And if it were only me the one affected, I'd simply walk away. But to leave things as they are when people are giving their support, their money, their enthusiasm with such good will, is simply unethical.

The end, in my view, does not always justify the means. The end of the project has anyway already been betrayed, and the campaign has already suffered --lots of confusion has arisen already because of the broken agreements. Is it really possible that this is not clear?

I would find it very unfair that I would be the one to blame if the Society faced problems because of this. The persons who have done the harm and have behaved without integrity are Tim and Paige, not me. In spite of that I have asked them to redress the damage done, and I have not been heard.

I think Blake would agree that there are some things in life more important than avoiding scandal, including integrity and respect for things that deserve respect.

I hope that you all will understand that even if I said nothing, when things are done this way, for the reasons we know, they always come up sooner or later. Lack of integrity is not something that can be pushed forever under the carpet, so I truly hope that I won't be made a scapegoat for following my principles. That I am not acting out of spite or animosity towards Paige is something that can also be seen in my work with her and my correspondence. Precisely because of the difficult situation, and because I wanted the project to succeed, I went out of my way to make things easy for her and welcome her, despite her absolute lack of knowledge of what the project was about. All that is documented.

My resignation cannot be avoided. I have been treated in a truly horrendous way.

Finally, it was with an extra care to be fair and not to let myself be carried by my own emotions that I asked for Lucy Winkett's advice. I think her integrity is to be fully trusted by all of us. She fully understands my reasons for writing to my contacts if my proposal is not accepted.

Thank you again for your kind words and sharing your thoughts, I am awfully sorry for the distress this is causing us all.

In the end I was of course made into a scapegoat. For the time being, anyway, Mr Eliot took the trouble to answer back:

I think there are two separate, though connected, issues:

- 1) How you have been treated; and
- 2) Your concerns about the integrity campaign.

It would be appropriate to raise both subjects in the committee meeting, but if possible I would suggest discussing them as separate items.

It is a serious issue that you feel mistreated, but it's not necessarily a reason to write to your contacts. At best that will shake potential investors' confidence by making the Society look schismatic; at worst it will mean they don't invest, and jeopardise the success of the campaign.

You should definitely air your frustrations within the society, but it should not need to affect the campaign more than it has already. It could undo all your, Tim's, Paige's and my hard work.

It was infuriating. He insisted on making *me* responsible if things went wrong, and now was even talking of Ms Morgan's "hard work", despite not having been there in any way to be able to see whether if she had done anything at all... and all of it just so as not to scare investors off. I found it worrying too that the dutiful Trustee, the newcomer so loyal to the Chair who had previously shown such favouritism for him, was also so casual about the discarding of all ethical principles in the Blake Society. I defended my position. I was also crumbling, for I could clearly see that the web of unprincipled politics was starting to grow; my experience of Mr Eliot's former involvement in the campaign had taught me what to expect of him. Rather than casting a vote of no confidence against the Chair, he was now invoking the principle of corruption, defending those who had corrupted the project, and using the language of veiled threats. It was the principle of sexism also, for, again, would he have talked to me like that if I had been a man? Would he have defended Mr Heath if it was a woman doing what he was doing? Of course not.

This is not the last we will hear of Mr Eliot. In the following chapters, and despite officially having no involvement in the Cottage appeal at all, we'll see how he would keep on appearing again and again, and as soon as the Cottage was acquired the Chair rushed to reward him for his loyalty.

This was my response to his email:

I truly appreciate your efforts at finding a solution and devoting time to share your thoughts with me.

Unfortunately the two issues are not separate. I was not *told* to leave the campaign, which would have been bad enough. I was cut off it in a manner that beggars belief, and the bullying and deceit have been very serious and have created confusion among people wishing to support us. Tim's behaviour has been completely irrational, vicious, I truly can't recognise him.

The lack of integrity lies not only on what they have done, but also in the way they have done it. You wouldn't treat any human being as I have been treated, and if this were a working place they would be in very serious trouble.

You were at the beginning of the campaign, you know how high the ideal was, the beauty of the project with no thought of personal gain of any kind. It was a project born of enthusiasm, joy, generosity, and such things *do* get corrupted when people behave like this.

We have received very moving signs of support, people are believing in what we are doing, this is William Blake's house after all... and meanwhile, within the campaign these things are happening. That does affect the integrity of the campaign, at its very core, it is really not worth pursuing anymore.

I won't stand in the way though if I can help it, but I have done *everything* I can trying to avert disaster, and I have been ignored.

I started working on this with Tim last year, I have cared about plans for the Cottage since I joined the Committee in 2011, it has been a project very dear to my heart. It would simply not exist the way it is without my contribution to it.

I will follow your advice and separate both issues as much as possible, but they are really one and the same.

I bear a very heavy weight on my shoulders, it is very unfair that it is me the one faced with this kind of decision because I did not start the problem, and I would be very grateful if the blame for any harm done to the campaign is not laid at my door. I have loved this campaign, I helped conceive it and create it, it has been a dear, dear project for me, I have done the utmost to save it, even today I have tried for Tim to stop the war. I have not been heard, acknowledged, and much harm has already been done.

I do not want to undo anybody's work at all. Mine though has already been undone. It is to Tim and Paige, and not me, to whom the entreaties not to harm the campaign should be directed.

I truly have done all in my power to avert this... I am so sorry, it is such a sad thing to happen in the Society.

Mr Eliot didn't respond. It's no wonder he refused to attend the Committee meeting.

On the day of the meeting, 30 September 2014, Mr Heath copied me in his response to a BBC Journalist who was going to interview him. I called him to ask him what we were supposed to tell to the press now that I was leaving and we were facing turmoil. He didn't respond. I was also horrified at the prospect of having to expose Mr Heath before the whole Committee that evening, and of the troubles that we were heading into. I made a last attempt to convince him to cooperate in finding a solution:

Thank you for copying me into your response to the BBC journalist, though I am sorry that you still refused to answer my call. I had all the right in the world to ask you what is our stance before the press supposed to be now.

You know well that if the campaign were legitimate, I too would have something important to say in those interviews.

Your door closed to any form of clarification, any human disentangling of the problem has only contributed to make it bigger, until it now seems to grow with a force of its own.

I have not wanted war with you. All these days I have been asking you to stop, before it is too late, and I am going to the meeting with a heavy heart, that you have cornered me into having to defend myself, and the integrity of our once wonderful project, before the Committee.

If you want us to approach our meeting in a more noble way, if you have anything to say to me at all, you still have time, give me a call if you feel that you may still have a chance to do what is right, to redress at least a bit of the harm done. I am still willing to talk.

Otherwise, what face are you going to show to the reporter? What are you going to say about our ideals and purpose for creating this campaign? What will you do with the shame?

This is so sad, Tim. It is Blake, Blake's Cottage, Blake's world, and us all splattered with mud. Don't you feel the sadness?

I received, of course, no response.

The next couple of chapters will deal with what happened at that meeting. They will also reveal what kind of Committee the Blake Society had, and has, and the extent to which they have been willing to collude with corruption, to deceive and betray their members and the public.