

What Happened with the Blake Cottage Appeal

CHAPTER XV



MR ELIOT IS REWARDED

After sending the document with the vision for Blake's Cottage to the Blake Society, the Blake Cottage Trust and the Big Blake Project, out of the blue, on 18 November, I received an email from, extraordinarily as it may sound, Mr Henry Eliot, with copy to us all:

Dear Adriana, (cc'd Blake Society, Blake Cottage Trust, Big Blake Project)

Many thanks indeed for your email and the attached document, which lays out your vision for Blake's Cottage very clearly, as well as your concerns and recommendations.

The passion you brought to the fundraising campaign is hugely appreciated; we are all extremely grateful.

Work on the future of the cottage will begin in earnest in the next few months and clear communication will be essential throughout the process. Apologies for any lack of transparency thus far. Thank you for your patience; please be assured that your specific points will all be addressed soon.

Many thanks again and wishing you all the very best,

Henry

Remember Mr Eliot? The one who, during his brief involvement in the Cottage appeal, had been covertly working with Mr Heath behind my back? The one who left the appeal pretty soon and never showed the slightest interest in it again? The one who, when I first raised the alarm with the Committee about how the Chair had bullied me out of the appeal to force in Ms Paige Morgan, was the only Trustee to jump to defend the latter even though he had had no experience of working with her so far and had no knowledge whatsoever of what had happened with the appeal since he had left? The one who obsequiously backed all the Chair's opinions, however disparaging of other people's work, and never acted or said anything until after the Chair had taken the lead? The one who had been reluctant about us asking his contacts for more support to the appeal, yet had happily signed and sent my letters, then snatched away the merits of the donations that resulted from my efforts, adjudicating, with the Chair's accolade, all merits to himself? The one who, despite supposedly having nothing whatsoever to do with the Cottage appeal anymore by his own written admission, accompanied Mr Heath to see his lawyers, and who was therefore, in all probability, the only

Trustee in the Blake Society along with, no doubt, Ms Morgan, who knew that the Blake Cottage Trust had already been set up as early as 30 October 2014, an action actively hidden from Mr Heath's co-campaigners and fellow Trustees? The one to whom, after observing this pattern of behaviour, I asked to state openly what his interest in the Cottage appeal was and how did he want to engage openly and transparently in it, and who answered that he had nothing whatsoever to do with it? Lastly, it may be important to remember that he was a close friend to Mr and Mrs Vinall's family.

Well, this was the person sending to us all that astonishing email. He wasn't making it clear on whose behalf he was talking, or who were those "we" that were so grateful for my work.

I read it and felt sick. I answered to him on 19 November, with copy to all:

Dear Henry,

I thank you for your kind email. I am not sure whether if you wrote it as a personal response or in representation of the Blake Society, but in either case it is greatly appreciated.

I also accept gladly, and gratefully, your apologies for lack of transparency in the past.

It is reassuring to know that we agree on the need for clear communication for future work in the Cottage, and again I put at your disposal any material that can make that communication clearer, and reiterate my willingness to answer to any doubts you may have, attend any meetings that can help towards establishing transparency, as well as my willingness to help in any way I can to contribute to this project's success.

I'm looking forward to the response to the points raised in my document.

But I never received any response to any of the points raised. As for my email above, **a whole month** passed before I heard from Mr Eliot again. No one was getting in touch with the Big Blake Project either, despite the Blake Society's promise that they'd meet up with them.

I received no answer, so on 21st November I called Mr Tweedy. Mr Tweedy, lest we forget, was the Blake Society's new Secretary, and, in the absence of any rationality or scruples from the Chair, had a duty to the public to guarantee that transparency was redressed. He didn't answer the phone so I sent him an email titled "Representation":

[. . .] I know that because of these two reasons you must be very busy and I don't want to burden you, but I do need to ask you, as the Blake Society's Secretary: was Henry's answer to my document his own personal answer, or that of the BS?

It is important to have this clear. I am curious as to why nobody else in the BS has answered to me, let alone the Blake Cottage Trust, and I think I may be right if I understand Henry's being the commonly agreed response so far.

That worries me; I don't understand how can he be representing the whole of the BS and BCT in such a serious matter. He left the campaign a long time ago. But that is not the most serious concern. His lack of representation comes from his perhaps minor, yet still unfortunate involvement in what has been so wrong with the Cottage and the Blake Society.

I am sure that Henry --a very intelligent, hard-working, capable, and ambitious young man-- has not understood the degree to which he has entangled himself in this situation and I am sure also that he has been manipulated to a certain extent, but the fact is, he was part of Tim's first attempt to push me out of the campaign and kept silent when challenged about that. Later on, when he had already left the campaign, and Tim and I were the ones running it, he went with Tim nevertheless to see the lawyers who set up the Trust, unbeknownst to all of us; then

in our last meeting last year, when I realised that the secrecy and bullying had started all over again out of the blue, there was a very clear intention in Tim of snatching away from me the merits of my work and passing them over to Henry, to which Henry gladly obliged. In view of that I wrote to Tim, Henry and Paige urging them to be transparent and express clearly what their part in the campaign was and what was going on. (As you know, Paige didn't deign to answer, while Tim called to say she had no time for the campaign anymore, then he threaten me with slandering me.) Henry clearly said he was not involved anymore. (Though he had been to see the lawyers with Tim.)

This is a summary - a summary of something that is wrong, and will be enormously wrong if the Blake Society's way of handling this very serious crisis is by allowing Tim yet again to have his way through the manipulation of others. (Again, there is recorded proof of all this.)

I am sure that Henry can do a wonderful work for the Cottage if he wants to, as he has shown in the past, but first, the Blake Society Committee and the BCT have to be aware of these mistakes, let him know that you are aware of them, and he has to understand as well that a Trustee is there to serve his Charity and the public and cannot indulge in such behaviour. Unless all this is taken into account, he simply cannot be a representative voice to address the Cottage's problems.

I don't know how else to make it clear to all of you that you need to keep your eyes open, be vigilant and over-meticulous in the handling of this affair. This is not a game. There are £509k involved, and a huge public responsibility.

I do believe the BS and the BCT must get together to talk about all this openly, and I do believe I should be in one of those meetings, because I know a lot that neither the BS nor the BCT know regarding the campaign and the project, and the appalling amount of wrong handling of them, and you all should know, since the public responsibility is now in your hands. And then, I insist, there is the need to get together with the BBP and come to an agreement that is fair to everybody, and learn to work together. This is for everybody's sake.

I am not trying to be a pain. But I do care about this very much indeed, as you well know. And furthermore, I have been trying to tell all of you the danger you're all in: that the local people are still very angry, and rightfully so; that they are unhappy with what they see as the BS attempt at washing its hands off the problem; that they can, and may, seek legal action, and can, and may, contact the Charity Commission. If that happens, there will be no more tactful attempts at saying what is wrong without entering into the uncomfortable details, because it will be other less sympathetic people asking the questions.

In fact, it seems to me that the BS Committee's obligation would have been to contact the Charity Commission ages ago to report the problems going on.

Is it really possible that none of you has understood so far how very serious this is, and how very serious indeed is the mishandling of the BS and the Cottage?

Though Henry's email is extremely polite and even admits to former lack of transparency, it is worrying. He says that work will start "in earnest" very soon but no one knows who's going to carry out that work and what it consists of. That information is not something that can be kept secret or public according to the BS and BCT mood: both have the obligation to make it accessible.

The fact that Henry has shown no qualms so far in colluding with Tim's method of secrecy and division as above mentioned, though I repeat I am sure he's not aware of the gravity of so doing, is very worrying too.

If things go down this way, next thing I can expect is probably Tim's slandering of me, without being given the chance to defend myself, and the BS calmly watching. He has threatened me with that before. If things reach that stage I will have to defend myself. And then there will really be trouble.

Has any of you looked by any chance at the very extensive documentation available by the Charity Commission? This link and the several documents it includes might be an eye-opener, just for starters:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455047/Tackling_abuse_and_mismanagement_2013_14.pdf

There is a very real danger that the BS Committee can be accused of negligence, of brushing problems down the carpet, of colluding with mismanagement through inaction. I have tried to make you all understand this and seem to keep on failing.

So please let me know what does that email by Henry really mean and in which capacity he's writing. Do whatever you think you have to do as Secretary, but please for God's sake, do listen, all of you. We can all still sit together and get things right. But right means right: a minimum of honesty is required.

I know all this is a very unfair, uncalled-for burden for the Committee. It has been, believe me, very unfair and heavy on me too. Most of you joined the Committee thinking it was a small literary society that did wonderful things around Blake. It turned out not to be quite so and it has been an injury to us all. But this is the reality, and it has to be faced.

I know the document I sent last week is long and cannot be answered to in detail immediately, but I do expect a proper, precise answer to all the points that I raise, and I cannot wait forever so please let me know when do the BS and the BCT plan to give me such an answer. If this goes on being treated like a game, I simply won't be able to endorse the project anymore before absolutely anyone, and if asked my opinion, I will say it, and my opinion is that it is corrupt.

And no, the right answer is not to refer anyone who asks me to the BCT. I can't do that precisely because the way things stand at the moment, I think the whole thing is corrupted and I want to be able to sleep in peace. I don't take the deceiving of people lightly.

Sorry for all this, I was hoping we could talk about this in person but I don't know if you're getting my calls.

This, as some of my other letters, was as we know premonitory. I was alluding also to the lack of information from the Blake Cottage Trust regarding their plans for the Cottage, because since its acquisition they were not giving any information to the public at all.

Mr Tweedy's response was:

Thanks for your msgs. As you guessed - my phone's been off for a few days I'm afraid - I've put it back on if you want to talk, or perhaps we can get together soon and discuss things in person - there's a BS committee meeting coming up (start of December), which I'll tell you about, and maybe it'd make sense to meet after that.

But I wanted to assure you that Henry's email was not a formal response from the Blake Society - I'm sure we'll discuss that at the next committee meeting - and I was as surprised as perhaps you were to read it. I have to say that my thoughts ran along the same lines as yours - maybe I'm being unfair but I thought it had 'ghost written' all over it, and it was even more surprising since Henry has been very much in the background this year (due to his book coming out), and I wonder whether his email means he's now involved again in the cottage - something I will certainly ask at the next BS committee meeting. I do trust Henry though - I obviously don't have the experience that you had with the cottage dealings - but I think his heart is good and

he wants to do the right thing - and I thought what he did say in his email was positive and hopeful - apologising for previous lack of transparency and confirming that the points you made "will be addressed soon". So let's just hold him to this.

I also thought your reply to Henry was spot-on. My sense is that, as I mentioned in an earlier email, there will probably be a full discussion and evaluation of all proposals in the new year (and including any from BBP - I don't know if they have submitted anything yet, and if they do of course that will have to be included in the discussion). So I will find out when the BS trustees meet both when the timeline is for this and when your points will indeed be addressed. Let's meet up after the next CM, as there'll be more information then. I will also suggest to the trustees that we have regular monthly meetings specifically to discuss the cottage project and what's happening - to offer advice and support where needed, and also to ensure that it is held accountable and that proceedings are transparent.

Tim also mentioned in a group email that there "will be a celebration in the village in the new year" - I have no idea what this is - I imagine the BBP/Rachel have been contacted about it, and it sounds potentially like a good idea. But again - I should know more after the next CM.

I know things are moving at a glacial speed (maybe that metaphor isn't quite so relevant these days!) - this is the first committee I've really been on, and it tends to confirm every cliché about how painstakingly slowly committees operate, and the exasperation at the lack of quicker decisions ([. . .]). It will be interesting to see what happens at the next CM - let's meet up after that and see how to go from there.

Mr Tweedy's letter, so full of good intentions, was also as wobbly as ever: the Secretary of the Blake Society had no idea where Mr Eliot's email had come from; it didn't reflect any agreements of the Committee; he believed it had "ghost-written" all over it... yet the thought it was a positive thing. He also kept on guessing and imagining things that, as the Secretary, he should *know*.

I wrote back:

Thank you very much for your letter.

I must say I agree with your initial thoughts regarding Henry's email, and that I don't think you or myself are being unfair. The fact itself that it took you by surprise, that no one appointed him to answer in representation of something he certainly does not represent and is so contentious, is pretty bad.

I am sure that Henry has a good heart and in many ways I like him. I am also sure that he's young and ambitious, therefore reckless; that Tim has used him extensively as a pawn in his disgraceful dealings with the Cottage and in his disgraceful tactics of bullying me, and that Henry has felt privileged and with power (there are people who do believe that a literary society's Committee is about power!) and has taken advantage of it. Yes, please let us meet and I'll explain. Henry has been incredibly self-serving and untrustworthy in this affair. Extremely so, and again, any review by the Charity Commission of all this lack of transparency and communication following what seem to be private agendas would find it all very worrying indeed.

Please do all that you mention in your email. It is crucial and a duty too that Henry and Tim disclose what work exactly is he talking about, who's going to do it and why. And it is crucial that Henry understands too that he's not a legitimate voice to represent this, and why, and that

he explains to the Committee what this all means (If he's back in the Cottage, why nobody else knew?), *and* his former unethical behaviour.

In fact that part of his very polite email can well be read as a smooth way of saying, 'yes, we're actually stealing your work, thanks for asking'. In one worrying, yet again polite email he sent me when we went through the worst on September 2014 he defended Paige and was basically asking me to keep my mouth shut. Then he said that "Once the cottage is secured, then we can afford to be more thoughtful about how the cottage is run.". Well, it's about time that not only Tim, but Henry himself, allow themselves that thoughtfulness and if they don't, the worse it will be for them and the BS, because no Charity can afford to be ran in such a truly disgraceful manner.

Of course Henry is a good person, no one here is a monster. Not even Tim! Even Tim is a good man, believe me, though I know sometimes he makes it hard to believe. Yet see the harm a good man can do, and keeps on doing, when his Albion is fast asleep. I am sure that if Henry only knew the kind of muddy waters behind Tim's manipulation and what he actually is contributing to, he wouldn't like it and would probably be actually scared of what he's been colluding with. But please Rod, do not hold any doubt that he has been colluding indeed, for there is no other possible word.

Of course if in doubt I can show the correspondence that backs my words etc. etc. Meanwhile perhaps you might want to take a look at the letter of early last year I left with you when I left the BS in which I questioned Tim about that first attempt to push me out of the campaign, of which Henry was indeed not only aware but an active participant.

To make it clearer: there are two differences only between Henry's and Paige's involvement in these unacceptable practices. The first one, that Henry actually did work, did what he promised to do and did it well. The second one lies in the fact that on that first occasion both Tim and Henry were working in secrecy behind my back, but there was no active bullying (if pushing someone out of a project she helped conceive like that is not bullying) and in fact both gladly turned to me to ask for my help when they realised they had ended up with a horrendous "copy and paste" document that needed revision. Whereas when Paige became involved, then Tim's bullying became very active and very serious indeed. But apart from that, Henry, with all his good manners and efficiency, has been just as complicit as Paige has in the secrecy, the "passive" bullying which means snatching somebody's work away from her, the lack of communication with the other Trustees that amounts not only to inappropriate work practice but actually to an enormous lack of respect, as if none of you deserved any information or consideration and it was all right to have access to "privileged" information, and putting you all at risk.

So this is serious too and I am not so naive as to fall for it yet again. There is something deeply wrong here, and Henry has no business in speaking as if he represents all of you, let alone the Cottage.

And by the way, if there is going to be a celebration, I certainly expect to be invited, please inform the Committee.

Yes, I know things go slowly with Committees. I also know that both the Blake Society and the BCT are in a serious crisis now and that there are people out there, myself included but in fact many more people, demanding rather clear, precise and prompt explanations from both organisms, so I'm afraid that none of you can afford to take things easy as usual, because this is an extraordinary matter, and very, very serious.

Please let us meet after you have the meeting, and do try to protect yourselves - the only way you can do so is by demanding absolute honesty and transparency from your Chairman and all the Trustees and facing the seriousness of the situation. That includes not only having monthly meetings to discuss the Cottage, which is of course a very good idea, but actually making the decisions you reach in those meetings accessible to the public. That is the obligation of both organisms, that's part of what being accountable means.

Anyway, let's hope that the poor Cottage can still open its doors properly someday, though the way it's being handled I doubt it more and more...

The other day I was thinking how great it would be if it also worked along with the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid (<http://www.residencia.csic.es/en/info/history.htm>), what an extraordinary dialogue could be had then between the two countries and was getting carried away... then I just really had to laugh sadly at myself, for everything seems to point at a Blake's Cottage submerged in lies, ill will, bitterness... and worse. But let us hope Blake won't let it be so in the end.

The reader well have noted my mention of my wish to be invited to any celebration of the Cottage that they held. I had of course come up with the idea of a celebration in the first place, and, again, they had seemingly stolen it, though for entirely different purposes from the transparency that had made me propose it. Now I wanted to be invited. Not only was I recovering from the harm that had been done to me: these people's continued lack of scruples was making me stronger. I wouldn't let the Cottage be trampled on. And I wouldn't be trampled on either.

Mr Tweedy's responses were getting wobblier by the minute:

With regard to Henry and the cottage, I certainly think you should be included in whatever "celebration" is being planned in the village and will emphasise this at the CM. If the celebration event/meeting doesn't resolve things, or isn't satisfactory, we can always then arrange a more formal meeting with trustees of all parties, but my sense is that this process is in motion - it is at least positive that the BCT trustees are inviting involvement and ideas from others, and this needs to be given time - Henry mentioned that there won't be any work done on it for at least several months, and also that that your points will be addressed. As I mentioned last time, the CM will give more information and I'll certainly ask for clarification on all the points we've talked about and be in touch as soon as we've met and know more what the timeline is and what it will involve.

Nothing of course came from all his promises and good wishes. He kept on talking only of what he "sensed".

I do know that Mr Tweedy was in a very trying position and I am sorry for him. Yet he had let himself been caught in that position by accepting to be the Secretary, in a way that was everything but transparent, for an organisation that he had been wishing to walk out from because he didn't like the way it worked. Therefore I ask Mr Tweedy, again, what was he thinking of as he went through the motions of being the Secretary of the Blake Society with such irresponsibility.

I answered to him:

[. . .] The following is regarding the ever sadder Cottage issue and your letter. [. . .]
The first thing I'd like to say is, if Henry's response is not the formal Blake Society's answer to my document, then where is that answer, and what is the BS waiting for? And where is the Blake Cottage Trust's Answer? Who represents what here?

I disagree with the idea that the BCT calling for ideas from others is a good sign. I see it as a clumsy attempt at patching things up and buying time. I don't want to repeat here what I said in detail in my document, but people gave support and money to a fully defined vision of what the Cottage should be.

Henry didn't say that "there won't be any work done on it for at least several months". He said that "Work on the future of the cottage will begin in earnest in the next few months". It's not quite the same.

December and January are crucial months as you know for the BS, as it is when the Committee is dissolved and the Trustees for the new administration are elected. Given the extremely ambiguous situation between the BS and the BCT, further actions to make this

ambiguity worse and therefore skirt responsibility can be planned during this time, while people are distracted with the Christmas holidays. Hence my sense of urgency.

My urgency also obeys the fact that I feel potentially threatened. The more I think about Henry's assuming the role of spokesperson, the more I worry. His quiet but certain involvement in Tim's campaign to bully me and snatch my work away from me is certain, and every time he has been party to the secrecy and been privy to privileged information, there have been problems, both for the Cottage and for myself. As you know, Tim has threatened with slandering me before. So while the BS Committee calmly waits and calls for patience, I feel that I, my work and my reputation are at risk.

I am tired of being asked by the BS Committee to be patient despite all the evidence you have of all that is wrong. Every single time that I try to open things up and suggest we all sit together to talk openly, I am asked for more patience, even though the Committee keeps on being taken by surprise by the actions of a few individuals who, in their politics of secrecy and covert actions, have shown no respect for the Committee as a whole.

I think of all the bullying and abuse I have been subject to, and all the patience I have been asked to have by all of you despite your own anger at Tim, and I see someone who's been asked over and over again to shut her mouth and even be willing to be a scapegoat. I don't think that's what I deserve from the Blake Society. Is any of you aware of how I have been harmed? *Harmed*: there is no other word. Harmed for wanting to set things right for a Society, and a project, that I care for, and that involve the trust, and money, of many people.

My situation is the same regarding my contacts for the campaign as it was over a year ago: not knowing what to say. Do I encourage them to support this wonderful project? Do I warn them to stay well away from a magnificently corrupted project? What do I say when they ask what is happening now, what are the plans, if I know nothing? In what position of an idiot am I left if I can't answer why I know nothing, having been so involved in the project, and when the information should in fact be public? Or in what position of someone colluding with a cover up, if they feel (rightfully so) that there is something that I am not saying?

Around two years ago I started a fruitful correspondence with Blake's Spanish editors, [. . .], a relationship that I care about because of the wonderful work they do and that is good for me professionally. Since problems with the Cottage started I have not been in touch with them, not even to thank them for their support, for fear that they will ask me what has happened.

Some of my pupils donated money for the campaign. One of them is still in my class. Every Wednesday I fear she may ask me something about the Cottage and that I won't know what to say. It's happened once and I had to give an extremely evasive answer. These are just some examples of how this whole business keeps on affecting me, and my professional life.

The sense of impotence is huge. Yet every time that I think, "sod it, let them do what they want, and if the Blake Society can't stand up to their responsibilities, that's their problem", those messages of donors to the campaign in the Just Giving page and what they sent by post and email come to haunt me. It is simply not right to be playing with these people this way.

Yet here I am, waiting to see if anybody else in the BS Committee or the Blake Cottage Trust, who really represents them, has the kindness, and the courage, to respond to my document, and not only with good manners, as much as they are appreciated: I want a response that I can trust. I don't trust anything that comes from Henry, and I have very good reasons for that.

I took lots of care in writing an absolutely clear, detailed and honest document for all of you, still having the Cottage's success as a priority. I can't afford to go on watching how the BS keeps on playing games.

I know everybody's tired of this awful business, and probably scared: what happens if Tim is *really* challenged? What if he doesn't react positively? What if he has to go, when the BS "could not exist without him"? Well, just think of your members for a moment and think if it wouldn't be more respectful for them to fold up the BS if nobody else feels capable to run it, than keeping over 300 people subject to one individual's whims.

As for the Cottage, it can still go to the National Trust if worse comes to worst. That would be much more dignified than it being Tim's Cottage, for whatever it crosses his fancy to do there. We simply can't allow the Cottage to become his "spider web", as he once called South Molton Street, and if you have doubts about what I mean by this you can perhaps talk with Antony and Christina, to whom I've expressed my concerns more plainly.

I have no idea of how you are all going to disentangle this situation, and, again, I know it is terribly unfair for everybody. But you as a Committee do have a serious responsibility towards others. Appalling is too small a word for what has been going on in that Society for quite a long while.

So the question is, what do we do now? What, that is worthy of all of us as human beings, that doesn't harm anybody, but that is sound, honest, and fair? And I say "we" because we all have a problem here, we all have a responsibility and it would be false to pretend I am not part of it. I am willing to contribute to sort it out. But not through more game-playing and cunning, and not through more turning of a blind eye to all that. This is not something that can be patched up. We have a problem and the only way that we can fix it is by first accepting that we indeed have a problem, its dimensions and its seriousness, and sitting together to sort it out.

Only then can we regain trust in each other.

If that doesn't happen, sooner or later the consequences will have to be faced.

At your meeting people may argue that I am not part of the BS or the Cottage project anymore, so I will forward you in a moment some correspondence regarding that that might be a good reminder to you all of what really happened here, and you can also circulate it among the other Trustees if you think it can help make them understand. That I care for the Cottage and it is indeed my problem too I think can be amply read through the document I sent you.

Please do let me know when will you have your meeting and when can we meet after that.

Mr Tweedy answered with a proposal to meet in person in a few weeks' time. It was by then 6 weeks since I had sent my document to the BS and the BCT, without receiving any answer apart from a polite non-answer from someone who had no legitimate representation.

On 8 December Mrs Searle, whose health had also been affected by the stress of the Cottage's awful situation, wrote to the BS, the BCT and me. She said:

[. . .] First of all the Big Blake Project committed to help the Blake Society run a campaign to try and raise the money to purchase the cottage. At no time were we informed by the Chair of the Blake Society that it was actually the Cottage Trust responsible as claimed in your email. Each communication was signed off by Tim Heath as Chair of the Blake Society. In particular, Tim Heath did not at any point reveal that he was himself a Trustee, had exclusively set up the Blake Cottage Trust deciding important things such as the priorities of the Trust. We were told that the Blake Society was setting up the Trust. It was only after the purchase did we discover that Tim Heath had actively excluded the Blake Society Secretary and no other representative of the Blake Society was involved.

The original vision document and the working vision document, which we contributed to, as clearly shown in the titles of each are under the umbrella of the Blake Society. Indeed the Trust had not even been formed at this point. The attached documents show the role of the Blake Society and the Big Blake Project quite clearly.

Could you please furnish us with the relevant documentation which shows when Tim Heath was authorised to act alone in the important meetings with the lawyers in contrast to the story we were told that the Blake Society was setting up the committee. The aims of the trust must be in line with the campaign vision otherwise: i) we were misled into helping you, ii) the Public were misled into giving money to the Blake Society.

The Trustees do not seem to be aware of these vision statements or at least seem to be operating under the impression that they can decide a strategy for the Cottage without

referencing them. The vision statements make important references to monthly workshops, and public access 2 days a week on average. There is reference to a use by Blake groups such as the Cottage being able to be used to the Felpham Festival in return for us opening up our networks to the campaign. We kept our side of the agreement in a number of ways.

- Drew Journalists into the campaign from the Guardian, Times, New York Times, La Monde, and the Press Association.
- Directly contacted [. . .] and [. . .] who went on to provide grants of £10,000 and £2000.
- Liased with Blackwell's Blake Festival and the Petworth Literary Festival distributed literature about the campaign to 1,000 people.
- Arranged for a meeting at the Chelsea Arts Club. Our brief minutes attached. At this meeting Tim and Henry were introduced to [. . .] who later agreed to judge the Blake Society film competition.
- Arranged for a joint announcement on the BBC radio with Tim in London and Rachel in Sussex. This offer was never take up by Tim Heath.
- On a local level we had articles in the paper on a weekly basis and secured support across the community.
- We arranged for a meeting for Tim, myself and [. . .] to meet with [. . .]. We discussed the cottage and a linked Centre of Imagination, outside of the cottage in Bognor Regis itself as a key part of regeneration. Tim asked prior to the meeting that he lead on the Cottage and we lead on the Centre of the Imagination.
- We have since submitted documents to planning on the Centre of Imagination and have built up a local consortium in support of some kind of Exhibition Centre in the town. This should accommodate larger numbers of visitors than is possible through the cottage alone.

We did not waiver in our commitment despite the very difficult attitude of Tim Heath - who seemed towards the end almost to be undermining our attempts to help the campaign. When hopes were fading with Tim's support as a back-up option we secured an agreement in principle for a mortgage in our own names that would enable the property to be taken off the market until the Trust was in a position to buy it.

Maintenance of the original vision is important not just in terms of integrity but as outlined by [. . .] in a recent meeting with Peter Johns would attract funding not possible if it is run as a self-funding letting scheme. So shutting the door now on more imaginative uses of the cottage fatally reduces potential funding opportunities.

There is a lot more that I probably should say about the inconsistent instructions and shifting of positions from the Chair of the Blake Society but to be positive the focus needs to be on restoring the right vision for the cottage. I have Adriana's ideas which are all building on and in the Spirit of the original vision. All of these should be considered seriously and not dismissed because a Triumvirate would perhaps struggle to work in such partnerships. However, [the cottage was saved for the Nation and its doors should be genuinely open to the Nation.

Please provide me with the documentation agreed by the committee explaining the disconnection of the current proposals with the original vision that we worked so hard for.

Neither Mrs Searle nor I have ever been provided with any such documentation or records of the Blake Society and the BCT regarding their decision-making. The following day, on 9 December, Mr Eliot sent to Mrs Searle and to me almost identical emails. Mine read thus:

Many thanks for your email, and many apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

The Blake Cottage Trust trustees have asked me to act as Project Manager of Blake's Cottage over the next two years, overseeing its transition and acting as a central point of contact for all interested parties. This is a recent development: I only met the trustees about it for the first time yesterday, which is why I've been waiting to respond to you. Thank you for your patience!

My position is yet to be formalised, but I am writing now in the expectation that I will start work in this role early next year. As well as fundraising, 'brand-building' and overseeing the conservation and architectural work at the Cottage, my key job will be communication: sending regular newsletters with progress reports, maintaining an informative and imaginative website, and hopefully holding regular drop-in update meetings.

I know that the Blake Cottage Trust trustees are immensely grateful for all the love, time and effort you put into the fund-raising campaign. I'd also like to apologise, wholeheartedly, on behalf of the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust. There has clearly been poor communication, and consequent confusion, and I am very sorry for the anxiety and stress it must have caused you. I hope that if and when I take on the role of Project Manager, I will be able to ameliorate this side of things from now on, by providing regular updates and a single point of contact for all concerns.

To address your key points:

- Firstly, I'd like to assure you that the vision documents that were drawn up during the campaign, and to which you contributed so passionately, have certainly not been forgotten by the Blake Cottage Trust trustees. These are hugely valuable documents, and are the foundation upon which the transformed Cottage will be raised. I can confirm that the trustees are dedicated to maintaining a visionary aspect to the Cottage, and that it will certainly be a space for the use of the nation, hopefully in many different imaginative and inspirational ways. Having said that, there are limited ways in which the Cottage will be able to fund its own running costs, so as we develop the site over the next two years, we will need to channel Blake's innovative practicality and good housekeeping into solutions that combine the economic aspects of a listed building with Blake's extraordinary imagination. The recent call for visionary submissions was simply an opportunity for anyone to add to the already excellent list of options; it was in no way a rejection of previous ideas. I think it's also important to remember that the vision we drew up in 2014 was just that, a vision, not a binding commitment: it is a valuable best-case scenario to aim for as closely as possible, but within the cottage's financial and practical limitations.

- Secondly, the trustees are very conscious - as you rightly point out - that the Cottage is still linked in people's minds with the Blake Society. As you know - and you spelled it out so well in your document - this is as a result of Blake Society trustees being instrumental in the campaign, and the use of the Society's name to lend weight to the cause. As we always knew, in the miraculous event of a successful purchase the cottage would need to be owned by a separate legal entity, which has now been formed. Now the work begins to clarify the distinction: part of my role will be to build the cottage's independent 'identity' through a new website, separate social media and clear press releases.

Many thanks Adriana. To take this further, I'd really appreciate it if you might be free to meet me for a chat in person. I hope that might be possible - maybe early in the New Year if things are tight this side of Christmas? Let me know when might suit you - I'd be very happy to travel to north London.

In the meantime, many thanks again. I wish you a very Happy Christmas and look forward to staying in touch throughout this exciting, creative process.

This communication, which I think I'd be forgiven to think also had ghost-written all over it, made me not only sick, but furious. So this was the reward to Mr Eliot's amenability. Well, it wasn't going to be that easy. A pawn of Mr Heath's saying that he would be "a single point of contact" for all concerns meant that Mr Heath himself would continue to be *the* single point of contact, which had been the origin of the problems. I wrote to Mr Eliot on 10 December, with copy to the BS, the BCT and the BBP:

Thank you for your letter, and congratulations for your successful return to the Cottage Project.

I was confused when I received your previous email in response to the document I sent a month ago, for I didn't know in whose representation you were speaking, since you left the Cottage project so long ago. Now I see that you were acting on behalf of the Cottage Trust, and though, as you say, you only met with them two days ago with regards to your new post, it is clear through your former email that you have been privy to important information for a while.

Back then I wrote to the Blake Society's Secretary to ask whether if I should take your response as the Society's formal answer and he said certainly not, and that in fact your email had taken him by surprise too, as indeed he had no knowledge either that you were involved in this in any way. So I am still waiting for the BS's response.

I must also say that it seems to me that far too many things take the Blake Society Committee by surprise.

Therefore I am afraid that this news doesn't make the situation any clearer to me and it only increases my concerns.

I am of course happy that the Blake Cottage Trust finally acknowledges so openly everything I did for this project, and I am certainly glad to hear that you acknowledge too the grave past communication problems and declare yourself willing to put an end to that, so by all means, I am very happy to meet up with you whenever you're free, before or after Christmas, and I also reiterate my willingness to attend any meeting with the trustees of both the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust, whom I am copying here for the sake of that communication.

Since we are talking about communication problems, I will accept your offer to finally open things up by being absolutely sincere. Forgive me then if I feel in the obligation to say that, welcome as your repeated apologies for past lack of transparency are, I struggle to find them sincere when even this latest communications themselves seem to be lacking in the very transparency you invoke.

May I ask, why were you the only person who responded to my previous email, making it clear that you had information about the project that no one else in the Blake Society seemed to have, if what the Secretary said to me is anything to go by, and why the other BS trustees didn't know you had joined the project again? If transparency has been such a grave issue in all this sad affair, and the Blake Society Committee has suffered much for being constantly kept in the dark about the whole project, why were you happy to be privy to privileged information?

This, as you well know, is not the first time that something like this happens - but to that later.

I believe that not only did you indeed owe an apology to me, but in fact to the whole Committee of the Blake Society, which perhaps would deserve also an explanation as to why you have behaved this way.

I apologise for the length of this letter, but it is extremely important that everything is crystal clear in this convoluted business and, since no one has taken on my offer to attend a meeting with all the trustees of both organisms, it matters to me that all of them understand my view, as this is a project for which I still care a lot.

I will first comment on some points you make in your letter.

I am afraid I don't quite understand what is meant precisely by "so as we develop the site over the next two years, we will need to channel Blake's innovative practicality and good housekeeping into solutions that combine the economic aspects of a listed building with Blake's extraordinary imagination.". Can you please explain? It sounds rather vague to me.

You also say, "I think it's also important to remember that the vision we drew up in 2014 was just that, a vision, not a binding commitment: it is a valuable best-case scenario to aim for as closely as possible, but within the cottage's financial and practical limitations."

I disagree. I don't believe it was "just" a vision. It was the vision that people believed in and to which they gave their support and money. In legal parlance I suppose it is not, as you say, "a binding commitment". I am more interested though in the ethics and the moral responsibility of both Trusts to adhere to what we promised we would do.

As for the recommendations I sent in my document, they are financially viable: they mean joining efforts with serious, experienced and respected existing organisms, which could actually open doors to the further funding that will be desperately needed, Links with them would also be, I believe, much more valuable in having a proper sense of direction and in allowing the team to build a real, serious programme, than a random call for proposals. By starting to work with this kind of organisations from the beginning it would be possible to build during these crucial first two years a solid ground that involves not only fundraising but the creative foundation of what the Cottage can actually become, in a much more serious and dignified way than simply renting out rooms; what I read in the press in that respect worried me a lot.

As for the bond between the Blake Cottage Trust and the Blake Society, forgive me if I insist: it is not only that the Cottage is "still linked in people's minds to the Blake Society". It is that the Blake Society, though aware of the need of creating a bigger organism for a bigger project, has a moral responsibility for this project, which implies, among other things, overseeing that work in the Cottage is carried out with absolute integrity. The BS cannot wash its hands off this duty, because it didn't facilitate its name, representation and infrastructure to then simply pass the results to another trust to do as it pleases. It cannot do that because, as a charity, it must be accountable to those who placed their trust on it. So it is not only about what is in people's minds. That may sound dangerously as if this is being handled merely as a publicity problem, and that the use of the Blake Society's name was also a publicity trick. I don't think that was the case. I don't want to repeat myself so if in doubt of what I mean please read my document again.

And now back to the issue of transparency in your involvement in this project. I do hope, Henry, that sincerity is truly appreciated, for I feel it necessary to remind you that last year there were three attempts at pushing me out of the Cottage project. You were clearly involved in the first one and had some disturbing part in the last one as well.

You may remember that while the Blake Society's Chairman, you and myself were the three persons from the Blake Society running the campaign, there was at the beginning a long period in which I was worried that nothing seemed to be happening and I received no answer when I asked both of you when were we continuing our work, only to then find out that both you and the Chairman had been working for around two months behind my back, at moments actually on my own ideas and suggestions, something I only found out about when the Chairman felt the need to ask for my help to revise a document.

I sent an email asking both of you why had you done this and up to this day, I never received any response from you. On the phone, the BS Chairman invoked the notions of politics and power within a Committee to explain this behaviour. I wrote to him telling him why I found such reasons and behaviour unethical, and if you remember, I also wrote to you apologising for the anger in my former email, saying that I believed you had been caught up a bit unawares in that web of politics and power.

You never answered to that email either. I do believe this was due to some inexperience rather than ill will on your part. You had just joined the Society a few months before. You were empowered by the Chairman from very early on and I understand that is attractive, but your unwillingness to engage in open communication about the problem showed a certain lack of concern for transparency and willingness to work openly in a team.

After that incident we were all working very well together. Soon after you left the campaign for good. When the BS Chairman and myself were the representatives of the Blake Society running it, the second attempt at pushing me out and snatching my work away from me took place. This time bullying was involved. You were no longer part of the campaign, but it was a huge crisis for the Blake Society as I am sure you remember. In one very polite email that you sent to me (though it was not addressed to the rest of the Committee as a whole) you seemed to imply that if I said what was going on and things went wrong, I'd have to carry the responsibility, which I found terribly unfair, and told you so. You were also the one member in the Committee to attempt to defend the indefensible. In that same email you said that "Once the cottage is secured, then we can afford to be more thoughtful about how the cottage is run." So I ask you now to honour your word and be more thoughtful, by adhering to the principle of full transparency.

The third time I was pushed out of the campaign, and the Blake Society, was around a year ago. Tim Heath and I, despite all the rather serious past problems, had been working very hard and well together again. During that time I insisted on writing to ask for financial donations to three prominent people whose contacts you had made. You were no longer part of the campaign. You were reluctant

about us writing to them to ask for more support, fearing they might be annoyed. I insisted. You and I know very well what happened then and how my insistence gave fruits in the form of one important donation.

Only a few days after that we had our last 2014 Committee meeting. I realised then that the atmosphere of secrecy had started all over again. I was very surprised, and I gather the Committee must have been surprised too, to find out that you had accompanied Tim to see the lawyers with whom the Trust was eventually set up, despite the fact that it was Tim and myself who were officially running the campaign and your having left it a long while before. It was also in that meeting that the Chairman transferred the merits of that last success in the campaign to you, and you gladly obliged.

I was upset, and very worried that the whole appalling situation of months before would be repeated, so I wrote to the people in the Committee who had been involved in this atmosphere of secrecy in the past asking to please open up communication and state clearly what your intentions were, what it was that you wanted to do in the project so that we avoided new problems and could all work together in a way that was fair to all.

You immediately answered to my email reiterating that you had left the Cottage project and had no further involvement in it. Yet I found your response disingenuous, for had you not just been to see the lawyers with the Chairman, without telling me or anyone in the BS about it?

I have all the correspondence that reveals in detail what happened on that sorry occasion, should any one want to be reassured about the actual truth behind my words.

So I have to say that I find the news of this appointment of yours as further reasons to worry that the main issues of communication and transparency within the BS and in the Cottage project are not really being addressed. I certainly find it odd that, though when you left the campaign and the Chairman and I were commenting about it, he said that you were very busy and "your heart was not in it", he keeps on calling you when there are things going on regarding the Cottage that are hidden from everybody else and end up taking us all by surprise.

Trusts, as the word says it, are organisms that work for the benefit of the public on the basis of the trust placed on them, so how they are run is something very serious indeed. They must look meticulously after the transparency and integrity of every single person that works for them, particularly more so when there have already been problems as serious as those affecting this project in the past.

I don't know if your new position will be on a voluntary basis or as a paid job, but in either case it is of course a very important role that you will be playing and everybody must be satisfied that that role will be carried out in absolute openness. That is the responsibility of the Trust, that has to be made accountable to others, since after all it is the money of others that has made the purchase of the Cottage possible.

I believe that apart from apologies and an explanation to me and to the BS Committee, it would be advisable that you explain to the BCT why you have colluded with secrecy in the past and guarantee to them that it won't happen again.

You say that your role will imply being "a central point of contact" between all parties. In the view of all the above mentioned, I find that very worrying. A person in such a position should have an impeccable record in regards of transparency and integrity. I am very sad to say that I don't think you have that in regards to your former involvement in this project, and that goes up to the undercover way in which the path to your new position itself and your sudden reappearance and assumption of the spokesperson' role have developed. Also, because of what I have said above, I worry whether if integrity would be your main concern when hiring other people to work in this project. I am sorry to say that I do not trust you enough for having such an enormous responsibility and that I strongly believe I have reasons for that.

You are a very capable, intelligent and efficient man, certainly very talented too and your capacity for work and creativity are not in question. However, I think that your commitment to truth and full transparency are.

Again, I do believe that you are not fully aware of the ethical implications of your behaviour, have probably not understood the seriousness of the situation, and probably neither you nor the rest of the

BS Committee have felt ready to grasp the gravity of the fact that I, who served both the BS and the Cottage project with such seriousness and commitment, was forced out of both through actually rather severe bullying. It may therefore sound to you as unfair or too rash if I say that you have colluded with a very serious situation indeed, or that however sweet the rewards for doing so may seem to be, politics and power are not really what charities are about, but a generous service to the public.

Indeed, let's meet up and clarify all this. I am deeply sorry if my sincerity sounds hard, but for me to wholeheartedly accept your wholehearted apologies, there needs to be real, concrete proof that things have indeed changed, and I cannot see evidence of that in the recent developments.

I may be wrong, so I am more than willing to hear what you have to say about this that may help me understand things better.

Again, I put at everyone's disposal the evidence I have regarding the history of this project.

As I said, Mr Eliot had sent to Mrs Searle an email very similar to the one he'd sent me, but it incurred in some other particular lies. He thanked the Big Blake Project on behalf of the Blake Society for all their work, said that the Blake Society Committee was keen for the Big Blake Project's work to be honoured in the Cottage (**something that not only has never happened; in fact, the Blake Society would be calling the BBP a "pressure group" just a month later**), again apologized profusely and "wholeheartedly" for the poor communication, that he acknowledged, then lied wholeheartedly as well, but saying (I quote) that "the Society was never formally or substantially involved in the campaign; Adriana and myself volunteered to help Tim work on the campaign as a separate project.". That was a rather serious lie, as the whole of this testimony has already proved in previous chapters.

Mrs Searle therefore answered to him, with copy to me and Mr Heath, reminding Mr Eliot of just how much we had insisted during the Cottage appeal on the fact that it was a Blake Society project, and rightly pointed that "it was never revealed that the Society was just a front for the campaign", which would imply misleading of donors. She emphasized that I agreed with her and, as far as she knew, so did the Howell family, former owners of the Cottage.

She voiced too her concerns about having a single point of contact now, since that had been precisely the origin of all the misrepresentation problems we had had in the past, and insisted on the need for decisions and agreements to be communicated to everyone to avoid further lack of transparency in the future. Then reminded him that truth matters.

Mr Eliot answered saying he'd be happy to meet her the following month.

I had meanwhile written to Mr Tweedy, still trying to arrange a meeting with him:

I've received Henry's news and I see that, as I feared, it is in fact too late.

You will tell me when we meet whether if anyone at all actually challenged Henry and his legitimacy to hold the fantastic role that has now landed in his hands.

I am appalled, and I do wonder how can the Blake Society Committee actually sleep, and also about its own self-respect.

The whole thing is simply disgusting. I'm sure that Blake would say, "Not in my name".

Sorry to have such dark things to say, but what the BS has colluded with is in fact much darker.

On 11 December Mr Eliot answered to my email, with copy to the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust. He still had the nerve to ask me for my list of contacts! He verified that he had been contacted by Mr Heath just two days after I had informed the latter that I would send a document to

both Trusts, a gesture of good will that I had had, as seen in the previous chapter, so that it wouldn't take him by surprise while he was mourning:

Dear Adriana,

Thank you for your email. I hope it will be useful to discuss these points in person, and I'd certainly like to take up your previous offer of discussing your list of contacts and who you would recommend getting in touch with.

In the meantime, I should clarify a few points:

- I see no lack of transparency around the role of Project Manager. The Blake Cottage Trust trustees first mentioned the role to me over the phone on November 11th. I was to consider the role before meeting them in early December. I am sharing this information as soon and as openly as I can - perhaps even earlier than I should, as the position is still not formalised. The information was also shared with the Blake Society committee at the first possible meeting (on December 3rd). I acknowledged your previous email swiftly, and promised to revert to you with more information as soon as I could, which is what I did, the day after meeting with the Blake Cottage trustees.

- The recommendations you lay out in your previous document are extremely valuable and will certainly be discussed in detail by the Blake Cottage Trust trustees. I can also assure you that the trustees are absolutely committed to maintaining visionary and imaginative uses of the cottage.

- And I will certainly discuss the comments you have made about my character with the Blake Cottage Trust trustees, as soon as possible.

Thanks again. I'll be in touch separately to arrange a time to meet.

His personal email to arrange for a meeting was more candid:

Would you be free for a meeting next week? Perhaps a coffee somewhere convenient.

Let me know where and when would suit you best.

I should tell you that I found the personal accusations in your email offensive and upsetting. I am sad that your impression of our shared work on the campaign is so negative. I have never intentionally pushed you out or worked behind your back. I hope when we meet I can assure you of my sincerity and shared passion for making the Blake's Cottage the best it can be, and we can move forward in a more positive way.

I look forward to discussing further in person.

So I answered to both emails, again with copy to everyone at the Blake Society and Blake Cottage Trust:

Thank you for acknowledging my email and for your good will to clarify some points.

I think that further clarification regarding the timing of all this issue comes handy:

On 9 November I wrote to the Blake Society Chairman to let him know that I intended to send my document with my proposals for the Cottage. I didn't want it to take him by surprise. You say you were called regarding your new post on 11 November. I sent the document on 15 November and indeed I am grateful for your swift response on the 18th.

On the 21st of November I asked the Blake Society Secretary whether if I should take your answer as the Society's formal response and he said no, that it had took him by surprise as well and he didn't know you were involved in the project again.

I assume then that the rest of the Committee only found out about this in your meeting of 3 December? I am sorry, but I think that given the seriousness of what is at hand, the seriousness of the points I made in my document, and the abysmal lack of communication within the BS Committee regarding this whole issue in the past, this development of things is, at its best, careless.

You say you'd like to take up my previous offer of discussing my list of contacts and people I think should be approached. It goes without saying that before we do that we all have to be completely satisfied that the handling of the Cottage is running as it should, and that I will only endorse the project if I believe that is the case. What matters here is the Cottage itself.

I am grateful for your separate email to arrange a time to meet, to which I will respond now.

In it you say that you find my personal accusations offensive and upsetting. If I am copying this correspondence to everyone involved it is so that these serious matters are discussed openly, giving no room for any further misunderstandings, so if you feel injured you should state so openly as well, because this is not a personal issue at all, but one involving work and a grave situation affecting two charities and many other people as well.

I have never meant to upset you and certainly not to offend you either. I have made no personal accusation at all: I have stated facts, backed up by several documents and correspondence.

I will arrange for a meeting with you. But I will not accept any further private emails attempting to turn this into a personal matter, because it is not. The wealth of correspondence accumulated throughout the last couple of years shows how I have tried to work out all these problems openly and to open a door for everyone involved to have their say and reach a fair solution, with no success. I will be very grateful then if anything that you have to say regarding anything I say to you in a collective email is addressed with copy to everyone else as well.

I am sure that the Blake Society Committee knows the extent to which I have had no ill will in my attempts at ending this poisonous atmosphere of secrecy. I am sure too that it is possible that you have legitimate ways to explain why you have behaved as you have. I am willing to listen and move forward, as you say, in a positive way. That's what I have tried to do all along, and why I stayed in the Blake Society and the Cottage project when I was asked to do so after I had initially resigned in the summer last year.

We arranged to meet. But I wouldn't rely only on my good will and desire to trust others any longer: on 12 December, I wrote to the Charity Commission.

A COUPLE OF CURIOUS MEETINGS

I met with Mr Henry Eliot on 17 December 2017. It was a curious encounter. It was in fact rather pleasant. Mr Eliot seemed sincere. I found it intriguing that after having gone through so much, and so many efforts on my part and Mrs Searle's to tell the Blake Society that we needed to communicate, **Mr Eliot was the first one to agree that there had been severe problems of communication in the past.** When I pointed at him the ways he had been involved in issues of secrecy regarding the Cottage project he said he had meant no wrong, **but accepted that he had been insensitive and had failed himself at communicating properly, and apologised. He repeated that my work for and commitment to the project had been spotless and everybody was very grateful. He accepted that the Chair had caused trouble because of his poor communication skills.** He heard me out regarding my grievances and **said that he was thankful for, and admired, my resilience, patience and commitment after all I had gone through.** He said then, which I found a bit cheeky, **that the Blake Cottage Trust and him as possible future Project Manager were very happy to work on my ideas and receive my advice. He was also grateful that I had warned the Blake Society earlier in the year about how angry the community in Felpham were** regarding their exclusion of the project and lack of communication. We discussed the disagreements we had had with the Big Blake Project at the beginning of the campaign and he agreed with me, unequivocally, that any disagreement could have been talked through, and **that it had been wrong for the Chair to use the BBP and keep on having them raise funds on behalf of the Blake Society just to later drop them off.**

I told Mr Eliot that I thought a Trust of only 3 people, with full control still in Mr Heath's

hands, was inappropriate for the Cottage. On this he didn't agree. He said he didn't see why it was wrong and that, anyway, that was up to the Trust to decide.

Then I told him I had contacted the Charity Commission. Here he seemed very angry, and alleged that it had been wrong to do that, when we were talking about transparency. I told him it was precisely to guarantee transparency that I had done so.

Mr Eliot seemed sincere to me most of the time and I gave him the benefit of the doubt – I do prefer trusting people than otherwise –, but I found it very worrying that he might be the Cottage project manager: he had agreed with me in almost everything – that there had been wrongdoing, and he had apologised; he was also surprised when I told him things the Chair had told me about his involvement in the campaign that according to Mr Eliot were not true, so if he was being sincere, then he was very easily manipulated by the Chairman, too quick to please him, and that would only perpetuate the situation of him being an instrument of Mr Heath's decisions. I asked him why when we had had problems in the past he didn't respond to my emails and **he apologised for his lack of "sensitivity"**; I then asked why on other occasions he only answered once the Chair had done so, simply echoing him, and whether if that was not an undue sense of loyalty to the Chair over his loyalty to the Committee and Blake Society as a whole. He **responded that he thought it was right to know first what the Chair thought about an issue, which, again, worried me a lot.**

We then talked about **how I expected my work for the Cottage appeal to be honoured. He in fact, and quite kindly, asked me how I wanted that to happen.** I told him that I certainly expected it to be fully acknowledged publicly, as well as the work of the Big Blake Project, and that should there be any celebration for the success of the appeal, we should be personally invited and our work publicly acknowledged there as well.

So far, so good. I was quite happy in fact to be having a proper conversation, at long last, with Mr Eliot. But I still needed to test his sincerity further. As the reader has seen, in the document I had left with Mr Heath when I stepped out of the appeal, then in the one sent to the BS and the BCT with my vision for the Cottage, I had mentioned that I'd leave for a year, then, if the appeal had succeeded, would get back in touch to consider the ways in which I might be engaged with the project again. Obviously, since I had worked so hard for the appeal, I had been hoping, if it succeeded, to develop those parts of the project that were dearest to my heart.

Now that was a complicated dream. Of course, I knew that to work with people who had proved to be so dishonest wasn't much of a palatable prospect. But I wanted to hear what Mr Eliot's thoughts were about such a possibility. Therefore I asked him if they were considering my working in the Cottage in the future. I told him what I had told the Chair before: that since the new Trust would be (I thought) a proper, big Board of Trustees where there would be enough space for everybody to work transparently and in peace, there could be space for me as well.

Here Mr Eliot's face hardened. He first told me, a bit aggressively, that he thought I had left the Cottage. I repeated to him the above considerations, that Mr Heath knew quite well. He then said that neither the Blake Cottage Trust nor himself had thought about that, and he wouldn't consider it advisable because of "the clash of personalities" between the Chair and myself. **I told him it was no "clash of personalities": that I had been bullied out of the project, which was different, and Mr Eliot had just agreed with me minutes before that it had been wrong.** I asked him, if he had just agreed with me that it was the Chair who had caused the problems and who had communication issues, to say the least, **why was I the one who was being excluded and whether if it would not be fairer and more practical to**

challenge the Chair instead regarding his work with his colleagues. He did not answer.

Then I asked him if they would be willing to employ or allow Ms Morgan to work in the project in any way. He said that though the subject had not been raised, **he couldn't see why not.** I reminded him of all the problems her involvement in the project had caused the previous year and her lack of reliability regarding work for other BS projects such as the Journal. I told him also that I found his answer surprising since he knew that the only reason why Ms Morgan had been involved in the Cottage was her personal relationship with the Chair.

And this was the most incredible part of our conversation. **Mr Eliot said he was very surprised, that he knew nothing about it. I reminded him that he had clearly known that the previous year. He had even asked me, in correspondence quoted in this testimony, to separate the Cottage problems from "what had been done to me", and had suggested, as already quoted too: "Once the cottage is secured, then we can afford to be more thoughtful about how the cottage is run." He said he had forgotten. I found this response bewildering – even more so when he had just told me minutes before that the Blake Society had had a meeting early that month because the Chair was afterwards going on holidays to Miami, which is where Ms Morgan lived at the moment.**

I sincerely wanted to believe in Mr Eliot's sincerity, but I found it extremely hard to believe that he had forgotten the issue about Mr Heath and Ms Morgan's relationship and how that had been at the core of their unethical behaviour in the past, as well as of the crisis that nearly destroyed both the Blake Society and the Cottage campaign. **I found it even harder since when the major problems arose in 2014, Mr Eliot was the one Trustee in the Committee who attempted to defend Ms Morgan, with no grounds whatever to do so.**

Another serious trial for my willingness to trust came when I asked him why he had accompanied Mr Heath to see the lawyers who had set up the Blake Cottage Trust. He answered that **Mr Heath had simply wanted him to accompany him so that the lawyers "could see his enthusiasm".** As implausible, nonsensical answers go by, that is one of the most remarkable ones I have ever heard.

This was near the end of our conversation. Mr Eliot said he'd pass on my questions to the Blake Cottage Trustees.

Later on he sent me a kind email:

Thank you so much for meeting me this morning. It was very good to see you - and useful to discuss things face to face.

As we agreed, I will contact the Blake Cottage Trust trustees now, and reiterate your offer of working on the transition of the cottage; I'll let them know that you will be awaiting their response.

In the meantime, I look forward to keeping in touch, and I hope you're feeling reassured that the Cottage project is now on track to being transparent and true to Blake's visionary imagination.

Finally, many apologies again for any insensitivity or carelessness on my part over the last two years; I hope that with the New Year we can make a clean start.

Warmest regards and Merry Christmas,

Then he sent a PS:

PS. If you were able to share with me the letter you sent to the Charity Commission, I'd be very grateful. Many thanks!

I answered:

Thank you, it was really good that we met and I am happy too that we could talk face to face, it makes such a difference.

Thank you also for writing to the Blake Cottage Trust trustees regarding my offer.

Yes, by all means let's keep in touch, and thank you again for your apologies. It is really meaningful to me and I sincerely appreciate that.

Regarding my letter to the Charity Commission, I have thought again about it and I hope you will understand if I prefer not to share it.

I'll explain why:

I wrote to them because of really serious concerns about the future of the Cottage, that will be clearer to you after today's conversation; because of my frustration and sense of impotence, that I didn't feel I was being truly heard, that the gravity of my concerns were not being taken seriously and that no matter what I did in my attempts for all of us to get together and talk, I was failing. I still believe meeting up with all the Trustees would have been very useful.

But also, I wrote because since through my document and my correspondence with all of you I was speaking out, with not many clear results, I realised I was in a vulnerable position yet again, that because of that I might incur Tim's anger and be again on the receiving end of his way to deal with anger, which is very harmful. So I felt a really important need to take the personal history out of the equation, report the issue to a truly independent, impartial public body that is qualified to deal with this kind of problems, put the issue in the hands of people who I hoped would know better than all of us, who have not really known very well the way to clear communication so far, the way forward to sort things out.

If I share that document with you I will feel I am putting myself again in a vulnerable position. Your loyalty would obviously be more towards the Blake Cottage Trust than to me and that is perfectly understandable. I don't want to put you in a difficult position, and I do not want to put myself in an even harder position either, particularly since it is obviously to be expected that Tim may be very angry that I have done this. I have the instinctive feeling that it is right to let the Charity Commission say whatever they have to say now, if they have anything to say at all, and I will feel that I am in a much less vulnerable position by keeping that document between myself and them.

I hope you will understand: I have been rather seriously harmed by this whole situation and I feel in the need to protect myself first.

You and both charities' Trustees can rest assured that I have made clear mention of the virtues of all of you and that I have simply mentioned events as they happened (much of what you heard today) and expressed my concerns, and that I have not mentioned the personal aspects of the conflict. Though I believe much of the wrong done stems from Tim's inability to differentiate the personal from the professional, and though I believe that there lies the gravest mismanagement and wrongdoing, I do know how damaging that can be and up to this day I have done my very best so that it doesn't come to light, despite the many ways in which it has been a constant undermining of everybody's work.

I have manifested to the Charity Commission my willingness to meet up with them and all of you together if they deem it necessary, so that everybody discusses openly the concerns I have raised.

What I can certainly offer is to write to them and tell them that I am happy that you and I have talked, that I am reassured that you have listened seriously to my concerns and about your sincere willingness and commitment to move forward in a way that will preserve the integrity of the project, I can do that right away.

Thank you for your understanding.

I wish you too a very Happy Christmas, hope that the year starts with joy for you, and look forward to the day when we can all celebrate the Cottage success with the joy it truly deserves.

He wrote to say he understood.



Now what to make of Mr Henry Eliot? As I'm sure the reader must have understood by now, it is not only Blake's Cottage what matters to me here, as much as it is the main reason why I'm writing this

testimony. What is of paramount importance to me as well is the lesson those of us involved may learn from this awful story, the possibility for some kind of truly human and dignified way to make sense of even the most difficult situations. It is a concern for truth, which was all the way through the background of my work for Blake's Cottage appeal.

I have gone out of my way innumerable times so as not to be unfair to anybody. I did enjoy that conversation with Mr Eliot. I was happy that we could talk in such terms, and I desperately wanted to believe in his sincerity. Yet, in view of the monstrous thing that the Blake Society Committee would soon become, and after going through the whole story as I write this testimony, I simply can't believe.

The only way I could give Mr Eliot the benefit of the doubt would be not only by admitting that he was extremely easy to manipulate, but by considering a strong element of stupidity involved. Mr Eliot is an extremely intelligent man. No one could possibly ever call Mr Eliot stupid. So I have no choice but believing that he has acted out of ill will.

How do I marry this conclusion with the sincerity I sensed in most of our conversation that day? Well, I guess that what we call ill will is not necessarily a clear-cut impulse. We have infinite ways of justifying our actions to ourselves, however self-serving they may be. I know that Mr Eliot is a very ambitious young man. And I believe that, throughout the whole of the Cottage nightmare, he didn't have any clear sense of what having scruples means. I hope that has changed now.

His position as manager of the Cottage hasn't materialized, and on January 2017 he stepped down from the Blake Society Committee.



On 18 December I met with Mr Rod Tweedy, the new Secretary. It was another remarkable meeting. I've had no shortage of bewildering meetings with Blake Society Trustees, who seem to have an uncanny talent to leave people dazed and confused.

Mr Tweedy told me that he thought Mr Eliot could be a capable project manager for the Cottage, yet agreed with me that he seemed to be unexperienced, easily manipulated by the Chair, as he believed he felt the need to please everybody. **He then repeated all the reasons why he was so very angry, even disgusted, at the Blake Society Committee and its handling of the Cottage business. He was so angry that he was going to step down as Secretary in 2016, a post he hadn't really wanted anyway. But he wouldn't step down as Trustee.** I didn't feel it was my place to tell him whether if he should stay or leave, but I was extremely puzzled at this incongruous gesture of dissent. If you're so unhappy in an organisation that you want to step out of it, you do that entirely, don't you? What Mr Tweedy was planning instead was to simply leave a post that was, I am sure, pretty scary for him, but remain in the organisation – presumably because he would be organizing its 2016 annual lecture early in the year, something he was really keen to do.

He told me that he had spoken with Mrs Vinall about the Committee's lack of guts, and that **she had told him she was angry too but was trying to challenge the Chair in a "gentle" way. He told me that he believed the Blake Society Committee didn't have the courage to challenge the Chair.** It was odd to hear him talking as if he was referring to something entirely alien to him, **so I saw myself in the painful position to have to remind him that he was not only a member of the Committee himself but, in fact, the Secretary.** Mr Tweedy simply let that pass, then said that **he thought that having purchased the Cottage was not good enough if the Committee treated people unfairly. He also agreed that Ms Morgan's presence in the Committee was undesirable.**

We then talked about his pacifist projects, about pacifists we admired, and I told him that if we admired people who were willing to challenge the British Armed Forces for the sake of peace and truth, surely we could manage to defend a tiny Cottage lost somewhere in West Sussex, that cost less than a flat in London? He laughed, and agreed with me.

However, when we talked again about Mr Heath's unethical behaviour within the Committee, Mr Tweedy became very angry, not at Mr Heath this time, but at the notion of people being "accusers", and asked me whether if I had done any "work" on "letting go". I patiently explained to him that such an expression of personal wisdom had nothing to do whatsoever with turning a blind eye to wrongdoing, nor with eschewing our responsibility to defend truth and what is fair.

I left the meeting without knowing what to think, but trying to believe that he was still a friend, and **in his unequivocal promise that he would "challenge" the Committee as soon as the year started.**

Again, I don't want to be unfair to anybody. Mr Tweedy is a good man. He tried, his own way, to be a friend to me and often offered his support. The problem is that he only offered it, but in fact gave none. I was fond of him, we had some wonderful conversations and I truly needed to believe that my friends were real in the midst of the Cottage nightmare. He at least had dared to mention in a couple of emails the unresolved problems of communication of 2014. However, Mr Tweedy's behaviour throughout the whole ordeal has been, I think, inexcusable. While going through the material to write this testimony, I just wonder why on earth I was still bothering to talk with him at all. I cannot go inside his head to understand his reasons for behaving as he has done. My belief is that he has been very afraid, and has what I have defined in this email as a wobbly character.

Mr Tweedy would in the end step out of the Blake Society Committee, no one knows exactly when in 2016 (I suppose after his event had taken place?). We will see later how the minutes of the 2016 AGM, published quite late in the Blake Society's webpage, manipulated this fact. However, he has been trying to interfere with the Cottage from the margins, doing what exactly and under what kind of delusion, I have found it impossible to understand. We will get there in due time.

THE BLAKE COTTAGE TRUST IN ACTION

Sadly, since the Blake Cottage Trust acquired William Blake's Cottage one year and seven months ago (I'm writing this in April 2017), its actions have had nothing to do with preserving the Cottage or honour what we promised to the public that it would be, but they have compensated for that with lots of action in the way of lying to the public, bullying and intimidating people.

On 18 December Mr Eliot wrote to say that he had passed on my questions to the BCT. The latter was still very keen on "working" my contacts, as you can see below:

Again it was very good to see you yesterday. I passed on your offer to the BCT trustees, who were very grateful. They have asked me to return the response below.

In the New Year, if and when my position is formalised, perhaps we could discuss any work strands that are still outstanding from your point of view (i.e. responding to contacts etc), and I would be delighted to take those up.

Best wishes and Merry Christmas!

Henry

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Dear Adriana,

Firstly, we thank you very much for all the work and passion you brought to the campaign to purchase Blake's Cottage; we are immensely grateful for all your efforts. We are also grateful for the document you sent us recently; this is a helpful summary of the vision formulated during the campaign. Thank you for taking the time to write.

Henry Eliot has reiterated your offer of working on the transition of the Cottage. We thank you for this offer and we hope very much that you will stay in touch with the project: your ideas and feedback will be extremely welcome over the next two years. For the time being, however, we are planning to appoint a single Project Manager only, so we are not looking for anyone else to work on the transition.

We are committed to transparency over the next two years, through newsletters, a regularly updated website and active social media. There will also be a clear channel for communicating ideas or concerns. We hope that you will maintain an active interest in the project and look forward to keeping you up to date on progress.

Warmest regards and many thanks again. We wish you a very Happy Christmas.

Tim Heath, Peter Johns, Michael Phillips

Trustees, Blake Cottage Trust

This was an elegant way to say "No, you can't work here, but we still want your ideas and your contacts". I found it a bit cheeky. There was no response to my questions, posed to Mr Eliot, as to whether if my work and that of the Big Blake Project would be publicly acknowledged. And of course, no answer to the question as to whether if they'd be willing to employ Ms Morgan in the future.

Their response, needless to say, was Mr Heath's response. I knew that Mr Johns and Prof Phillips had no idea of what had happened with the Cottage appeal in the past, and I had the impression that they didn't much care to know. I thought they should, and I made clear they did. I had had enough. This was my response:

Dear Henry, and dear Blake Cottage Trust Trustees,

Many thanks for your kind email and your response to my offer to work in the Cottage project.

I am sure it didn't take Tim by surprise, as to reconsider what my role could be in the future of the Cottage within a year of my leaving the project was clearly suggested when I left last January (please see documents attached).

First of all, I want you all to know that I am satisfied of Henry's sincerity; it was really helpful to talk face to face and clarify misunderstandings. I reiterate my willingness to meet up with all of you, which I think would be equally helpful and take less time in correspondence, which I know can be burdensome as we are all very busy.

I am sincerely grateful for Henry's apologies for whatever insensitivity or carelessness may have got in the way in the past and I found it very generous of him to accept that some things had not been as they should be. I am confident that after our conversation he will try harder to guarantee that this kind of problems are not continued.

In our conversation I forgot to tell him that I expect to be invited to any celebration of the Cottage's success that takes place - in fact last September I suggested to some of the BS Trustees to hold such a celebration, in a spirit of unity, when I realised how little of that existed between everyone involved in this project.

I expect to be invited on dates when I can in fact attend, so I let you know I can't on Monday or Wednesday evenings, nor on Sunday the 10th of January. If I ask you to go through the trouble to accommodate my availability it is because I am convinced that I have an unquestionable right to attend such celebrations, during which I expect my contribution to this project to be acknowledged clearly and openly, and I believe it is the least you can do to redress some of the harm done.

My offer to work in the Cottage comes from a similar conviction: that very few people have a more legitimate right, or a greater objective chance to make her work fruitful, than myself, given my earlier involvement in the project and the passion I have for it, acknowledged by you all.

I discussed this with Henry yesterday; a project manager has by necessity to work with other people, and as regards the building up of links with the organisms and people that I mention in my earlier document and developing from the beginning a solid ground for the creative aspects of the project, given my knowledge of it and the ideas that I have contributed, I know that I would be the right person to work on that and I'd be very happy to collaborate with Henry in that aspect of the project.

Your refusal to take up my offer worries me. You say that my ideas and feedback will be extremely helpful. That is, in fact, work. Since a great deal of the harm done to me in this project has been related to the stealing of my work and the appropriation of some of its fruits, I believe we should be as clear as it is possible as what is sound and fair in this regards.

I have also great concerns because, when I asked Henry whether if he would be willing to appoint for work in the Cottage in any capacity a Trustee of the Blake Society, Paige Morgan, whose involvement in the campaign caused incredible damage to it, who has repeatedly shown to have no probity, capacity to fulfil appropriately the tasks appointed to her, and who holds nevertheless an undue amount of power in the Blake Society, being accountable to none, Henry said that though the possibility has never been mentioned, he didn't have reasons so far for which he might feel it would be inappropriate.

I am sure that after our conversation Henry will be able to see why it would be serious wrongdoing. I found it surprising that I had to remind him what I had already let him and other BS Trustees know last year in this regards, but I think that the irregularities that have made work in the Blake Society and the Cottage project so impossible have been too much for everyone in the BS Committee to assimilate fully, and Henry is certainly not to blame.

All this time I have done everything in my power, as I told Henry yesterday, not to mention the most serious aspects of what is at stake here, hoping that, on the one hand, Tim would finally understand the need for his urgent commitment to truth and fairness, and on the other, that the BS Trustees would be able to guarantee his accountability.

I see your refusal to accept my offer to work on the Cottage in the future as a further example of how I have been made a scapegoat in this whole affair, despite there being very few people who can have a more legitimate claim for involvement in it than myself. I don't think the Blake Cottage Trust as a whole can be aware of this until it knows the whole truth, so it is with a very heavy heart that I feel in the need to say it now.

Tim will know, and there is also a wealth of correspondence to back my words, how much I pleaded with him to stop the harm done and see reason, not to force me to be the one to expose him. But he now has left me no other choice.

I believe now, without a doubt, that the Blake Cottage Trust has to know the degree to which Tim involves his personal life in his work for the Blake Society, and how he did so with the Cottage Campaign as well, nearly bringing both to collapse last year. That is the reason not only of Ms Morgan's involvement in the project, but also behind the appalling mismanagement of it since she briefly joined it and the also appalling bullying that I was subject to. Neither Tim nor Ms Morgan seem to understand that their personal affairs should not interfere with their work for the Blake Society, and the damage this has caused has been enormous, so I worry very much that such a situation could be repeated in the Cottage.

You can be assured that I have enough documents and correspondence that back the above statements as well.

The invoked transparency being essential now, I am obliged to say as well that I myself had started a relationship with Tim before he invited me to join the Blake Society Committee. I didn't know he was already personally involved with another Trustee - it goes without saying I wouldn't have accepted had I known. The way he and Ms Morgan chose to make me aware of the fact could be considered in itself as a severely harming interference of personal matters **within a work environment**.

The way Tim brings his personal life into his work around Blake goes beyond Ms Morgan and, at its moment, myself. It is my view that it is a matter of abuse of power and that his behaviour could be defined as predatory.

I believe no one in the Blake Society Committee can have any doubt whatsoever of the degree to which I tried for several years to do my work appropriately, with integrity and being accountable to everybody, during my relationship with Tim and after it was ended, a long while ago; the endless efforts I made to work with respect for our work and respect for all our colleagues, including Ms Morgan herself, in spite of the constant aggression and on and off bullying I was subject to.

I loved my work for the Blake Society, and the Cottage project is one of the most important working projects in my life. I strove endlessly to find a balance so that all of us could do our work in peace and joyfully, to no avail.

Every time I think this is too much for me and I should let all of you run the Cottage as you wish and wash my hands off it, I think of the letters, emails and comments in Just Giving of all the people who supported us so generously, and then I know I cannot really let it rest until I am satisfied that these people will not be betrayed by allowing the Cottage to become an instrument for Tim's personal advantage, just as the Blake Society has been for quite a while without its Committee knowing what is really going on or, when they do, how to stop it.

I also believe that I have a duty to speak out because I know that I have been severely harmed throughout all this story, and I don't want other people to be exposed to a similar kind of harm.

That I am not saying this out of anger at Tim for whatever happened between us can be corroborated not only by the time it has taken me to finally speak clearly despite all the harm done to me and my work, but also through all the correspondence in which I asked him to behave honourably and, by doing so, also to avoid the chance that he might be exposed. It can also be corroborated in my correspondence to other members of the BS Committee voicing my concerns, my distress at the chance that I might have to do what I am doing now, and my warnings about the possible risks of not challenging him as a Committee.

In my communications with you, my absolute priority is the Cottage. I feel the duty to speak out for the Cottage's sake, and I am confident that the passion, vision, commitment and professional skills that I have brought to a project to which I belong with as much legitimacy as Tim himself, and with a certainly greater moral impeccability, is not in question.

I also think I must speak out for myself. Your refusal to accept my offer to work in the Cottage in the future, in this context, can only be read by me as a further aggression, trampling on my work and appropriation of a great deal of its merits. I am convinced that this is not the Trust's intentions as a whole, but now that you know the context, I am sure that you will understand how this can be read as further abuse of power.

Finally, I think I must speak out to set a precedent regarding a kind of behaviour that should never be tolerated, yet is sadly common in our society. As I told Henry yesterday, I believe that, had I been a man, nothing like this would have happened. I also believe that if it had been a woman indulging in the kind of behaviour Tim has as the Chair, it wouldn't have been tolerated by the Blake Society for one second.

I don't know how much this resonates with all of you as male Trustees of a charity, but I am sure you are all sensitive men, very much aware of how our society is still one that indulges the abuse of power over women in many different ways, something that William Blake would hardly endorse, so I hope that you will understand the need to bring this unpalatable subject to your awareness - if the Cottage is to be what we have envisioned at all, it cannot be allowed to be tainted by the very falsehood that Blake challenged all his life.

Throughout all this sad episode, that last year dangerously undermined my health, I have reiterated what I am saying here: that I know, with not a shadow of a doubt, that despite the truly appalling things that Tim can do in his personal relationships, he is a good and incredibly generous man; that despite the also appalling ways in which he has allowed his personal life to interfere in his work, he has devoted decades of his life to preserve Blake's legacy with unbounded generosity, creativity and tireless work and all of us who love Blake have many reasons to be grateful to him. These contradictions are very hard to negotiate, though I suppose we know, through Blake, how great the tensions between contraries can be.

And as I said in the meeting in which I had initially resigned from the BS in September last year, Tim is of course forgiven. But forgiveness can never mean to allow what is so clearly wrong to perpetuate itself, and

that is Tim's inability to understand the boundaries between his personal and professional life, and between the former and Blake's world. After all my attempts at communication with the BS and the Blake Cottage Trust, and their results, I feel that the moment for absolute clarity has come.

Please find attached some of my correspondence on the three occasions in which attempts were made to take away from me my legitimate right to work on this project; I think it will make things much clearer to you.

A very happy Christmas to you all, and I hope that the new year brings along the possibility of genuine celebration of all that is to be celebrated in Blake's Cottage, and a truly fresh beginning.

With warmest regards,

Mr Eliot sent me their response, in an email in which he still hoped for us to get in touch the following January. The BCT said:

Dear Adriana,

Thank you for your email, and for the points you make, which we have discussed and assimilated.

Our position remains that - at this time - we are intending to appoint a single project manager only. This is for practical reasons: for the next two years the cottage will essentially be a building site. The primary role of the project manager will be to help find the funding and deliver a building fit for use. In the meantime, we will build on the excellent vision documents compiled by you and others during the campaign.

We will welcome any succinct contributions you wish to make, but we will not expect you to work on the project. We remain very grateful to you for all the work you put into the campaign last year, and look forward to staying in touch.

Warm regards,

Blake Cottage Trustees

I wrote back again:

I thank you for your email, and for clarification regarding what the situation with the Cottage will be in the next two years.

I don't believe you do address with any clarity the points I make in my letter, and I am sure that you will appreciate the seriousness of the situation.

Please respond clearly to what I say regarding my presence in any celebration of the Cottage's success and due public acknowledgement of my work in it.

Also please explain if, by saying you will not expect me to work on the project, that means in the next two years or at any point in the future. In either case, please explain clearly why.

And explain also if anyway you are planning to work on my ideas - and if you understand the ethical implications of that.

Explain clearly too, in unequivocal terms, whether if you are willing to allow Ms Morgan or any other person imposed by Mr Heath's personal life to work on the project in the future, and whether if you are willing to challenge Mr Heath's irresponsible and unethical behaviour if need be, as a means to protect the project's integrity.

I hope that you understand your responsibility, and that you remember at all times that the money and support raised for the project do not belong to you.

On 21 December, Mr Eliot wrote to say:

The Blake Cottage Trust trustees are now away until the New Year, but they thank you for your email. They wish you a Happy Christmas and will be in correspondence again in 2016.

On April 2017, I'm still waiting.

In the following chapters we will see how the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust rapidly spiralled down in a volley of lies, manipulation and intimidation, while they allowed Blake's Cottage to fall into further disrepair, until reaching the present moment, when Blake's Cottage is sadly all but abandoned, and in the full control of people who by now have forgotten all possible intention they might have ever had of making of it a place to honour the work and spirit of William Blake.

