

What Happened with the Blake Cottage Appeal

CHAPTER XVI



ALWAYS BE READY TO SPEAK YOUR MIND, AND A BASE MAN WILL AVOID YOU

We have seen in the previous chapter how Mr Henry Eliot was seemingly rewarded by his loyalty to Mr Tim Heath, Chair of the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust; how both the Big Blake Project and I kept waiting for an answer to our request of a meeting with both Charities to sort out the pressing conflicts at hand; how the new Secretary of the Blake Society, Mr Rod Tweedy, became wobblier under the pressure. We also read how I let the Blake Cottage Trust know of the nature of the problems caused by Mr Heath while running the Cottage appeal, something they chose to ignore, and that in their silence they were implicitly admitting a possible open door for Ms Morgan's future interference with the project. It was evident that the Blake Cottage Trust did as Mr Heath said, as was the case with the Blake Society.

I could see clearly that nothing had been learnt from the nightmare we had gone through in 2014; that my efforts to warn the BS Committee about the extraordinary lack of ethics and even common sense in the way Mr Heath had handled the whole appeal had been in vain, and that they were more than ready to hide again their heads in the sand, only this time deeper. So on 20 December I wrote to challenge the interlocutors I had in the Committee, who had been the closest witnesses of the problems we'd had: Mr and Mrs Vinall and Mr Tweedy, again. I also forwarded them the correspondence I'd just had with the BCT:

Dear Rod, Antony and Christina,

Below my recent correspondence with the Blake Cottage Trust.

This is the time when people postulate themselves as Trustees for the Blake Society. The other day I was asking Rod if the BS was willing to challenge the legitimacy of Paige's place there after all the damage done, or the article she put on the BS's public organ on the very day that Tim and I signed the document of our agreement to go on working together, thanks to Antony's enormous efforts at helping us negotiate.

I don't know to what degree Tim himself has been challenged about this whole mess.

I am sorry that I have to bother you with lengthy communications, but I have no other choice since neither the BS nor the BCT take up my offer to meet up and clarify things - I am being treated like a kind of uncomfortable pariah, hardly what I deserve from an organisation, and a project for which I not only worked with such honesty and so hard, but for which I also tried to find all possible solutions in such a messy situation, with as much patience and forgiveness as can be expected from any human being.

I have written to the Charity Commission. I hadn't mentioned the personal aspects of the problem but I will now.

The latest response from the all-male Blake Cottage Trust seems to me a reflection of the really sorry state of our society as a whole, where abuse of power, particularly against women, goes unchallenged. Can anyone really build what we have hoped for Blake's Cottage to be upon such foundations? Don't you think that Blake must be turning in his (unmarked) grave?

And is the Blake Society willing to make a stand for what is right, or not?

I, and my work, have been made a victim of somebody else's appalling behaviour. The process of victimisation through abuse of power is always the same: the injured person is ignored, and the more she tries to speak out and find justice, the more she is treated like an uncomfortable pest that can't keep her mouth shut.

I believe it is about time for all of you to remember the quality, sheer volume, good will and integrity of my work for the Blake Society and the Cottage project, and my loyalty to the Society in the most impossible circumstances.

And I truly believe that, at this point, the Cottage would be much better off in the hands of the National Trust than in the hands of these people.

Make no mistake: if the lid is kept on now, if I and my work are trampled on and the problems are brushed under the carpet, even if I never mention the subject again, the lid will keep on falling and falling off, the problems will raise their ugly head over and over again, and Blake's Cottage will have been soiled, and people's generosity betrayed, in the grossest possible way.

And how sad, that all along the Blake Society just keeps on watching.

I am deeply grateful for all your support to me and your patience in listening throughout this horrid nightmare. But as to secure the integrity of everybody's work and the half a million pounds put together, and the ideals, and the good will, that is not enough. The risks of the ways in which the Cottage can be used for other purposes than those people supported are very real. And truth matters. It always does.

Needless to say, I received no response.

All this while, the "Ms Morgan problem" had been left largely unmentioned by the Blake Society Committee, the way families traditionally deal with their dirty laundry, and with the same kind of superstitious fear. I had allowed them to do that because of the sheer ugliness of the matter at hand, and knowing how vulnerable I was myself if they chose to do what they are doing now: slander me, given my past relationship with Mr Heath. I realized now that, in doing that, I was colluding too, by not calling things by their name, into perpetuating one of the most entrenched forms of abuse of power in our society.

I wouldn't do it anymore. Mr Eliot's and the BCT's suggestion that they were willing to go on stealing my work (my "ideas and feedback") but not to let me get near the Cottage in the future, while perfectly willing to open a door to Ms Morgan if she and Mr Heath felt like going on trampling on a public project, and the Blake Society Trustees' silence when I questioned them about it meant that they had already decided to turn me into a scapegoat and protect Mr Heath and Ms Morgan. This was of course infuriating for me, because of its sheer injustice, but it was far more alarming than that. It meant that there were now **two** organisations willing to allow a single man to snatch away a project for which some 700 hundred people had given support and money out of sheer generosity and trust in us, and that this man was being given green light to do whatever he wished of William Blake's Cottage.

I was not going to keep my mouth shut.

Next thing I did was, early in January, to renew my membership to the Blake Society, so that I could voice my concerns at the next AGM. As I did so, I asked Mr Tweedy for the minutes of the latest AGM and when the report on 2014 would appear in their webpage. He responded to say, namely, that he had no idea what I was talking about (though he was very polite). I never received the minutes.

A few days before the AGM, I also contacted directly another Trustee: the Treasurer, Mr Luis Garrido. He had seemingly wanted to help when the problems had exploded in 2014, yet had remained passive afterwards. I wondered how much he knew of what was going on now that the problems had extended to Felpham. Also, I was gathering the evidence that the Charity Commission had been asking for. Mr Garrido had many grievances against Mr Heath and Ms Morgan and had been in the Blake Society for much longer than me. I didn't want to tell the Charity Commission anything I wasn't sure of or make unfair accusations, so I called him on 8 January and asked him how problems had developed at the beginning with the Blake Society's Journal and Ms Morgan's involvement in it.

A most revealing conversation it was.

Mr Garrido told me that **from the beginning the Journal had been "taboo". That every time he had asked Ms Morgan or the Chair about it they had been very rude to him and that, as I had seen myself during my years in the Committee, the issue could simply not be raised and no one seemed to have a right to question them about it.** He said that he knew that things with the Cottage were wrong; **that he knew I had been pushed out of the project and had my work stolen; that he didn't believe that the Chair had done anything legally wrong, as he was very cunning and had studied law, but that we knew well that legally right does not always mean ethically or morally right and that we all knew very well that everything around both the Cottage and Ms Morgan's presence in the Committee was morally wrong.** I asked him why no one challenged the Chair and he said, "What for?", then added that that would never change anything; that in all his years in the Committee he had seen **that if anyone dared to challenge the Chair, the latter would become very nasty to that person, who would then simply have to leave. That the Chair was a "dictator" and that situation would simply not change, so it was a matter of either "accept it or go".** He said that nevertheless the Chair had become very nice to him of late and that he was very surprised, that he had never believed he could change, and alluded to the occasion when he had wanted to resign in the past, and I intervened prompting him and the Chair to talk and sort out their differences. Mr Garrido said that after that he had had no more personal problems with the Chair, **but that still he knew things were wrong, and that he knew Ms Morgan had also been "very nasty" to fellow Trustee Josie Ms McQuail, as she had been to himself and to his wife, former Trustee Mrs Carol Garrido,** who had left the Society in her frustration because the only projects that got done were those supported by the Chair.

I asked him why nobody had challenged the article Ms Morgan had published in the Blake Society webpage regarding the Cottage at the highest crisis for both the Blake Society and the Cottage project and he told me he had no idea such an article existed. He asked me to send it to him **and promised that he would then ask the Committee to have it removed.** I informed him that I had contacted the Charity Commission, and he said he was not aware of that, though I had already told Mr Eliot (who had informed the Chair) and Mr Tweedy.

For a while I felt a bit reassured. He had sounded quite sincere, and willing to challenge the presence of Ms Morgan's infamous article in their webpage. It was a start, though of course I found it abysmally intriguing why someone who had such firm views about how things stood in the Blake Society Committee would want to still be there.

THE WEAK IN COURAGE IS STRONG IN CUNNING

What followed was one of the most revolting, and clumsy, displays of cunning I have ever seen.

On the evening of 11 January, which was in fact **the eve of the Blake Society AGM,** Mr Garrido sent me the following email, with copy to the Committee (so clumsy he hadn't even noticed that Christmas had already passed!). He was not only talking on behalf of them all; they were all signing:

Dear Adriana,

All the trustees on the Blake Society Committee wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year. We are responding jointly to the concerns regarding the Blake Society that you laid out in your vision document in November.

At our latest meeting, we discussed and agreed happily and unanimously how extremely grateful we all are for the hard work and passion you gave to the Blake Society during your time on the committee. We are also very grateful for all the work and love you lent to the campaign to buy Blake's Cottage.

Thank you for laying out your points so clearly. We are conscious that there has been confusion around the responsibilities of the fundraising campaign team, the Blake Society and the Big Blake Project, due in part to the fluid origins of the campaign and the fact that this was a new venture for all those involved.

Now that the cottage has been successfully purchased, however, we are keen to make the separate roles of the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust as clear as possible. We are working on clarifying the distinction online, and we will forward any future correspondence regarding the cottage to the BCT.

For our part, we have every confidence in the Blake Cottage Trust's ability to manage the work on the cottage, but we are aware of the Blake Society's obligation to maintain oversight of the project, given that many donations came through the society. So we have requested a progress report at each of our committee meetings from now on, which will be an opportunity for us to monitor the work of the BCT trustees and feed in our comments and concerns if necessary.

We have noted - and agreed - your point about the importance of retaining an imaginative and creative vision for the cottage that honours the spirit of Blake, and we will be sure to pay particularly close attention to that aspect of the plans as they develop over the next two years.

We wish you all the very best with all your current endeavours, and would love to see you at one of the Blake Society events this year.

Warmest regards and thanks again. All the best for 2016.

Antony, Catherine, Christina, George, Henry, Josie, Luis, Paige, Rod and Tim

P.S.

Since our last phone call there has been some progress on the matter of removing a certain document that deals with the history of the process of launching the campaign and fund-raising towards acquiring Blake's cottage. There seems to be several options:

Option 1. To remove all documents of that nature whether written by Adriana or by Tim or by Paige.

Option 2. To remove no document at all

Option 3. To remove only the actual document that you object to on the grounds of giving a misleading picture of the history of the process.

This issue is now in our agenda to reach a decision at the next committee meeting. Now we know exactly which document you requested that we should remove and we hope to reach consensus on that matter. I've only just raised this matter with a few committee members and we have not yet had a full discussion of this matter, but will do so at the next committee meeting, and thus for now this is work in progress.

You are in all our hearts and the whole committee took great care in honouring our debt of gratitude towards you as well as our warmest feelings of love and respect that you deserve so much. That is why this email is entitled Combined Blake Society Message to Adriana, because every committee member cared to come forward to back this message up with their respect and approval.

Yours

Luis

To start with, though allegedly being a response to the document I had sent them two months before, it still wasn't addressing any of the issues raised there. However, the most insulting thing of all was that the letter was signed by Ms Morgan as well, sending me their "warmest feelings of love and respect". They were clearly trying to placate me, **on the eve of the AGM, because they knew by now that I would attend, and because they knew I had contacted the Charity Commission.** But it was far too gross. I could hardly believe that the man who three days previously had painted such a sinister picture of the Blake Society Committee could now be penning such a letter. I responded thus:

Dear Luis, and dear Trustees of the Blake Society,

Many thanks for your kind letter, that I deeply appreciate, and a very Happy New Year to you all as well.

I am grateful for your response to the document I sent you in November, though I have to say it has seemed a bit too long a wait to me.

You mention the "confusion around the responsibilities of the fundraising campaign team", "due in part to the fluid origins of the campaign and the fact that this was a new venture for all those involved".

Those words express only a small part of what really happened in this rather sorry affair. Some of you have been kind and patient enough to hear me out, and do know that what has happened here is rather more serious than that, so it saddens me that even now, that truth still seems to be avoided, for the truth involves a severe lack of ethics, and a degree of mismanagement and bullying that beggars belief. It was that lack of ethics, that mismanagement and that bullying, that made me leave the Blake Society and the Cottage project.

I was not allowed to tell the details of what had happened, and how, in the meeting we had in September 2014, when I had initially resigned. I have repeatedly requested to have a meeting with you, the BS Committee, since the news of the Cottage's purchase came out, and I have been ignored.

So even though I appreciate wholeheartedly the good intentions behind your letter, and though I do understand fully well how difficult this whole issue is for every single one of you as Trustees of the Society, I have to say that I find your explanation of the nature of the conflict far from accurate.

I am pleased to hear that you are taking seriously your obligation to maintain oversight over the Cottage project. I wish I also shared your confidence in the Blake Cottage Trust's ability to honour it and safeguard its integrity, but so far I have no reason to do so. In my recent correspondence with the Blake Cottage Trust, all I have found is what I can only define as the continuation of the willingness to appropriate my work, placate me with kind words, and of abuse of power.

You say that the whole committee has taken great care in honouring its debt of gratitude towards me. I know indeed that you are grateful and many of you have repeatedly and sincerely expressed that gratitude. There is no reason why it should have been otherwise, given the amount and quality of my work for the

Blake Society and my loyalty to it even now, when I contacted some of you to warn you of the danger it was in given the anger of people in Felpham towards the Society as a whole.

But deeds speak more powerfully than words, and I am not sure that I have received all the actual support from the Committee that should have been expected by a loyal and hardworking colleague who was subject, along with her work, to unspeakable harm.

You talk also about the article that I have mentioned in the Blake Society webpage. That Options 1 and 2 are even being considered, in view of everything that has happened here, is so preposterous it's almost funny - yet at this stage I cannot say I am surprised.

And yet, I am aware that this whole issue has been and still is hard for all of you, and that it is an undeserved burden; it is very unfair indeed that you all are put in this position through the recklessness, to put it mildly, of a few individuals.

I know that most of you are sincere and I accept your words gratefully. Yet I see that Paige herself is signing this letter as well. I want to make it clear that I do not accept these words from her.

I am used to this rather obvious cunning from her, that has been as constant as her many aggressions towards me, and her lack of respect for me and for the Committee as a whole, and it won't take her too far this time either.

She's signing this letter today, on the very eve of the Blake Society's AGM, when she has been owing an explanation and an apology to myself, to the Blake Society as a whole, and to the Cottage Project, for well over a year now. She was openly welcome to the Cottage project, and betrayed the trust put in her. She never believed to this day that any of us deserved a single word from her as an explanation of what was going on, not even an attempt at defending herself if she believed she was being wronged in any way. She felt, as usual, that she was above all rules, above all of us, because of her personal relationship with Tim.

What good her signing of this letter, today, can possibly do now?

Paige has been given plenty of chances to speak before, and up to a few weeks before I left the Blake Society last year I opened that door to her, and Tim, yet again: I urged them to be transparent, to stop the secrecy, to talk, be honest and contribute to sorting things out. She never bothered to answer, and Tim called me to bully, and to threaten me.

It is about time that the Blake Society faces the reality of the harm that Tim's involvement of his personal life in his work around Blake has caused and keeps on causing. I know that I, and my work, that has been of great worth, have been severely harmed because of that. Paige herself has undoubtedly been harmed too, and has also been misled into believing that she's entitled to power within the Society and to do as she wishes because of her relationship with Tim, for it is rather clear that she doesn't understand the meaning of work ethics or the difference between right and wrong. More people will surely be harmed if the Blake Society goes on turning a blind eye to this problem.

Sorry to be so blunt, and I am deeply sorry too if I cannot say that your very kind letter makes me believe a real change is underway, or that Blake's Cottage is in good hands. The timing of the letter is also a bit strange, and I wonder why it has taken so long for the Blake Society's Committee as a whole to get in touch with me, after everything that we all have been through.

I really wish I didn't have to say these words, that I could spare you, and myself, the deep upset, the time, the trouble. But truth matters, and it has been injured for far too long.

I am sure that after all this you will indeed keep an eye on the Cottage. We all will, we are all worried and sad. It is utterly sad in fact that none of us has had any real reason to celebrate anything at all after its purchase. For the time being, the response I have received from the Blake Cottage Trust has been a confirmation that things are not as they should be at all.

I believe that the reason why Mr Garrido has been willing to undergo so much abasement is his and his wife's pet project, and the reason why they joined the Blake Society: the marking of William Blake's grave in Bunhill Fields. Mr and Mrs Garrido carried out a superb research many years ago to locate the exact place where Blake's remains are buried, and all those years the Society has

been saying that it's trying to mark the grave with a piece by a renowned stonecutter. Mr and Mrs Garrido had many grievances because the project was always relegated, and had been close to resigning for this reason. For years no one, not even them, was raising funds for that project, that was as quiet as... well, a grave. When we finally decided it was time to get going, the very first funds were raised by another Trustee who is no longer in the Committee, Mr Simeon Gallu, and myself, but even after that, the project was buried in oblivion. Only now that the Cottage has been acquired has the Blake Society started raising funds for it again. The "success" of the Cottage was the carrot that Mr Heath used to encourage Mr Garrido's patience during my last two years in the Committee. It is clear now that Mr Garrido is willing to go through any kind of ignominy at the heart of the Blake Society to be able to "honour" William Blake with a piece of stone.

The reader may have noted that in the phone conversation we had prior to the AGM, he mentioned that Mr Heath was cunning, since he did things that were unethical yet not strictly illegal. Well, curiously enough, in January this year Mr Garrido sent me a letter in which he reproached me for speaking out, adding:

"None of us is perfect but no laws have been broken, your accusations are too much and they would never stand up in court in any case and what is more they lack legal substance."

AGM, JANUARY 2016

On 12 January, prior to the Blake Society's AGM, Mrs Searle and I met for the first time since I had left the Cottage appeal. At some point, she told me how much she had always admired my passion for the Cottage project. I told her I found it odd to hear her say that, because Mr Heath always told me that she and the Big Blake Project didn't like my passion, or me, at all, and that that was the reason why it was best for me not to attend meetings with them. She told me it had always been the opposite, and that to them Mr Heath said that I couldn't attend because I was very busy.

It was getting a tad difficult to be swallowing all of Mr Heath's concentrated venom, but there was more to come at the AGM.

When I walked in I saw Mrs Vinall, visibly shaken. Mr Vinall looked at me with undisguised hostility. To my astonishment, after being informed that Mr Tweedy (who was not present) had stepped down as Secretary though remained a Trustee, we heard that the new Secretary was Mr Antony Vinall himself. This was the man who, the last time I'd seen him, had warned his wife about nominating herself for that post, asking her if she hadn't seen enough with how awful it had been for me and Mr Tweedy.

At the AGM, Mr Garrido acknowledged my work for the Cottage project. Approval for the past year's AGM's minutes was voted. I could not vote because I didn't receive those minutes, though I had asked the then Secretary to please send them to me.

Then Mr Garrido emphasised that a new Trust had had to be created to administer the Cottage because the Blake Society Committee, with then 11 Trustees, was not big enough to handle such a big project. Soon after he was contradicted by Mr Heath's explaining that the Blake Cottage Trust consists of only 3 individuals.

Then Mr Heath gave his report on the Cottage, with no acknowledgement whatsoever of the Big Blake Project's or my involvement in it. He didn't mention either any concrete plans for the Cottage, nor Mr Eliot's supposed appointment as Project Manager.

Mr Heath said several things about the Cottage project that were false. One of the most insulting was to say **that the Cottage had been conceived as "a blank canvas" on which people could "project their desires for it", when the whole of the campaign was ran after a painstakingly conceived and concrete vision, and that was what people gave had given their money and support for.** Mrs Searle from the Big Blake Project challenged him about this but he did not respond. He then

went on to say how, when the campaign had seemed to fail, he had “by miracle” secured the rather substantial sum of £400,000 that made the purchase of the Cottage possible from a generous anonymous donor. He emphasised that the donor had “set no conditions at all” for giving that money. This emphasis, in view not only of the large amount of money itself, but also of the false information the Chair had been giving all along and the fact that he secured this money on his own, with no involvement from anyone who had been responsible for the campaign apart from himself, I found suspicious.

I then read a statement raising my concerns regarding the Cottage. After a heavy silence the Chair said that that was a statement, but had I any questions? I said he knew I did, as I had posed those questions to the Blake Society and Blake Cottage Trust Committees many times and hadn't received any answer, nor had my requests for a meeting with both Trusts been heard. He didn't respond to this either, or to any single concrete point of those raised in my statement.

He kept on saying things like “we set up the Trust”. I challenged him telling him that there had been no “we”, that he had set it up by himself and secretly. He kept silent, did not even bother to contradict me.

Mrs Searle voiced more of her concerns. They were not addressed either, despite the obsequious emails that the Big Blake Project had been receiving for some four months from Mr Eliot and Mr Tweedy, promising they would hold a meeting with the BBP that has never taken place, and promising as well that their work for the appeal would be acknowledged and honoured. **What the Blake Society delivered instead of its promises was a terrible insult, since Mr Heath called the Big Blake Project “a pressure group”.**

Mrs Searle said she found that offensive, when they had been running the campaign together with the Blake Society and raising money on its behalf. Mr Heath chose not to respond. To this day no one knows why the Society's ingratiating letters to the Chair of the Big Blake Project have been transformed into an entrenched refusal to acknowledge their work and into continued affronts. When asked why he had not allowed me to be in the Blake Cottage Trust despite all that the project owed to me or to be involved in the future of the Cottage, Mr Heath said that I was a poet and that was my area of expertise, when what the Cottage needed was good administrators. **That was of course more of Mr Heath's nonsense, when I had been so praised by them all both for my work as a Trustee and Secretary of the Blake Society, and for everything I did to make the Cottage campaign possible.**

Something important to note is that, **as has been the case all along throughout the Cottage problems, at no moment have the Chair nor any other Trustee had anything to say against my work or my person in public. That is because they have nothing to say, and that is why they have resorted to slandering me in private instead.**

At the AGM the Chair also said that since a Trustee doesn't own things, I must be wrong in believing that he had full power and control over the Cottage. I told him that that was precisely the point: that he needed to understand that the Cottage was not his to do with it as he wished. He didn't respond to that either. The concerns raised by me and Mrs Searle were left unanswered and they moved to the voting of the Blake Society Trustees for 2016.

They read the nominations, which included Ms Morgan, and submitted them to the AGM's approval. I tried to object to Ms Morgan's presence but was not allowed to voice my concerns in any way. I was simply not allowed to speak at all. Mr Vinall shut me down by saying that since there weren't more nominations than available places in the Committee, there were no grounds for an objection – **this, when they had just submitted the nominations for our approval minutes before.** This was the

man who, the last time I'd seen him, had voiced how furious he was at Mr Heath's secrecy over the Cottage appeal, who had told me that he knew that my work for the Cottage had been stolen away from me, who said repeatedly that Mr Heath liked to play games, who had repeatedly said that the unethical behaviour of Mr Heath and Ms Morgan during the appeal had set a precedent for the Committee so that it could not be repeated in the future.

When the AGM was over, this man and Mr Garrido asked me to send them the statement I had read, "for the minutes".

Later in the year (presumably after he had had his event), Mr Rod Tweedy left the Blake Society Committee because of his disapproval of how the Cottage appeal was handled, but refused to speak out or contact the Charity Commission. The Blake Society tried to patch up his resignation and, for a whole year, lied in its webpage by simply omitting his name from the list of Trustees that had indeed nominated themselves that year (I won't say that were elected because as we have seen, **there were no elections, since they were in such a rush to silence me, so for a whole year too, the Blake Society, breaking its constitution, functioned without an elected Committee**). The minutes of this AGM that they published in their webpage and are still there now were riddled with lies. I have commented those minutes in this blog before. You can find them in the Documents section, with my comments included (<https://blakecottage.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/comments-to-minutes-blake-society-agm-2016.pdf>). I also talked about them and the AGM in the blog section (<https://diazenciso.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/the-minute-particulars/>).

Anyway, on my way out after the 2016 AGM, Mrs Vinall, looking very distraught, asked me if I was OK. I told her I could not believe that the entire Committee was condoning so many lies and corruption. I asked her how was it possible that no one challenged Ms Morgan's presence in the Committee. **She said she didn't know how to challenge it since "she's never around, there's nothing to challenge". I reminded her of her unreliability regarding the Journal and she said, "How can I challenge her about a Journal that doesn't exist, that I have never seen?"**

Ladies and gentlemen, again: the Blake Society.



When I got home that night, Mrs Vinall sent me a kind text message saying that she hoped I was OK. But it wasn't bringing comfort anymore. I am grateful for her kindness even now and I know how hard this unedifying story has been for her. I am sure she wished in her heart that none of these horrors had taken place. But she was too faint-hearted, and therefore failed to understand what her duties were as a Trustee. I cannot judge her too harshly though – it must be very hard to live with the truth of the kind of things that her husband has done in regards to Blake's Cottage and his involvement in the Blake Society.

In the small hours after the AGM, I wrote to Mrs Vinall:

Dear Christina,

I wish there was an easy way to say how much I appreciate your text message, your support and concern for me, how grateful I am from deep in my heart, and yet how sad I am at what I have seen lately in the Blake Society.

Sorry if I write such long letters... it is the despair of trying to be understood, heard, while feeling I am screaming in the desert.

I was remembering last year's AGM: how hard I tried for all of us to present a united front then despite the horrendous problems we had, to end the year, and my presence in theBS, in peace, despite Tim's bullying me even while organising the event that followed it. How happy I was I had invited [.] to

give a meaningful talk about Blake (so sorry you missed it!), the flowers I took care to take to the AGM hoping that along with [. . .]'s talk, some kind of light would hold us all, in safety and in peace.

I have been indeed distressed about having to do what I'm doing. Today, suddenly feeling I wouldn't be able, and trying to gather courage, I spent an hour and a half at St James's, meditating (I hope Christ will forgive me if it was Buddhist meditation!), and a lot of that meditation was "May anger not take the best of me, may I be able to speak the truth without harming others." As usual through many awful moments in this story, the meditation (of peace, of compassion, of light) was directed to me, to Tim, to Paige, to Parul, to everybody entangled in all this harm.

As I gather the evidence for the Charity Commission I see again all the care I have put in being clear, in speaking for truth without being unfair, in giving everybody a chance to talk, in finding ways for all of us to work together with integrity.

After the AGM tonight I felt almost ridiculous, still caring about our shared humanity when there is so little of that left in the Blake Society.

I can't sleep, I am shell-shocked and feel ill. I am shell-shocked for having heard Tim speak, for seeing the empty, vacuous shell of who used to be a man; for seeing that there is really no point at all in making any more effort at reaching any kind of truth or fairness, of speaking with clarity, because he's gone well beyond any wish to have any integrity at all, it is clear it has stopped being a concern for him altogether. I am shell shocked because after what seems like a life time worrying that the destruction Tim causes may mean his own destruction, I realise now that he has already died, a long time ago. His soul has gone.

But I am shell shocked too to see that the BS will stand behind him. That I was not allowed to object to Paige's presence in the Blake Society, when so many of you in the Committee know that what is going on is wrong, that both she and Tim have behaved wrong, when I know that many of you have been frustrated, angry, and do know that I was sacrificed to this awfully sordid, grotesque reality.

I am very hurt that the Committee is ending up treating me like "the angry ex lover who is jealous and wants revenge", therefore trying to silence me, when you all have seen over and over again how much I have tried to be fair, when you know that I welcomed this woman into the Cottage project despite how hard it was for me, when you know that up to the last minute I opened a door for her and Tim to behave honourably. I have received a wound from all of you that is very profound, because I know that you know this is wrong, and I also know that you know I have been harmed in a horrible way, that our work and the Cottage project have been harmed perhaps beyond repair, that my work was stolen, and yet are treating me as Tim is trying to treat me: like a hysterical, hurt lover... Are we ever going to end this kind of abuse towards women? Can we, ever? What kind of utterly sick society allows things like this to happen over and over again?

When I asked you how can you all possibly condone Paige's presence in the Blake Society, you said something about not knowing how to challenge her since she's hardly around. That's part of the problem, she's like a ghost who does very little yet wreaks havoc whenever it is her whim. I also mentioned the Journal and you said something about not knowing how to challenge that since the Journal doesn't exist, you've never seen it.

Well, that's part of the problem. Tim gave her the Journal, she's the sole editor and there hasn't been a Journal for some six years, and the explanations they give about why it is so, when they deign to do that at all, are all contradictory, including Tim saying to me once that he wouldn't read it himself as it was, that it wasn't ready... he said that to me in 2012.

What on earth can justify such a situation within a Charity? You tell me, because I simply can't understand.

The lack of respect of both Tim and Paige towards the Committee as a whole has been reflected in many ways. One of the most grotesque has been their communications through the long-distance conferences during our meetings. Once Tim himself moved the computer towards me so that I could have no doubt whatsoever that while we were having our meeting, they were having their personal communications too.

What I saw today has been a kind of existential blow: the nature of human psychology. How easy it is to fear those who use and abuse others, how easy it is to yield to their power.

Mind you, it is a rather innocuous example of that if compared with what I happen to be reading right now: Primo Levi. But still, it is a sobering, and very sad realisation. And we're still talking about some £600k and a public project.

What does Tim want to project on that absurd "blank canvas" of the Cottage that he invented today at the AGM? I worry, Christina. I have told you before why, and that is one of the reasons why I don't simply wash my hands off this whole mess.

Please think of what the Institute of Imagination really is in South Molton Street. It is nothing, and never has been. It was a vague, grandiose, ambitious project that he had, that sounded beautiful yet never materialised. [. . .] And even if this rather dark part of the problem did not exist, all the rest is so evidently wrong, so unethical, such a bunch of lies, that Blake must be cursing and turning in his grave.

I thank you for your concern for me. I am well, I am happy in general, with my own life, a book coming out this year, and I have just joined the board of Trustees of [. . .] which seems to be a much safer and more serious place for a Trustee.

Thankfully there is a wealth of beauty and joy in my life despite this horror.

But it is a horror, and tonight has been a devastating live show of it for me.

One day there will be justice, one day this harm will be redressed, even if it is after all of us are dead. One day Blake's Cottage will be a place that honours Blake with dignity and generosity. But for the time being, the Cottage is being splattered with mud, and it is heartbreaking.

A big hug and much love,

Her response the following day touched me:

Dear Adriana,

I realise I don't really know what to say - except you really are in my thoughts and prayers. And want you to know how much I feel for you - and the whole ghastly situation.

With deepest blessings & love,
Christina x

I answered back:

Dear Christina,

Thank you, and thank you for the honesty. This is very hard for everybody and can leave us all speechless at moments.

But I think that I wouldn't know what to say either if I were at the moment part of the Blake Society Committee, and allowing this to happen. Inaction is action too.

I thank you for your words, or lack of them, and for your prayers. I also know that deeds are sometimes needed too.

I know it is not easy, the situation is so ghastly indeed, and it is very unfair that Tim - and Paige, let's not forget that - have drawn us all into the midst of what at moments seems to be like the very jaws of hell. It is very unfair, not only for me. It is very unfair for every single one of us and I know that. But still, it is the reality, and we humans only have reality to deal with, unfortunately.

I do care a lot for you Christina, I know you care too and am grateful, and I hope that one day we will be able to leave this nightmare behind.

Much love,

Adriana x

I spent the night after my return from the AGM staring into darkness, unable to move. I felt as if my veins had been injected with something venomous. I wasn't even thinking anymore of the concrete individuals participating in this outrage. I just kept on asking myself, how can people

behave like this? It was a moment of true existential crisis, of losing faith in humanity, with a horrendous sense of paralysis.

It didn't last long though.

WHAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

The following day I sent to Mr Vinall and Mr Garrido the statement I had read at the AGM, just as he had requested, with the following email:

Dear Luis and Antony,

Please find attached my statements prepared for the AGM last Tuesday: the one I read, and the one I was not allowed to read.

I copy to Josie and Rod, who could not be at the AGM, so that they too know what I had to say.

I decided in the end to send this to you including the part I did not read in the first statement: my concerns regarding the Cottage's future management. I didn't read it at the moment because the issue was not mentioned in Tim's report, but it is a serious issue - the plans, in fact, *should* have been mentioned - and I am making sure that the Charity Commission knows my concerns about this as well.

I don't really know why I bother to send you this. The Blake Society Committee's pretenses of accountability and transparency have become an abject show of disregard to truth, and of the intricate mechanics of a cover up.

The minutes are likely to be watered down anyway, subject to Tim's approval of his version of reality. I will be very interested to see how the minutes reflect the way I was silenced and not allowed to object to Paige's nomination as a Trustee seconds after the list of nominations was submitted for the approval of the AGM.

Thank you Luis for having been the only person at the AGM to acknowledge my work for the Cottage campaign. It is greatly appreciated.

All I have left to say is that I should have contacted the Charity Commission ages ago. In fact, all of you in the Committee should have done that yourselves. I don't know if you're aware of that.

Mr Vinall responded:

Dear Adriana,

Just to let you know that I've received your message and have printed your two statements to ensure they're kept safe.

The Executive Committee, of which you were a member, took a decision about the management of the cottage project and the ultimate ownership of the cottage which seemed right at the time. Subsequent developments have not changed my view that it was the only sensible and responsible approach. If the Charity Commission enquires into the matter, I'd be very surprised if they found any evidence of mismanagement or - their main concern - misuse of the Society's funds.

I must also add that from my experience of serving on the Committee I do not recognise the basis of your objections to Paige.

I had had enough. I had been far too polite, far too civil. It was about time to speak to these people with a degree of clarity they couldn't possibly misread. I responded, not to him alone, but to the whole Committee:

Dear Antony, and dear Trustees of the Blake Society,

It would be wrong to believe that the Charity Commission's concerns are only about the transfers of funds from one bank account to another. Misuse of funds includes the betrayal of the foundations of a project for which people gave money to, and the cover up of severe mismanagement and bullying in order to serve the personal affairs of a few individuals.

It is strange that you say you do not recognise the basis of my objections to Paige's work. First things first: even if you don't, that doesn't give you the right to silence someone who raises an objection at the AGM.

But the issue is deeper than that: for a time I thought that you were one of the Trustees whose judgement I could trust the most, though that belief obviously changed at the AGM last Tuesday.

We have met in person several times. On those occasions I have expressed to you and Christina (and to Rod when I have seen him separately) my concerns. I have left documents with you explaining the work I have done for the campaign, the little Paige did, and did wrong, and the problems her involvement in the campaign caused. You agreed with me, and were also disgusted when I showed you the article she had published in our webpage.

In all those occasions you have expressed, unequivocally, your anger at Tim and at his way of managing things, your anger at the mismanagement of the Journal, your frustration at the lack of communication, how last year you had to add the Cottage as AOB in the meetings' agenda to try to get some information from Tim who kept you all in the dark about it; you have told me that you know that my work has been stolen and others are taking credit for it, and that the Cottage's success wouldn't have been possible without me, etc. etc.

I have noticed that you are very careful not to say what you think in writing, but I know what we have discussed in person, and your clear, expressed anger and disgust about this whole situation.

I know it is considered good practice not to say in writing what one thinks, in a world that seems to be founded on mistrust of others and lack of confidence in one's own good judgement and convictions, but I have heard you, and it is important that the rest of the Committee is informed about the duplicity of your communications.

I know you are all afraid, and that this is an unfair burden on all of you, but it is not me who has originated the problem. It has been Tim, and Paige. I find it a very interesting case in human psychology, how your fear is seemingly making you gang up against me. But isn't that the reason why whistleblowers sometimes need legal protection?

Let's make some points rather clear, because I think that we're not understanding each other:

I know that at the moment the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust have a power that I do not have, isolated as I have been left by all of you.

I know that the person, or business, who gave the big donation must be very powerful if he/it can afford something like that.

I know that I am vulnerable here, first, because I happen to have felt much and profound affection for Tim, and some of you have seen me very distressed and overwhelmed with grief and worry.

Second, because I am a woman, and all of you are showing rather clearly how our society still condones the abuse of power against women in any organisation, in any stage of life. You think it is OK that the Chairman invites as a Trustee to the Blake Society a woman he's having a relationship with without informing her that he already has a lover in the Committee; you think it is OK that this woman is then bullied and isolated in all her work for the Society; that the Chair tries to humiliate her when she becomes uncomfortable by bringing in another of his female friends who has interfered in several Blake Society's events even without being a member of the Society (she's giving a talk on my birthday, by the way, that's the Chair's five-year-old level of behaviour). You think it is all right that the Chair and his American lover steal away this woman's work and bully her until she nearly ends up in hospital and the Cottage campaign is floundering and about to be destroyed, and to ask her as a Committee to yet go on working for the Society and for the Cottage and save the reputation of both. You think that it is OK that the Chair is a predatory man who brings all of his personal affairs (real or imagined) into his work around Blake.

But you think that it is wrong that the woman we're talking about speaks out. And you think it is wrong that she tries to protect the integrity of a public project that involves around £600,000 and the good will and generosity of innumerable people.

(Not very Blakean, is it? But so be it, it is well known that Albion is still fast asleep.)

Then, I come from another country, so I may not know some of the intricacies in this society that help people without principles to get away with whatever they want.

Therefore, and since I seem to be a kind, forgiving person (a Buddhist, on top of it all!, aren't Buddhists just nice, passive people?), it must seem rather easy to you all to silence me. The lack of self-respect you seem to have as a Committee contributes to your having no qualms about trampling over truth in the process.

You had no way to know, but I will tell you now, that I have never been silenced by anyone. The person writing to you is one who has held public heated discussions in the press with some of Mexico's major intellectuals; one who has challenged repeatedly, working with others some times, others entirely on her own, the Mexican Government and the Mexican Army regarding their many crimes; one who has visited several Mexican Ambassadors in the UK to raise concerns about human rights; one who has openly supported indigenous organisations opposed to the government, and one who has published letters in the press challenging a murderous and corrupt Mexican President, when the risks of doing so were severe. If you care to take a look in the press at the kind of things that can happen in Mexico when you speak out, you will have an idea of the kind of risks I am willing to take in order to defend truth, and justice.

The risks I have taken in the past in doing so are certainly much bigger than incurring the anger of Tim Heath, and the anger, fear, or both, of the members of all the Trusts that he may be chairing at the moment, including all the harems that they may be capable to hold.

I am not saying that my defence of truth is or will always be successful. What I am saying is that if my approach to all this mess: trying endlessly for all of us to talk together and sort things out properly, like decent human beings; having warned the Blake Society of the danger it was in because of Tim's appalling behaviour; my repeated forgiveness, my trusting of some of you, has been misconstrued as naivety or weakness, you have all been sorely deceived. I am not the kind of person that cowers before power, and I have had far mightier opponents than the Blake Society, which I have served with impeccable loyalty and hard work, as you all have recognised over and over again.

Your statement in this email, Antony, and your behaviour in the AGM, after all the times I have heard you express your unequivocal anger and disgust regarding this whole situation, are one of the most awful surprises I have come across in this sorry affair. True, I have no evidence, you never put what you thought in writing. But that doesn't erase my memory, and if you believe that seeing such a U-turn in someone who seemed to understand the problem and support me will demoralise me and finally silence me, you are wrong: this gives me even more reasons to speak out.

I don't know what the Charity Commission will do in the end, that's up to them. But I do know that I have evidence of a level of mismanagement, lack of transparency and condoning of abuse in a Charity that beggars belief.

I know too that one day the Cottage will be restored to its dignity. And I know that Blake has never been more betrayed, that in his own life-time indeed he received few attempts at humiliating him and throwing mud at him more despicable than the present behaviour of the Blake Society.

Mr Vinall's response, though brief, contained further lies:

I feel I must make clear that "anger and disgust" towards other Trustees is not in any way a correct description of how I responded when I gave your concerns and grievances a patient and sympathetic hearing. At the Committee's request I was trying to act as a confidential mediator and keep the trust of both sides in ending a rift which was hindering the Committee's work, so that you could remain as Secretary.

I continue to believe that the only possible way forward is for everyone who cares about the Society and the cottage project to find ways of working together constructively.

So I put him right:

Dear Antony,

1. You are talking about the time in which you were kindly acting as mediator between Tim and myself in 2014. I am referring to that period but also to the personal meeting we had in September last year after the Cottage was purchased.

2. On both occasions, you were not simply giving my concerns and grievances a patient and sympathetic hearing - I find you saying that patronising and disingenuous. You were concerned yourself, and you did manifest anger and disgust, unequivocally, and have said to me at least on two occasions, in person, that Tim "likes to play games".

3. Your wording regarding your work as mediator "so that I could remain as Secretary" is also a bit vague. I had resigned, I did not wish to remain as Secretary. ***The Committee asked me to do so, and not to speak out, and I remained in the BS and the Cottage campaign in good faith after I was asked to do so, despite the bullying I had been subject to, because you were afraid of the damage of the reputation of both the BS and the Cottage appeal.***

4. I agree with you entirely: "the only possible way forward is for everyone who cares about the Society and the cottage project to find ways of working together constructively."

Frankly, I don't think any of you cares more for the Cottage than myself, since I seem to be the only one concerned with ethics and truth in the first place. ***I have asked repeatedly to be invited to a meeting with the BS and the BCT Committees, together or separately, so that I can be heard out by all of you and we can all clarify things in person and move on constructively, and have been refused.***

I have reminded the BCT that I am willing to work in the Cottage in the future and I have been told that they are very happy to use my ideas and my contacts, but not for me to work there at all.

5. I won't waste any more time or energy spelling things out to the Blake Society Committee over and over again when it is clear that truth is not the priority among you, and this email of yours is one of the clearest proofs I have of that, so please do not write to me again unless any of you has any concrete and honest thing to say or proposal to make. I have given enough of my time and energy to the Blake Society, and I have been repaid with an ungratefulness and lack of honourability that is not worth my efforts.

Mr Vinall didn't answer again, thank goodness, but Mr George Fort did, with copy to all:

Dear Adriana (et al.),

I would welcome a meeting between you and the Committee, to talk these issues through. I have not been aware of the Committee refusing to meet you; I was not aware that such a meeting was ever on the table.

I definitely think such a meeting should happen pronto so that we can all give voice to our grievances - those of us that have them - talk them through, and come out the other side with everyone happy.

All the best,
George

Mr Fort had joined the Committee in 2014, and it was sad that during his first year as a Trustee he had to go through such horrors. I do believe that he has been timorous, but he has been the one single Trustee to acknowledge my request to meet up with the Committee, and to open the door. In doing so, he did show some courage, being as he was one of the newest, and youngest, members of the Committee. His email also shows that my requests for such a meeting had been hidden from the whole Committee. I answered to him:

Dear George,

Thank you so much for your email.

I have indeed been saying I am willing to meet up with any of you or attend any meeting deemed necessary to clarify things and have put at both Trust's disposal the documents I have that may help

towards that clarification since I sent my document last November, and I have insisted on the need for me to attend a meeting in several emails to some of the Trustees.

I don't know anymore what can be expected from such a meeting when at the moment several of the Trustees have shown quite clearly that truthfulness is not on their agenda, so obviously I am not interested in going to a meeting where I will have people ganging up against me as a practical demonstration of the meaning of the word "scapegoat".

But if enough of you think it can still be useful in any way, I'm willing to attend. To make the procedures easier and clearer though, I think you should all be rather clear regarding the fact that should need arise for me to protect myself from harm, I will.

I have been already severely harmed with all this business while the Blake Society just stood watching, when not actively engaged in the harming, and I will not let that happen again.

I never heard from the Blake Society Committee again. That despite all that had happened I was still willing to meet up with them must have been too scary. I am grateful though to Mr Fort's efforts. At the AGM this year he approached me kindly to say hello. I was very cold to him. I was very angry with the Committee, but I do regret to have met with such coldness his gesture of friendliness. If he ever gets to read this testimony, I hope he knows I'm sorry. He was always a kind and peaceful presence in that Committee.

Mr Fort is no longer a Blake Society Trustee.

The following chapter will deal with more lying to the public of the Blake Society and the Blake Cottage Trust, the "open day" they organized in 2016 using publicly the name of another organisation without their consent; my decision to make this matter public, and contact our famous benefactors, and some correspondence I held with some Blake Society Trustees and one ex Trustee that throw some light on the state of cowardice and delusion from which the Blake Society has been working while taking money from the public.

