



the
big Blake
project



CALL TO ARMS! Blake Festival

We are improvising a festival named 'Golgonooza' to launch the crowd-funding campaign to buy William Blake's cottage in the next 100 days and need your help

BACKGROUND

THE CAMPAIGN TO BUY Blake's Cottage, the birthplace of the English Jerusalem was launched at the Houses of Parliament on Mon 7 July. As the Tour de France sailed by, Barry Shearman MP hosted an event that highlighted the importance of this campaign. Uniquely, Blake wrote the words to *Jerusalem* in Felpham. Words that continue to inspire our nation, words highlighted in international exhibitions (such as the current British Council exhibition *Clockwork Jerusalem*). Be it in celebration of sporting triumph or facing disasters, Royal weddings or marches for justice, *Jerusalem* is never far away. This song of Prophets and Kings appeals to both radicals and nationalists alike; hence the call for it to be adopted as the English national anthem. Since the visions received here and across the Downs gave rise to those rallying words, it is true to say this is the birthplace of



Jerusalem. Blake spoke of this whole area with a new name, Beulah. However, Blake – rebel with a cause – created much more than Jerusalem, and it's important that people from across the world have the opportunity to come and see where he experienced these visions and celebrate the work of this great polymath.



The purchase of Blake's cottage in Felpham, about a mile East of Bognor's town centre, is part of a three-point plan to establish the area as one of great cultural significance with a festival planned for

September and the construction of a Centre of the Imagination, possibly on the Regis site if it had local support.

THE COTTAGE

EARLIER THIS YEAR the Blake Society secured an option to buy the cottage for £520,000 – a considerable reduction on the market price.

This is the first time it has become available on the market in 88 years – an opportunity not to be missed! We envisage that the cottage will become a centre of creativity and innovation continuing the work begun by Blake and will be an extraordinary asset for Bognor Regis, and the nation. Examples of literary homes which bring people to this country include: Austen's house at Chawton, the Brontës' house in the village of Howarth, and Wordsworth's cottage in the Lake District, Turner's house in Twickenham and Hogarth's house in Hounslow to name but a few. Let us not forget Stratford-upon-Avon.

Blake is one of the trinity of English geniuses known throughout the world, alongside Shakespeare and Newton – and is perhaps the most significant of the three today because of his role as a champion of the human imagination and its importance to a modern economy.



THE BIG BLAKE PROJECT

THE BIG BLAKE PROJECT was established in Felpham to secure Church Field in 2012 and has since created the Blake Trail, and the William Blake Poetry Prize. Original trail brochures are still available in the Bognor Regis Tourist Information Office, and St Mary's Church, Felpham. Working in conjunction with design consultancy Loosemarbles, the trail is being enhanced by a bespoke map designed by top illustrator Chris Price to be displayed outside the rail station.

The Poetry Award this year will be the Blake Society's #lithegrant. The Judge is Stephen Fry and the winner will be announced at the Blake Festival.

GOLGONOOZA

THE BIG BLAKE PROJECT have started the process of improvising a local festival named 'Golgonooza' (Blake's city of imagination) to launch the Internet campaign. The launch is planned for 18-20 Sept with events in St Mary's Rectory Gardens and the town centre.

With 111 days left to raise half a million pounds help is urgently needed. Musicians, writers, poets and performers are currently being lined up. Rachel Searle said, "This festival has to be run on giving and whilst we will cover expenses we hope that everyone will give what they can."

This "Improvised Festival" will be used to publicly launch the campaign to buy the cottage. This is a unique and exciting opportunity to put Felpham and Bognor Regis in the spotlight and will also serve as a keystone for cultural regeneration in Bognor Regis. **We are looking for community groups to work in partnership with the project in organising the festival and welcome any contribution, practical or artistic.** Since this festival has already come to the attention of the national press, the whole area has a vested interest in making it a success. The details of the festival are being finalised this week. Rachel: "We ask that people take into account the full regeneration potential of the cottage and help make the festival truly noteworthy."

If, like Blake, you "live to create" please get in touch with either:



RACHEL SEARLE, 07775893533; WILL HARVEY,
info@loosemarbles.co.uk
OR thebigblakeproject.org.uk
FACEBOOK AND TWITTER



PRESS RELEASE Blake's Cottage

We are improvising a festival 'Golgonooza' to launch a crowd-funding campaign to buy William Blake's cottage in the next 100 days and need your help

Pastoral poet

Painter

Printer

Philosopher

Prophet

Provocateur

Purist

Pragmatist

Polymath

THE COTTAGE

THE CAMPAIGN TO BUY Blake's Cottage, the birthplace of the English *Jerusalem* was launched at the Houses of Parliament on Monday 7 July.

As the Tour de France sailed by and with only three months to raise £500,000, Barry Shearman MP (right) hosted an event that highlighted the importance of this campaign for the nation. Uniquely, Blake wrote the words to *Jerusalem* here. Words that continue to inspire our nation, words highlighted in international exhibitions (such as the current British Council 2014 exhibition *Clockwork Jerusalem*). Be it in celebration of sporting triumph, Royal weddings or marches for justice, *Jerusalem* is never far away hence the call for it to be adopted as the English national anthem.

The purchase of Blake's cottage in Felpham is part of a three-point plan to establish the area as one of great cultural significance with a festival planned for September and the construction of a Centre of the Imagination.

The Blake Society have secured an option to buy the cottage for £520,000 – a considerable reduction on the market price.

Blake's cottage would be an extraordinary asset for Bognor Regis, and the nation and is an opportunity not to be missed. We envisage that the cottage will become a centre of creativity and innovation continuing the work begun by Blake.

Examples of literary homes which bring people to this nation:

- Austen's house at Chawton
- The Brontës' house in Howarth
- Wordsworth's cottage in the Lake District
- Turner's house in Twickenham
- Hogarth's house in Hounslow

Let us not forget Stratford-upon-Avon.

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THE BIG BLAKE PROJECT

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The Judge is Stephen Fry and the winner will be announced at the Blake Festival.

THE FESTIVAL

THE BIG BLAKE PROJECT has started the process of improvising a local festival 'Golgonooza' (Blake's city of imagination) to launch the internet campaign.

The Festival is planned for 20 September with events in St Mary's, Rectory Gardens and the town centre and musicians, writers, poets and performers are currently being lined up.

With 111 days left to raise half a million pounds, help is urgently needed. This "Improvised Festival" will launch the campaign to buy Blake's Cottage, and will also serve as a keystone for cultural regeneration in Bognor Regis. We are looking for community groups to work in partnership with the project in organising the festival and welcome any contribution practical or artistic. Since this festival has already come to the attention of the national press, the whole area has a vested interest in making it a success. The details of the festival are being finalised this week.

Rachel Searle: "We ask that people take into account the full regeneration potential of the cottage and help make the festival truly noteworthy."



If, like Blake, you "live to create" please get in touch with either Rachel Searle: 0777 589 3533 rachelmsearle@gmail.com, Will Harvey: 01903 366353 info@loosemarbles.co.uk or thebigblakeproject.org. [uk Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)



Call to arms!



FOR THE FIRST TIME in 88 years, Blake's Cottage has been on the market. A six-month option to buy was secured by the Chair of the *Blake Society*. To help, we the *Big Blake Project* are running the *Golgonooza Festival*, (18-20 September). Here, the

2014 Tithe Grant award (to be judged by Stephen Fry) will be presented for the best App...horism. Please help us make this festival suitably inspiring and/or join the fundraising campaign.



William Blake: poet, painter, printer and prophet. A genius of the imagination and one of the most radical thinkers Britain has ever seen. Today, his works are read, studied and loved all around the world but other than a handful of collections, nowhere in Britain celebrates his extraordinary craftsmanship and creativity. Felpham was the only place Blake lived outside London and in 1800 upon these, "*banks of the Ocean*" he beheld Jerusalem. On walks he saw with "*four-fold vision*" since "*the doors of perception were cleansed*". Blake's beloved "*roof of rusted gold*" nestled sweetly in "*England's green and pleasant land*" and was where he produced the last copies of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. With your support, this beautiful building will become a living hive for the imagination: a home that celebrates Blake, welcomes visitors, poets, radicals and schools to continue his legacy, creating new work in the spirit of Blake's irrepressible imagination.

To house the product of the cottage, a unique Visitor/Exhibition Centre in Bognor Regis is planned. A must-see Centre of the Imagination designed to connect with Bognor's Georgian past and frontier achievements in Art, Engineering and Science. This, we believe, will regenerate Bognor Regis, a town overlooked today with some of the lowest literacy levels in the UK, but in Blake's day, beauty being birthed by another visionary, Richard Hotham.

Our aim is to raise enough money to preserve and protect the cottage and regenerate. Your donation in money or kind will be invaluable in achieving that goal.

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Please contact Rachel Searle on:
rachelmsearle@gmail.com
07775893533



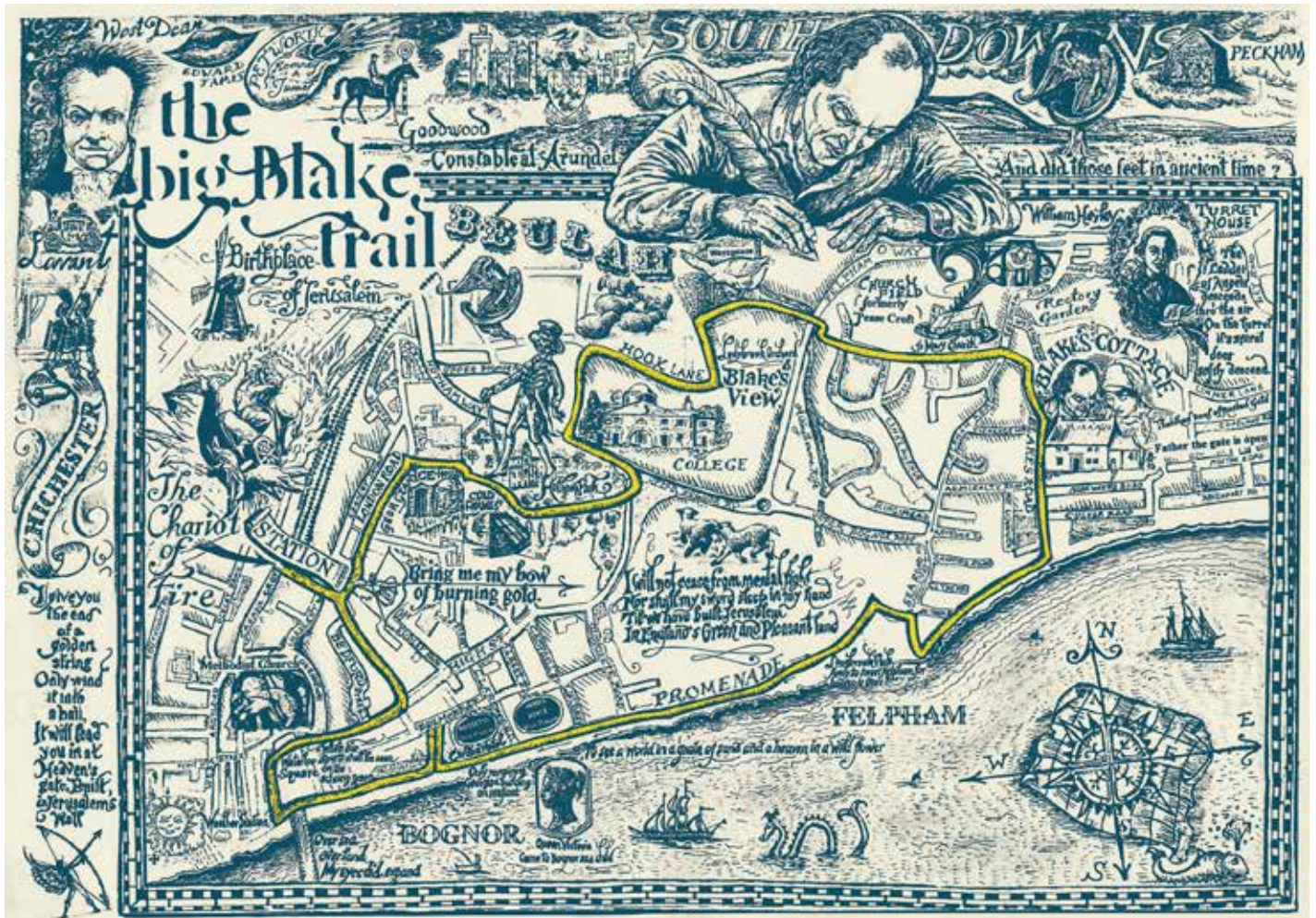
Shakespeare has the Globe.
Newton, Woolsthorpe.

William Blake, that other great genius of English
ideas and the writer of *Jerusalem*, nothing.

Change that by helping save his house for the
nation and the imagination.

www.justgiving.com/BigBlakeProject





Come and Celebrate Bognor's Heritage

Bognor Train Station, 12pm Sat 15 Dec
The start of the Big Blake Trail

St Wilfred's Choir, local Scouts and members of the Big Blake Project Team are gathering to sing *Jerusalem* and build the trail with golden angel stickers



A FREE raffle will take place with FOUR winners collecting a limited edition print of the Blake Trail Map

The Bognor Regis Centre of the Imagination

There's a distinct ring about the title and one that has a legacy – there are blue plaques in Bognor celebrating William Blake, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and James Joyce. The surrounding areas were home to a large number of romantic poets and we have West Dean housing the Edward James collection of surrealist art, the Cass Foundation Sculpture Park at Goodwood and Rolls Royce.

It is widely accepted and proven that art and culture are vital to the regeneration of many a run-down town and there is a trail running along the south-east coast that starts at Margate and ends (arguably) at Southampton. There is a noticeable gap between Brighton and Chichester.

Margate has been transformed since the Turner gallery opened bringing £100million to the town's coffers.

Folkestone invites artists to use the town as their 'canvas' The Folkestone Triennial is one of the most ambitious public art projects presented in the UK. The Folkestone Triennial takes place every three years and is one of the five key projects of the Creative Foundation, an independent visionary arts charity dedicated to enabling the regeneration of Folkestone through creative activity. Working with the people of Folkestone, partners and other stakeholders, the Creative Foundation is transforming the town, making it a better place to live, work, visit and study.

Hastings' Jerwood Gallery set amid traditional fishermen's huts were met with protest, but the result is one of respectful success.

Then there is the award-winning Towner Gallery in Eastbourne and the stunning De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea.

In May 1935, as the Earl De La Warr laid the plaque that can still be seen in the floor of the Pavilion's foyer, he set out his vision for:

"A modernist building of world renown that will become a crucible for creating a new model of cultural provision in an English seaside town which is going to lead to the growth, prosperity and the greater culture of our town".

Some achievements to consider –

- Over 3 million visitors in eight years: 50% of those local, 50% from a national and international catchment.
- Over 300,000 visitors annually.

- Over 40,000 tickets sold annually to over 80 auditorium events
- 73 staff on the payroll, including part-time and casual staff; 96% of staff from the Rother and Hastings area.
- 28 major community events annually through venue hire facility.
- An international repertoire of artists for the exhibition and live performance programme.
- 6000 participants in engagement programmes and 19 Arts Awards in 2012/13.
- Consistent local, regional and national press, television, radio and online coverage, positioning the Pavilion, as a building and programme, as an essential cultural destination.
- Important partnerships with local, regional and national agencies both for the delivery of its programme as well as the regeneration of the region.
- An economic impact study for 2006/07, demonstrating value to the region worth £16million per annum.
- A Social Capital research study, commissioned in partnership with East Sussex County Council demonstrating the value that DLWP holds within its communities.

Pallant House in Chichester – widely acclaimed for its innovative exhibitions and pioneering Learning and Community Programme winning numerous awards and accolades including the Charity Award 2013, the highest profile event in the charity calendar, for Outside In

It's important to note that all these destinations are less than two hours' journey time from London. Bognor Regis: one hour fifteen minutes.

A Centre of the Imagination (while having William Blake at it's core) wouldn't be another gallery in the sense that it would be a centre embracing and celebrating innovation and creative thought be it philosophical or applied.

It would be a catalyst for the cultural, economic, tourism and social regeneration of the town and the surrounding region, maintaining a viable and sustainable business model, seeking to diversify income streams by growing fundraising and commercial activity.

Art and science are growing ever closer and for Bognor to be at the heart of groundbreaking development in all areas would be the town' USP. A test base for innovation.

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P124-5C Print

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P67-16C Print

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P45-6C Print

The palette



*You are cordially invited to the celebration
to help secure the home of*

William and Kate

The William Blake Festival
GOLGONOOZA

20th September 2014
Rectory Gardens, Felpham PO22 7ER.

the big Blake project

William Blake

Sat 20 Sept 11am-9pm

Festival

thebigblakeproject.org.uk/golgoonza

music and dancing

eating

comedy

drinking

art

storytelling

talking

Poetry

choirs

drawing

monologues

golgoonza

FREE ENTRY
Old Rectory
Gardens
Felpham
W. Sussex
PO22 7ER



ART BY WWW.KIN-COIN.CO.UK/STYMBELLES

GOLGONOOZA GLORY!

OUTSTANDING SUCCES – The touchpaper is lit for the Blake campaign

• 1000 visitors • £1000 raised



On Friday evening, the lads from **Additions** were still erecting the marquees - little did they know that this was the beginning of a magical transformation and the start of a big adventure. A fabric maze was being created, the photo booth installed and the stage set. A project hatched a mere three months ago by 'Blake's 7' was now a reality.

As the mist lifted the next morning, all hands on deck - **Blake's 7** with **Loosemarbles** arranged pillars, statues, the gallery and decorated topiary, then the stallholders arrived like a band of gypsies slowly revealing their wares. The charcoal was lit and the Blake Banger launched.

Arabesque danced their legs off, then **Kevin Short** gave us a selection haikus and a hilarious but touching rendition of his poem, *Hangman*. I thoroughly recommend Kevin Short - a formidable performer - you never know what's coming next.

Sadly, illness kept three performers away but this was more than compensated by **Tony Parkins**, who was the glue that held the day together, showing us that old school showbiz professionalism works at a Blake festival too.



He's now a devout fan.

The other saviours of the day were **The Bamboo Band** who raised the tempo with their passionate plea to re-ignite the fascinating music style that is calypso. They were followed with a stunning set by the extremely talented **Tom and Ash** with their take on flamenco.

Beryl Kingston, winner of *The Blake Society Title Grant Award*, judged by Stephen Fry, read her winning aphorism and gave great insight into Blake, the most religious man who's ever walked the earth, and told us that he died smiling - now, how many people do that? It's incredible to think that Big up Beryl absolutely incredible that of the 12000 entries from across the globe the winner came from Bognor Regis.

Jo Johnson, psychologist, explained *Shrinking the Smirch*, a unique workbook for anybody who is living with a long-term physical or

psychological condition. It asks the reader to think about their symptoms as something external to them - a smirch - which is an annoying imaginary creature who seeks to make humans sad and unhealthy.

Waiting for Robert, the play by **L. Welch** reflective of Blake's time in Felpham was deeply moving and passionate by actors from Southampton and held an audience of 150 enthralled - despite being outside, one could hear a pin drop.

Bognor Community Choir gave us a lifting

Jerusalem and **Simon Mouatt**, Associate Professor in Economics offered the question, *Is Capitalism Satanic?*

Then the highlight, **Attila the Stockbroker**, the sharp-tongued punk poet captivated the audience with his impassioned works that make you laugh, ingest and think. He continually struck a chord with people of all ages with his radical, highly honed poetry.

Will Harvey of **Loosemarbles** said, "Well, if this can be achieved in three months, watch this space for next year. People were coming up to us and saying, 'Well done, we need more of this.' An elderly couple who live by the park couldn't praise Attila enough, stating that his words are what they've believed all their lives. It was a day of contemplation and gentle entertainment where people read, drew, sang

Clockwise from top left: Arabesque, Rachel Searle (front left) with members of Blake's 7 and supporters, Frankie from Drawing Circus, Poppy Goodheart and fiancé, the crowd enjoyed a full day of entertainment, Loosemarbles, Attila the Stockbroker, Simon Mouatt, Tony Parkins with Nick Gibb MP, performers playing *Waiting for Robert*. Photos by Christian Murray and Tony Lord

and performed. One local businessman said, "It's like a happening!" Especially with the elegant ladies from **The Drawing Circus**.

Many traders have given their takings to the cause and overall, there was a tremendous feeling of goodwill. The only complaint was, "Where do we donate the money?"

The next day, two T-Rex fans outside Blake's cottage, were disappointed they had missed it, "Damn, Marc Bolan was a Blake fan too" and by the afternoon, it was gone - a dream but for the angels hanging from trees and Blake peering down, smiling.

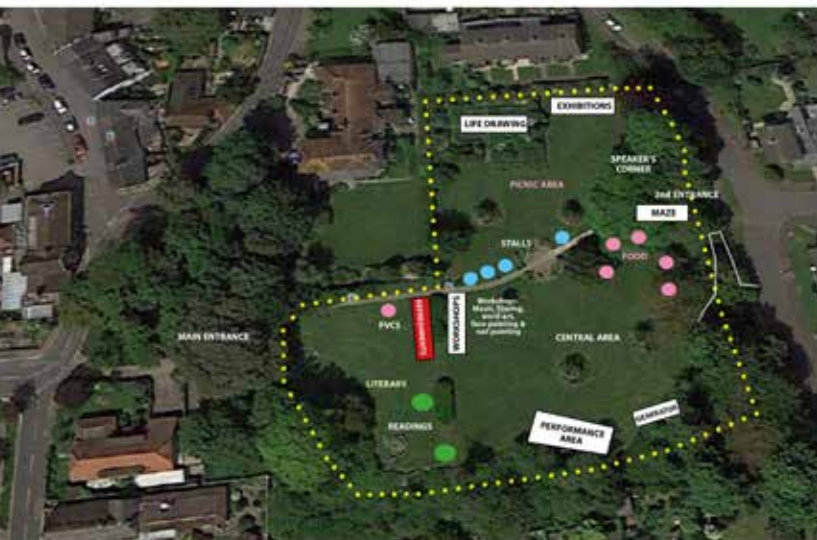
THANK YOU TO:

BLAKE'S 7 - Simon Mouatt, Rachel Morris, Rachel and Mark Searle, Barney and Jackie Dowling, Abby Wilkinson, Will Harvey, Michael da Costa

Additions - The day would not have been possible without support from Brandon Tool Hire and Sound Impressions for the fantastic technical support.

Staci Mendoza Quinn and Gumbo from Way Out There And Back, Little Bee Bakery, The Drawing Circus, KM Lockwood, Bamboo Band, Rachel Smith, Kate Pollard, Delaine and Damien Le Bas, Simone Froud, Wendy Elsdon, Michael Johnson, HLT, Bejewelled, Felpham Village Conservation Society

Sponsored by the University of Chichester and Butlins



Come and enjoy *Waiting for Robert* <http://waitingforrobert.tsz.com/about/brandings>

Would you like to see a permanent celebration of Blake in England?

We want to see just that.

The Blake Society (charity no. 1106130) is trying to buy Blake's cottage in Sussex for the nation. Please donate to Justgiving.com/bigblakeproject to help fund the campaign.

For further details, please contact:
 Rachel Searle
info@thebigblakeproject.org.uk
 0777 589 3533
 Will Harvey
info@loosemarbles.co.uk

Blake festival will celebrate the poet



William Blake by Thomas Phillip

WILLIAM BLAKE fans are staging a festival next week to celebrate Felpham's most famous residents.

Golgonooza, from next Thursday to Saturday, will feature a crowdfunding campaign to buy Blake's cottage in the next 60 days.

The festival will include events in St Mary's Church, Felpham, Old Rectory Gardens and Bognor Regis town centre, with musicians, writers, poets and performers lined up.

With just two months left to raise £500,000 to buy the poet and philosopher's Grade II-listed cottage, help is urgently needed.

Rachel Searle, founder of the Big Blake Project, said: "We ask that people take into account the full regeneration potential of the cottage and help make the festival truly noteworthy."

The campaign to buy the Blakes Road cottage, where *Jerusalem* was written while Blake lived there from 1800-05, was launched in parliament in July.

It is intended by its supporters that the building will serve as a keystone for cultural regeneration in Bognor. The details of the festival were being finalised

by **KEVIN SMITH**
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in the past few days.

The launch will be from 7pm-9pm next Thursday in St Mary's Church with Waygoose, when a range of Blake scholars will offer a variety of lectures.

Next Friday will see an A-Z of comedy poetry, video and music from 7pm-9pm at the William Handwick pub in Bognor High Street.

September 20 will be packed with fun from storytelling by Abbie Pulchra from 10.30am-2pm to a 3.30-5pm comedy slot by Tom Durkin and *Waiting for Robert*, a play reflective of Blake's time in Felpham.

Also featuring will be spoken word performances in Cressis Bognor from midday-12.30pm, Stewart Nichol's *Blakean Welcome* at 12.45pm-1.05pm and an appearance at 7.30pm from the sharp-tongued, high-energy, social surrealist rebel poet and songwriter Anilia The Stockbroker.

More details from Rachel Searle on 07775 265333 or rachelsearle@bigblake.com or Will Harvey on 01903 995553 or info@cosmataria.co.uk

Golgonooza hailed a success

By **KEVIN SMITH**
k.smith@bognor.gov.uk
(01243 830177)

A "GOLGONOOZA" weekend in Felpham has been hailed as a success.

The festival, called Golgonooza, ran from next Thursday to Saturday and was the first of its kind in the town since the poet and philosopher's cottage was bought by the Big Blake Project.

The festival was a success, with over 100 people attending and a large amount of money raised for the Big Blake Project.

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Rachel Searle, founder of the Big Blake Project, said: "The festival was everything we hoped it would be and more. We raised £10,000 for the Big Blake Project and a large amount of money for the Big Blake Project.

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"We raised £10,000 for the Big Blake Project and a large amount of money for the Big Blake Project.



Rachel Searle, founder of the Big Blake Project, with her portrait for the Big Blake Project.

as hundreds celebrate Blake



Christine La Brie with one of her artwork on display.



Paula Bennett drawing graphs.



Michelle O'Farrell with her Blake-themed artwork.



Jerusalem

performed by Katherine Ellis and Adam Evans
in aid of the Big Blake Project

Katherine Ellis
msoaphotographic.com





WAYZGOOSE

Issue 1

www.thebigblakeproject.co.uk

July 2014

LAUNCHED! Let's buy it...

The campaign to purchase this important heritage site is launched at the Houses of Parliament



Felpham – a green and pleasant land

As the Tour de France sailed by and with only three months to raise £500,000, Barry Shearman MP hosted an evening that highlighted the importance of this campaign.

William Blake, rebel with a cause – 'My Business is to Create' created much more than *Jerusalem*, so it's important that people come and see where he experienced visions and celebrate the work of this great polymath.

The purchase of the cottage is part of a three-point plan to establish the area as one of great cultural significance with a festival planned for September (see over) and the construction of a Centre of the Imagination.

William Blake's words almost define our identity, the idea that chimes; uniting to build Jerusalem in this 'green and pleasant land'.

Securing the Blake Cottage will reveal so much more to this story.

More than a pastoral poet, William Blake was a radical thinker of his time, a rebel, a true creative genius, an intriguing artist, and yet he is buried in an unmarked grave.

Shakespeare owns Stratford-Upon-Avon, Newton gravity, but Blake is almost homeless.

And today, after over eight decades, his ocean home and the inspiration for *Jerusalem* can be saved for our nation of artists, authors, artisans and all.

Blake's Cottage in Felpham, West Sussex is the only place where he lived outside London and The Blake Society has secured a purchase option for the first time in four generations; we simply have to honour our heritage and let his imaginative legacy live on.



The Launch

Barry Shearman MP & his Permanent Assistant Simon Weil

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David Myers Bognor Regis Ltd
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Rachel Searle Big Blake Project

Adriana Diaz-Enciso Blake Society

Henry Eliot Blake Society

Tim Heath Blake Society

FROM THE BLAKE SOCIETY

To build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, requires your help. We are seeking benefactors to offer initial seed funding or match funding or to help underwrite the crowdfunding campaign.

After the purchase, renovation and opening of the Cottage, our five-year plan is to join the Cottage by the sea to the House in London.

Inspiring examples of successful homes include the Freud Museum



in Hampstead, Dennis Severs' House in Spitalfields, William Wordsworth's cottage in the Lake District, or Jane Austen's house in Hampshire.

We are also seeking individuals and organisations to join us and contribute their imagination to the creative life of the Cottage.

This campaign is being led by the Blake Society that was founded in 1985 and is a registered charity. Our President is Philip Pullman.



WAYZGOOSE

Issue 2

www.thebigblakeproject.org.uk

August 2014

LAUNCHED! Let's buy it...

The campaign to purchase this important heritage site is launched at the Houses of Parliament

From The Independent:

The Blake Society is launching a crowd-funding campaign in September to raise money to buy the former country home of William Blake. The quaint Grade-II-listed thatched cottage at Felpham in Sussex has been on the market for £650,000. It is where Blake wrote the poem for the hymn "Jerusalem", and Felpham is where he was arrested for sedition.

The current owner, Heather Howell, 89, has lived there for more than 30 years, but it has been in her late husband's family since 1928. It has remained largely unchanged with the same beamed interiors and original doors – even the vegetable patch seen in Blake's sketches.

When it came on the market last July, neither the English Heritage nor the National Trust stepped in to save it for the nation, as they have done for countless other important homes and buildings. But the Blake Society, which was terrified of an imminent sale, asked the owner to give them time to raise the money to buy it. Howell gave them until late October 2014 and knocked the price down to £520,000.

Speed is certainly of the essence as the Blake Society runs to the rescue to save the cottage in the next few months, aided by "the Blake seven", a group of locals in Felpham and Bognor, who also want to raise money to help the campaign.

William Blake's illustration of



Felpham – a green and pleasant land

his Grade-II-listed thatched cottage William Blake's illustration of his Grade-II-listed thatched cottage "The Blake Society has negotiated and signed a legally binding option to purchase the cottage," says Tim Heath, chairman of the Blake Society. "The owner couldn't find a buyer. The actual premium on the cottage due to the fact that Blake lived there is not much. There are structural problems in the roof which make it difficult for people to get a mortgage," says Heath.

The Blake Society aims to raise a third of the money before the crowd-funding campaign is launched, while the Blake seven, headed by Rachel Searle, an economics teacher in Felpham, will run a local festival called Golgonooza in September to

boost the fund-raising effort. Searle, who founded the Big Blake Project, which includes the local Blake trail and poetry prize, met the current owner of the cottage who told her that she should get in touch with Heath and join forces to help buy the cottage "for the nation".

Blake lived in nine houses in his life, all rented. This cottage is one of the last two of his remaining properties that have not been demolished. His former London house in Mayfair, in which the Blake Society occupies the top floor, has a waxing salon in the basement, and a shop.

"It would be a wonderful marriage between the city and the coast if we bought both houses," says Heath ambitiously. "But the first step is to

secure the cottage. It is far cheaper," he explains.

The Blake Society intends to turn the cottage into "a centre of the imagination", rather than a museum. It will also be a place artists and writers, "or people who are challenging the status quo", he says, can go and stay for a few days. Other parts of the cottage will be set up to show how Blake did his work, with a printing press and equipment for engraving and etching.

"The cottage needs to be saved to give people across the world the opportunity to celebrate his work and this place of inspiration," asserts Tim Heath.

Charlotte Cripps

More information www.blakesociety.org; www.thebigblakeproject.org.uk

www.justgiving.com/bigblakeproject

The Launch

As the Tour de France rode by and with only three months to raise £500,000, Barry Shearman MP hosted an event that highlighted the importance of this campaign.

William Blake, rebel with a cause – 'My Business is to Create' created much more than *Jerusalem*, so it's important

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The purchase of the cottage is part of a three-point plan to establish the area as one of great cultural significance with a festival planned for September (see over) and the construction of a Centre of the Imagination.

Attendees

Barry Shearman MP and his Permanent Assistant • Simon Weil • Richard Norris • Sarah Norris • David Myers • Michael Da Costa • Theresa Simon • Richard Holledge • Paul Smith • Nicola Briggs • Stephen Stuart-Smith • Rachel Searle • Adriana Diaz-Enciso • Henry Eliot • Tim Heath

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Tobias Churton

