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16 April 2008

Mr Richard Walford  
Gilbert Stephens Solicitors  
15-17 Southernhay East  
Exeter EX1 1QE

Dear Mr Walford,

**Re: The Estate of my father, Graham Sheppard**

Thank you for your letter of 14 April.

I am afraid that I find you manipulative in the extreme, and you keep stating versions of past events which are inaccurate and misleading. I suspect that this is deliberate and done to mislead the Court, ultimately.

However, I would like to put the record straight as to what has happened in relation to the diary and the cheque.

The diary is something that first emerged as something your client first claimed existed in an e-mail of 10 October 2006. It was not until the day before the hearing of 15 March 2007 that you disclosed a page from the diary. Eventually you sent a 'week-to-view' scan so I was able to ascertain that it was a bog standard WH Smiths diary, not the usual charity Diaries that your client kept over the years.

Then there was toing and froing while we tried to get sight of the diary, and eventually this happened – but by this time it was September 2007. I had a brief flick through a very fresh-looking diary at the negotiations which took place instead of a hearing, the Master being ill. I believe that the delay was because your client was beavering away to finish this 'diary' in time.

Then, with a further delay to the hearing date, I hoped to inspect the diary properly in Exeter. But not only did you insist that a Partner of your firm, namely yourself, would have to be present – at great expense to me – there was also delay such that I had left Devon (where I was on business) by the time your client said she would not drop the requirement for me to pay for your time. The two of you were incredibly awkward.

With the cheque I had a similar experience, only on a shorter time-scale. When I discovered that my father had a Lloyds TSB account and a joint account with them too (after your client had confirmed that no further accounts existed), I asked for the statement from the joint account but had

to wait over a month to get it. And then it was disclosed a mere week or so before last December's hearing.

I got the cheque sent to Lloyds TSB in Wimbledon, and requested that your client allow me to see it. She did not take any steps to arrange for disclosure, she simply got you to write a letter saying that she could confirm that the payee was Teignmouth Old Grammarians Association (TOGA). Then, because I insisted on disclosure, you said in a letter (after the December hearing date) that you had seen the cheque.

But I think that you were both lying – why else would you still be refusing the release of the details four months later? In addition, I have tried to get confirmation of the cost of those 2004 TOGA dinner tickets from them, to no avail. Again, surprise, surprise – the treasurer of the TOGA lives around the corner from your client's parents – the once supposed witnesses of the 2004 and 2005 Wills.

I have always been ready for mediation, but every time I suggest it you say the same thing – that your client needs “material evidence” of my “willingness to compromise”. Why can't you and your client just agree to meet? Answer: because your client is afraid that the truth would come out. What does she expect me to do? She rejected all sorts of suggested compromises in 2006, put forward by my brother and I, so what sort of compromise is she expecting me to suggest?

That I KNOW the truth, by first hand experience, must by now be obvious to you. Over the next two months the cracks in her story are going to get bigger and ultimately “the truth will out”. So if you want to propose a new way to resolve this, please do. The longer it goes on, the less likely it will be that the invalid 2004 Will can ever replace the invalid 2005 one. And my former family home at Inkpen is decreasing in value all the time.

Yours sincerely,

  
Ian Sheppard