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THE MILTON MESSENGER

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

Season's greetings from everyone at Milton's Cottage. However you plan to celebrate over the winter break, we hope the next few weeks will be happy, healthy and restful. We thank everyone who's supported and visited us this year and look forward to sharing our news with you in 2023.

Though it's been another difficult year for the museum sector, your support has enabled us to develop a range of new activities in our garden (planted with trees, flowers and fruits that are referenced in Milton's poetry). From nature-writing workshops to outdoor performances, it's reminded us of the value of our green spaces and how they support both our health and our planet.

We'll continue this work in 2023 as we celebrate Earth Day on 22nd April. We'll also bring you Making Sense of Milton *- a muti-sensory programme reflecting the fact that Milton was blind when he lived here. And thanks to support through the Big Give Christmas Challenge, we're also developing a new social media literacy project for young people. We hope to see you again soon.*

www.miltonscottage.org

MILTON'S CHRISTMAS POEM

Despite working for the government that banned it (as Cromwell's Secretary for Foreign Tongues and unofficial spin doctor) Milton and Christmas go together like mince pies and brandy butter.

His first great poem, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, *was written on Christmas Day 1629, when Milton was only 21 years old. Anticipating his greatest poem,* Paradise Lost *(written at Milton's Cottage) he describes how a sinful world became the site for Christ's birth.*

The poem begins and ends conventionally enough. "Star-led Wisards haste with odours sweet" while "Shepherds on the Lawn" gaze upon the "Heav'n-born-childe." But this charming advent is shattered by the startlingly violent middle section of Milton's poem. There is "moan with midnight plaint" as "Apollo from his shrine" is evicted with "hollow shriek" by the birth of Jesus. Milton populates his Christmas poem with pagan gods to make it unforgettable. Read it on The Milton Reading Room *at https://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading_room*

@MiltonsCottage

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FOWARD

Past, future - and presents

MILTON IN A COLD CLIMATE

Milton lived through a time of climate change, known as "The Little Ice Age". In 1608, the year he was born, the Thames froze over for six weeks, resulting in London's first officially documented Frost Fair. Londoners could skate, drink, wrestle, play football, buy food cooked over coal fires, and even get their hair cut in the middle of the ice.

Behind such festive scenes, however, lay an early cost of living crisis. With the Thames frozen over, food supply lines stalled across the country, and those who earned their living off the river saw their livelihoods collapse. The price of fuel increased as demand for heating soared, and the change in climate led to crop failure, famine and war. It's perhaps no wonder Milton that described his Hell as a frozen continent, where everlasting fire co-exists with perpetual ice and snow.

The current climate crisis may be affecting us in different ways, but it has the potential to be even more devastating. Through our programme of nature writing workshops for young people, we are exploring our garden and Milton's environmental writings as resources to increase climate literacy. To get involved in our free workshop activities please contact us on 01494 872313.

FRIENDS' CHRISTMAS OFFER

Looking for the perfect last-minute present for a bibliophile? For just £24 (or £36 for a couple) you can send customised gift membership to the Friends of Milton's Cottage, giving unlimited entry to Milton's Cottage for 12 months - as well as access to a wide range of social and cultural events, from our annual Pimm's Party to Apple Day.

You'll also be providing much-needed support for Milton's Cottage - the only surviving residence of John Milton, and the place where he completed his epic masterpiece Paradise Lost. *Milton's Cottage receives no state funding and so your Friends' membership contributes towards our essential core costs as well as our ongoing work to engage new audiences with Milton's legacy.*

The first event in the 2023 Friends' calendar is the Annual Milton Lecture, held at Mercer's Hall in London on 21st February from 6pm. This year's guest speaker is Margarette Lincoln, who will be speaking on the subject of Milton's London.

To find out more please contact Keith Sudgen on keith@hughhighley.org.uk. To request customised Gift Membership to the Friends of Milton's Cottage, please email friends@miltonscottage.org