

A Buckinghamshire Poet

John Milton.

In 1665, with the plague raging in London, John Milton and his wife settled in Chalfont St Giles in the cottage at owned by his friend Thomas Ellwood. They stayed only a year in Buckinghamshire village, and one might imagine that Milton, who was surely very much an urban man, an intellectual, a political campaigner and polemicist, poet, theologian and philosopher, very much involved in the political foment in the capital, might find life in a rural backwater dull and unchallenging. Yet he made good use of his time at Chalfont, for it was here that he wrote his great epic masterpiece *Paradise Lost*, and indeed commenced on the sequel, *Paradise Regained*. We might guess at his his delight on entering the cottage garden from these lines from *Paradise Lost* where Adam and Eve enter their “blissful bower” in Eden provided by the Divine Creator.



*Statue of Milton in
Temple of British
Worthies at Stowe*

*Thus taking hand in hand alone they pass'd
On to thir blissful Bower; it was a place
Chos'n by the Sovran Planter, when he fram'd
All things to mans delightful use; the rooffe
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
Laurell and Mirtle, and what higher grew
Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
Acanthus and each odorous bushie shrub
Fenc'e up the verdant wall; each beauteous
flour
Iris all hues, Roses, and Gessamin
Rear'd high thir flourish't heads between, and
wrought
Mosaic: underfoot the violet,
Crocus, and Hyacinth with rich inlay
Broider'd the ground, more colour'd
then with stone.....*