

MILTON'S COTTAGE



A Conversation with *Paradise Regain'd* & *Samson Agonistes*

John Milton's last two poems, 1671

Introduction to the exhibition, *A Conversation with Paradise Regain'd & Samson Agonistes* by Richard Kenton Webb

As we approach the 350th anniversary of Milton's death, Milton's Cottage is pleased to introduce an exhibition of drawings by Richard Kenton Webb.

Seen in public for the first time, *A Conversation with Paradise Regain'd and Samson Agonistes* is displayed throughout the historic rooms of Milton's only surviving residence. Shown alongside a 1st edition of Milton's final poems, published together in 1671, they speak to this magical place where he completed his epic masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*, and was inspired to write *Paradise Regain'd*.

In both *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* Milton reflects on the Restoration of the Monarchy and the loss of the English republic, for which he had put aside his first love, poetry, to serve as Cromwell's spin doctor. Milton's rich verses, his vision of spirituality, and the forces of good and evil provide a framework for Webb's own visual meditations into the act of creation.

Like Milton's final poems, which continually reference and comment on each other as well as on their epic predecessor, *Paradise Lost*, this exhibition forms a set with Webb's earlier works. In 2021 he completed his 10-year project *A Conversation with Milton's Paradise Lost* – 128 drawings, 40 paintings and 12 relief prints. This led to a commission of 12 drawings in response to Milton's pastoral elegy, *Lycidas*, for the Milton Society of America, and a chapter in [Milton Across Borders and Media](#), published by Oxford University Press.

Kelly O'Reilly, Director of Milton's Cottage

About the work

From 2011 to 2021, I had a conversation with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In, 2020, I moved to Plymouth to head up Painting, Drawing and Printmaking BA and MA at Arts University Plymouth. For the first 13 months, I lived through the lockdowns in a hut in a wood beside the Atlantic Ocean. This is where I finished the last two books of *Paradise Lost* and twelve drawings for *Lycidas* which were commissioned by the Milton Society of America. I spent a great deal of time reading and re-reading these two last poems, alongside many books and essays about these poems.

In July 2022, I finally had an opportunity to respond to Milton's *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* whilst on the Albers Foundation Residency in the USA. I am excited to be showing my response to these works for the first time, especially as they will be displayed throughout the historic rooms of Milton's only surviving residence. Shown alongside a first edition of Milton's final poems, published together in 1671, my drawings speak to the place where he completed his epic masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*, and was inspired to write *Paradise Regain'd*. I found it intensely exciting to read Milton's next poetic statement. This swansong is about overcoming impossible situations. He has my full attention. This work is a very personal response to Milton's universal themes of creation, destruction, temptation, love and loss.

In both these narratives, there is self-sacrifice, hope and salvation. There is always hope, but we must choose. Milton's Redeemer showed Samson, the blind and foolish man that we can always find hope in our living God even when society does not.

Richard Kenton Webb, July 2024

www.richardkentonwebb.art



Waiting to Speak to Milton, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022

Richard Kenton Webb

Paradise Regain'd

2022



Modes of Apprehension, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



First Temptation, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Second Temptation, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Violence, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



The Pinnacle, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



A Paradise Within, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022

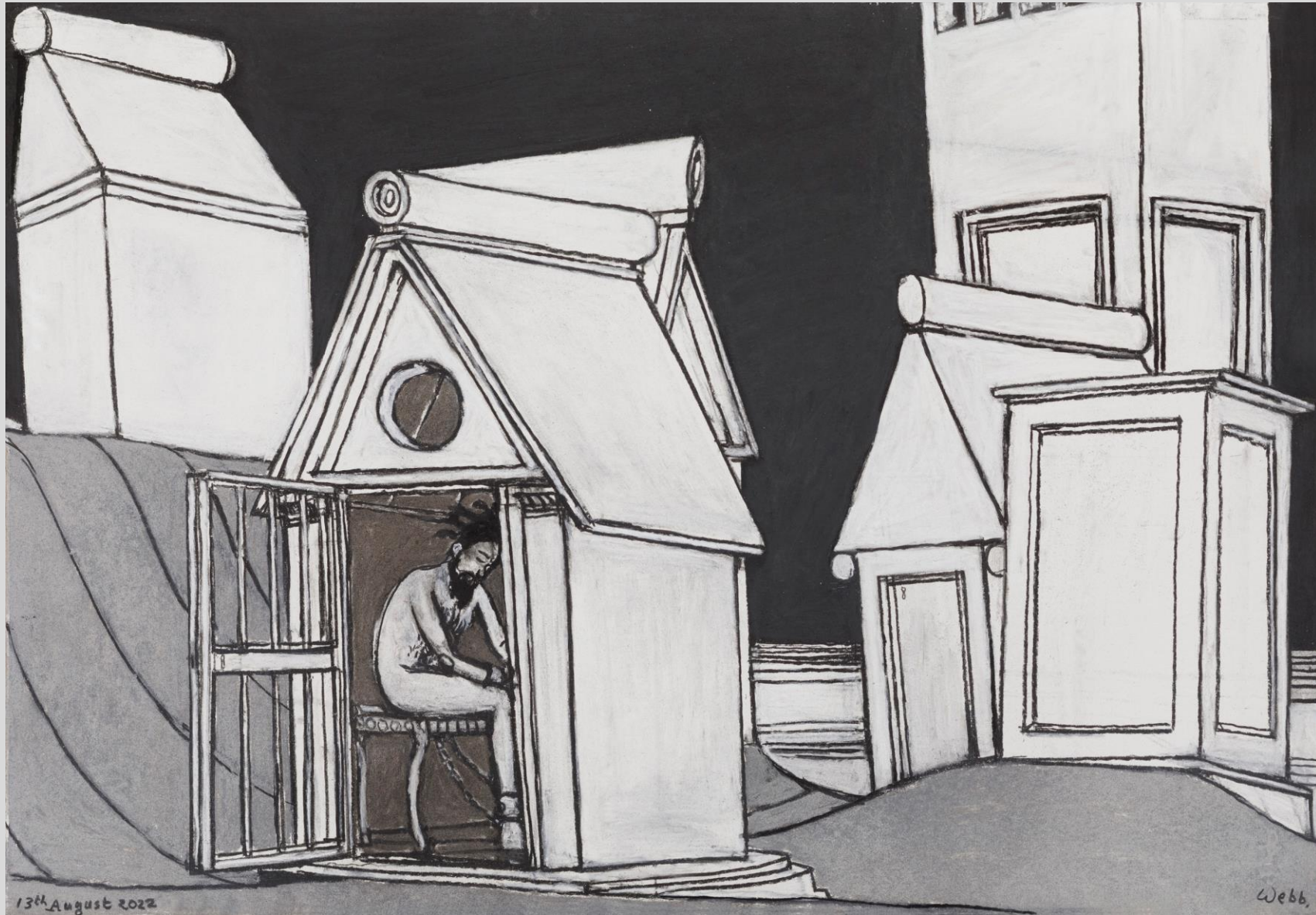
Richard Kenton Webb

Samson Agonistes

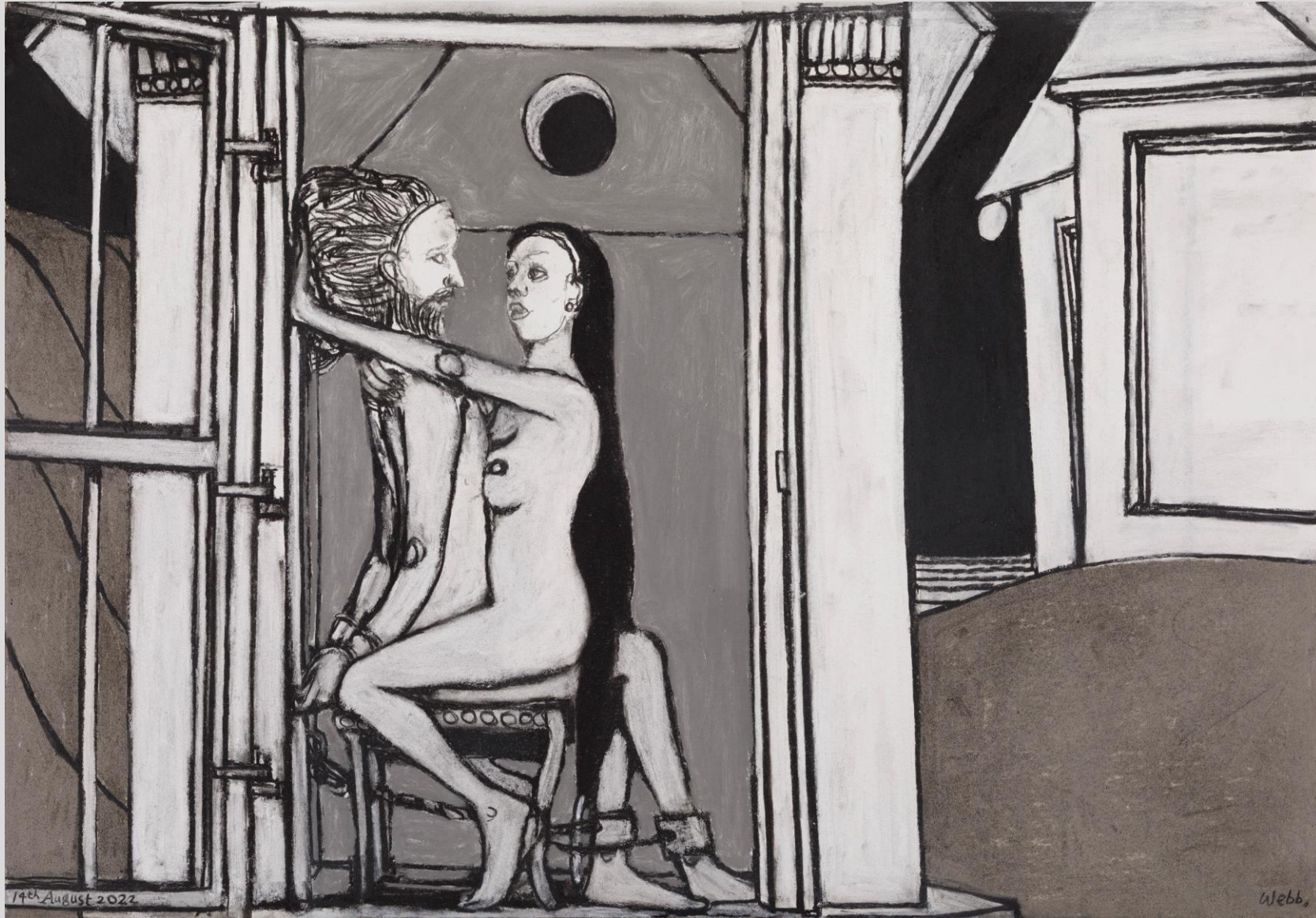
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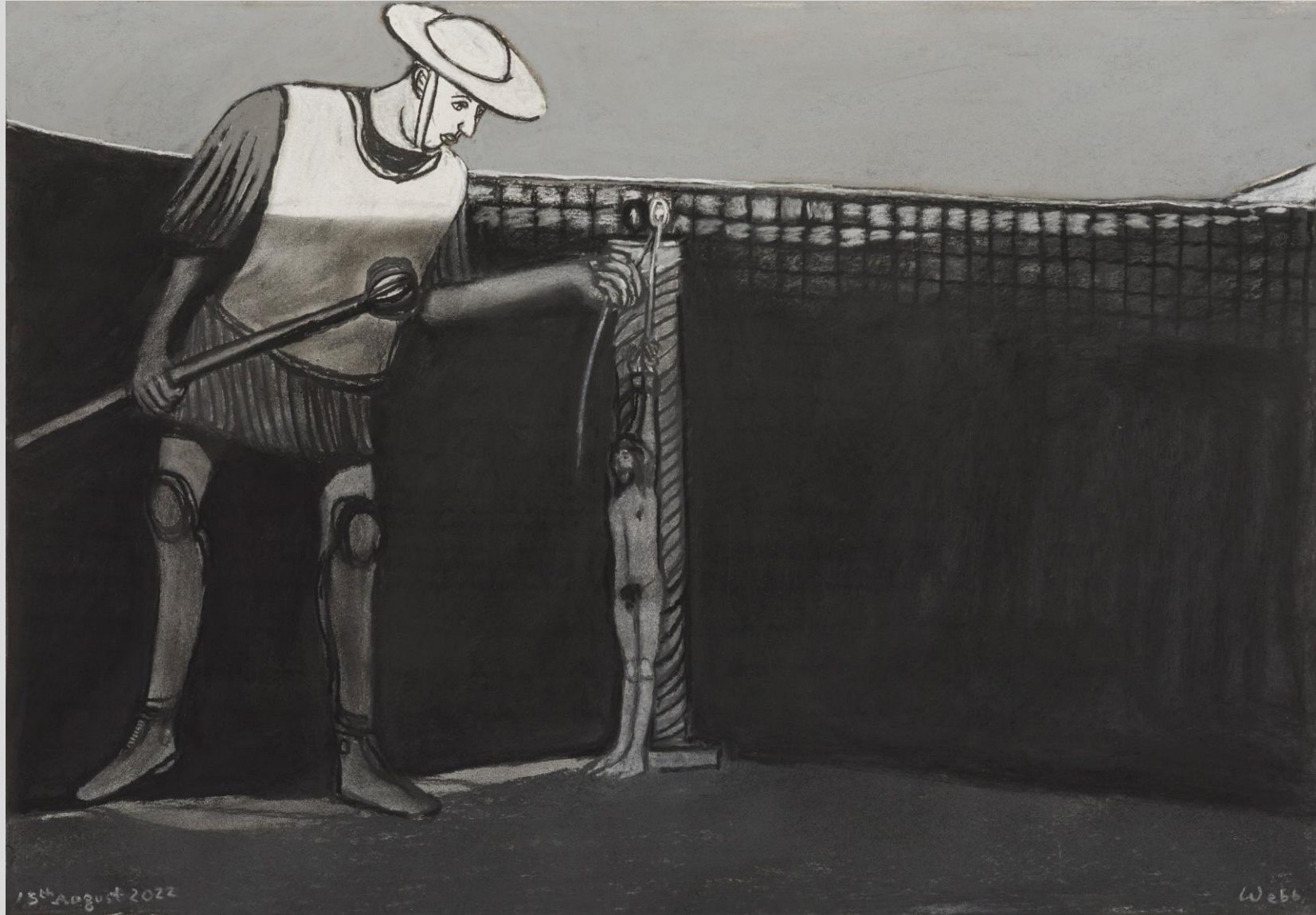
Blind Poet, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Reality, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Delila, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Giants, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Calm of Mind, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022



Ruin, charcoal & white chalk on paper, 53 x 76cm, 2022

Richard Kenton Webb, MA (RCA, Painting)

Richard Kenton Webb (b.1959) is a British artist and educator. He is one of the few British artists trained at both the Slade and at the Royal College of Art, studying under and alongside many well-known artists. He carries these conversations in his DNA.

Having lived in Gloucestershire for 35 years, he moved to Plymouth in 2020 to join the team at Arts University Plymouth as Subject Leader for BA (Hons) and MA Painting, Drawing and Printmaking.

Webb has been awarded several prizes and residencies. In 2016, he was shortlisted for the John Moores Painting Prize and in 2020, awarded first prize at the London Sunny Art Prize. Then, in 2022, he was invited to the prestigious Josef and Anni Albers Foundation Residency in Connecticut USA.

In 2021, Webb completed 10 years of work dedicated to a Conversation with Milton's *Paradise Lost* -128 drawings, 40 paintings and 12 relief prints. This led to a commission of 12 drawings in response to Milton's poem, *Lycidas*, for the Milton Society of America; and a chapter in *The Synergies of Drawing and Painting Paradise Lost, Milton Across Borders and Media*, OUP (2023). His work links colour and narrative, fusing his own personal drive to share, teach and inform.

Webb exhibits internationally and has works in private collections around the world. He is represented by Benjamin Rhodes Arts, London where he recently had both solo and two-man shows.

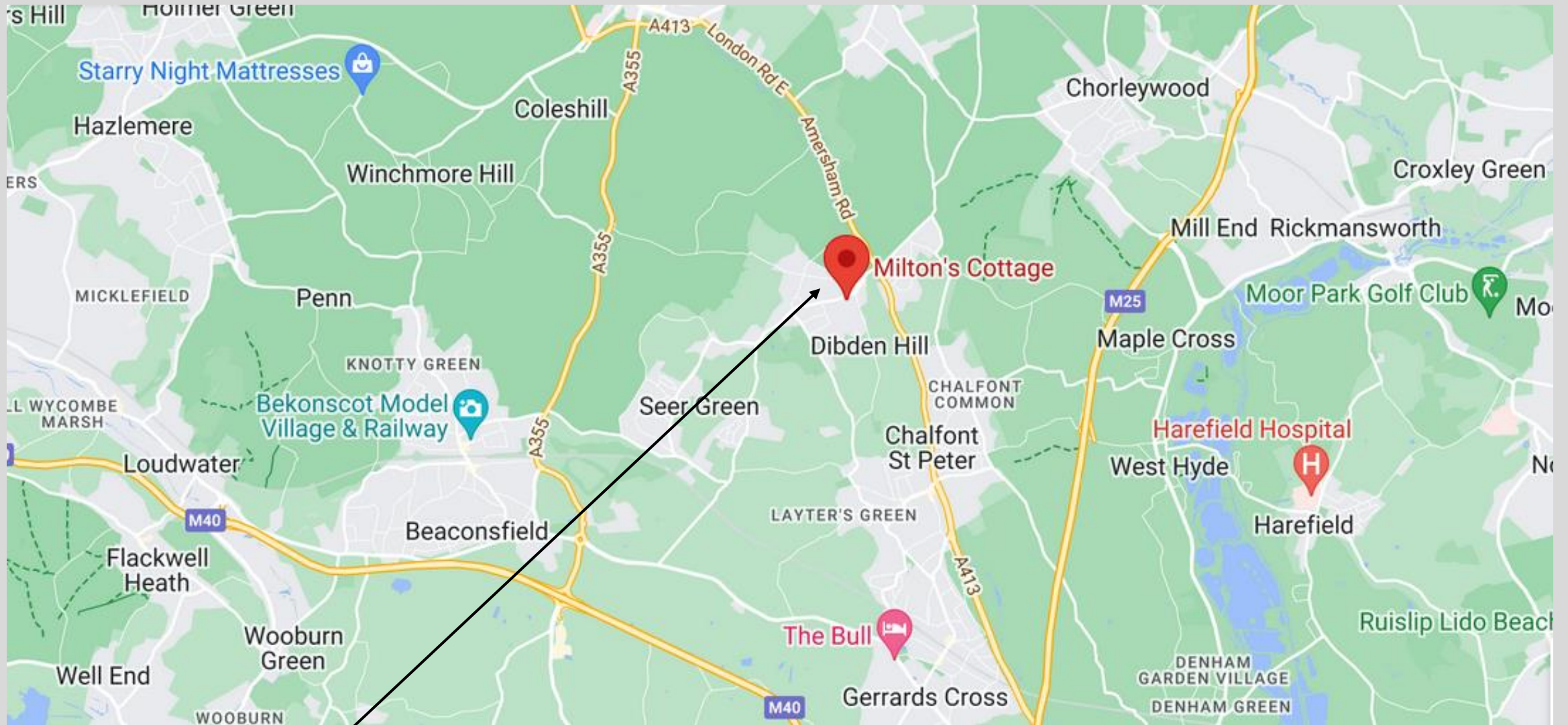
A Conversation with *Paradise Regain'd & Samson Agonistes* marks 350 years since the death of Milton and runs from 3rd July to 8th September 2024.

Private view: Tuesday 2nd July 2024, from 6.30 – 8.30pm. Artist talk: Wednesday 24th July 2024, 7.30pm

At: Milton's Cottage, 21 Deanway, Chalfont Saint Giles, HP8 4JH.

For further information and images, contact Kelly O'Reilly, Director of Milton's Cottage, on businessdirector@miltonscottage.org / 01494 872313.

For sales, contact: benjamin@benjaminrhodes.co.uk.



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