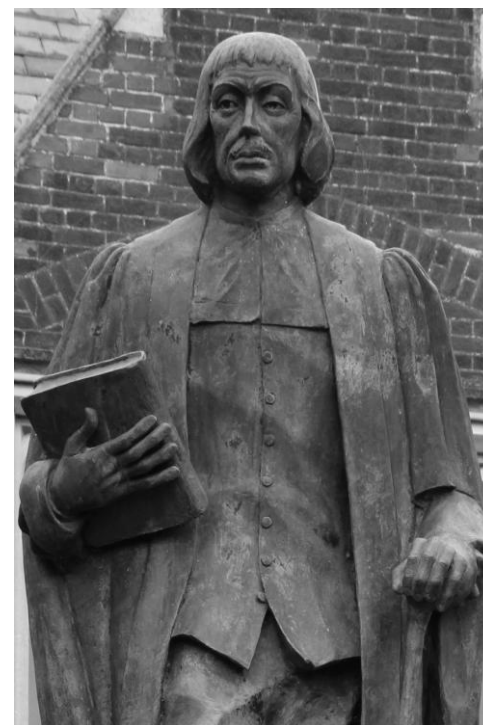


Map courtesy of openstreetmap.org

- 1) St. Michael's Church – Start/finish
- 2) Footbridge
- 3) John Ray Cottage
- 4) Church of St. Peter and St. Paul
- 5) Dewlands
- 6) Hoppit Bridge



Compiled by Peter Turner for
Braintree and Bocking
Civic Society



A walk in the footsteps of

John Ray

(1627-1705)

‘The Father of Natural History’

Distance:- 4.5miles (Allow 2 hours)

Start/finish:- St. Michael's Church, Braintree.

Please observe the Country Code
Field paths can be muddy after rain



This walk has been devised to cover two routes which John Ray would have used many times; it includes further landmarks relevant to this great man.

It starts at St. Michael's Church, Braintree which in Ray's time was the home of Braintree Grammar School. This was situated in the Jesus Chapel - the small door between second and third windows from the right. He attended this school from the age of 10 until he was 16 when he was awarded a scholarship to St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge.

The Walk

Leave the church behind the fountain turning left to cross the road heading south down London Road. As you pass Marshalls Park on your left and cross the road bridge over the River Brain take the next turning left (Tortoiseshell Way). After approx 150m turn right (still Tortoiseshell Way) and at the top, as the road bears left, carry on into Clouded Yellow Close making for the far RH corner where a footpath leads behind the houses and turn right. When you come to a T junction turn left. After about 150m climb some steps to cross the footbridge over the A120. On the far side turn left descending some steps to continue alongside the A120. After approx 300m turn right at a fingerpost and follow the cross-field path. Cross the wooden bridge and follow the path to a waymarker pointing slightly right, and walk to a point between the second and third tree on the brow, at this point head to the left of a thicket on the far side of the field. When you emerge onto a road, cross over to the opposite grass verge. (Beware of traffic, especially from the right).

To your right is the cottage where Ray was born; the black building on the roadside was the Forge or Smithy. His father was the local blacksmith and his mother an herbalist. Undoubtedly he would have spent many hours watching his father and helping his mother collect plants.



Turn left and follow the road to the next junction, turn right down to the church.



Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Black Notley.

Ray's monument can be seen between the church and the tree to the left.

Go through the church gate and follow the path to the south side of the church, pause at the main entrance door. To the right of the entrance is a tall monument, this marks

Ray's final resting place and was erected by his friends and admirers. The box tomb adjacent is that of Ray's friend, the physician and naturalist, Benjamin Allen.

Continue walking south to the LH corner of the church yard going through a kissing gate into a grassy meadow and follow a well worn path down to a footbridge. Once over the bridge continue up to the next hedgerow and turn left with the hedge on your left. The path bears right then left and right again, at this point follow the waymarker left which leads into a residential road called Dewlands. Carry on to the main road and turn right. Immediately before the next junction the red brick house on your right stands on the site of the old Dewlands cottage.



In 1656 Ray's father died and he had a cottage built on this site for his mother, it was known as 'Dewlands'. On her death in 1679 Ray moved in and lived here until his own death on 17th January 1705. This is where he would have written a significant body of his works, collecting specimens in the surrounding countryside.

The cottage burnt down in 1900.

Retrace your steps along the Witham Road and carry on over the A120 into Notley Road. Keep on down the hill, over Hoppit Bridge and up into Braintree and St Michael's Church.