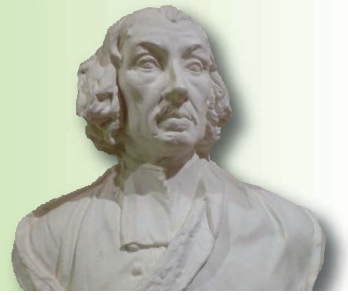


John Ray

Information Sheet



Who was John Ray?

John Ray was a 17th Century figure from Braintree district who founded natural history as a scientific, experiment-based and university-worthy subject in Britain.

He was born in 1627 in Black Notley, the son of the village blacksmith and herbalist. He rose from these humble beginnings to pursue a successful career at the University of Cambridge, before going on to systematically study plants, animals, birds, fish and insects. Using his new scientific definition of a species he attempted to provide full classifications of each of these groups. His work, achievements and dedication still inspire scientists today. He died in 1705 and his grave is marked with a monument in Black Notley churchyard.

Interested in finding out more?

Come and visit our John Ray gallery at Braintree District Museum detailing the life, times and work of John Ray.

We are open Tuesday – Saturday 10am-4pm

For more information call: 01376 328868
or Visit: www.braintreemuseum.co.uk

Why is John Ray significant?

- He is the father of British natural history
- He was the first person to create a scientific classification system for plants, animals, insects, birds and fish
- He defined what constitutes a species
- His work helped pave the way for Linnaeus' classification system, and Darwin's work on evolution
- He was among the first to suggest that fossils were the remains of now-extinct species
- The terms petal and pollen were first used by John Ray in his 'History of Plants' published in 3 volumes between 1686 and 1704
- He was the first to study and record the complete life cycle of the butterfly
- He conducted the first recorded experiments into plant structure
- He is our main historical source on English proverbs



Braintree District
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