

famous botanist born in Braintree. Turn right at the circular fountain, (a gift of William Julien Courtauld to the town in memory of King George V.) into the High Street. The Boar's Head public house is considered to date from the 13th century - the building shows layers of history behind the facade. As you make your way along the High Street, notice the clock above the shops - the site of the old Corn Exchange of 1836. A little further along is the cobbled coaching inn entrance with its stone plateway for the coachman to negotiate the entrance. This is the site of the old "Horn Hotel" (now shops).

9 Enter the doorway-sized alleyway on your left - Bailey's Gant. Emerging from one of the oldest to one of the newest parts of the town, George Yard Shopping Centre, turn right at the seating. Heading for the archway, look to your left at the replica Crittall windows and the blue plaque commemorating the workshops of F H Crittall, who established his window-making business here in 1883. The building to your right where the pavement slopes was the George Inn, from which the area gets its name.



Crittall Workshops, George Yard, c1900

10 Turning left out of the archway walk along Bank Street to the White Hart Hotel, continuing just around the corner to the left into Rayne Road. The middle house opposite is part of that owned by clothier and nonconformist John English. John Bunyan preached in a barn at the rear of the English house and at the White Hart. The commemorative carving may be seen in

the beam of the house. Looking at the White Hart, the road indicates the boundary between Braintree and Bocking. To the left of the White Hart may be observed a wall plaque of a dolphin indicating this boundary change.



Bradford Street, c1900

11 At this point a much longer walk, worthy of a separate trip, will take you to Bradford Street where many of the finest houses dating back to the 13th century are located. Take the road to the left of the White Hart into Bocking End. This section of the walk will end at the disused watermill on the river bridge, dating from 1580. The river is the Pant - a Celtic name. Cross the road at this point and the river becomes the Blackwater. As you return to the White Hart via the same route, you will pass, at the bridge roundabout "Tudor House" noted for its tilt.

12 From the White Hart, retrace your steps along Bank Street to the Swan public house and turn left into Swan Side. The Swan is a 14th/15th century building with original windows and doors still to be seen in the woodwork around on the side wall. The gateway has the date of 1590, which is when this particular section was built. Cross the lane here into Little Square, the area of the original market of 1199. All of the gants led to the market. On the right is a large 15th century Manor House with shop buildings opposite, all of which date from the time of building permanent trading premises / homes to replace the original stalls. Pass through Leather Lane back to the Constitutional Club and retrace your steps through Great Square to the Town Hall.



Tudor House, Bradford Street, Bocking, c1900

Country and rural walks may also be purchased from the Tourist Information Centre.

There are numerous good restaurants and cafes in the town for your enjoyment.

Accommodation is available in town and nearby; full details available from the Tourist Information Centre, Town Hall Centre, Market Square, Braintree, CM7 3YG. Telephone 01376 550066.

With thanks to David Possee and Iori Williams



Front cover: Bank Street, Braintree c1900

Braintree Town Trail

A one-hour leisurely walk through the history of the town.

Produced in association with:



Braintree and Witham
TIMES



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History of Braintree

The history of the town goes back to about 700BC with occupations near the River Brain in the Rose Hill/Chapel Hill area and around the present crossroads in the present Town Centre. Until recently the crossroads was thought to be a Roman development but history now points to it having existed much earlier. Saxon development led to a large number of pilgrims passing through Braintree and Bocking to Bury St Edmunds.

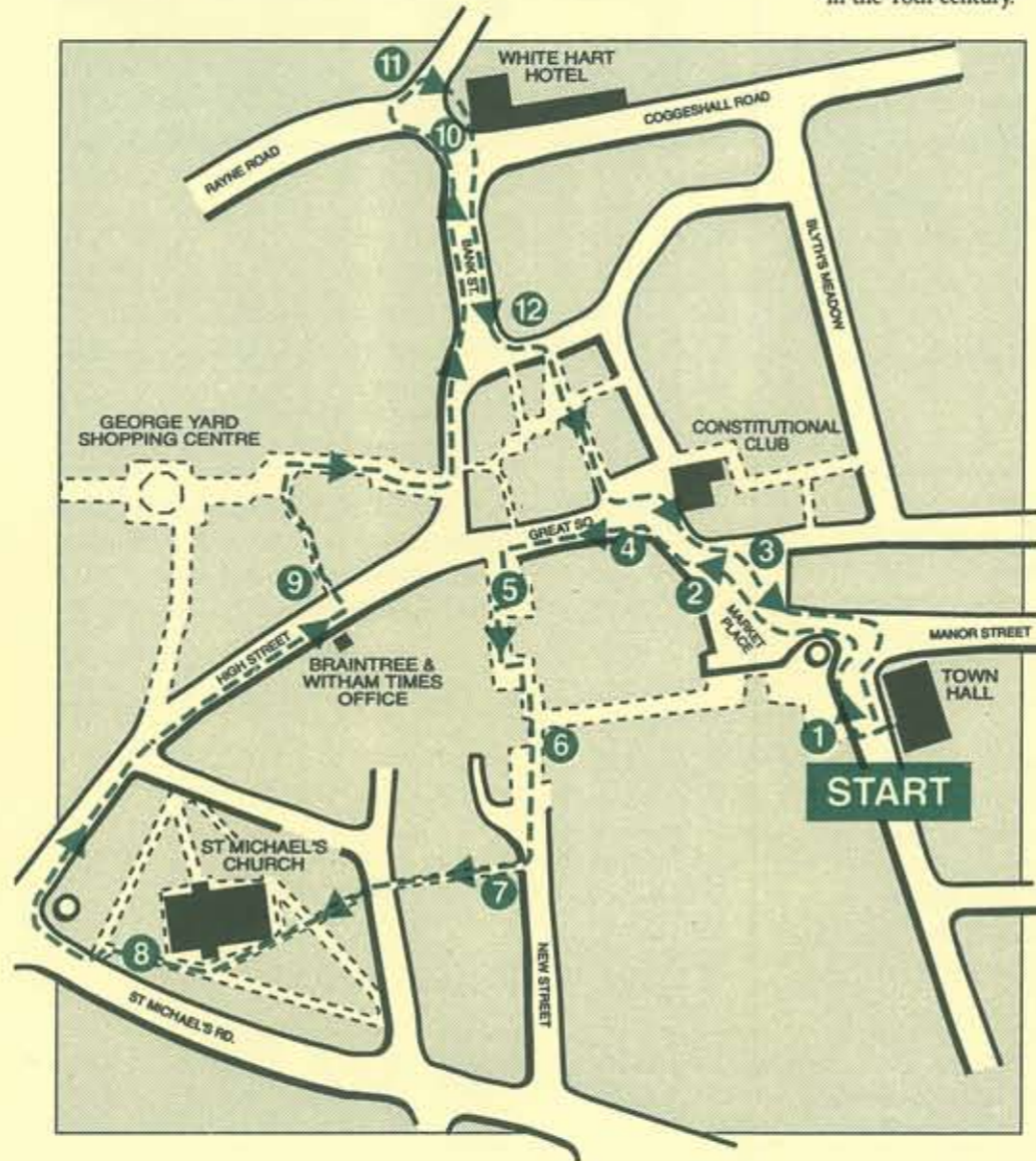
In 1199, the Bishop of London obtained a Market Charter for the town; Braintree with its weekly market and annual fair, thrived as a place of considerable importance. In the 16th century, Flemish Protestant immigrants brought weaving prosperity when many of the houses and inns became homes to woollen weavers; trade and building both prospered.

Braintree townfolk also emigrated, with many from Essex, to the New World, as religious intolerance and financial hardship took its toll. In 1632 the "Lyon" ship took settlers to establish Braintree, Massachusetts and to Hartford, Connecticut. The population suffered too during the Great Plague of 1665, which claimed 865 victims from a population of just 2,300.

Woollen weaving was superseded by silk manufacture and the establishment of the Courtauld factory by Samuel Courtauld, himself a descendent from the Huguenots who moved to Braintree in 1834. Agriculture was flourishing and, with the building of the Corn Exchange in 1839 plus the arrival of the railway connection to London in 1848, Braintree was an important thriving agricultural and engineering town. The Crittall engineering firm, first established in general metalwork and then specialising in the world-renowned metal window frames, began in Braintree.

1 Start your walk from the Town Hall. The building was a gift to the town by W J Courtauld. Built between 1926 and 1928, it stands on the earlier site where William Piggott, the Puritan Martyr, was burned. Now listed as a Grade Two* building it was one of the first to use pre-stressed concrete in its construction, with a brick-work facade.

2 Cross Fairfield Road from the Town Hall into Market Square. This large open space was the site of the Cattle Market, part of which Tesco now occupies. The horse drinking fountain was also given to the town by the Courtauld family in 1882. Imagine, too, that the site of Tesco's was much earlier the Braintree Workhouse, built originally in the 17th century and rebuilt on the same site in the 18th century.



Market Square, Braintree c1900

3 To your right is Manor Street, with the Victorian buildings of Manor Street School now housing Braintree District Museum. A separate visit to the museum will provide a history of the District from Roman to recent times.

4 Continue diagonally across the square and into Great Square, the site of the original market, granted under the charter of 1199, until you reach the Constitutional Club (on your right).

5 Turn around to face the High Street. Walk to a wide paved area on your left - New Street. Strolling into this area, several buildings on your right date back to the 17th century. Doorways in the wall are remains of three alehouses which served the expanding market - The George, The Dragon and The Three Tuns known locally as Great Hell, Little Hell and Damnation. The doorway apparently in mid-air would have had steps up to it.

6 Continue downhill into Phoenix Shopping Centre and under the modern archway. Stopping at the roadway, look across to the white weather-boarded buildings in the middle distance - Samuel Courtauld's first commercial mill. The ones beyond are the New Mills of Walters, which became Warners - both famous silk-weaving firms. (The Working Silk Museum is now sited here and can be visited to find out more about silk weaving in Braintree).



Weaving at Warners, c1901

7 Cross the road and turn immediately right into the "gant" (alleyway) which leads to St Michael's Church. Notice the 1840 lock-up for temporary holding of offenders (convenient for the alehouses) as the Police Station was at the time in Rayne Road, some distance away.

8 It is not known exactly when St Michael's Church was built but the Parish Church was founded at the time of the Market Charter. A tower was added in 1240 and the spire in about 1350, when the church was also enlarged for the worship of pilgrims. The only part of the present structure to contain any 13th century work is the east wall. Walk beside the church; you will emerge beside a knot garden laid in 1986 in memory of John Ray, the



High Street, Braintree, c1900