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- A black and white photograph of the Witham G.E.R. railway station. The station features a long platform with a covered walkway and a large, ornate glass and metal structure spanning the tracks. The text "WITHAM G.E.R." is visible on the wall above the structure.





History of Braintree Branch Line.

By the 1830's the industrial progress in other areas was beginning to leave Braintree behind. Isolated amidst a network of Turnpike roads, and without access to rivers and the sea, firms in Braintree depended upon carts to bring materials in and send out finished goods to their customers. Silk manufacturers such as Courtaulds, one of the largest local employers, packed their cloths into large willow hampers which were loaded onto horse-drawn wagons. With the arrival of the Eastern Counties Railway at nearby Witham, in 1838, pressure grew in the town for a rail connection.

Anticipating the arrival of the railways, Samuel Courtauld was quick to take advantage and repurchased his father's mill at Chapel Hill in 1843. The original terminus station had been transformed into a goods depot from which private sidings extended into a cluster of industrial enterprises that had developed in the immediate vicinity. Immediately to the north of the goods station lay Crittall Windows' new Manor Works. A railway siding had been laid across Manor Road into the rear of the factory. The factory was designed to produce components for shipment by rail. Crittall's railway street siding took in raw materials such as iron bars and consigned to their customers completed products such as industrial and commercial window units and later, agricultural equipment.

In 1869, a new railway line had been constructed from Braintree to Bishop's Stortford. A brand new station, still in use today, replaced the former terminus building to cater for the through traffic.

WITHAM

Dorothy Sayers birth place – Dorothy L Sayers was one of the first women to receive a degree from the University of Oxford. She was most famed for her detective novels featuring the characters Lord Peter Wimsey, Harriet Vane, and Montague Egg, but she was also a successful playwright, noted theologian, and scholar of Dante's poetry. She moved to Witham in 1929 after her marriage to Arthur Fleming, and lived in Newland Street until her death in 1957. Witham Library holds a reference collection of her works, press-cuttings, reviews and letters in the Dorothy L Sayers Centre, jointly managed by Essex Libraries and the Dorothy L Sayers Society, held in a specially furnished room on the upper floor. The statue of Dorothy L Sayers is located in Freebournes Court.

WHITE NOTLEY

John Ray Walk – John Ray (1627-1705) was born in the village of Black Notley, Essex. He pioneered the classification of plants and animals. He was also an influential philosopher and theologian. He is often referred to as the father of natural history in Britain. To celebrate the life and achievements of this great man, the John Ray Walk has been devised. This nine mile linear walk, linking the towns of Braintree and Witham, passes through the delightful countryside of the Brain Valley, the birthplace and home of John Ray. The walk also provides a link between the two former railway lines, the Flitch Way (Braintree to Bishop's Stortford) and the Blackwater Rail Trail (Maldon to Witham). These disused railway lines are now managed by Essex County Council as Country Parks. Since their demise as railways, nature has reclaimed them to provide excellent homes for many plants and animals. Foxes make their homes in the disused drainage pipes whilst slow-worms and snakes take advantage of the grassy banks for basking in the sun. You can explore and enjoy these wildlife havens, as no doubt John Ray would if he were alive today. For more information on the John Ray Walk please view www.esscrp.org

CRESSING

Cressing Temple – Cressing Temple takes its unusual name from the medieval monks of the Knights Templar who founded the two vast wooden barns, which form the centrepiece of this delightful rural estate. Nestled to one side of the barns is the Walled Garden. Inspired by an age when gardens combined beauty and functionality, it is the result of painstaking research and archaeological excavation, and is filled with species widely cultivated at the time. As you step within the Tudor walls, you step back in time. Here plants have been carefully grouped according to medicinal, culinary and dyers' plants. You will also find a potager and a small orchard and nuttery. The nosegay garden is a fragrant delight with a wealth of sweetly scented plants that were grown for their perfume, whilst the arbour is planted to recall Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream with its profusion of roses, woodbine and oxlips. At the centre of the garden is the fount, on which four spouts take the form of the green man, the spirit of vegetation frequently found in medieval carvings. Set in peaceful surroundings, the gardens make a perfect escape on a clear winter's day. The barns are open throughout the main season, and visitors can enjoy a full programme of cultural events.

- Two vast 13th century barns.
- Formal walled pleasure garden with original Tudor wall.
- 17th century Farmhouse and Tudor Granary.
- Events for the whole family.

www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/find-whats-near-me/cressing-temple-barns

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BRAINTREE MUSEUM

At Braintree District Museum the story of the District and its diverse industrial and cultural history unfolds. The Main Galleries examine the development of the area from prehistory to the twenty-first century, focusing upon the textile and manufacturing industries of Courtaulds, Warners and Crittalls, as well as displays of Castle Hedingham pottery, the work of the Great Bardfield artists and Essex straw and lace. A vibrant calendar of temporary exhibitions complements the Main Galleries throughout the year. The Museum is housed in the converted Victorian Manor Street Junior and Infant Schools that were built in 1862 and 1897 respectively. The main building is home to the Museum Reception and Shop; Temporary Exhibition Gallery; Main Galleries; Victorian Schoolroom and John Ray Gallery, and opened in 1993. Address: Braintree District Museum, Manor Street, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3HW www.braintreemuseum.co.uk



FLITCH WAY

The Flitch Way passes through 15 miles of countryside along the former Bishop's Stortford to Braintree railway in the heart of rural Essex. Its name comes from a medieval ceremony, which originated in Little Dunmow and which still takes place every four years. The ceremony involved married couples trying to prove that they hadn't argued for a year and a day - if successful they were awarded with a Flitch (or side) of bacon. The route of the Flitch Way has a multi-user surface making it accessible for all throughout the year. Much of the route can be explored on foot, bicycle or horseback taking you through wildlife-rich railway cuttings, past Victorian stations and over embankments with views across impressive farmlands, villages and woodland. Cycling the eight mile route from Braintree to Little Dunmow is particularly ideal for families as it is completely traffic free giving everybody the opportunity to discover the wildlife. The start of the Flitch Way route at Braintree is adjacent to the Railway Station. The route passes through historical towns and villages allowing you to explore places such as Great Dunmow or to combine a walk/cycle ride with refreshments being served at Rayne Station. The station was built in 1866 and was one of the busiest on the line. Renovated in 1994, it is now the Visitor Centre and Ranger base for the Flitch Way. The Flitch Way forms part of the National Cycle Network route 16 www.sustrans.org.uk The Flitch way also links with other countryside attractions such as Great Notley Discovery Centre and Hatfield Forest.

GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK

Great Notley Country Park covers some 100 acres of open space, which is managed for the benefit of wildlife and the community. The site was formerly arable farmland and has been transformed into a mixture of wetland and open grassland. Each of these habitats provides a haven for a variety of species. The park includes a number of mature species of native trees. Elsewhere, bats have made their homes in the grassland and wildflower meadows. ~~Walking, cycling, jogging and horse riding can all be~~ enjoyed in the park and beyond with its links to the Flitch Way in the north and the bridleway in the south. A variety of activities and events are held throughout the year. Families can picnic or fly kites or, for the more energetic, there is an all-weather, multi-activity, floodlit pitch and two grass football pitches. There's also an excellent visitor centre, housed in the award-winning Discovery Centre. An outstanding example of sustainable architecture, this has been designed with construction materials, which ensure low maintenance and energy consumption to reduce the impact on the environment. The park is home to Sky Ropes, the fun, family friendly high ropes adventure course as well as Essex's longest kid's play trail. Great Notley Country Park, Great Notley, CM77 7FS www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/find-whats-near-me/great-notley-country-park

WARNER MILL

Located at Warner's Mill, Silks Way, the Warner Textile Archive is of national importance, but its roots are firmly here in Braintree. The archive is a unique record of the history of textile manufacture and design since the 18th century. It includes almost every example of woven and printed fabric produced by the Warner company as well as original artwork by leading designers commissioned to furnish palaces, stately homes, liners, hotels and ordinary homes.

THE GALLERY

Open to the public three days a week, the Gallery is a celebration of the diverse collection of fabrics and designs within the Warner Textile Archive. Colour, Shape and Texture are the key words to describe the Gallery. Every drawer and display case takes the visitor on an exciting voyage of discovery from Warner's unique three-pile velvets, the intricate woven silks of Owen Jones and the cutting edge designs of the 1920s and '30s through to the boldness of the '50s and the iconic creations of the late twentieth century. The Warner Textile Archive, Silks Way Braintree, Essex, CM7 3GB www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk