

John Ray Window

March 2026 Update

Latest update from the New Stained Glass Window group.

On January 22nd 2026 the group had a special meeting with other bodies interested in the John Ray anniversary invited to join us. We were joined by Robert Rose, head of Braintree Museum, Paul Wood chair of the John Ray Trust and Jenny Rowland member of the John Ray Trust. Caroline and Louise Ratcliff also joined us. Revd Rachel fully described our plans for the window.

Robert told us that Braintree Museum have lots of plans to celebrate the 400th anniversary of John Ray's birth. They are planning an exhibition to be called JR400 which will run from January to June 2027.

It will have a wide appeal to all ages and be linked to the climate emergency. It will include walks, talks, school projects, links to scouts and guides and museum sleepovers. Following discussion it was agreed that the best date for installation of the window would be June 2027 at the end of the Museums' exhibition. Robert suggested a JR day of talks and gatherings involving the church, the museum and the trust. He and Revd Rachel agreed to set up a steering group, called JR400, to work together.

Paul told us that 2026 is the 40th anniversary of the John Ray Trust's foundation. To mark this he and Jenny explained that they plan to redo the signs on the John Ray walk and replace damaged posts. The Trust have links to Trinity College, Cambridge which Ray attended. There is a stained glass window at the college celebrating Ray and they plan to mark the 400th anniversary. Paul said he would report to the Trust about our plans and to our delight we have since heard that the Trust are going to donate £5000 to the cost of the window. This generous donation alongside our previous grants and personal donations brings our total to over £28,000, very nearly to the predicted cost of £30,000!

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Sheena told us about her plans to speak to schools and was particularly keen to speak to the two John Ray schools about the man their schools are named for. She spoke to Paul at this meeting and he got back to her with the great news that the Trust are going to donate benches to both schools celebrating John Ray's life and work, decorated with species mentioned in his writing.

Caroline and Louise told us that if there is a church fete in 2027 in their father's garden they will plan to have a John Ray display at that event. There is going to be a ploughing match at their farm in September this year and they will hope to advertise all the upcoming events. Caroline said that the John Ray walk runs through their farm and they consider themselves custodians of it, not owners.

The John Ray memorial in the churchyard is in need of work or the inscription will become unreadable. It is a listed monument so work on it is difficult. Robert had a recommendation of a good firm to consider. This was a very productive meeting and made us realise that 2027 is getting close! We continue to have close contact with Juliet Forrest as she works on her beautiful design.

Gill Ridgewell.

