



THE CLOTH TRADE IN CULLOMPTON & THE CULM VALLEY



THE CULM VALLEY AND THE CLOTH AND CLOTHING TRADE










THE CULM VALLEY CLOTH STORY

By visiting the places in this trail you will build up a picture of how Culm Valley cloth and clothing was produced, financed and distributed around the world over many centuries.

The river Culm flows from the Blackdown Hills into the Exe and out to sea through the ports of Exeter and Topsham. There is a long history of cloth and clothing production in settlements and mills using water power along the Culm, with some exports from Exeter and Topsham.

The production and distribution of cloth in the Culm Valley is situated within a wider area, with links to clothiers, manufacturers and financiers in Wellington, Tiverton, CREDITON and Exeter.

KEY

-  Touchscreen
-  Church
-  Museums
-  Walking Trail
-  Cloth Mill
-  Town House
-  River Culm catchment indicated by beige overlay



CULMSTOCK

Culmstock had a long tradition of cloth making. In 1394 a Culmstock man was the fourth largest wool merchant in Devon. Fox Brothers built a mill here in 1822 to spin yarn; William Upcott later took over the mill and operated it until 1870. Fox Brothers reopened Culmstock Mill for spinning and darning.

Today: The mill building is converted to flats.



COLDHARBOUR MILL, UFFCULME

The last 18th century working woollen mill in the West Country. Founded 1797 by Quaker Thomas Fox who built on the serge making business of his forebears, the Were family of Uffculme and Wellington. Production continued into the late 1970s after which the Mill re-opened as a Working Wool Museum.

Exhibitions, demonstrations and regular Steam Up events. Hand-weaving classes. Open weekdays 10am-4pm Phone: 01884 840960 www.coldharbourmill.org.uk



SPICELANDS

Spicelands Quaker Meeting house and burial ground, near Uffculme, where members of the Fox and Were families worshipped and are buried, is sometimes open on Heritage Open days: information in local press.

BRADFIELD MILL

A cloth factory built by Cullompton men Brown and Fowler of Cullompton in the 1790s with Joseph Davy later becoming a partner. Brown and Davy produced worleys for the East India Company. After bankruptcy the mill was acquired by William Upcott and worked as a wool factory until 1870.

Today: cottages remain on the site.



WILLAND

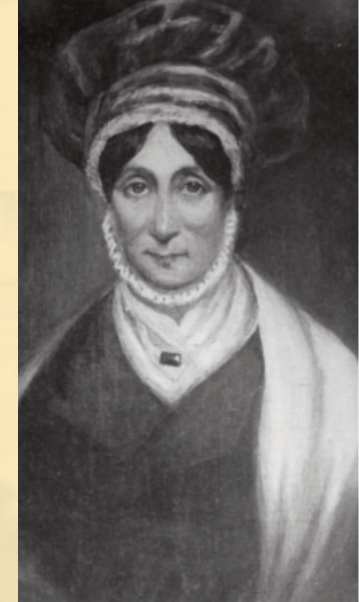
The Parish Church has a memorial stone of Henry Olande, clothier, died 1586, one of the richest men in Willand in 1851. The Binfield family of Willand, farmers & landowners married in the 19th century into the Sellwood tannery and Upcott cloth manufactory families leading to close associations between Cullompton and Willand.

CULLOMPTON - See Cullompton map.

BRADNINCH

3 generations of Cullompton Upcotts ran Northdown Mill from 1795: the mill was used as a woollen factory and 6 cottages occupied by spinners (women) and carders (men). In 1824 the Mill was destroyed by fire.

Today: Bradninch Miller Morris dance with staves modelled on the local Working Men's association.



WELLINGTON

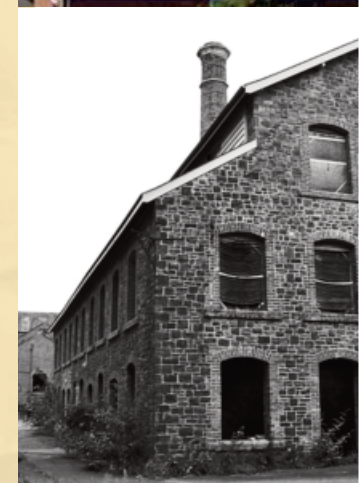
The Were family were active woollen manufacturers in Wellington from around 1730 and built the original Tone Mills in 1754. Thomas Fox, grandson of Thomas Were, became involved and when his grandfather retired in 1770 he was part of the new partnership established. Tonedale Mill complex was developed in several stages. Other woollen mills in Wellington - Westford and Prowses - were run by the Elworthy family, and Egerton Burnett cloth manufacturers were active from about 1835.

Deborah Meaden from Dragons Den has recently invested in the Fox Brothers mill which today produces cloth for Savile Row and clients world wide.

Online shop: www.themerchantfox.co.uk

The owner of New Look, whose first shop was in Wellington, encouraged Glenis Beard to set up her own business: she went on to run Glenis Clothing in Cullompton for many years, making clothes for export and UK sale.

Wellington Museum: exhibits of firms and individuals from Wellington including Fox Brothers; a 300 year old Armada chest from Fox's boardroom. Fore Street, open March - October Mon-Fri 10-4; Sat 10-1. Check website for other times: www.wellingtonmuseum.org.uk 07971 242904.





TIVERTON

Tiverton Merchants' Trail tells the story of merchants who made Tiverton famous for manufacturing woollen cloth: John Greenaway, who funded a porch and chapel at St Peter's Church; and the Peard, and Enchmarch families.

Download leaflet from <http://tivertoncivicsociety.org.uk> 5 boards plus pavement medallions mark the route.

Heathcoat's factory still operates in the town; a factory shop sells material. Mon-Fri 9-4.30; Sat 9-1; 01884 244264.

Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life: displays on cloth, lace making and local history. Beck's Square, Tiverton 01884 256295 www.tivertonmuseum.org.uk. Entrance fee.



CREDITON

Crediton is said to have held the only South West cloth market up to 1538. Kerseys and later serges and flax were produced up to the 18th century with export to Holland, Germany and Portugal through the port of Exeter. Despite two major fires and competition from the industrialised north, in 1841 there were still 280 weavers. Leather making, boot and shoe making came to the fore.

Some weavers' courts remain, eg Albert Place, 42 High Street formerly known as Hooker's Linhay after the family of master weavers who lived and worked there.

George Davy (1704-1766) and his son and grandson ran a fulling mill at Fordton near Crediton & exported cloth from Topsham. Another grandson Joseph Davy moved to Cullompton and became a partner at Bradfield Mill.

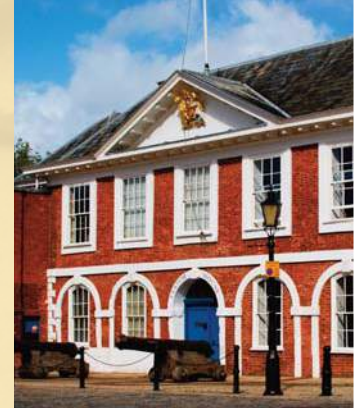
Crediton Museum, Old Town Hall, 10am-4pm, Wed-Fri; 10am - 1pm Sat; Easter to October. Free admission. Exhibition and talks. Phone: 01363 773919



EXETER

Woollen Trail: By the early 1700s Exeter was a wealthy city due to the woollen trade. Cloth from all over Devon was finished in Exeter and exported from Exeter Quay (Custom House pictured) and Topsham. The Exeter woollen trail has 8 information panels, is 2 miles long and takes about 1 hour. It includes: the Guildhall, merchants' houses, St Nicholas Priory, Tuckers Hall, Exe Island, the Quayside, warehouses and the Canal basin.

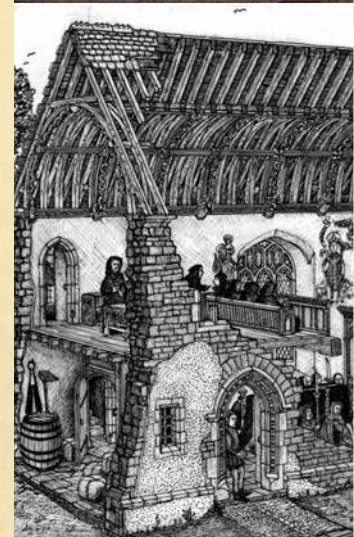
Download trail from www.exeter.gov.uk; 01392 265205.



TUCKERS HALL

The Guild of the Incorporation of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen in Exeter, has occupied the same building on Fore Street since 1471. Visit the magnificent original meeting room and purpose-built interpretation centre with a working model of a fulling stock.

Check website for times: www.tuckershall.org.uk Free entry.



TOPSHAM

Serge, mainly from Exeter, Crediton, Tiverton, Cullompton, Wellington and Uffculme, was exported from Topsham to the continent; see merchants' houses and former warehouses along the Strand, and Topsham Quay. Topsham Museum has displays of local maritime history and other items related to the cloth trade including a tillett wrapper used by Fox brothers, Coldharbour Mill, to identify cloth exported through the East India Company. Several cloth merchants had houses in Topsham and the Topsham Quaker community had kinship links to the Were and Fox families of Uffculme and Wellington.

www.devonmuseums.net/topsham; 01392 873244



THE CULLOMPTON CLOTH STORY

Spend a few hours following the town centre trail to discover Cullompton's hidden cloth trade heritage.







John Lane of Cullompton exported cloth from Topsham to Northern France in the early 16th century; see emblems of his wealth in St Andrew's Church.

In the 18th century Cullompton was in the top four cloth towns in Devon, alongside Tiverton, Crediton and Exeter. Cullompton men – William Upcott, William Brown, John Fowler and John Davy – invested in the industrialisation of the cloth manufactory at Bradfield Mill and Shortlands.

The Quaker Fox Brothers invested at Wellington (where production continues), Coldharbour Mill (now a working museum) and later in Cullompton (where cloth was produced to 1977).

Clothing continues to be produced in the town by a skilled workforce.

KEY

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|---|--------------|---|-------------------------------|
|  | Touchscreens |  | Factory buildings |
|  | Cloth Mills |  | Houses of cloth merchants |
|  | Churches |  | Tannery and related buildings |





1 THE HAYRIDGE

The start of trail with car park adjacent. Cloth trade interpretative touchscreen available during opening hours.
thehayridge@devon.gov.uk

In 1841 67 cloth workers lived in Higher Street, 53 in New Street, 35 in Crow Green, 33 in Exeter Road and 24 in Duck Street (sic, 1841).

Today: the street pattern in these roads is the same as it was then.



2 SELLWOOD BROS 3 TANNERY (1816-1967)

In two locations at the south-west end of the town, had a water-powered bark mill and 47 tan pits. Despite suffering fires in 1831, 1867 and 1958 its workforce grew from 48 people in 1881 to over 100 in 1958 (8% of the local workforce at the time).

Today: The building which formerly housed the water-powered bark mill is now an antiques warehouse and the remains of the leat and tail race can still be seen. The other half of the site is now occupied by the supermarket Aldi whose back wall is original.



4 POUND SQUARE

The Unitarian Chapel has the grave of William Brown's daughter who married Isaac Davy; Jaffa, Pound Square, where Daniel Sellwood and his father and grandfather were born: the house formed part of the Tannery walls.



5 SELLWOOD HOUSE

Behind the Church, named after the family who ran Sellwood's tannery. Daniel Sellwood recalls 'my grandmother Lucy and her unmarried daughter Constance lived at East View next to the Church and Vicarage in 1926'.

6 ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

Lane's Aisle is one of the most significant reminders of the wealth created by the cloth trade (like Greenway's Chapel, Tiverton). Merchant's marks related to the cloth trade inside and out of the church related to the wealthy clothier John Lane (d.1529) who has been described as head borough or bailiff of Cullompton. Graves of the Upcott family and other cloth merchants.

The Church is open in the morning. For guided tours ring: 01884 33249 (Church office, 10-12am Mon-Fri).

Interpretative touchscreen on the cloth trade in Cullompton plus digital views from the church tower is available in the Community Centre next to the church; 01884 33265.



7 CULLOMPTON 9 WORKHOUSE

In the 1830s many weavers received poor relief because they had no work, or insufficient wages. The Overseers of the Poor complained that William Upcott and Joseph Davy were not paying appropriate wages. After the workhouse closed in the 1830s William Upcott purchased the building and used it for hand weaving.

Today: the original brick building (with bricked in windows and doors) can be viewed from New Cut, and from the Green.



8 INDEPENDENT RELIGION

Many of the weavers and cloth workers from the seventeenth century onwards were Quakers, Methodists and Presbyterians (later Unitarians). The Quaker meeting house was in Exeter Street, the Methodists met in New Cut from the time of John Wesley, where a building remains.

The Unitarian meeting house in Pound Square is still in use.





10

10 SHORTLANDS LANE

For centuries the Upcotts had a large house and cloth workshops at Shortlands. In the 1830s William Upcott employed about 60 weavers. He used Fox's at Cullompton for some spinning. He and Fox's produced worleys for the East India company.

Today: the flats are on the site of Shortlands House. The remains of the old watercourse from Shortlands down to the town can be seen in New Cut.



11

11 HEATHCOATS OF TIVERTON

Heathcoats had a mending factory in Cullompton from 1948 to 1980. In the 1830s the building was an Independent Chapel attended by weavers.

Today: the Victoria Hall houses a Pre-School.



12

12 THE MANOR

Dating from before 1602 when Thomas Trock improved it, the Manor House was owned by William Upcott, cloth manufacturer, and then his son John Samuel Upcott who continued the cloth business until 1868. He named it The Manor House and he and wife Mary Anne lived there for the rest of their lives.

Today: the Manor is a public house.



13

13 THE WALRONDS

1601 manor house, recently entirely restored. Fine panelling, possibly Huguenot, and plaster ceilings. Initials of Humphrey Parys in overmantel, importing merchant, 1565. Two serge-makers occupied the Walronds in 1730s: the Quaker William Bidwell and John Fowler.

Open by appointment; interpretative touchscreen on the cloth trade in Cullompton is available www.walronds.com



14

14 THE MERCHANTS HOUSE

Former 17th century merchant's house; now a private residence it used to have shop and storage on the ground floor, with living rooms above.

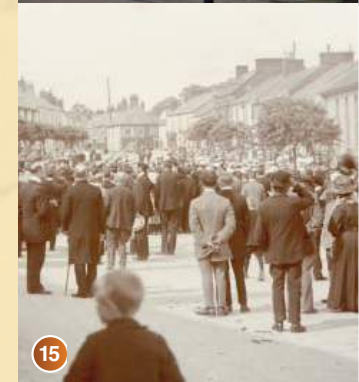


15

15 HEYFORD HOUSE

In the early 20th century Mrs Gidleigh set up Weavers, a knitting business, behind Heyford House where she and Dr Gidleigh lived, to provide employment for women.

Today: Heyford House is a day spa.



15

15 BULL RING

Sheep were sold in the market here up to the 20th century.

Today: there is a regular street market (Wed and some Sat mornings) but no sheep!



16

16 FOX'S CULLOMPTON FACTORY

Fox's opened a weaving branch factory in Cullompton in 1890, making high quality woollen and worsted cloth until 1977. During WW1 the entire output was khaki cloth, employing over 200 people.

Today: the Factory is now Twyford Engineering, due for development. The old factory buildings are the brick buildings along the lane leading to Court Farm. The brick house was the Factory Manager's house.



17 SITE OF FOWLERS SERGE MAKERS COTTAGES

Opposite Fox's: in 1757 16 dwellings owned by John Fowler, serge maker of Cullompton, were occupied by serge weavers and woolcombers.



18 HIGHER, 19 MIDDLE AND 20 LOWER MILLS

On the Leat were double mills, making a total of six Cullompton mills. The configuration of 3 double mills is very unusual. William Upcott owned Upper and Middle Mills and in 1831 used Middle Mills for woollen manufacture.

Today: parts of Upper and Lower Mills remain and can be viewed from the public footpath along the Leat.



THE TANNERY AT HIGHER KING'S MILL

The tannery was active c.1830 and 1875. It employed 12 labourers in 1851 and 9 a decade later.

COURT TANNERY 1871-1906

This tannery was located at the north end of the town behind Court House, home to this tannery's owner. In 1971 it employed 21 men and was probably steam-powered.



CULM LEATHER,

A leather dressing works (1921-1982) and glove makers, Devron and Brown, (- c 1975) were both on what is now Alexander Industrial Estate.

TOWN CEMETERY

Containing graves of the Sellwood and Davey families.

THE UPCOTT FIELD

This was left by the Upcott family to commemorate JS Upcott, ancestor of William Upcott, Cullompton cloth merchant. Public open space.



AN INTERNATIONAL STORY

ANDREW ELICOTT, FROM CULLOMPTON TO AMERICA

Andrew Ellicott (b Cullompton 1682, died Pennsylvania, 1766), Quaker serge maker, married Mary Fox, part of the wider Fox clan. He is named on the deeds of the Quaker burial ground in Cullompton.

Andrew and his son, also Andrew (1708-1741), went to America where his grandson, a third Andrew, set up Ellicott's Mills in Maryland, which became one of the largest milling and manufacturing towns in eastern America.



CULLOMPTON TO PORTUGAL

In the Sandeman Port Museum in Oporto, Portugal, are bottles of fortified port. There are English sealed bottles with the name: 'I.B. Columpton'; 'Ellis Button Uffculme'; 'W. Upcott 1778'; and others for the Walronds and Blackmore families.

William Upcott traded in cloth with the Lisbon merchant Carlos Luis Ahrend between 1823 and 1837.

The Bale Books show that Topsham traded with Oporto at this time. Cloth was sometimes traded for port.





Cover and back photos: details from St Andrew's Church, Cullompton



Touchscreens providing more information are located at Cullompton venues, the Walronds, the Hayridge, and the Community Centre, and in Uffculme at Coldharbour Mill. This booklet was produced during the Culm Valley and the Cloth and Clothing Trade project, 2013-15: see <http://cullomptonclothtrade.wordpress.com>.