In its heyday (1500-1750), Tiverton was famous for the manufacture of woollen cloth. Thousands found work and merchants grew rich. Their Trail can be followed around the town of today.

PLACES TO VISIT IN TIVERTON

**Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life** – open Mon-Fri 10.30-4.30, Sat 10am-3pm. Closed Christmas to end of January.

**Tiverton Castle** – open Easter to late Oct: Sun, Thurs and Bank Hol Mon 2.30pm-5.30pm

**St Peter’s Church** – open daily.

Several of Tiverton’s historic buildings are open to the public during the National Trust’s annual Heritage Open Days held in early September.

Town Walks are arranged by the Tiverton Civic Society on request.

OTHER PLACES with connections to the Cloth Industry:

**Coldharbour Mill**, Uffculme (near Junction 27 on M5), a working woollen mill and industrial museum with restored waterwheel – is open from Easter until the end of October from 10.30am-4.00pm. Tel 01884 840960 to check details.

**Exeter** Tucker’s Hall, Fore Street, is open from 10.30am-1pm every Thursday and on the first Saturday of each month throughout the year, and from 10.30am-1pm every Tuesday from June to September.

**Topsham Museum** opens every day except Tuesday and Friday 2.00-5.00pm and opens on Tuesdays in August only.

Dates and times correct at time of publication (July 2018)

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Text by Jane Evans and Brian Jenkins. Editor Fern Clarke.


A Trail Guide for Westexe, available from the Museum, will guide you round Westexe and to the Waldron’s Almshouses (1579) in Wellbrook Street.

Visit our website at www.tivertoncivicsoc.org.uk
Five panels tell the merchants’ story and various pavement medallions mark the route.

For convenience we begin at the top of Phoenix Lane by Panel 1.

1 PANEL 1. 18th CENTURY MERCHANTS
A great fire in 1731 gave the opportunity to re-build houses in this prime area. Only one remains, Gothan House, home of George Davey. Go back a few yards to ☐, turn right, then left, to view this fine red-brick Georgian house now occupied by Ashfords, Solicitors. Return to Panel 1 again and turn left along Fore Street, passing the sites of Oliver Peard’s house and Benjamin Dickinson’s mansion at ☐, to St George’s Church on your left, said to be Devon’s finest Georgian Church. The Midwife’s Gravestone is against the back wall of the church beyond the extension. ☐ If our Victorian Town Hall is open, look at the Borough Seal design in the stained glass doors. Go down Angel Hill to:-

2 PANEL 2. 16th & 17th CENTURY MERCHANTS
Angel Hill is at a key location, commanding Exe Bridge, a crossing-point since medieval times. Continue to the bridge for the town’s iconic view upriver to St Peter’s Church, with the Master of Chilcot’s House on your right. Medallion ☐ reminds us that many cloth-fulling mills and channels lined the river bank. Only the Factory Leat remains. If you wish to combine the Merchants’ Trail with the Westexe Trail, please turn to the Westexe Trail leaflet at this point. This will return you to the bridge.

Return up Angel Hill to St Peter Street. Opposite Chilcot’s School (1611) is the Great House (1603-14) and Almshouses built by George Slee. Both have Blue Plaques. Walk up St Peter Street noting the Queen Anne Amory House, c 1708, on your right. 18th century merchants built their fine houses where once their Tudor and Stuart forebears lived. One such was Samuel Foote (1625-91), M.P., who traded on his name ☐. Hereabouts, too, John Greenway (c1460-1529) had a house ☐. Go into the churchyard. Notice the intricate carvings of John Greenway’s Porch and Chapel, 1517, St Peter’s richest feature (see also Panel 4). The church itself is filled with reminders of merchants’ wealth – their marks on the capitals, their tombs near the chancel.

From the church to Tiverton Castle is but a step through the churchyard. ☐ Once a stronghold of the Courtenay Earls of Devon, the Civil War ruin became a home to Peter West, of merchant stock, who built a new wing, the South Court c1685. Retrace your steps to Newport Street. No sign remains of the busy Wool Market ☐. On the corner is the sign of The Lamb. Cross the road and follow ☐ on the right of Newport Street. Turn right at Clare House, 1816, a former Rectory, and head towards the Pannier Market, 1830. Exit left ☐ along Market Walk to Bampton Street:-

3 PANEL 3. THE WIDOW AND THE TOWN’S HISTORIAN
The packhorse medallion ☐ reminds us of how wool was carried from Exmoor and Minehead. The panel shows the lost Enchmarch family mansion (1749) which once occupied this very spot. Sarah, the Widow Enchmarch, carried on her husband’s business with her sons. Opposite is the original doorway to Henry Newte’s Great House, built in 1656. Go down Bampton Street. Here was the family business of Martin Dunsford (1744-1807), merchant and historian of Tiverton.

Note the interesting Corn Market (1732) at ☐. A board gives its history. The columns extend inside the shops. At the bottom of the street, a Blue Plaque on the right marks the site of the Exe Bridge. The streets are lined with many Blue Plaques. See also Scottish Towns Panel 4.

A further walk can be taken over Exe Bridge to Westexe and Waldron’s Almshouses (1579) in Wellbrook Street.

4 PANEL 4. EARLY TUDOR MERCHANT – JOHN GREENWAY
Here you can read how John Greenway acquired his wealth and how he bestowed it on the people of Tiverton. His Chapel at St Peter’s Church is spectacular, and his Almshouses, founded in the 1520s, continue to thrive today, with additions opened by Prince Charles in 2004. Go on to ☐ – look across at his merchant’s mark carved in stone on the tiny Almshouse Chapel. A few yards on, at ☐, cross the road and continue down Gold Street. At ☐ look at the entrance to Sharland’s Court, typical of where many people lived and worked. Go over Lowman Bridge, ☐, marking the road to London.

5 PANEL 5. WOOLLEN INDUSTRY & EDUCATION
The story told here evolves around the River Lowman and the different processes in the cloth industry. Fulling mills were worked by leats all along the right bank. Yet it was here, too, beside the Lowman, that the greatest clothier of all, Peter Blundell (c1520-1601), is remembered. His bequest was the famous Grammar School. Walk on a little further to the gateway to Old Blundell’s, now a Grade 1 Listed Building owned by the National Trust, and see it from the Green. ☐ You may now retrace your steps up Gold Street and go back along Fore Street to ☐. From here Tiverton Museum is easily accessible – just follow the signs to ☐.

A further walk can be taken over Exe Bridge to Westexe and Waldron’s Almshouses (1579) in Wellbrook Street.