

# Exeter Woollen Trail



Exeter City Council



## Cricklepit Mill

Opposite is Cricklepit Mill, one of Exeter's main corn mills. It was almost entirely rebuilt between 1670-1700 when a fulling mill was added to its downstream side. Earlier, three other fulling mills had been built downstream, one by William Hurst who lived in St Nicholas Priory.

Celia Fiennes, a female travel writer, visited Exeter in 1698 and gave this description...

*'The whole town and country is employed for at least twenty miles around in spinning, weaving, dressing and scouring, fulling and drying of the serges. It turns the most money in a week of anything in England.'*



The pub opposite is named after Bishop Blaize, the patron saint of Clothworkers. He was believed to be a late Roman saint who was cruelly martyred by having his flesh torn from him with woolcombs.

## Fulling

Fulling (or tucking) is the process of cleaning and pounding the cloth in water to finish it ready for sale and export. After fulling, the cloth was taken to nearby fields, or to sheds like the Dry House, where it was gently stretched out on large racks, known as tenter frames, to prevent shrinkage. Rows of short iron hooks held the cloth, which is where the phrase 'being on tenter hooks' came from.



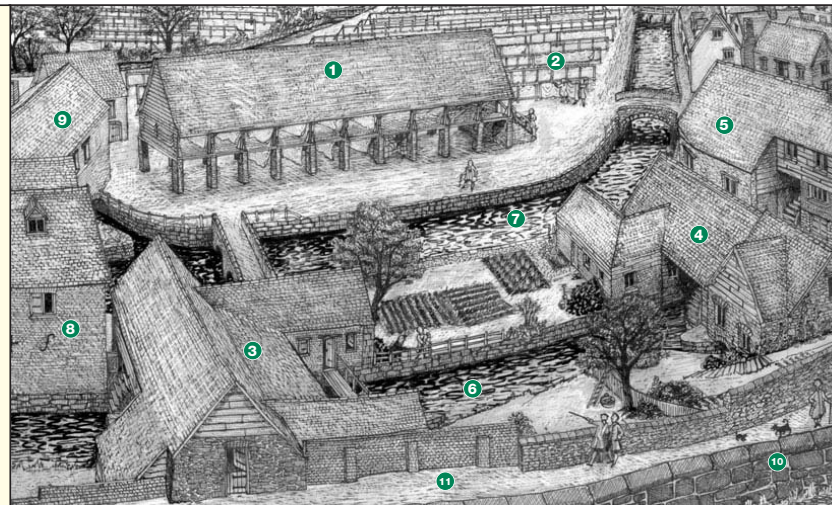
Cloth being hung to dry on a tenter frame (from Diderot's Encyclopaedia)

## The power of water

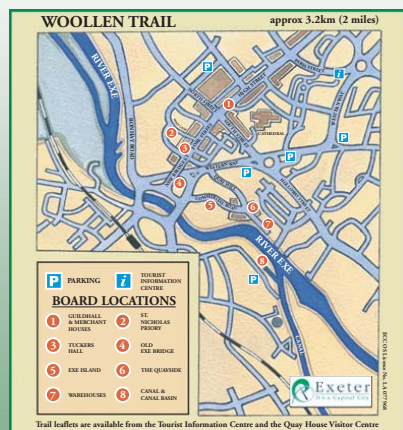
The easy availability of water from the river was the main reason why this area became such a hive of industry. Water was needed to power the wheels, which drove the corn and fulling mills and was brought from the river via the man-made Higher and Lower Leats. Water was also needed for fulling and dyeing the cloth.

This area was once the very heart of the Devon cloth industry densely packed with mills, fulling stocks, cloth drying sheds and racks.

- 1 Dry House
- 2 Rack field
- 3 Andrews and Palmers Fulling Mill
- 4 Cricklepit Fulling Mill
- 5 Cricklepit Corn Mill
- 6 Higher Leat
- 7 Lower Leat
- 8 Weekes Fulling Mill
- 9 Edge Mill
- 10 City Wall
- 11 Cricklepit Street



Reconstruction drawing of Cricklepit around 1750 as seen from the City wall (R. W. Parker/Exeter Archaeology)



“This is such an exciting place! There's people everywhere carrying cloth between the mills and the drying sheds and you should hear the noise!

It makes me right proud to think that our cloth goes all the way across the sea to Holland and Spain for foreign folk to wear.”



Busy, busy packing bales. Catch the ship before it sails

