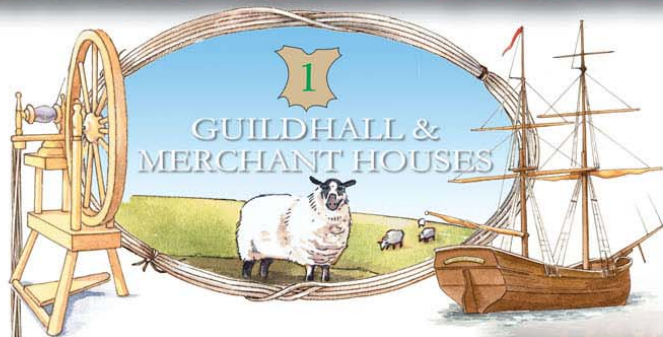


# Exeter Woollen Trail



Exeter City Council



## The Guildhall

For over 800 years, the Mayor and his Council, or Chamber have regulated the affairs of Exeter from here. One of the roles of the Chamber was to keep a tight grip on the guilds of craftsmen, enforcing standards and stipulating conditions of trade on the various industries in the town - including the woollen cloth industry.

With its famous medieval roof and Elizabethan door panelling, the Guildhall is one of the finest open halls surviving in the West Country. The elaborate portico, which extends to the High Street pavement, was added in 1592-4.

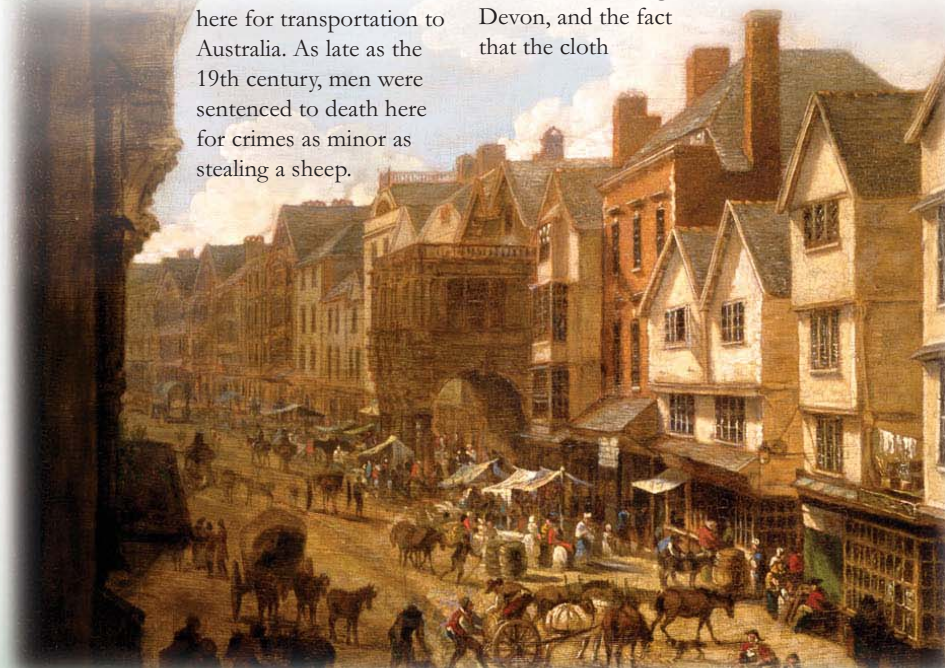


It was here that many of the dramatic events of the city's history were played out. In 1685 the famously cruel Judge Jeffreys sat at the 'Bloody Assizes' held here after the Duke of Monmouth's pitchfork rebellion. Later, people were condemned from here for transportation to Australia. As late as the 19th century, men were sentenced to death here for crimes as minor as stealing a sheep.

### Wealth from wool

From medieval times until the 18th century cloth making was one of the most important industries in Europe. Exeter's prominence in the woollen cloth industry was due to its proximity to spinners and weavers throughout Devon, and the fact that the cloth

was finished on Exe island to be exported from the Quayside. The centre of the old city became home to an elite of powerful merchants whose wealth was founded on cloth.



High Street in the early 19th century by John White Abbott (Exeter City Museum)



Interior of the Guild Hall (Exeter City Museums) See noticeboard to right of door for opening times.



No. 46 The High Street (Exeter City Museums) One of the earliest houses now standing in the High Street

### Merchant Houses

Between the 15th and 18th centuries the woollen cloth trade thrived in Exeter. Powerful wool merchants owned many of the houses in this area. The merchants had their shops and offices on the ground floor and lived upstairs with their families. If you look above some of the shops you will see many of the original fronts of the merchants' houses - some are over 500 years old.

### The Woollen Trail

This trail gives you the opportunity to explore many of the key sites involved in Exeter's woollen cloth trade. It will take you from the City Centre through the West Quarter to Exe Island, then

onto Exeter's Historic Quayside. Along the trail 8 information panels provide detailed descriptions at each site and a weaver and merchant will help you discover Exeter's "Age of the Golden Fleece". Children can enjoy the trail

through following the "sheep's story", learning what happens to its fleece from shearing to export. A trail leaflet is available to help you around the city. Pick one up at the Tourist Information Centre or the Quay House Visitor Centre.

Shear the sheep, comb the fleece, spin the yarn. How many times a year are sheep shorn? Once, twice or three times?



Answer: Once