

## WEAVING AND DYEING

Medieval Suffolk was famous for making woollen cloth and it grew to become a major part of the economy in towns such as Hadleigh, Lavenham and Sudbury. When the Huguenots were expelled from France by Louis XIV in 1685 they took their knowledge of silk making with them and moved to Spitalfields in London.

Then In the late 18th Century silk making arrived in Sudbury where wage levels were lower than in London and local weavers already had the necessary weaving skills. At first silk weaving was a cottage industry. Many terraces of three storey weavers' cottages still survive in the town with large windows on the first floor to shed maximum light on the looms. Eventually 'manufactories' were built and it became a major industry.

Silk is spun by silkworms which feed on the white mulberry leaves. There is a mulberry bush in Weavers' Piece and a large old tree in the garden of Gainsborough's House. Raw silk produces a beautiful soft fabric, but people wanted different colours, so the fabric was dyed.

The dyeing of fabric goes back thousands of years. Natural dyes were produced from plants as far back as the Neolithic period. Many of the dyes used in both the woollen and the early silk industry would have been made from local plants. Some of the great variety of dye plants can be seen in the garden at Weavers' Piece. Woad has particular links to East Anglia, used by Boudicca and the Iceni tribe to paint their faces for battle. It produces a blue purple colour known locally as Lavenham Blue. The famous Lincoln Green of Robin Hood was made using woad and then overdyed with dyer's Broom.

Agrimony was a well-known domestic herb with a variety of medicinal uses but also produces a yellow dye, the shade depends on the time of year it is harvested. Alkanet, a member of the borage family with small blue flowers, has roots which produce a deep red dye which can be used in food stuffs too. Madder will produce a deep red dye. It was this dye that was originally used for the English army uniform, giving them the nickname of "Redcoats". Shades of yellow were made from a variety of plants.

The carving which you can see in the garden is made from a tree which grew here but had to be cut down. It represents a silk worker displaying pieces of silk.

## PLANTS FOUND IN THE GARDEN AND THEIR USES

PLANT	BOTANICAL NAME	FLOWER	BLOOM TIME	DYE COLOUR ON WOOL
Agrimony	Agrimonia eupatoria	Yellow	July/August	Brassy Yellow
Alkanet	Anchusa officinalis	Blue	Mid-Summer	Red dye to foods
Broom	Cytisus scoparius	Yellow	Late Spring	Yellows, Yellow-green oranges and reds.
Bronze Fennel	Foeniculum vulgare 'Purpurascens'	Yellow	Summer	Clear Yellow
Coreopsis	Coreopsis grandiflora	Yellow daisy	Early Summer	Yellow
Dahlia	Dahlia spp.	All but blues	Summer to frost	Yellow to orange
Dyer's Broom	Genesta tinctoria	Yellow	June	Yellow/orange/red
Dyer's Chamomile	Anthemis tinctoria	Yellow daisy	Mid Summer	Yellow
Asteracea (Daisy family)	Various	Gold, maroon, bi-color	Mid Summer	Gold, orange, rusty red
Dyer's Woad	Isatus tinctoria	Yellow	Spring	Blue
Elecampane	Inula helenium	Yellow		Scottish tartan blues, purple
Goldenrod	Solidago spp.	Gold	Late Summer	Bright Yellows, Golds
Hollyhock	Alcea rosea	Dark rose, red, black	Summer	Yellow, Gold, brown
Indigo	Indigofera spp.	Violet	Summer	Indigo blue
Lady's Bedstraw	Galium verum	Yellow	Early Summer	Red, brick, coral
Lady's Mantle	Alchemilla vulgaris	Yellow	Early Summer	Yellow
Madder	Rubia tinctoria	Pale little flowers		Shades of red
MariGold	Tageles erecta, t. patula	Yellow, Yrange	Summer to frost	Yellow, Gold, orange
Pot MariGold	Calendula officinalia	Orange/Yellow	Summer to frost	Yellow to foods
Russian Sage	Perovskia atriplicifolia	Blues	Mid/late Summer	Blue
Saffron (not yet got)	Crocus sativus	White	Autumn	Yellow dye for food
Weld	Reseda luteola	Yellowish	Late Spring	Yellow
Yarrow	Achillea millefolium	Yellow	Early Summer	Yellow

S U D B U R Y

· Silk ·

FESTIVAL

A celebration of silk weaving

WEAVERS' PIECE INTRODUCED BY 'TALBOT'

MAP AND TRAIL INSIDE

## TALBOT THE LABRADOR

Sudbury Town crest includes a black dog that is a Talbot. Talbots, in the Middle Ages, were hunting dogs. I am a Labrador named after that dog. I know my way around Sudbury and I often meet people outside the Town Hall 1. I love going there because just across the road near St Peter's Church 4 is a horse trough. If you read the plaque you will see how, long ago, old friends of my family were looking for their puppies and 84 other puppies. You may have read about them in the book by Dodie Smith, "101 Dalmatians".

In Gaol Lane, at the back of the town hall, is the Heritage Centre 3 where you can learn about the history of Sudbury. I look in occasionally and know you will find lots more information on Sudbury and its history there.

Also, in Gaol Lane is the place where I live ...Weavers' Piece! 8. This a Dye Garden, with examples of plants that were used to dye the silk after it was woven. It is full of interesting smells. You know what a dog's nose is like...ultra-sensitive. I always know if my friends have been there. It's a good job we're all well behaved. The plants in flower have delicious smells too and I understand they were all so useful in days gone by. The bakery across the road smells good too!

A bit further along the lane, just off the car park is the Dental Emporium, which was once a silk "manufactory".

From there, I like to go and look at the statue of Thomas Gainsborough 2 which stands in front of St Peter's Church 4 on the Market Hill 5. Thomas Gainsborough was a famous artist who was born in Sudbury. He liked to paint pictures of the areas around Sudbury but to make money he painted portraits. In some of them, including a picture of Mr and Mrs Andrews, he included a dog. The dog was a friend of my distant relations!

Also, on Market Hill is the town's imposing library. It was once the local Corn Exchange. It was built in 1841 and is a listed building. A corn exchange was where merchants sold the grain produced on their land.

Market Hill is the site for the twice weekly market. Held on Thursdays and Saturdays, there is a record of a market in the town in the Domesday Book 1086.

If you run down the Market Hill (look out for the cars), and on to Gainsborough Street, you will find the house Thomas Gainsborough grew up in. Next door at No. 47 is the oldest silk "manufactory". The gardens at Gainsborough's House are particularly lovely!

Also on Talbot's Walks around town 9 10 11 12 13 are the current silk mills which are still producing silk. Vanner's and Stephen Walters also have shops.

I hope you enjoyed walking round my silk producing town and learning about the history. Come back soon and I am sure I'll remember you and help you to enjoy your visit!

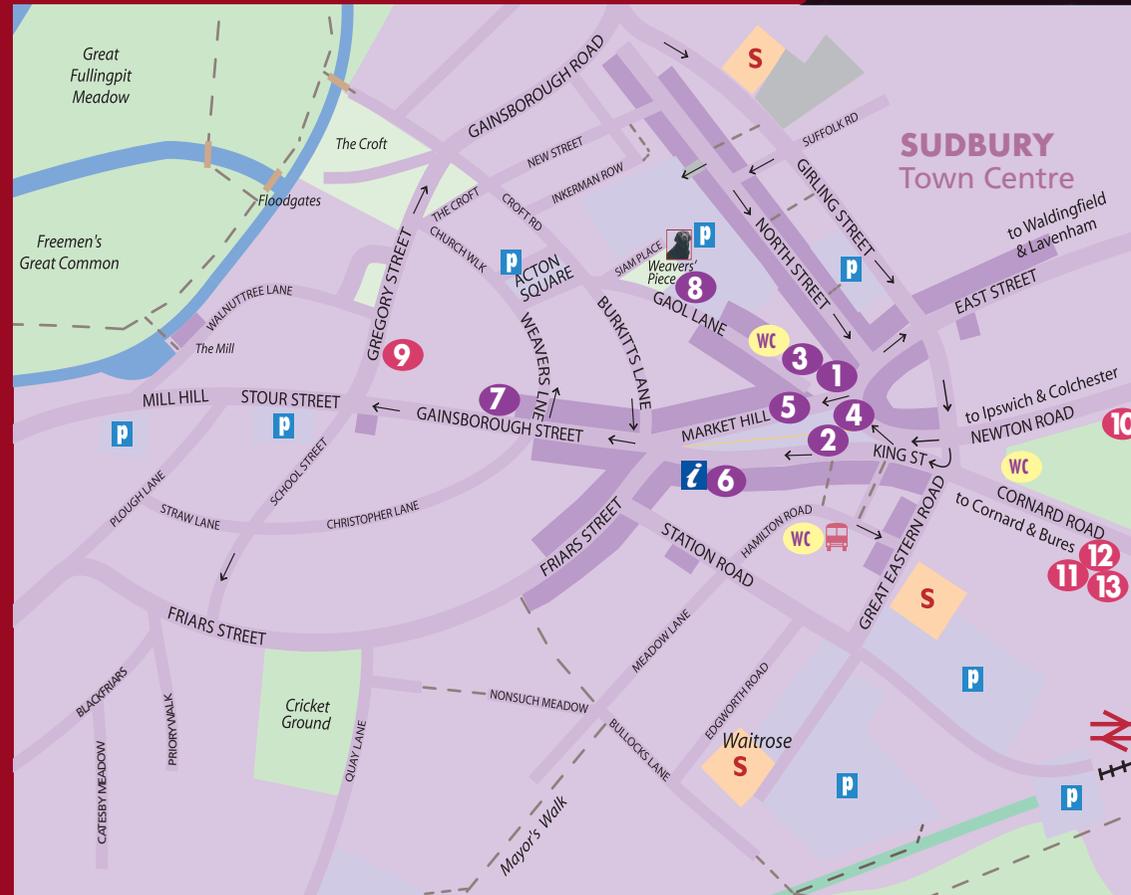
If you see the red posts in the garden there is also a separate Talbot Trail around Sudbury. You can buy a leaflet explaining this at the Tourist Information Centre 6 and for more information and details of events happening in Sudbury I like [www.seeanddosudbury.co.uk](http://www.seeanddosudbury.co.uk)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEAVERS' PIECE HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Pocket Park Grant. Project management sponsored by SB Surveyors and with support from Babergh District Council and Sudbury Town Council. Planting design by Herbaculture CIC. Leaflet design by DL Design and Print and Motivation Matters and Thanks also to sponsors including Bulmer Brick and Tile, Keyline and Smoke and Fire (Darsham) and other individual contributors. Contractors including John Moore Tree Services, Escar UK Bronze, Activlives, A J Smith and D J Waspe. Plan and explanatory panels by Robin Drury.

“Why not see if you can follow my trail and find out more about the silk history of Sudbury?”

## MAP SHOWING THE LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



## KEY

- 1 Town Hall
- 2 Gainsborough Statue
- 3 Heritage Centre
- 4 St. Peter's Church
- 5 Market
- 6 TIC/Library
- 7 Gainsborough's House
- 8 Weavers' Piece
- Silk Mills
- 9 Vanners Silks + Shop
- 10 to Gainsborough Silk Weaving
- 11 to Stephen Walters + Shop
- 12 to David Walters
- 13 to Humphries Weaving

- P Public car park
- WC Public toilet
- S Supermarket
- Rail station
- Bus station
- Main shopping

Silk Mills - walking distance from St Peter's on Market Hill

- 9 0.2 mile
- 10 1.2 mile
- 11 0.5 mile
- 12 0.5 mile
- 13 0.5 mile