Thomas Gainsborough, R.A. (1727–1788) was born in Sudbury, Suffolk to John and Mary Gainsborough. His childhood home was originally a Tudor timber-frame style, to which John Gainsborough added a Georgian brick façade in 1723. After his father’s death in 1748, Gainsborough moved back to Sudbury, where he lived for the rest of his life. He was a wealthy merchant and clothier.

In 1709, Gainsborough’s uncle, Humphry Burroughs, inherited a large fortune from his aunts. In his will, Humphry left a considerable amount of money to his nephews, including Gainsborough. This money allowed Gainsborough to pursue his passion for art.

Gainsborough’s House

Gainsborough’s House, 46 Gainsborough Street, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2EU
Monday to Saturday 10.00–17.00
Sunday 11.00–17.00

Gainsborough’s House, a former 17th-century merchant’s townhouse, was the home of Sudbury’s most famous native son in 1913 with the unveiling of the artist’s monumental 8’ 6” bronze statue on Market Hill. Designed by Bertram Mackennal and sculpted by Arnold Machin, the statue is an allusion to Gainsborough’s own love of music. The base of the statue is a hand, standing on a base of Portland stone. A bronze relief below shows Gainsborough playing a violin, with a sign of the prosperity in the area during medieval times. Originally dating around 1370, large-scale renovations were completed on the church in the 15th century.

Gainsborough’s era, one of the most important buildings here was Friars Street in Sudbury. In the 1300s, when Dominican Friars kept a Priory House in the vicinity. In the 14th century Friars Street became a thoroughfare dating to the 1300s, when Dominican Friars kept a Priory House in the vicinity. In 1300, Simon of Sudbury was executed in Westminster Hall and beheaded, and his head was displayed on Spital Field in London. He is remembered as the patron saint of fullers, between an elephant and a lion.

All Saints Church

All Saints Church is a Church of England parish church in Sudbury, Suffolk. It was built in Norman times to serve Sudbury’s wool trade. On the north side of the churchyard, the Gainsborough family vault and box tomb can still be seen today. Thomas Gainsborough chose to be buried more modestly at St Anne’s Church in Kew, London, along with his wife Margaret. However, Gainsborough would have attended the church as a boy, and included the spire of All Saints in the background of one of his most famous paintings: the double portrait of Mr and Mrs Andrews.

Salter’s Hall

Salter’s Hall, dating to around 1450, is the highest quality timber-frame structure in Sudbury and may have belonged to a local merchant or clothier. Standing near the Charity on Stour Street, this impressive structure reflects the wealth of East Anglia’s wool towns in medieval times. Salter’s Hall features original wooden tracery on the windows, with a carved spout (or spandrel) beneath the oriel window showing St James the Less, patron saint offullers, between an elephant and a lion.

Sudbury Grammar School

Sudbury Grammar School was founded in 1491 and run in Gainsborough’s day by his uncle, the Reverend Humphry Burroughs. Thomas and his brothers were all educated at the school but by the age of 13 Gainsborough had left Sudbury for London to study art.

What’s There?

Now a private residence, Salter’s Hall has an unparallel view down towards Sudbury’s famous Water Meadows.

Water Meadows

Thomas Gainsborough much preferred painting landscapes to more lucrative genres such as portraiture. His love of the countryside was first discovered in the woods and fields surrounding Sudbury where he spent time in the Water Meadows, an area of natural beauty first recorded in Sudbury chronicles around 1260.437. Several members of Gainsborough’s family were Freeman of the Commons, giving them the right to graze cattle and horses on these pastures.

What’s There?

Accessable via walks for all ages. Meander along the River Stour on the 3.5-mile Meadow Walk, and observe a rich vista of flowers, insects, birds and cattle.

Sudbury Heritage Centre

Sudbury Heritage Centre is an all-year-round centre dedicated to the study of the local history and heritage of the town of Sudbury.

What’s There?

The centre is located on Lamp Lane in the heart of Sudbury town. It offers a range of exhibitions, displays and resources, including a collection of local photographs, maps, and artefacts.

For details please contact:
Sudbury Heritage Centre
Lamp Lane
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 1DU
Tel: 01787 372958
Email: info@gainsborough.org

Gainsborough’s House Society

Gainsborough’s House Society was established in 1958 and opened to the public as a museum in 1961. The Society is a registered charity and is committed to preserving and interpreting the life and art of Thomas Gainsborough, one of England’s greatest artists, this comprehensive collection of Gainsborough’s art within a single setting.

What’s There?

The Society manages and curates Gainsborough’s House, a Grade I listed building, and is responsible for the care and display of its permanent and temporary exhibitions, as well as the maintenance and development of its galleries and collections. The Society also provides outreach programmes and events to engage the public with the work of Thomas Gainsborough and his contemporaries.

Elaborate, ornamental, and bound in a sheath of green cloth, the Gainsborough tomb in All Saints churchyard is a sign of the prosperity in the area during medieval times. Originally dating around 1370, large-scale renovations were completed on the church in the 15th century. A sign of the prosperity in the area during medieval times. Originally dating around 1370, large-scale renovations were completed on the church in the 15th century.

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Gainsborough's House
Thomas Gainsborough, R.A. (1727–1788) was born in Sudbury, Suffolk to John and Mary Gainsborough. His childhood home was originally a Tudor 15th-century dwelling that became home to Gainsborough's uncle, Thomas Gainsborough's father, was a ‘Crepe & Shroud Maker’ and his uncle Thomas a wealthy merchant and clothier.

One of the most prominent buildings along Friars Street is Buzzards Hall, a 15th-century dwelling that became home to Gainsborough’s uncle. His nephew a legacy that would allow young Gainsborough to study art in London. At the age of 13, Gainsborough left Sudbury to train under the French illustrator and engraver, Hubert-François Gravelot, at the St Martins Lane Academy.

St Gregory’s Church
St Gregory’s is one of three historic parish churches within Sudbury, a sign of the prosperity in the area during medieval times. Originally dating to around 1370, large-scale renovations were completed on the church in the 19th century by the architect William Butterfield. Although St Gregory’s is best known as the church of Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury and famous casualty of the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381, the Gainsboroughs also have history here. Thomas Gainsborough was born in this parish in 1727, and the churchyard is the burial place of his father, John.

Friars Street
Friars Street in Sudbury is an ancient thoroughfare dating to the 1300s, when Dominican Friars kept a Priory House in the vicinity. In Gainsborough’s era, one of the most important buildings here was the Independent Meeting House (no longer extant), built in 1709 for the Independent Meeting House (no longer extant), built in 1709 for the Gainsborough family. In 1727, the churchyard is the burial place of his father, John.