



## Axminster – A fascinating East Devon Market Town

In the Iron Age, the Axe Valley was the boundary between the tribes of Dumnonii the Western Devon and Devonians the Western Dorset. Today, however, it will have provided magnificent views of the surrounding countryside and it is believed that Axminster was an Iron Age hill-fort, known as Castle Hill and later known as Axton.

Axminster developed in the Anglo-Saxon period with 'Axtonwic' first recorded in AD 922. The 'Winton' town was first mentioned in King Canute's records as the tenth most important town in the county, but it remained a small town, built on the ruins of Winton. Nothing remains of the original church or the ruins part of the great Saxon church of St Mary's.

It was the sheep that saved the town. During the English Civil War, Axminster was the most important town in England when all but the Winton was razed to the ground by Parliamentarian forces from 1645. Despite this, by 1714 a fire had destroyed the town. A new church and a new drainage but was stopped from spreading preventing Axminster from being razed to the ground again. In 1714, the town had a population of 1,000. The town was a market town, providing the opportunity for the wool and other trade goods from the valley.

The Market Charter for Axminster was



granted to the town. Although Axminster had a variety of markets, including Friday, Tuesday, and wool.

There is still a weekly produce market on Thursdays in Trinity Square. The town is surrounded with streets. The first Axminster carpet was created in 1779 by Thomas Wherry in a factory located on Green in West Street. It was in

1810 that the original factory and Thomas Wherry built a new factory running along West Street but with few problems over the factory since 1840. A new Axminster Carpet factory was opened in 1870 by Thomas Wherry and it is this factory producing Axminster Carpets. The Axminster Heritage Centre is located near the factory.