



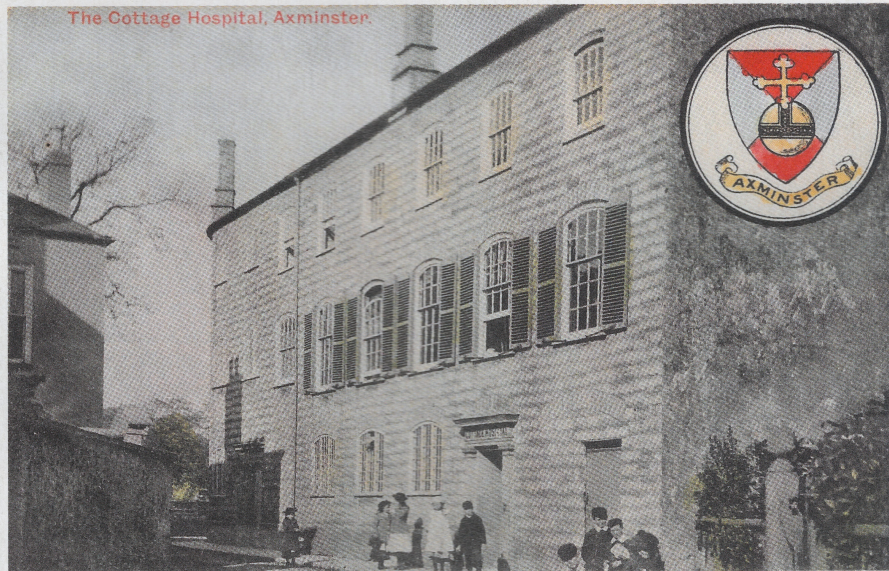
Axminster – A fascinating East Devon Market Town

In the Iron Age, the Axe Valley was the boundary between the tribes of Dumnonii (in Modern Devon) and Durotriges (in Modern Dorset). Today, numerous Hill forts provide magnificent views of the surrounding countryside and it is believed that Axminster was an Iron Age hillfort, hence the Castle Hill and Castle Street names.

Axminster developed in the Anglo-Saxon period with 'Ascanmynster' first recorded in AD 755AD. The Minster Church was first mentioned in 789AD when it was recorded as the burial place of Cynehard the Atheling, heir to the throne of Wessex. Nothing remains of this original church and the earliest part of the present church is the carved Norman doorway.

Fire has shaped the town. During the English Civil, Axminster was the most destroyed town in England when all but the Minister was razed to the ground by Parliamentarians from Lyme Regis in 1644. In 1789 a fire in Market Place caused serious damage but was stopped from spreading preventing Axminster from being burnt to the ground again. In 1834 on Trinity Sunday a fire destroyed 20 properties in the town centre, providing the opportunity to widen the road and create Trinity Square as we know today.

The Market Charter for Axminster was



granted in 1209. A livestock market was held at various locations, including Trinity Square, until 2001.

There is still a weekly produce market on Thursdays in Trinity Square. The town is synonymous with carpets. The first Axminster carpet was created in 1755 by Thomas Whitty in a factory behind his house in Silver Street. A fire in

1828 destroyed the original factory and Samuel Ramson Whitty built a new factory running along Silver Street but cash flow problems saw the factory close in 1836. A new Axminster Carpet factory was opened in 1937 by Harry Dutfield and it is this factory producing 'Axminster's from Axminster' today. Visit Axminster Heritage Centre to learn more about this history.