



ORIENTAL RUG AND TEXTILE SOCIETY

of Great Britain

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Notes on Historic British and Irish Hand-Made Carpet Factories

Notes from Wilton Factory Archive (Held at Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

Range of 'Wessex' hand tufted rugs that were produced 1930 - 1935. Wilton may have introduced a special quality for contemporary art rugs. Can now properly speculate more on the differing weaving qualities attributed to Wilton. eg Marion Dorn as arguably the best known. The original a/w was done in gouache. Brighton Museum had these on loan at the time from Wilton.



The kind of book given to clients interested in creating rugs

'WESSEX' HAND-MADE CARPETS

Termed 'Real Axminster' by reason of their original association with Axminster, Devonshire, in the seventeenth century.

The Axminster Handcraft Industry was transferred, in 1835, to Wilton, Wiltshire, to combine with the factory there, established in 1698, with successful results, and is to-day the major industry of the Wilton Royal Carpet Factory.

Real Axminster Carpets have a wide and varied appeal through their distinct advantages over other carpet fabrics. With normally careful treatment they improve with age in beauty and character. Under trying conditions of incessant wear they are correctly reputed to equal any and surpass most others.

They allow unlimited freedom in design and colour, and are made seamless to any required size and shape (not exceeding 40 ft. wide, any length). The much improved execution of detailed designs and colours in the less costly qualities enables them to be used in comparatively modest schemes of decoration.

A large range of samples and hand-painted sketches (to scale) is maintained at the London Show-room. Requests for selections should state, as far as possible, the scheme of decoration, sizes, and quality in mind.

Many of the examples in circulation were made as essays and subsequently corrected before the carpets were put to work. Therefore criticism is welcomed. They can be altered in form or colour as required.

The sample range is supplemented by a highly efficient studio service. Existing designs and colour schemes are re-drawn and re-coloured to any specification, without fee. Trial sections, for criticism, are also made, usually without charge, when provisional orders have been secured.

These carpets are charged by the square yard or square foot, calculated from the actual rectangular area (to the nearest inch). Shaped carpets, close-cover schemes, etc., are subject to special estimate.

Boasts of a large design team

'WESSEX'

FINE Skein-tied WORSTEDS and SAXONIES

HAND-TUFTED REAL AXMINSTER

10 × 10	stitch, fine WORSTED	(100 knots per square inch)	. . .	210/-
8 × 8	" "	" (64 " ")	. . .	154/-
6 × 6	" "	" (36 " ")	. . .	120/-
5 × 5	" "	" (25 " ")	. . .	102/-
5 × 5	" "	SAXONY (25 " ")	. . .	94/-
4½ × 4½	" "	" (20 " " approx.)	. . .	85/-

Prices are per square yard, for orders of not less than 5 square yards of a design and colouring. (Rectangular shapes, made up of any sizes.) Lesser total areas and shaped pieces to special quotation.

Bacon, Dorn and McNight Kauffer were using the two cheaper qualities 4.5 x 4.5 or 5 x 5cm

'WESSEX'
FINE TUFTED WOOLLENS and WORSTEDS
HAND-TUFTED REAL AXMINSTER

'SAVONA'	quality	99/-	'LARISSA'	quality	54/-
'LADAK'	"	88/-	'MERE'	"	51/-
5x5 TUFTED WORSTED	"	84/-	SECOND NEW GRADE	"	50/-
5x5 LUSTRE	"	84/-	'BURFORD'	"	45/-
'SOMERSEX'	"	80/-	'AGRA'	"	45/6
'SARUM'	"	71/-	'SEMLEY'	"	42/6
'SEVAS'	"	68/-	FIRST NEW GRADE	"	40/-
'LADOGA'	"	63/-	'AVON'	"	37/-
THIRD NEW GRADE	"	60/-	No. 1 SPECIAL	See page 3	

Prices are per square yard, for orders of not less than 5 square yards of a design and colouring. (Rectangular shapes, made up of any sizes.) Lesser total areas, and shaped pieces, to special quotation.

Prices circa 1932

'WESSEX'
HEAVY TUFTED WOOLLENS
HAND-TUFTED REAL AXMINSTER

'G' quality	66/-	'C' quality	42/-
'F'	60/-	'B'	40/-
'E'	55/-	'A'	36/-
'D'	51/-		

Prices are per square yard, for orders of not less than 5 square yards of a design and colouring. (Rectangular shapes, made up of any sizes.) Lesser total areas and shaped pieces to special quotation.

'WESSEX'
FINE TUFTED WOOLLEN
HAND-TUFTED REAL AXMINSTER

No. 1 SPECIAL Quality *25/6*

Made from the usual high-grade materials and dyes throughout, clean, lustrous, and well-spun yarn, this quality is attractive and exceptional value. It is particularly suitable for modern style designs of simpler character.

This price is per square yard, for special orders of not less than 5 square yards of a design and colouring. (Rectangular shapes, made up of any sizes.) Lesser total areas and shaped pieces to special quotation.

From time to time a select and varied stock of carpets and rugs is displayed at the London Warehouse, mainly in good modern style. These can be purchased at slightly less cost than special orders.

**REAL HAND-MADE CARPETS
MURAS QUALITY**

PRICE 22/6 a square foot
Price ruling at date of despatch.

THESE fine carpets, famous wherever luxury of effect and hard wearing qualities are required, are made in any design or colouring, to harmonize with every scheme of decoration. They are made woolen in any size or shape up to 40ft. wide by the required length. Oval, circular and shaped carpets are charged at the full rectangular rates or subject to special quotations. Sketches can be supplied, adapted to suit the size and shape of the carpet desired, in specific period, oriental or modern design, plain, tone-on-tone, etc., and carpets can be made to customer's own design.

Guaranteed MOTH and INSECT proof.

	per sq. yd.	sq. yards
Surface-faxony yarn	11/6	1,848 gross
Grey Woollen Wash	12/6	990 "
Flax warp	1/6	180 "
TOTAL WEIGHT	8 "	4,118 "
KNOTS	20,728 knots	14,800 knots

A PRODUCT of Wilton Woollen, whose craftsmanship has been handed from generation to generation since establishment at Axminster 1755, and moved to Wilton 1835.

Makers of Fine Carpets since 1655.

EXPORT Packing extra at cost. Carriage paid to U.K. port.

WILTON PIECE GOODS

WYLYE RIFER (Signed & Framed)	27/6	4/6	4/6
WYLYE (Signed & Framed)	27/6	3/6	3/6
CLARENDON SUPER (Two-tone)	27/6	—	—
CLARENDON (Two-tone)	27/6	—	—
BREAMORE SUPER (Flax)	27/6	—	—
BREAMORE (Flax)	27/6	—	—
WILCURL (Non-Crush)	27/6	—	—
WYLYE RUGS	4'6" x 2'6"	75/1000	13/4 each
	4'6" x 3'6"	95/1400	16/2 each
WYLYE SCRAF	4'6" x 4'6"	115/2000	19/0 "
	3'6" x 4'6"	111/1800	18/0 "
WYLYE CORRIDORS	2'6" x 2'6"	20/100	3/4 "
	3'6" x 2'6"	20/125	3/4 "
	4'6" x 2'6"	20/150	3/4 "
	5'6" x 2'6"	20/175	3/4 "
WYLYE RUG SETS	1 Bag 11'6" x 3'6" 90/1100	11/0	
	1 Bag 4'6" x 2'6" 20/135	2/0	

3 or more 25/6
20 or more 21/6

SPECIAL COLOURS—EXPORT ONLY.

PLAINS. Size of readings 1 or 10 pieces.
TWO TONE. Size of readings 4 or 11 pieces.

AXMINSTER PIECE GOODS

WILROD	27/6	3/6	3/6
WILMAR	27/6	3/6	3/6

AXMINSTER RUGS

WILMAR	4'6" x 2'6"	13/4
	4'6" x 3'6"	17/0
	4'6" x 4'6"	18/0
	5'6" x 2'6"	17/0
	5'6" x 3'6"	18/0

TERMS

GENERAL

All machine made orders are accepted subject to prices ruling at date of despatch.

EXPORT.

2 1/2% for prompt cash paid in London.
Packing extra at cost.
F.O.B. van miles of Wilton.

HOME TRADE

2 1/2% for cash by the 15th of the month following the date of invoice. Wrappers are charged and returnable.
Orders under £15 carriage charged.

less luxurious pocket price list - 1950s demonstrates decline

HANDTUFTED REAL AXMINSTER.

Avon.	37/- .per sq. yd
First New Grade.	40/-
Samley.	42/6.
Agra.	45/6.
Second New Grade.	50/-
More	51/-
Larissa.	54/-
Third New Grade.	60/-
Ladoga.	65/-.
Sevas.	68/-
Sarun.	71/-
Somerset.	80/-
Ladak.	85/-
Savone.	99/-

less luxurious pocket price list

WEAVING

See Sheds 1A. 40ft. wide loom widest in world.
1B. S.W. Third.

(a) THE KNOT

is the Ghiordes (Gordis) as in Turkish and Coarse Persian types.

(b) MATERIALS
HAND-MADE

Flax Warp (Vertical) made at old factory, Bridport, Dorset.
3 ply and 2ply Woollen Yarn Fila. Mixture Woollen and hair for weft. Fine Worsted for edge. The tufts for the pile are cut into two inch lengths on a machine before they are given to the Weaver. The Weaver's assistant who fetches and carries is called the "Waiting Maid". The tufts are each tied on to two warps, one back one front, after one row the weft or shuttle is inserted once, the warp shed is then reversed and another weft or shuttle inserted. The weft is compressed with a Beater.

(c) TOOLS

Beater and Needle.

Top Roller holds Warp specially wound for each Carpet. Spiked roller is turned by geared handles. As the Carpet is made, about 6" at a time, it is "Bunk".

(d) PATTERN

is crudely coloured to show different colours more clearly.

The Studio located in S.W. 1.B and 3.A. (upstairs) is not open to the public as it interfered with the work of the artists too much.

THE DESIGNS are made in our Studio to Customers' requirements. Every Carpet is different. Advantages of Hand-made are:- Any design, any colour, any shape, all in one width, no extra charges.

The quality will last much longer than Machine-made owing to the extra weight of the 3 ply yarn, the woollen weft and the knot which prevents the tuft moving and provides a cushion in the back. Machine-made Carpets must be made in large quantities, all the same type.

(e) WAGE-RATE

1 - 2 square yards per week per girl.

Note that the time taken will depend on length rather than width. A girl conveniently covers 1 yard sideways. The long corridor carpet for the Ritz Hotel, London (recently made) took 46 weeks (125 feet).

Workers are on piece rate for each 3,600 tufts and earn about 24 per week. A higher rate for more "difficult" patterns. A pattern is more difficult if the pattern or colours are complicated. A plain is easy but dull.

The operatives are, in many cases, descendants of the original weavers from Axminster.

(f) PRICE

In a Shop (including tax 33 1/3%) is about 21s. per square yard for quality Wares (16 knots to square inch). The real good complex (100 knots to square inch) in squares, no longer made, would cost 210s per square yard, this is made of a fine Worsted yarn "Woolen Tied". The Hand-made industry is not profitable but is carried on now for reasons of prestige.

Shearing Machine (like a lawn mower) in L.O (over river). Sets brush to lift loops to be shorn.

(g) HAND-MADE FINISHING ROOM

L.C. First Floor.

Besides finishing the hand-made carpets, this room also is responsible for the finishing and preparation for despatch of machine-made samples which form a very large bulk of their work. The finishing of hand-made consists of careful inspection, heading back of the two ends, labelling and brushing. The Carpets are normally rolled for despatch as they carry better in this condition.

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Mentions costings and Dorn's commission for The Ritz

All records were transferred to Wiltshire County Archives whose collection are now held at

Email: heritageadmin@wiltshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01249 705500

Postal Address:

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre

Cocklebury Road

Chippenham

Wiltshire

SN15 3QN.

the pages for the records on line are:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/results.aspx?tab=2&Page=1&ContainAllWords=2583&Repository=Wiltshire+and+Swindon+Archives>

Choose Wiltshire and Swindon from drop down and insert **2583** into the search

also see my pages:

http://www.orient-rug.com/rw_pages/history/rw_Handmade.html

Main Factory close to Wilton House seat of Earl of Pembroke (patron and consotium leader)

Small subsidiary hand knotting workplaces opened:

1894 Southamton (unsuccessful) destroyed WW11

1905 at Mere (Somerset) Tisbury (Wiltshire) Downton (Wiltshire) transferred to nearby next village Morgan Vale (Wilshire)

1916 at Fordingbridge (Hampshire) only 4 miles south from Downton.

1935 Downton transfers to Morgan's Vale { coincides with end of ' Wessex ' range ? }

Downtown and Fordingbridge are very closeby and the two may be confused or the same

The managing director at Wilton Carpet Factory states it was possible that some factory records were sent to the V&A. Their own files were destroyed on two successive occasions. This may have occurred in 1959 when hand-knotting ceased , 1965 during a merger , 1970 when they were taken over by Yougal or 1987 when the group became part of Coats Viyella

They may show up at the V&A.(??) but appear tragically lost

11/8/2009

" Thank you for your enquiry about records from the Royal Wilton Carpet Factory. I have checked the catalogue and regret that neither the Archive of Art and Design nor the National Art Library holds any such records or trade literature." - Anne Newport.

Anne Newport
Librarian, Documentation
Word & Image Department
Victoria and Albert Museum
South Kensington
London SW7 2RL
Tel: 44 (0) 20 7942 2390
Fax: 44 (0) 20 7942 2394
Email: anewport@vam.ac.uk

12/8/2009 V&A / VAM

Thank you for your enquiry about records relating to the Wilton Carpet Factory. We have two files of letters, accounts etc, but they are not from the period you are interested in. They relate to the late 40's and early 1950s, and to the late 1970s and early 1980s (although there is mention of an exhibition about Wilton's 1930s carpets in the 1970s file). If you still wanted to see these you would need to make an appointment with the Archive of Art and Design where they are held, and view them in their reading rooms at Olympia. Tel; 020 7942 2966.

To make it quicker when asking for the files you should quote MA/1/W2421 and Wilton Royal Carpet Factory Ltd., (Philip Coombes)

Natasha Jacoby - Assistant Curator
Designs n.jacoby@vam.ac.uk

Some of Wilton's lost records were exhibited in the 1975 Brighton Exhibition

Like you I had the reference to Wessex but could not detail anything.

In the documentation I have there is like different types of hand made or knotting mentioned, but there are never references to the modernist rugs. The images bellow come from my best booklet. There is no date for publication I believe in the 70s.

SUMMARY

The Wilton Carpet Factory manufactures only machine-woven carpet where the tufts that form the pile are inserted row by row as weaving progresses. Two types are made – Wilton and Axminster. These look the same from the front, but the methods of construction differ. They can be identified by looking at the back. In a Wilton carpet the pile yarn is woven into the back of the carpet when it is not required on the front as part of the pattern. This creates stripes of colour on the back. An Axminster carpet has a plainer back, although a faint outline of the pattern can usually be seen.

- 1699 Charter granted by William III to Clothiers and Weavers of Wilton.
- 1710 First weaving shed erected on foundations of an earlier (1655) building.
- 1741 First Wilton carpet loom patented.
- 1755 Thomas Whitty created first Axminster carpet, in Devon.
- 1785 Death in obscurity of Wilton carpet weave inventor, Dufosée.
- 1835 Blackmores purchased present factory site. Looms and equipment removed from Axminster to Wilton.
- 1851 Hand-knotted carpets made for Queen Victoria shown at Great Exhibition.
- 1889 After several changes of owners factory became Yates and Co. Ltd.
- 1898 Pardoe Yates died.
- 1905 Company bankrupt. 14th Earl of Pembroke formed consortium obtaining Royal Warrant for The Wilton Royal Carpet Factory Ltd (WR).
- 1908 Visit by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.
- 1905–16 Small hand-knotting factories opened in 1905 at Mere, Tisbury, Downton (later Morgan's Vale) and in 1916 at Fordingbridge.
- 1935 Downton transferred to Morgan's Vale.
- 1939–45 Carpet making ceased for the war effort.
- 1945 WR taken over by Solent Carpet Co.
- 1949 Branches at Tisbury and Morgan's Vale closed.
- 1950 Spool Axminster looms started to produce machine-woven Axminster.
- 1951 Branch at Fordingbridge closed.
- 1957 New weaving shed built to house new Gripper Axminster looms.
- 1958 Last great Axminster carpet produced for Guildford Cathedral.
- 1959 Hand-knotting ceased. WR and Solent parted company.
- 1965 WR and Solent formed Hampshire Industrial Textiles Company to manufacture tufted carpets in Romsey.
- 1967 Spool Axminster looms ceased to be used.
- 1970 WR taken over by Youghal Holdings.
- 1987 Youghal Holdings, including WR, became part of Coats Viyella Group.
- 10.1.95 Acquisition by Carpets International of Wilton Royal brand name and business.
- 10.3.95 Production ceased at both the Wilton and Romsey factories.
- 10.4.95 A new company, the Wilton Carpet Factory, launched.
- 11.5.95 1st Axminster Loom back in production. Carpet commissioned for Wilton House.

During the latter part of the 19th century the factory changed hands, eventually becoming Yates and Company. In the 1870s William Morris was commissioning machine-made Brussels, Wilton and hand-knotted Axminster carpets from the Company but, unfortunately no examples of Morris's work remain at Wilton.

Once again we turn to the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* of 30th August 1884 for some contemporary information about the Wilton carpet factory.

The factory . . . employs about 300 hands, who represent almost as great a producing power owing to the invention of the Jacquard loom and the introduction of other improved methods of weaving, as the larger number of persons engaged at the close of the last century. Many of the weavers are children under 14 years of age who work on what is known as the alternate day system which enables them to attend school three days a week . . .

Orders for the Prince of Wales were being executed during our visit, and a magnificent carpet with 4350 knots to the square foot was weaving for Mr. Vanderbilt, the American millionaire. Both these carpets were Axminster the most costly product of the English hand looms, thick and luxurious to the tread and much softer and finer than either of the fabrics known as 'Turkey' or 'Tournai'. These Axminster carpets are made almost entirely of fine wool, front and back, knotted in tufts upon a warp of threads by the hand of the weaver, and held together by an

YATES & CO., LTD.

PRICE * LIST.

				Per Square Yard.
X	...	3 x 3	Turkey	16s.
W	...	3½ x 3	Turkey	18s.
S	...	3½ x 3½	Turkey	20s.
Q	...	4 x 4	Turkey	24s.
R	...	4 x 4	LambsWool...	35s.
P	...	4 x 4	Saxony Yarn...	29s.
OP	...	4 x 4	Chenille	30s.
O	...	4½ x 4½	Saxony Yarn...	33s.
MO	...	4½ x 4½	Chenille	34s.
M	...	5 x 5	Saxony Yarn...	37s.
LM	...	5 x 5	Chenille	38s.
L	...	5 x 5	Worsted	42s.
K	...	5½ x 5½	Saxony Yarn...	43s.
JK	...	5½ x 5½	Chenille	44s.
J	...	5½ x 5½	Worsted	50s.
H	...	6 x 6	Saxony Yarn...	50s.
GH	...	6 x 6	Chenille	53s.
GG	...	6 x 6	Worsted	60s.
G	...	7 x 7	Saxony Yarn...	60s.
FG	...	7 x 7	Worsted	70s.
FF	...	8 x 8	Saxony Yarn...	70s.
F	...	8 x 8	Worsted	80s.
E	...	10 x 10	Worsted	100s.
D	...	12 x 12	Worsted	150s.

invisible groundwork of linen thread, a shadowy outline of the pattern being traceable at the back. Owing to the fineness of the stitch the process, as can easily be imagined, is very slow, and an idea of the time required to weave a large carpet can be formed from the fact that one made a few years ago for the Sultan of Turkey was over 9 months on the loom. The carpets termed 'Wiltons' have a soft rich pile lower and closer in texture than the Axminster, and are woven in a Jacquard loom like the Brussels.

The Americans, who are displaying a taste for luxury and ease unsurpassed even by the French in the 17th century in spite of the heavy carpet duties imposed by the Washington Government, are large buyers of the most gorgeous carpets that the looms of Wilton can turn out.

Above: A carpet price list of the late nineteenth century.

Left: A narrow piece of Real Hand-Made Axminster being woven, 1946.



THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS



Left: King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited the Carpet Factory in 1908 and greatly enhanced its popularity by their patronage.

Below left: The Wilton cart in the V.E. Day Pageant, 1945.

Below: A finished carpet being loaded for transportation to its final destination, 1899.

In 1898, following the sudden death of the Managing Director, Pardoe Yates, at the age of only 39, serious financial irregularities were discovered. Remedial measures were put into place, but to no avail, and a receiver was appointed in February 1904. This was the cue for Sidney, 14th Earl of Pembroke, to come to the rescue. He formed a consortium of businessmen to buy the company, which was renamed The Wilton Royal Carpet Factory Limited.

Devizes Gazette 16th February 1905

It is stated that among other places where Wilton carpets have been supplied are the Dais of the Throne Room, Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Osborne, &c; Royal Chapels, the Royal saloon carriages on railways, the State rooms at the Royal residences at Marlborough House and Sandringham, the principal Courts of Europe; London, provincial, American and Continental mansions; the Houses of Parliament, the Halls of the City Guilds, the Imperial Institute, Lincoln's Inn Library, cathedrals and churches, town halls, theatres, clubs, hotels, and railways.



Under the new management hand-knotted Axminsters continued to be woven alongside machine-woven Wiltons. When insufficient female labour could be hired in Wilton hand knotting expanded into branch factories in Mere, Tisbury, Downton and Fordingbridge, which are all within a 20-mile radius of the town. The Downton factory later moved to Morgans Vale.

The factory was kept open during the First World War, but during the Second World War carpet production ceased. Instead the premises were used for net garnishing, tarpaulin making and tent repairing. The dye house was turned into a laundry for washing blankets and palliasses cases. Upwards of one million blankets were laundered.

At the end of the war the factory resumed carpet making but the heyday of hand-knotted carpets was over and production stopped in 1958. The last hand-knotted carpet made at Wilton was for the chancel of Guildford Cathedral, where it is still in use.

By that time the factory was also manufacturing machine-woven Axminster carpets, having





WASTE MATERIALS

The utilization of waste materials at Wilton is hampered by the fact that there is hardly enough of it to make the sorting of same profitable. Any odd colours left over from one order can be utilized for dead frames of other orders. There are the thrums or short ends of Wilton pile or chain which are sold as thrums for about one third of their original cost. Flights or clean fluff from the looms are collected separately and sold for about 7/6 per cwt. The loose ends of cotton chain, jute stuffer, and linen weft are sold at about 5% of the original cost. Oiled waste is burnt to prevent fire risk which would arise from stocking of same.

The wool and dust which is the result of shearing Axminster and Wilton Pile carpets is sold locally for manure.



Above left: Taking a large carpet to the Shearing Shed.

Below left: Shearing and finishing a narrow Wilton pile carpet c. 1905.

Extracts: From a factory file of 1923.

APPRENTICESHIP

The method of apprenticeship for the Axminster weaving Branch at Wilton is for a waiting maid (who in the course of that employment gets some idea of the work) to be put in the charge of an experienced weaver who is responsible for the apprentice's work. The apprentice is paid a weekly wage for 6 months and during that time whatever work she does is credited to the older worker. This method offers an inducement to the older worker and consequently the work and the training is thorough, and could not well be improved upon, as the older worker is reckoned as responsible for the quality of the work done by her apprentice. At the Branches this method, owing to the lack of experienced workers, has not been put into operation, and the young hands have to depend on what assistance they can get from the forewoman and other workers. The result is that the hands at the Branches cannot be depended on for good work exact to measurement as at Wilton.



Above: A group of handweavers at the Downton Factory, c. 1916. When it became impossible to recruit enough weavers amongst the local Wilton girls, small factories were established in Downton, Tisbury, Fordingbridge, Mere and Morgan's Vale.

DESIGNING, DYEING AND WINDING



Above: Designing a carpet on point paper.

Above left: Until 1993 all the wool used in Wilton Carpets was dyed on the premises. Now it is bought in already coloured.



Left: The winding room, where hanks of wool are wrapped around the winders which are placed so that the bobbins can be filled. The bobbins are then used to supply the carpet tufts on the looms.

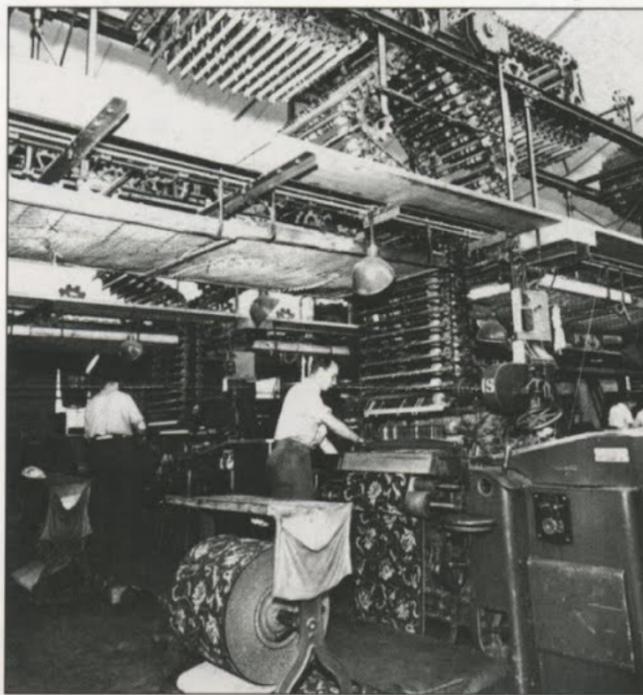
Right: The Axminster spool loom.

introduced spool Axminster looms in 1950. The first gripper Axminster looms were introduced in 1957 and housed in a new, purpose-built weaving shed. This is the type of loom which is still used in the factory, the spool Axminsters having been phased out in 1967.

In 1944 the factory had come under new management when the company was taken over by Solent Carpets, and the following decades saw a series of further management changes and take-overs. In 1958 Solent went public and Wilton remained a private company. In the meantime the manufacture of tufted carpets had begun in the United States and spread to England during the 1950s. Tufted carpets were cheaper to make and soon became popular with the public and this led to a new venture by Solent and Wilton when they jointly formed the Hampshire Industrial Textile Company to manufacture tufted carpet in Romsey.

In 1970 both businesses came under the control of Youghal of Ireland who in turn were taken over by Coats Viyella in 1989. A number of changes took place at Wilton under the new regime, most significantly the closure of the dye house in the early 1990s. Since then wool has been bought in ready dyed to the Company's specifications. In 1995, six years after they took control, Coats Viyella sold its carpet division to Carpets International, the European subsidiary of a large American carpet firm. The new owners immediately announced the closure of both the Wilton and Romsey factories, an action which resulted in the loss of 360 jobs. The designs, customers and brand names of the Wilton factory were transferred to other plants in the UK.

This could well have been the end of Wilton's long tradition of carpet making, but instead it became a rebirth. A new company was immediately formed and on 10th April 1995 the Wilton Carpet Factory re-opened with just 11 employees. One month later, on 11th May, the first of the Axminster looms was turned on again to start weaving the new company's first order, which was followed soon afterwards by a carpet commissioned by the Earl of Pembroke for the private library of Wilton House.



Here is the interior page of catalog from the WRCF published in 1950. All the carpets inside are of western classical design, none is modern.