

had been born at Bloxham, was practising as a full-time itinerant preacher in Radford, though of which denomination the census does not make clear, but William Jeffs, born in Banbury, was a travelling Mormon elder living in Foleshill, where John Jones from Middleton Cheney ran an ale and porter business. These patterns of migration between towns with adjoining hinterlands were interesting but not unusual. They emphasise that the movement of more than 100 plush workers and their families, probably about 300 people in all, was exceptional.

Plush weaving in Banburyshire continued to contract in the 1860s. By 1871 there were only 52 weavers in Banbury, employed at the factories of William Cubitt, and of James Hill, born at North Aston in 1823, who operated his Banbury-based business from his home at Souldern. In 1861 he was employing 39 people, more than half of them children, but had only 26 workers in 1871. Smaller factories grew up in villages where there had been concentrations of hand loom weavers. William Wrench, already established at Shutford by 1851 as a 'Manufacturer of Livery Plushes, Crepes and Velvets', employed 23 in 1861 and 28 in 1871, and introduced a steam engine in 1885 to operate power looms. Edward Gascoigne employed five weavers at Bloxham in 1851, and James Gascoigne nine weavers in 1861 and seven in 1871. A few weavers continued to work in their homes at Adderbury, Barford, Drayton, Epwell, Milton, Sibford and Wroxton. James Hill's company remained in business until about 1900, while the goodwill of Cubitts, the last firm to make plush in Banbury, was sold to Wrench's of Shutford in 1909. Thereafter the industry was confined to Shutford where it continued until after the Second World War.¹⁶

There were four significant textile industries in Oxfordshire in the early nineteenth century. Lacemaking in the eastern part of the county remained a domestic industry and declined rapidly in the last decades of the century. The woollen cloth makers of Chipping Norton and the blanket makers of Witney successfully adopted the factory system, and continued to flourish into the second half of the twentieth century. The plush manufacture of Banburyshire did not supply mass-markets and had less potential for expansion. It was of only minor significance by the 1870s, but its contraction in the region was due not so much to market or technological factors but to a significant movement of plush makers to the Coventry area in the 1840s and '50s.

¹⁶ Hodgkins & Bloxham (as fn.1), p.12.