

of the pave' were amongst the five lodgers at the *Royal Oak*, a notorious haunt of prostitutes, but there appear to have been none in Lodging House Yard. Crime was also associated with lodging houses, and that of the Wards was the base in 1844 for a couple called Gloucester Eliza and Bill. The former decoyed men attending Banbury races to secluded spots where the latter robbed them. In 1850 a woman, a one-legged man and a one-armed man were running a begging letter racket from the Wards' new establishment at Rag Row.²⁴

There is little to be said about general labourers, men who were available on a daily basis for any unskilled work on offer. They were to be found in Banbury's lodging houses in some numbers as they were in every other town. Members of the army and navy, particularly recruiting parties, are listed in lodging houses in most towns but, curiously, not in Banbury, perhaps because none of the censuses was taken at the time of the town's fairs, which were the occasions when men were traditionally pressed to take the Queen's shilling. Some lodging house inmates made their livings by collecting rags, bones and old iron from country-dwellers, sometimes exchanged for cheap crockery or trinkets. The establishments where they deposited such re-cycled materials and obtained items for which they could be traded were called 'marine stores', and were often located in the same streets as lodging houses. There do not appear to have been any such establishments in Banbury, although a marine store dealer born in Marlborough was staying with Thomas Colley in 1861. Many of the inmates of Banbury's lodging houses doubtless made their livings from begging, but enumerators in the town rarely made this clear on the census returns, as they did in some other places, and were content to allow vagrants to be listed as labourers or hawkers.

Perspectives

Banbury's lodging houses should be seen in relation to those in neighbouring market towns. In Oxford, as indicated above, there were some lodging houses catering specifically for members of the university, but along High Street St Thomas (now St Thomas Street) from the Quaking Bridge to the parish church of St Thomas, was one of the most notorious concentrations of common lodging houses in England, extending into Hollybush Row and yards like The Hamel. In 1851 there

²⁴ B. Trinder, *Victorian Banbury*, p.75; *Northampton Herald*, 1 February 1850.