

place with which Cave had trade dealings. While it is conceivable that Tysoe people were unusually bad at repaying their debts, it is much more probable (since they were surely honourable folk!) that this concentration of indebtedness was simply the consequence of the fact that the three villages of Tysoe – Lower, Middle or Church, and Uppe – were the largest single market for William Cave’s footwear. Sadly, Joseph Ashby, Tysoe’s most famous son, is not recorded among the debtors, but he was only in his teens at the time.

The debts were owed by 33 different individuals, so it was evidently not the case that a shopkeeper in Tysoe had bought goods wholesale from William Cave in order to retail the stock locally. There may be other, hidden, reasons for the close links between Tysoe and Banbury in the case of William Cave’s trade, but as yet any such factors are unclear. Tysoe was in Warwickshire but, far from a railway and with poor road connections northwards, it looked naturally enough to Banbury as the nearest major market town. The debts owing to William Cave indicate that he was selling goods to many people in Tysoe, and it is apparent from the pattern of debts that the villages between Banbury and Tysoe were also important for the shoemaker’s trade—places such as the Sibfords, Wroxton and Hanwell were Banbury’s exclusive hinterland, and remain so to this day. On the other side of the town, some of the rural villages in the western tip of Northamptonshire were also part of the ‘natural’ trading sphere of Banbury people. That Farthinghoe, Halse and Marston St Lawrence, for example, appear in the list illustrates the way in which historians should look at patterns other than those indicated by ancient administrative boundaries. Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of the places served by William Cave – or at least, those where debts were owed – and my perception is that the pecked line which I have drawn gives a convincing impression not only of Cave’s trading patterns but also of the primary commercial hinterland of Banbury itself.

A closer look at the network of carrier’s routes helps us to understand the distribution of the products of Banbury’s tradesmen and craftsmen. Tysoe was, as we might surmise, particularly well served – there were five carriers and nine services per week, which represented a major artery of communication. Carriers transported parcels, goods, packages, deliveries and people, so the boots and shoes for which Tysoe people still owed money had been sent to them by one or other of the carts operated by Messrs. Hirons (from the *Windmill*, Thursday); Butcher (the *Plough*,