representing a population movement far beyond the normal interchange of migrants between towns less than 30 miles apart.

Banbury in 1851 had a population of less than nine thousand but was the dominant market centre within north Oxfordshire and the southern parts of Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. It was primarily a commercial town where most people gained their livings from retailing, services and small-scale craft manufactures. The only substantial industries serving distant markets were textiles, principally the making of plush, and engineering, but the two together gave employment to fewer than 300 people, about seven per cent of the working population. One reason for Banbury's prosperity was that the nearest towns of comparable or greater size, Oxford, Northampton, Stratford, Warwick and Coventry were all situated at a distance of between 20 and 30 miles.[2]

Coventry differed from Banbury in many respects other than its size. While much of Banbury was razed to the ground in the Civil War, and few of its buildings date from earlier than 1650, Coventry remained a largely medieval city. J.B. Priestley observed in 1933 that it was a town that had often changed its trades but had always managed to come out on top, and nevertheless remained genuinely old and picturesque. He remarked, with what proved to be black irony, that its half-timbered and gabled houses, its soaring stone and carved wood, were a suitable setting for a production of *Die Meistersinger*.[3] That city was destroyed by the Luftwaffe on the night of 14-15 November 1940.

Some of the plush weavers from Banburyshire settled in the close-packed courts that had been built on the gardens and yards of ancient houses in the city centre that, by 1861, had been duly numbered by the Local Board of Health, established in 1849. Coventry's growth in the early nineteenth century had been constrained by common land, and many of its new houses had been built on enclosed properties beyond the common fields in areas like Hillfields, where villas built from 1828 were soon surrounded by workshops and terraced housing, and in Foleshill, Stoke and Radford, two or three miles from the centre. The population of Foleshill grew from just over 3,000 in 1801 to more than 8,000 in 1861.[4] Many migrant Banburians made their homes in these outer suburbs.

[2] B. Trinder, *Victorian Banbury* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), pp. 16-37, 202.

[3] J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: Heinemann, 1934), pp. 69-70.

[4] J. Prest, *The Industrial Revolution in Coventry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 19-42; R. Chaplin, 'Discovering Lost New Towns of the Nineteenth Century', *The Local Historian*, X (1972), pp. 189-90.