

them by Henry Bessemer, which passed to their successors in Banbury and to Wrenchs of Shutford in 1909.<sup>7</sup>

Textile manufacturers in the Banbury area were specialising in the production of plush by the 1790s. When a Royal Commission reported on the industry in 1838 it appears to have been prosperous. There were three firms in Banbury: Gillett, Lees & Co., managed by the Quaker family who owned one of the town's banks, R. & J. Baughen, and Harris, Banbury & Harris. Gillett, Lees & Co. had 150 looms, Baughens' 120 and Harris, Banbury & Harris 160. Plush-making remained a rural and domestic industry in which the workers were able to maintain wage rates by restricting entry to the trade. Many weavers lived in the villages around Banbury, 35 at Shutford, 34 at Bloxham, 34 at Adderbury, and there were 105 in Banbury itself. The extent of the trade in the early nineteenth century is revealed by the birthplaces of weavers living in Banbury in 1851 which included: Adderbury, Bloxham, Bodicote, Brailes, Byfield, Chacombe, Claydon, Drayton, Fritwell, Hook Norton, King's Sutton, Marston St Lawrence, Middleton Cheney, Shotteswell, Shutford, South Newington and Wroxton. George Herbert, whose father was a weaver, provides some impressions of the 'factories' in Banbury, Harris on the east side of North Bar, Baughen's on the opposite side, and Gillett's on the east side of South Bar near Banbury Cross. They accommodated hand looms – there were 30 in Baughen's establishment – but were also places from which domestic weavers collected yarn and to which they returned finished pieces. Baughen's applied a steam engine to work spinning machinery, but none of the companies introduced power looms.

The trade suffered from recession in the 1840s. Harris, Banbury & Harris ceased production in Banbury in 1843-44, which may have stimulated the movement of weavers to Coventry. The Gillett family withdrew from manufacturing in 1850, although their business was continued in the 1850s by Lees & Co., who also operated from Bury Lane in Coventry, and from the early 1860s by William Cubitt, once their commercial traveller. In 1851 there were 123 weavers and 16 ancillary workers in Banbury; plush-weaving continued in Shutford where there were 36 weavers, but the numbers in most villages where the industry had flourished were reduced. There were 19 at Bloxham, 18 at Brailes, 11 at Adderbury, six at Middleton Cheney, and 11, mostly

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<sup>7</sup> Hodgkins & Bloxham, as fn. 1, pp.12-17.