

members of the Watts family, at Chalcombe, as well as five at Bodicote, four at Drayton and at Great Bourton, two at Wroxton, one at Sibford and one at Wardington. By 1861 there were 71 weavers in Banbury, 16 at Shutford, 14 at Chalcombe, eight at Brailes, seven in Bloxham, three in Adderbury, and two at Wroxton, but none at Middleton Cheney, King's Sutton, and Hornton.⁸

Plush manufacture was never prominent in the spectrum of Coventry's industries. The city's principal manufacture was the weaving of silk ribbons, gauzes, trimmings and some broad fabrics, together with the production of the yarns of which they were made, employing more than 8,000 of the city's population of just over 40,000 in 1861, a reduction from the total of rather more than 10,000 out of about 36,000 people recorded a decade earlier. The ribbon trade was a largely domestic industry, protected from foreign competition by tariffs until 1860. It was long-established and in 1835 there were six silk throwsters in the city, 77 ribbon manufacturers, and 13 silk dyers, as well as specialist makers of shrouds and trimmings, and numerous people producing looms, weavers' harnesses and other items necessary for the industry.

James Hart, whose family firm had the largest ribbon business in Coventry, was employing 400 men and 580 women and girls in 1861, although most companies were much smaller. Ribbon manufacture was dominated by locally-born workers. Studies of the 1851 census have shown that in the weaving district of Hillfields, 80% of heads of households were born in or around Coventry, and in the older district of Gosford Street the figure was even higher, at 85%. There was nevertheless some inward migration of weavers and dyers from other centres of the silk trade, from Bethnal Green, Bishopsgate, Clerkenwell and Spitalfields in London, from Macclesfield, Congleton and Leek, and from Reading, where silk-working had declined almost to nothing. Most looms were worked manually, and the occupations of many teenage boys were recorded as 'turns a loom'.

The principal innovation in the trade was the construction from about 1850 of 'cottage factories', in which weavers working in their own homes were able to use power from communally-owned steam engines, transmitted by shafts to workshops on the floors above the living quarters. The best known example is the model factory built in 1857 by

⁸ Trinder, *Victorian Banbury*, pp. 32-3, 86-7; A Taylor, *Gillets: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.76-99.