

the making of lightweight plushes for covering hats had prospered in the early nineteenth century. Benjamin Riley, silk manufacturer and merchant of London, was a Coventrian, living in Rothwell in the 1850s, who employed some 350 people.¹¹ There were also specialist workers from London such as William Veasey, a plush printer who lived in a court in Hill Street, and Edward Reynolds, an embosser of plush and table cover maker, who had been born at Waltham Abbey and lived in Croft Cottages.

In the 1830s there were two manufacturers of plush in Coventry, both of whom had links with Banbury and with London: Harris, Banbury & Harris of Fleet Street, Coventry and Ironmonger Lane, Cheapside in London, and Lees & Co of Bury Lane. Two of the partners in the former company were living in the city in 1861, Thomas Banbury, aged 75, a leading member of the Reform party in the city in the 1830s who had retired from plush manufacturing and lived at No 5 Fleet Street, and Allen M Harris, aged 26 and born in London, who was lodging at No 3 Oxford Terrace.

Coventry had more than four times the population of Banbury in 1851. There were long-standing relationships between the two towns. Connections were maintained in 1851 by vans that left Thomas Golby's warehouse in Bridge Street four times a week, by carriers from Southam and Tachbrook, and by canal boats. From 1852, when the Great Western Railway was extended from Banbury to Birmingham, it was possible to reach Coventry by train by changing at Leamington. George Herbert remembered a clerk from Coventry at a plush factory in Banbury and recalled that his uncle, once a plush weaver, had moved to Coventry where he had made his living as a silk warper, and took George Herbert's father to see one of the first Jacquard looms to be used in the city. Some plush weavers from Adderbury, according to a note with the 1851 census, had moved with their families to Coventry during the previous decade. From the mid-1830s and through the 1840s there was correspondence between Poor Law authorities in the Banbury and Coventry areas concerning migrants who were claiming poor relief.¹²

Table Two (page 237) shows that there was movement in both directions, that seven families of plush workers who had experience of working in the Coventry area were living in Banbury and Shutford in

¹¹ B Trinder, *Industrial Archaeology in Northamptonshire*: unpublished report for Northamptonshire Heritage, (1998), p. 32.

¹² Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window* (fn.6), pp. xiii, 3-5; Taylor (fn.8), pp. 87-90.