

their many commissions without forgetting anything or making a mistake'.¹⁴ Sydney Tyrrell contrasted the perpetually confused George Hunt of Eydon with the efficient William Cherry of Lower Boddington. Some Banbury carriers, among them George Godson of Brailes and William Hayward of Heyford, were sufficiently financially literate to have accounts at Gilletts' Bank.

Carrying concerns were family businesses. Many carriers relied upon wives or mothers to take in consignments for transit to towns or to hold commissioned goods until they were collected by customers. Seven women in the Banbury region in 1851, 13 in 1871, and ten in 1881 were recorded on the census as 'carriers' wives', indicating that enumerators recognised that they contributed to the running of the business, as did the wives of butchers and home-based shoemakers. In *The Old Curiosity Shop* (published in 1841), Kit collects a box from a carrier's house where he receives it from the carrier's wife. In 1861 the census listed the occupation of Elizabeth, wife of Robert Fowler, carrier of Bloxham as 'Carrier (assists)'. Some men in their late teens or twenties were defined in the census as 'carriers' sons' and doubtless worked with their fathers, just as 'farmers' sons' obviously worked on the land. The occupations of the three sons of the Newbottle carrier Richard Page in 1881, aged 19, 16 and 13 were all given as 'Assists Father' and that of the 17-year-old son of John Cherry of Lower Boddington, carrier and coal merchant was recorded in 1881 as 'Carrier helps his father'. No occupation was recorded for his wife but his 14-year-old daughter's occupation was 'Carrier helps her mother'. Many sons succeeded their fathers as carriers, as it appears, did some sons-in-law. George Blaby, working from Hempton Road, Deddington in 1881 at the age of 25, appears to have taken over the business of his father-in-law Joseph Hemming, whose widow lodged with his family. A carrying business might pass smoothly from one generation to another, but inter-generational impatience or fraternal rivalry could create competition. The Hook Norton carrier in 1851 Robert Borsbury apparently succeeded his 80-year-old widowed father, but for a time afterwards he faced competition from another family member, probably his brother.

Some carriers were shopkeepers or publicans, whose carrying businesses may have originated as trips to collect supplies from towns,

¹⁴ G Jekyll, *Old West Surrey: some notes and memories* (1904, rep 1978, Dorking: Kohler & Coombes), p. 45.