

It was difficult for a country-based carrier to expand his or her business but a few town-based concerns fulfilled some of the functions of country carriers. John Bletchley's warehouse in Thomas Street, Bristol, was the focus in the 1850s for local as well as regional services. Vehicles were despatched to Southampton, Exeter and London, but they also went to places such as Malmesbury, Minchinhampton and Wotton-under-Edge, that might have been served by traditional country carriers. A carrier called Robinson travelling to several pit villages east of Durham, by 1890 offered services to destinations in a wide circuit around the city. Daily journeys from the framework knitting village of Ruddington were being provided in 1891 by the Ruddington Carrying Company but the firm served only one other village on its route into Nottingham. The potential for significantly expanding businesses came only in the 1920s.

Capital.

It was possible to enter the carrying trade at an early age from a labouring background. In 1861 John Hone was carrying from Adderbury at the age of 16 from the home of his father, a plush weaver. In 1881 Edward Waring, son of a Bodicote farm labourer, was working as a carrier at the age of 18 while still living in the parental household, as was George Tasker of Cropredy, son of a groom. John Taylor, farmer of 57½ acres at Balscott in 1871, had four sons, of whom the two eldest worked on the farm. The third, aged 27, was established as a butcher, while the youngest, aged 24, was a carrier to Banbury. John Benson defined as 'penny capitalism', enterprises that could be established by the investments of small windfalls, modest inheritances, spells of highly-paid work as a navy or itinerant harvester, or successful gambling.¹⁷ Contemporaries with the same resources might invest in a small shop, a beer house, a lodging house, or a steam threshing engine. In the mid-twentieth century working people in Banbury hopeful of winning the football pools, aspired to own fish-and-chip shops or seaside boarding houses.

A carrier required a suitable property, whether freehold or rented, with accommodation for a horse and a vehicle, and space for storing goods in transit. Public houses and village shops fulfilled these requirements as well as providing additional sources of revenue. Sydney Tyrrell thought that the home of George Hunt of Eydon might have been designed for a

¹⁷ J Benson, *The Penny Capitalists: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Entrepreneurs* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1983).