

1919, and made Bridge Street into a hub of country bus services, some of them following routes developed by country carriers. Potts observed in 1938 that most surviving carriers had replaced carts with motor vans which enabled them to visit Banbury more than once daily, but that 'A few relics of the past in the form of the horse-cart' could still be seen.²⁴ A directory in 1939 recorded 21 carriers making 54 journeys a week into Banbury, while 25 made 74 journeys into Oxford, and there were still residual services to Bicester, Thame and Henley. Country carrying even survived the Second World War. Kelly's Directory in 1950 recorded that 16 carriers made 33 weekly journeys to Banbury.

Retrospect.

The image of a country carrier plodding patiently alongside his horse from village to town has at first sight little in common with the scenes characteristic of the economic changes of the late eighteenth century, of flames, steam, constructional daring, mechanical ingenuity and multitudes of people working in large buildings. Yet carrier networks were part of the same quickening of economic activity as the proliferation of steam engines in the 1790s, the building of many blast furnaces in Staffordshire, Shropshire and South Wales, and the multiplication of textile manufacturing capacity. Carriers provided the capillaries of a distribution system that was central to economic growth. They collected and delivered many of the goods carried by trunk waggoners, by canals and later by main line railways. As Blackmore remarked of Beckley, '...this little village carried on some commerce with the outer world; and did it through a carrier'.²⁵ Increased consumption was a necessary concomitant of increased production, and carriers helped to make it possible. The late Professor T C Barker remarked that 'In the interpretation of the Industrial Revolution too much attention [is given] to making things, especially to making things in factories, not enough to buying and selling or to providing services of all kinds, which are also wealth generators'.²⁶ Carriers offered one of those services, and one that stimulated consumption in rural communities.

²⁴ W Potts, *Banbury through One Hundred Years* (Banbury Guardian, 1942), pp.62-63.

²⁵ R D Blackmore, *Cripps the Carrier* (Sampson Low, Marston, 2876), p.1.

²⁶ T C Barker, 'Business as usual? London and the Industrial Revolution', *History Today*, vol 39, 1989, pp. 45-51.