

The growth of country carrying from the 1790s is also evidence of the small-scale entrepreneurship that flourished in the period. Hundreds of rural families of the higher echelons of the labouring class decided to take up carrying between 1790 and 1840. Similar decisions motivated families in other parts of England. Some miners invested in tools that enabled them to assume roles as sub-contractors (or butties) accelerating the growth of coal production. Families in Lancashire extended their houses to accommodate spinning jennies or hand looms. Young men who had learned their trades in Birmingham and Sheffield established workshops shaping metal in innovatory or accustomed ways. The changes that historians have called the Industrial Revolution depended not just on the actions of Richard Arkwright, John Wilkinson, Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood, but on decisions to start businesses by thousands of men and women most of whose names are lost.

Carriers were involved in an increasingly complex pattern of food supply, taking eggs and dairy produce not just to the market towns that they served directly, but to national carriers who conveyed them to the great cities. Carrying was intricately connected with the emergence of village shops. Some shopkeepers may have commenced carrying to bring goods from wholesalers, and most relied upon carriers for at least some of their supplies. Carriers were a small element in the pattern of country banking that developed from the late eighteenth century, and they contributed to the prosperity of rural industries and crafts. Above all carriers made towns accessible to country people - and not just for the mundane purposes of exchanging goods. W H Hudson wrote of early morning travellers, by carriers' carts and other means, that 'all of us (were) intent on business and pleasure, bound for Salisbury, the great market and emporium and place of all delights for all the great Plain' and that 'The one great and chief pleasure, in which all participate, is just to be in the crowd - a joyous occasion which gives a festive look to every face'.<sup>27</sup>

The carrying trade reflected the ways in which people identified with the regions (or in the French term, *pays*) in which they lived.<sup>28</sup> Sydney Tyrrell declared that for the people of Eydon Banbury was 'our town'.<sup>29</sup> This was a sense of identity distinct from county and parochial

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<sup>27</sup> W H Hudson, *A Shepherd's Life: Impressions of the South Wiltshire Downs* (London: Methuen, 1910), p.85.

<sup>28</sup> F. Braudel, *The Identity of France, Vol.1* (Fontana edn., 1989), pp.20, 37, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Tyrrell, *A Countryman's Tale*, pp.130-31.