OXONIENSIA

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Intending contributors to *Oxoniensia* are asked to submit an electronic copy of their work to the editor, Dr Stephen Mileson, no later than 1 December each year (editor@oahs.org.uk). The editor will be pleased to advise on preliminary drafts. 'Notes for Contributors' are available on the website.

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The Society, formed in 1972 by the amalgamation of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society (founded in 1839) and the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society (founded in 1852), exists to further the study of the archaeology, topography, architecture, and history of Oxford and Oxfordshire. In addition to publishing *Oxoniensia*, it provides a programme of winter lectures in Oxford and organizes excursions to places of architectural, historical, and archaeological interest. Through its Listed Buildings Committee and associated Victorian Group, the Society makes representations to public bodies, both on its own behalf and for the Council for British Archaeology, to safeguard historical buildings and monuments. The Society also convenes the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum, which fosters liaison to discuss and advise on issues concerning archaeology and museums, monitor cases and on occasion make representations on matters of concern.

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OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Association was founded in 1980 to further the study of local history in the County, and in particular to promote links between amateur local historians and academic and professional bodies involved in local history. The Association organizes twice-yearly study days and publishes a regular newsletter and a journal, *Oxfordshire Local History.* Further details at: www.olha.org.uk

Enquiries about the Association should be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz Woolley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford, OX1 4LS (membership@olha.org.uk).

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The Society publishes volumes of records relating to Banbury and its neighbourhood, including parts of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire as well as Oxfordshire. Thirty volumes have been published to date. These include all pre-General Registration Banbury Parish Registers, 1558—1838, now mostly out of print, but available on microfiche from Oxfordshire Family History Society, c/o Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Westgate, Oxford OX1 1DJ.

Recent volumes, available from Banbury Museum, include:

An Alphabetical Digest of Rusher's 'Banbury Trades and Occupations Directory', 1832-1906, ed. J. Gibson;
Victorian Squarson: The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, of Deddington, 1, 1835-1848, 2, 1849-1869, ed. G. Smedley-Stevenson; *Banbury Past through Artists' Eyes*, S. Townsend and J. Gibson

In preparation:

Life (and Death) in Georgian Banbury.

The Society's magazine, *Cake and Cockhorse,* is issued to members three times a year. Those from 1959 to 2003 are available to buy on a CD-ROM or free online at www.banburyhistory.org.

Subscriptions (£13) are payable to the Hon. Secretary, c/o Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury, OX16 2PQ.

OXONIENSIA

A refereed journal dealing with the
archaeology, history and architecture
of Oxford and Oxfordshire

Cover images: photographs and a drawing from 'William Butterfield … in Oxford' and 'The Camel that Escaped the Nazis'. See figures starting on p. 82.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviated titles are used in each article after the first full citation. In addition, the following are used throughout the volume or in particular articles:

BAR	British Archaeological Reports (Oxford, 1974–)
BAR BS	British Archaeological Reports, British Series
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
BCA	Balliol College Archive
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BRO	Berkshire Record Office
CBM	ceramic building material
ECA	Exeter College Archive
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
EVE	estimated vessel equivalent
Fig./Figs.	figure/figures
f./ff.	folio/folios
FLO	Finds Liaison Officer
HER	Historic Environment Record
IoAO	Institute of Archaeology, Oxford
JMHS	John Moore Heritage Services
KC(A)	Keble College (Archive)
MCA	Merton College Archive
MCR	Merton College Register
MedArch	*Medieval Archaeology* (London, 1958–)
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
MS	manuscript
n.	note
NCA	New College Archive
n.d.	no date
ns	new series
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OBR	Oxfordshire Buildings Record
OD	Ordnance Datum
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
os	old/original series
OUDCE	Oxford University Department for Continuing Education
OUSA	Oxford Union Society Archive
OXCMS	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
PHA	Pusey House Archive
QCA	Queen's College Archive
r.	recto
SMidlA	*South Midlands Archaeology* (Oxford, 1983–) [formerly CBA Group 9 Newsletter]
TNA: PRO	The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew

TS	typescript
TVAS	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
v.	verso
VCH	*Victoria History of the Counties of England* (London, 1900–) [*Victoria County History*]
vol.	volume

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Common Carriers in Medieval England:
Evidence from Oxford Archives

RICHARD SHARPE

SUMMARY

In the Pastons' England carriers who plied a regular route provided an important service, carrying part loads of goods, even valuables, as well as letters and money. Such services have not always been recognized, and there has been a diversity of supposition as to when carriers as distinct from carters began to trade. This paper seeks to use Oxford college accounts to frame a period during which regular carrying services began. Before 1420 colleges used to pay a fellow's expenses to go and bring books bequeathed to the college, but by 1450 carriage was usually provided more cheaply be regular carriers serving the city and university. Lack of detail in the evidence makes it difficult to arrive at secure dates, but there was a named carrier plying between Oxford and London by 1449. From 1459 the trade was deemed to be carried on for the benefit and under the jurisdiction of the university, and before the end of the fifteenth century the university licensed certain carriers. Carriers are attested earlier in Oxford than anywhere else. The evidence does not admit of economic analysis, but carriers provided an important service to society, not least in enabling correspondence such as that of the Paston family.

The common carrier was an indispensable figure in the life of early modern England, providing for the carriage of small items from place to place and an alternative to the posts for letters.[1] Early modern letters frequently refer to sending goods or packets by 'the carrier', and the definite article signifies that a particular carrier was meant who plied a regular route. In 1637 London was the terminus of more than two hundred public carrier services each week.[2] There were carriers in most parts of England. By the nineteenth century the carrier's name was always painted on his cart, and the network of regular long-distance carriers was only put out of business by the combination of railways and a cheap postal service. Even then local carriers continued. R.D. Blackmore's tale of *Cripps the Carrier*, was set in Beckley above Otmoor in the 1830s; published in 1876, it was a tale of a bygone age. In the history of transport the common carrier occupies a distinct position.

When such carriers first appeared on English roads is not well established. Not all medievalists properly recognize them, and early modernists often ignore late-medieval

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[1]   J. Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon, and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts* (1967), does not begin to investigate the history of carriers. D. Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters: Trade and Travel before the Turnpikes* (2005), is much better for the seventeenth century, but the Middle Ages are dealt with in a sentence (p. 3).

[2]   John Taylor's *Carriers Cosmographie* (London, 1637), is a 24-page directory arranged alphabetically by places served from London. Oxford carriers, for example, could be had on almost any day from the Saracen's Head on the north side of Snow Hill without Newgate (see below, p. 56, for its use in 1509). Thomas Delaune, *The Present State of London* (London, 1681), pp. 385–435, provides a later list, at a time when five weekly carriers served Oxford. J.A. Chartres, 'Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality', *EconHR*, ns, 30 (1977), pp. 73–94, discusses these and comparable records of later date. He was concerned with the myth of bad roads; his data came from London and do not represent a national picture. A follow-up was provided by G.L. Turnbull, 'Provincial Road Carrying in England in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Transport History*, ns, 4 (1977–8), pp. 17–39, reprinted in D. Gerhold (ed.), *Road Transport in the Horse-Drawn Era* (1996), pp. 25–47.

evidence. Indeed the existence of common carriers in late-medieval England has sometimes been denied: Michael Freeman in 1977 wrote, 'Public carriers, or common carriers, as they were more usually called, first appeared on the country's major roads in the late sixteenth century'.[3] Yet it has also sometimes been taken for granted. Writing of mid fifteenth-century England, H.S. Bennett presents a timeless figure, 'The carrier was one of the most well-known figures on the roads. Year after year the same man would ply between two towns . . .'.[4] C.L. Kingsford also writes on a basis of familiarity, 'Carriers went regularly from town to town and were employed for the conveyance not only of goods but also of letters and valuables'.[5] The Paston and Stonor letters in the third quarter of the fifteenth century were key evidence for these writers, but Kingsford was also well acquainted with the files of Early Chancery Proceedings, in which one case led him to write of James Vale, 'common carrier of Oxford', loosely dated 'much earlier'. More recently Wendy Childs has written, 'the common carriers of Oxford regularly carried scholars' possessions and books'.[6] Her brief source notes lead to Henry Bathe, of whom more later, and to Kingsford's James Vale.

This paper will seek to date the first appearance of regular carriers in medieval Oxford, the earliest so far recognized on English roads. It is easy to find evidence for the carriage of goods, but much harder to be sure whether the carrier who provided the service was that figure so obvious to Bennett and Kingsford. It is necessary to be precise about the trade and to have criteria by which to determine whether particular sources provide evidence of a common carrier as defined. A common carrier plied a particular route according to a known schedule, picking up and dropping off part-loads for payment, and this service was 'common' or 'public' as being available to anyone willing and able to pay his charge. He was ready to carry money. Goods might be sent out and payment brought on the return leg of the route, facilitating low-volume long-distance commerce. Or where a person needed to send money to a family member some distance away, the carrier would take it. He would also carry letters and small packets. The trade was unregulated, but the carrier was obviously trusted. To those along his route he was *the* carrier with a definite article, but in wider contexts he may be defined by the town he primarily served. When clear evidence becomes available in the sixteenth century, inns were the principal stopping-points, providing for the carrier and his horses as well as for those using his service, and there are signs that this was so before the end of the Middle Ages.

The Paston letters have provided the best-known evidence from the fifteenth century. Here we read in August 1465:[7]

> The berer of this lettir is a comon carier and was at Norwich on Satirday, and brought me lettirs from other men, but your seruauntes inquere nat diligently after the comyng of cariers and other men. [. . .] Ye shall haue lettirs of me this weke.

So wrote John Paston (1421–1466) from London to his wife Margaret Paston at home in Norfolk. A few weeks earlier she could refer to sending personal belongings 'by the next

[3]   M.J. Freeman, 'The Carrier System of South Hampshire, 1775–1851', *Journal of Transport History*, ns, 4 (1977–8), pp. 61–85, reprinted in Gerhold, *Road Transport in the Horse-Drawn Era*, pp. 49–73 (at p. 49). For this he cites W.T. Jackman, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (1916), vol. 1, pp. 43–4, who espoused the antediluvian opinion that medieval inland transport relied on packhorses, and 'the use of wheeled vehicles for the carriage of goods in the early sixteenth century was comparatively unimportant'. The earliest evidence of a common carrier recognized by Jackman was on the Ipswich–London route in 1599.
[4]   H.S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England. Studies in an Age of Transition* (1922), pp. 159–64, provides a well-informed discussion focused on a short date-range.
[5]   C.L. Kingsford, 'Social Life and the Wars of the Roses', in his *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth-Century England* (1925), p. 72, much earlier than Thomas Makyn's letter to William Marchall (n. 123), itself difficult to date.
[6]   W.R. Childs, 'Moving Around', in R.E. Horrox and W.M. Ormrod (eds.), *A Social History of England, 1200–1500* (2006), p. 271.
[7]   J. Gairdner (ed.), *The Paston Letters, AD 1422–1509,* 6 vols. (1904), vol. 4, p. 474 (no. 600, 7 August 1465); ed. N. Davis (1971–6), revised R. Beadle and C. Richmond, 3 vols., EETS (2004–5), vol. 1, p. 139 (no. 76).

cariours'.[8] Earlier in the year, when he was needing money, he proposed that she send some to him by carrier:[9]

> Peraventure some trusty carier may come at this tyme, and with hym myght some mony come trussid in some fardell, not knowyng to the carier þat it is no mony but some other clothe or vestement of silk or thyng of charge. Wherfore take avise of such as ye trust, and purvey þat I may haue vp at this time j c li. of gold aftur the old coynage and xx li. in grotes.

These letters refer to carriers in indefinite terms, and peradventure is at odds with regularity. Sufficient carriers were on the road for John Paston to think of sending letters on an almost day to day basis, but their comings and goings were to be ascertained by Margaret's servants. Paston was insecure about sending money—quite a lot of money in this case—and planned to disguise it. None the less, I take it that the advice Margaret was to seek was which carrier would be most reliable. By reading between the lines we may infer that the intention at this date was to use carriers who happened to be on the road. Soon the terms of business appear to have changed. In 1466 'Gresham the London carrier' handled money. In 1474 Sir John Paston (1442–1479) provides a glimpse of arranging with Corby the carrier about the day for delivery and a varied load of goods.[10] This Corby is named in the letters several times between November 1469 and October 1475, and his schedule was clearly familiar to the Pastons.[11] He can be identified as Robert Corby, of Potter Heigham (Norf.), from his being named in legal action by his surety over the non-delivery of a cauldron and a brass can.[12] We may guess that his route was a local circuit that included Paston, Heigham, and Norwich, and presumably also a direct road between Norwich and London. He would usually take three or four days between the two cities.[13] From these letters we can conclude that carriers were readily available between London and Norfolk in the 1460s. We may also see hints at a change as one man takes on a recognized role: Corby the carrier was well known to the Pastons, and there is no more hesitation above peradventure finding a trusty carrier.

To these examples we can add further illustration from other collections of letters. On 25 October 1476, from the Stonor letters, Elizabeth Stonor, in London, advises her cousin to send a man to Henley-on-Thames to break up a large fardel of textiles 'to make ij ffardellys ther off, that hyt mythe be sent downe by the caryar off [[*Hendelay*]]'.[14] The definite article shows she meant the regular carrier. Another letter from 1480 refers to sending some silver plate in the Exeter carrier's pack, which begs another question.[15] And on 1 April 1477, from the Plumpton

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[8]   *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 4, p. 469 (no. 598, 30 July 1465); ed. Davis, vol. 2, p. 374 (no. 741), 'your gesseron [*jesseraunt, a jacket of scale armour*] and gauntelettys shall be send hom by the next caryours'. Use of 'next' indicates frequency if not regularity.

[9]   *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 4, p. 65 (no. 535, 14 Jan [?1463]); ed. Davis, vol. 1, p. 126 (no. 71, 14 Jan. [1465]).

[10]   For Gresham, see n. 125 below. *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 5, p. 212 (no. 856, [Nov. 1474]); ed. Davis, vol. 1. p. 476 (no. 285).

[11]   *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, vol. 1, p. 551 (no. 337, Dec. 1469); ibid. p. 554 (no. 339, 1 March 1470), 'the caryer forgot your byll behind hym . . . but it shall be browght you . . . by the next caryer'; ibid. p. 430 (no. 256, 5 August 1470), 'I sende yow a letter in a boxe by Corby'; ibid. p. 448 (no. 268, 30 April 1472); ibid. p. 596 (no. 366, 23 Oct. 1475), 'and ye com not hastyly, send me on by Corby, whyche shall com homward on Fryday or Saterday next comyng'. Was Corby perhaps the succcessor to Gresham (below, n. 125), the Pastons' London carrier in 1466?

[12]   The National Archives/Public Record Office, Early Chancery Proceedings, C1/48/175, Gray v. Mayor of London, datable when [Lawrence Booth] bishop of Durham was chancellor, 1473×74. Corby's surety was John Burton, a mason in London.

[13]   As deduced from a number of letters by Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p. 162.

[14]   C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290–1483*, 2 vols., Camden Society, 3rd series, 29, 30 (1919), vol. 2, p. 16 (no. 173). The Stonor papers were deposited with the court of Chancery as evidence relating to proceedings; the family was unable to recover them, and there they remain, divided between different special collections in the nineteenth century and painstakingly reassembled in Kingsford's edition.

[15]   Richard Germyn to William Stonor, 13 May 1480: 'before Midsomer Y schal bringe hit to London pakked in the cariour's pakke of Exeter' (*Stonor Letters*, ed. Kingsford, vol. 2, pp. 105–6, no. 268). The use of *pakke* here prompts a question: are we to understand it as the pack or fardel given to the carrier or as the carrier's load? If the latter, what does it imply?

letters, 'I have sent you a piece [*of cloth*] of 2 yards and a halfe broad by Grethum of York, the first of Lent', in which context we must surely understand this to be the name of the carrier from York.[16]

By 1470 or 1480, in different parts of the country, it appears that reliable regular services were provided by known individuals to carry small but, in some cases, valuable part-loads. Earlier than that there were carriers on well-used routes who were willing to take on additional goods when they were not already fully loaded with another client's goods. It is difficult to tell whether what this evidence shows is a change in the nature of the carrying service or merely growing knowledge and trust by clients such as the Pastons in a carrier regular enough on their route to become reliable. We may need to envisage the beginning of services in two stages. First would-be clients needed to know that there were carriers on a route, some of whom would have capacity to take on extra loads, some of whom would be 'trusty'. Carting has a long history, and the classic evidence of the Southampton brokage books shows carters lining up like taxis to take on loads. No evidence shows their taking on additional jobs, such as carrying personal belongings, letters, money, along the same route or part of it. Second, some who engaged in this trade found that regularity and reliability on a route created a sustainable business in carrying small goods. A hireable carrier could decide to specialize on a regular route, relying on a sufficient and steady demand for a service to the public. Little work has been done to shed light on the beginnings of this important aspect of the carrying trade.

From the early seventeenth century contemporary lists of carrier services out of London show who plied what routes on what days and where their services set out from. Evidence of almost equal transparency can be put together for Oxford in the second half of the fifteenth century, but it does not exist as a single source. We have to find evidence that a person was carrying on a regular basis on a regular route, and that is most readily achieved by finding record of payments to one carrier for carriage on one route by different clients over a period of time. The great difficulty is that sources often provide no more than a record of payment for carriage, and payments 'pro cariagio' appear in accounts from as early as the twelfth century. The hire of carts to carry full loads over distances both long and short can be followed from the twelfth century onwards. Only rarely does evidence show a carter's taking on loads from two or three clients for one journey, and such rare glimpses are provided by the brokage books whose perspective was that of the toll-collector. Evidence from the perspective of the carrier is almost non-existent, and evidence kept by the client was not concerned to explain how the service of carriage was provided. First, we need to look for evidence so worded as to suggest the taking on of small part-loads, or letters, or money, perhaps in addition to a core load that paid the basic costs of the carrier's journey. If a client pays a small sum for the carriage of (say) a pair of candlesticks, that must imply something quite distinct from the bulk trade. Some goods must have been more favourable than others as 'hosts': bolts of cloth will accommodate the added candlesticks more readily than large sacks of wool, wool more readily than coal. The smallness of the load whose carriage is paid for—sometimes as little as a single book—may lead us to make guesses about the manner of carriage, but we need to be cautious, for horse-drawn carts were not the only means of carriage. Second, we seek evidence of a regular route, 'the carrier', 'the Salisbury carrier', or recurrent evidence of the same named carrier on the same route, before we may infer that the trade has moved from being opportunistic to being regular.

CARRIERS VERSUS CARTERS AND HAULIERS

The common carriers' role was very different from that of hired carriers, carters whose carts were available for hire, for example, to carry bulk loads from a distribution hub to local centres, such as those so well documented by the brokage books of Southampton from 1430

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[16]   J.W. Kirby (ed.), *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, Camden Society, 5th series, 8 (1996), p. 48 (no. 26).

onwards.[17] There were many carts available for hire in King John's time.[18] The availability of carts for hire is recorded from at least as early as the reign of King Henry II.[19] Before this the records scarcely exist. Carts, of course, were everywhere, and carting services were part of the manorial economy.[20] A farm cart might be available for hire when not in use or a carter might have made a business from keeping a cart or carts for hire. That carts could be hired in some numbers is obvious from evidence of the early fourteenth century, when sheriffs could command carts by the dozen in exercising the king's right of purveyance, namely to acquire provisions, labour, or transport for the household or the army by compulsory purchase at a price determined by a royal official.[21] The unusual preservation of monthly accounts kept by one driver and an annual account in the name of another, both working for St Giles's hospital in Norwich, shows that, though paid for seven days' work each week, they had days to work for themselves when not required.[22] Payment for seven days a week recognized that the horses needed daily attention even on Sundays and holidays. Ordinary carters, even in a place as busy as Southampton, might have to wait to be hired.

Of the carts themselves and the horses that had long since largely replaced oxen as draught animals it is difficult to say much. Those most used on the roads were two-wheeled carts drawn by a team of four horses, but it is rare to be able to infer such detail from the written evidence.

A carter who offered his cart, his horses, and his services to carry a load is quite different from a regular carrier who was going from point to point and made his living by charging those who wanted goods carried between those points or to any intermediate point. Yet there is a terminological uncertainty. Medieval records do not make any linguistic distinction between a carrier for hire and the regular carrier, which can lead to real problems in reading the sources. The regular carrier had to make the journey between appointed places on a timely basis with or without a full payload. His investment relied on the expectation of making up a load that would at least cover his costs. Given the small size of goods whose carriage we can document, he may have carried a complex load for multiple clients, but the cost in relation to weight was much higher than with bulk goods. This trade no doubt grew out of the opportunistic use of

[17] Carters are discussed by M.A. Hicks in Hicks (ed.) *English Inland Trade 1430–1540: Southampton and its Region* (2015), pp. 35–51. The brokage books day by day name the carter of every cart passing the Bargate, his destination, load, and client(s) owning the goods, and the custom levied. They deal with 'whole cartloads conveyed to specific destinations at which they were often divided, retailed, and/or redistributed' (p. 44). The earliest volume is in print, B.D.M. Bunyard (ed.), *The Brokage Book of Southampton from 1439–40*, Southampton Record Society, 40 (1941); others in the same series are the books for 1443–4, ed. O. Coleman (1960–61), 1447–8, ed. W.A. Harwood (2008), 1448–9, ed. E.A. Lewis (1993), and 1477–8 and 1527–8, ed. K.F. Stevens and T.E. Olding (1985).
[18] D.L. Farmer, 'Marketing the Produce of the Countryside', in E. Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, III, 1348–1500* (1991), p. 349, drawing on published accounts from the bishop of Winchester's manors for 1210–11 (N.R. Holt (ed.), *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1210–1211* (1964)).
[19] The need to provision the army in Ireland in 1170–71 leads to examples in the pipe rolls. Thirty carts were hired in Berkshire to carry cheese: *Pipe Roll 17 Henry II*, p. 88 'pro xx peiseis casei ad Guarnis' exercitum Hybernie c s. Et pro locandis xxx carettis ad portand' eand(em) Guarn' de Abendon' et de Niweberia ad Bristou xlv s.'; in Oxfordshire, ibid. p. 131, 'Pro locanda careta ad Papilionem Regis deferend' de Oxinef' ad Lund' xxj d. Et pro c summis frumenti missis in exercitum Hybernie vj li. et ix s. [. . .] Et pro caretis locandis ad portand' Bladum de Oxinef' ad Bristou xliiii s. et x d. per breue Regis'. A much larger sum was expended in Gloucester, ibid. p. 88, 'Et pro v caretis et iiij carectariis ad opus Regis in exercitu Hybernie vij li. et vij s. et ix d. per breue Regis', leaving one to suppose that these carts were hired for an extended period rather than for one delivery. Lesser examples abound.
[20] D.A. Postles, 'Customary Carrying Services', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd series, 5 (1984), pp. 1–15.
[21] J. Masschaele, 'Transport Costs in Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 46 (1993), pp. 266–79. His contention that purveyance accounts show that transport costs in fourteenth-century England 'were remarkably low' (p. 266) needs modification: sheriffs did not pay a full market rate but imposed a rate beneficial to the king.
[22] J.C. Tingey, 'The Journals of John Dernell and John Boys, Carters at the Lathes in Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 15 (1902–4), pp. 114–63. Dernall in 1417 and Boys in 1428–9 were employed at the Lathes, a farm belonging to St Giles's hospital, for carting, ploughing, and other field work with a team of horses; they recorded their jobs for the farm but also mention days on their own business.

carts that happened to be going to the right place at the right time with spare capacity to carry someone else's part-load in addition. Such opportunistic carriage continued alongside the regular carriers throughout the early modern period, perhaps offering an advantage in specific circumstances of a cheaper price or more expeditious delivery, perhaps because it provided for delivery by a route not regularly served.

Our chief difficulty will be telling whether our sources point to a carrier whose cart was under private hire to do one client's job or a common carrier who offered the same services to multiple clients at the same time.

Other means of carrying goods of course existed. Gangs of sumpters or packhorses carried goods in the Middle Ages and long after, but these are not, I think, referred to as carriers.[23] The Latin word *cursor*, which appears earlier in our sources than the usual word *vector* 'carrier', poses unresolved questions here. The hiring of horses for riding was almost universal, though only occasionally visibly regulated, as on the Dover road.[24] And water transport on certain routes and for certain goods was often much to be preferred to road transport. The arrangements for making up a boat-load may have been quite complicated, given the quantities that could be carried either by river or along the coast. Litigation sheds some light on such business.[25] Between 1476 and 1479 William Stonor was certainly used to having a variety of goods sent up from London to Henley with William Somer, 'bargeman of Queenhithe'. The goods included not only supplies of wine and stockfish but on one occasion a fardel containing spices, a silk gown for Mistress Stonor, and a mustard quern, and on another a balance and scales.[26] In 1479 Somer charged 20d. for the carriage of a pipe of wine. One pipe of wine was surely not a load, and the small goods certainly not. Yet it is not plausible that a bargeman would make up a load entirely of small goods, so we may suppose that these were carried in addition to the main payload. On Thursday, 9 May 1476, Stonor's agent wrote to say, 'as these day at none þe barge departyd fro London, and he saythe he will be at Henli a Mondaye or a Tuysdaye at the fardyst'.[27] How the letter was carried is not apparent, but it seems implicit that it was expected to reach Stonor sooner than that.

Barges and hired horses are quite distinct from the common carrier as widely recognized through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The fact that our limited medieval sources are brief, often poorly contextualized, and rarely unambiguous forces us to use the evidence with particular care.

The subject is one of considerable interest. Regular services for the carriage of small goods, for private reasons as well as for trade, at affordable rates must have made a huge difference to people, even if the cumulative economic impact is impossible to measure. When and where did the first regular carrier ply his route? When such services started in England is not known, but on some routes it was certainly before the middle of the fifteenth century. Where the first carriers plied is a much more difficult question. Any dated source may help towards saying when, but the sparsity of sources means that nowhere is well represented and much of the country is without any evidence at all. Finding and reading the sources is not without its difficulties, but this paper will offer a small body of evidence that helps to define the terms of the question. In particular the account rolls of Oxford colleges provide evidence

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[23]   A. Abram, *Social England in the Fifteenth Century. A Study of the Effects of Economic Conditions* (1909), p. 15, equated the carriage of goods in panniers with a common carrier.

[24]   Letters patent of Richard II dated 5 January 1396 provided trade protection for the hackneymen between Southwark and Dover (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391–96*, pp. 712–13). Their privileges were still protected when a system of post riders was organized in Queen Elizabeth's time (Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon, and Post*, p. 65).

[25]   R.C. Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348–1381. A Transformation of Governance and Law* (1993), pp. 171–80, with writs summarized, pp. 328–33.

[26]   For example, an indenture for goods, dated 14 May 1478, now filed in Ancient Deeds, Series C, C146/2288, but part of the Stonor papers, ed. Kingsford, *Stonor Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 45–6 (no. 209). Other references to goods sent to Henley on Somer's barge, ibid. p. 5 (no. 164), pp. 65–6 (no. 225), p. 72 (no. 233).

[27]   Kingsford (ed.), *Stonor Letters*, vol. 2, p. 5 (no. 164).

of carriers on several routes in southern England in the fifteenth century. This will allow us to see the evolution of the regular carrier's role at a significantly earlier date than has often been assumed. Finding small payments for the carriage of small goods in the absence of any clearer evidence for regular carriers may represent the opportunistic use of carriers already hired by another client. Other explanations may be possible. Just posing questions about the well-documented carriage of small goods will illustrate the challenge of using such records as we have. An agenda for further inquiry beckons.

LOOKING FOR EARLY REFERENCES

To answer the first question, 'When?', we need dated evidence that is entirely clear as to what kind of carrying business was referred to. There is no specific body of source material in which to look for common carriers in the late Middle Ages, but there is clear evidence that they existed. A useful first point of reference is the words used to refer to carriers in general, and it is the business of dictionaries to seek out the earliest example of the relevant words. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a quotation from 1534, 'all the poure cariers . . . repayrynge wekelye and monthelye to your citie of London', quoting from an act of parliament for the paving of Holborn, the road from Oxford into the city of London.[28] These were regular carriers, and there is perhaps a hint that they were sufficiently organized to have made a collective complaint about the state of the road. The Fraternity of St Katherine, forerunner of the Worshipful Company of Carmen, dates back to 1517, and may have been able to lobby.[29] OED's earliest example, however, the bequest of two silver spoons to Alice, 'uxori Rogeri Brounfield de Ebor', carryour', in a will dated 24 August 1471, requires us to make a supposition about how Roger traded.[30] Even in a town the size of York carriers make little appearance, but there were local porters, a quite distinct trade.[31] The Middle English Dictionary defines ME *carier* as 'a carrier, a carter, a bearer of letters', and *comune carier* as 'a public carrier', leaving the quotations to differentiate. The first example from as early as 1322 is no more than a surname, 'Rogerus le Cariour', and a payment in 1399 for loads of sand brought for the builders at York minster 'per Hugonem Carior' is concerned with bulk carriage. These may have been porters or carters, but this source offers no evidence for the carrier in the fourteenth century. In the French of England the Anglo-Norman Dictionary records the word in a statute of 1353: 'Et eit chascun Cariour retournant de l'Estaple une bille souz le Seal du Meir de l'Estaple par quele il poet estre conu q'il seert a l'Estaple, contenant les journees que lui bosoigne pur son retournir a l'ostiel; quele bille lui soit grante franchement'.[32] These are likely to be carrying whole loads under private contract, a major part of the distribution network from the Staple.

A different word occurring in Latin, French, and English takes us to an early date but leaves us unsure of what it meant. The nineteenth-century tranter, as he was called in some

[28] Acte for the pavyng of Holburne, 25 Henry VIII, c. 8 (*Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (1810–28), vol. 3, p. 442).

[29] The fraternity was formed on 19 March 1516/17.

[30] J.T. Fowler (ed.), *Acts of Chapter of the Collegiate Church of SS. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon, AD 1452 to AD 1506*, Surtees Society, 64 (1875), p. 154.

[31] F. Collins (ed.), *Register of the Freemen of the City of York, 1272–1558* (1897), offers an early example from before 1424, 'Johannes Buteler, caryour' (p. 124). There are more men styled 'porter' among the freemen. A porter carried goods on his back or on a sled or even on a horse, and is sometimes referred to as a carrier, but this would seem a lesser occupation than a carrier, who needed a cart and credit for a team of horses. There are two words, AN *portur*, the one meaning bearer [ML *portator, portitor*], the other gatekeeper [ML *portarius*]; ME *porter* is well documented in the latter sense by the Middle English Dictionary but not in the former, though this may be oversight.

[32] 'Every carrier returning from the Staple shall have a bill under the seal of the mayor of the Staple by which it may be known that he serves at the Staple, detailing the journeys necessary for him for his return to the lodgings; this bill shall be given him without payment': Ordinance of the Staple, 27 Edw. III, st. 2, dated 23 September 1353, *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, vol. 2, p. 247b (§ 8); *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 1, p. 335 (§ 4).

dialects, may resemble the carrier, and OED defines the word as having 'various local uses, chiefly denoting a man who does jobs with his horse and cart'. Thomas Hardy in *Under the Greenwood Tree* calls Reuben Dewy 'a "tranter" or irregular carrier'. In Latin *travetarius* is recorded from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth century. The related vernacular words are AN *traventer* (with intrusive n), *travetier*, ME *traventour*, *traveter*, *traunter*; etymologically, this is probably from Latin *transvehere*, perhaps actually from the noun *transvector*, but the -*n*- is unexplained. Early examples in Latin name individuals as 'travetarius regis', whose role seems to have been to organize the hire of carts and shipment of goods for the court.[33] In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the word was also used to mean a buyer of goods, a pedlar selling goods from a cart, a tapster selling drink from a cart, and a man who hired out horses. Recorded examples nowhere denote anything like a regular carrier, fifteenth-century examples are rare indeed, and it is possible that this Anglo-French word had fallen out of mainstream use before there were common carriers on the road.

The first Middle English example that looks more securely like a common carrier is assigned the date 1439, 'William dyd send þe seid clothe before hym with Cariers unto Oxenford', but one needs to know more about the payload before arriving at a firm conclusion.[34] From 1459, however, the qualifier is used, as if well established, in an indenture between the university and the burgesses of Oxford: 'Alle common caryers, bryngers of scolers to the Uniuersite or their money, letter, or eny especiall message to eny scoler or clerk . . .'.[35] And John Paston's letter from 1465 is also quoted, 'The berer of this lettir is a comon carier and was at Norwich on Satirday'. Turning to Latin sources, a glossary from the middle of the fifteenth century gives two words for carrier, 'Caryare: *Vector*, *vectitor*'.[36] And from the Medieval Latin Dictionary, in 1489, we find an example: 'dominus Custos misit per Baker vectorem a ciuitate duo candelabra deaurata', the warden of Merton College has paid Baker the carrier to carry two silver-gilt candlesticks and other altar plate from London to Oxford.[37] The incomplete entry quoted by the dictionary from the college annals is corrected by a more detailed one under the correct date, one month later, 'dominus Custos misit ad collegium per Baker vectorem iocalia sequentia ad ornamentum summi altaris'; the articles described amounted to a weight of 251 oz (nearly 16 lb), valued at £43 7s. 4½d.[38] This was obviously not the hiring of a cart but carriage of a small part-load of high value. The paired entries make clear the direction of carriage and, incidentally, illustrate an early use of *ciuitas* 'the City' to mean London.[39] The college accounts give further insight into the making of these vessels and incidentally show 12d. spent on a box for their carriage and 4s. 4d. paid to 'Baker vectori pro vectura earundem peluium'.[40] Covering carriage and, in effect, insurance of valuable goods, the charge may be modest, but it is far above the cost of carrying a load of firewood. Baker is someone whom we shall meet again.

[33]   In 1225, 'Robertum Brian travetarium suum de curia sua', and in 1228 'Willelmus Wygan travetarius domini regis de curia sua . . .' (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, pp. 8, 175; in 1233, William de London, the tranter (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1232–47*, p. 32).

[34]   C1/9/124, Somerset v. Sharp, datable 1432×43 (see below, n. 53).

[35]   Agreement between the chancellor and the mayor, dated 23 February, 37 Henry VI, 1459, printed by H. Anstey (ed.), *Munimenta Academica, or Documents Illustrative of Academic Life and Studies at Oxford*, RS, 50 (1868), vol. 1, p. 346; H.E. Salter (ed.), *Mediaeval Archives of the University of Oxford*, 2 vols, OHS, 70, 73 (1920–21), vol. 1, p. 245; *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 57.

[36]   *Promptorium Parvulorum,* ed. A. Way, 3 vols, Camden Society, 25, 54, 89 (1843–65), p. 62.

[37]   H.E. Salter (ed.), *Registrum Annalium Collegii Mertonensis 1483–1521*, OHS, 76 (1923), p. 126.

[38]   Salter (ed.), *Registrum Annalium*, p. 127.

[39]   OED recognizes this usage first in 1556; neither the Middle English nor the Medieval Latin dictionary records it. The earliest I have noted is in 1424–5, when the New College bursar's roll uses 'a ciuitate usque Oxon" alongside 'a ciuitate London" (NCA, 7399).

[40]   J.M. Fletcher and C.A. Upton (eds.), *The Domestic Accounts of Merton College Oxford 1 August 1482–1 August 1494*, OHS, ns, 34 (1996), p. 347.

This evidence allows us to say, with some confidence, that in King Edward IV's time there were regular carriers on routes between towns in various parts of the country. Norwich was a major commercial city, regularly served by 1470 and with frequent carriers in the 1460s. Oxford, the focus of a nationwide network of clerks and students, had carriers before 1459, and regular services may already have been on offer. From Henley, at the upper end of commercial navigation on the Thames, but not a major town in the road network, it is also revealing to see readiness to split a bundle for the road carrier to London rather than to send it downstream by river.

COMMON CARRIERS AND LEGAL HISTORIANS

The expression 'common carrier' is one that occurs in discussion of legal questions and in the evidence of law suits. The definition set out here, however, is not a legal one. In law both hired carter and public carrier were common carriers, provided they sold their services to any who wanted to hire them. The common carrier was someone trusted to carry other people's goods, and from Queen Elizabeth's time the courts deemed him to be a bailee, liable for the safe delivery of what had been entrusted to him. Bailment meant simply the handing over of goods upon trust, including goods loaned for use or deposited for safekeeping, upon a contract expressed or implied that the trust should be faithfully executed by the bailee. Liability applied even without covenant to carry, because the bailor's property was bailed into the hands of the carrier to be delivered. The leading case was in 1601.[41] The common law determined that carrier's liability applied in all circumstances except when delivery was prevented by act of God, or the king's enemies, or 'inherent vice' in the goods themselves, for example, he could not stop meat from rotting. At an earlier date the carrier was liable only through fault or negligence, and R.C. Palmer has traced the development of liability from the middle of the fourteenth century; his examples for the most part concern carriage by water.[42] The law has focused definition on the meaning of common; medieval sources rarely use the phrase common carrier and never define it, and we must avoid letting legal definitions obscure the distinctions between different means of transport.[43] The fact that a common carrier carried goods for any who requested his service made his role, like that of a common innkeeper, a common calling, something which has also given rise to discussion by historians of the common law. In studying these aspects of his occupation, lawyers have brought to light other instances of carriers in the Middle Ages. C.H.S. Fifoot knew the Oxford indenture from 1459, which certainly refers to common carriers, and he cited the first discussion of carrier's liability by a legal writer in 1523.[44] T.F.T. Plucknett's earliest example was from Yorkshire in

[41] Cases have long been discussed by lawyers (for example, O.W. Holmes, *The Common Law* (1881), pp. 180–92; E.G.M. Fletcher, *The Carrier's Liability* (1932)). The leading cases appear to be Southcotes case (1601) and Coggs v Bernard (1703), with a definition provided by Gisborne v Hurst (1710), and the legal evidence provides no window on carriers before the last years of Queen Elizabeth I. In the well-known Humber ferryman's case, as early as 1348, the ferryman was judged liable in tort, because his malfeisance in overloading the ferryboat was the occasion of the loss for which he was sued, though no covenant or contract for carriage could be shown (J.H. Beale, 'The Carrier's Liability: A History', *Harvard Law Review*, 11 (1897), pp. 158–68; A.K.R. Kiralfy, *A Source Book of English Law* (1957), p. 187; J.H. Baker and S.F.C. Milsom, *Sources of English Legal History. Private Law to 1750* (1986), p. 358); Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death*, pp. 173–6).
[42] Above, n. 25.
[43] A.W.B. Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract. The Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* (1975), pp. 229–33, assures us that in the Middle Ages 'common' means 'available to all': despite later legal concern with common callings, 'This is the sense in which the word is used in medieval cases, and it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the term is used without any technical overtones whatsoever at this period; it is nowhere found as a legal term of art'.
[44] C.H.S. Fifoot, *History and Sources of the Common Law. Tort and Contract* (1949), p. 160, citing Christopher St German's *Doctor and Student*, c. 38, now edited by T.F.T. Plucknett and J.L. Barton, Selden Society, 91 (1974), p. 261.

1392, though his evidence is no more than the word used to indicate someone's occupation.[45] A.W.B. Simpson noted a reference to *communes cariatores* in Beverley in 1418 and deduced an explanation for 'the relative infrequency of reference to carriers', but the carriers in his source were town porters who carried on their backs or on a horse, not carriers plying between towns, and they were regulated in Beverley already in 1377.[46] Such porters can be found in other towns at a much earlier date. In Leicester, where unusally early gild records survive, porters and carters appear as early as the first years of the thirteenth century.[47] E.G.M. Fletcher discussed a case from 1291, in which a merchant had made a covenant on Wednesday morning with a man at St Ives fair to carry a fardel of unspecified goods to sell to a burgess in London, 'quod duceret eum (*sic*) quoddam fardellum vendendum cuidam burgensi Lond' apud London", provided that he deliver the goods before vespers on Thursday; payment was to be 12d., with a further farthing as God's penny (*denarius Dei*) if the goods were delivered in time. They were not, and the merchant sued in the fair's own court, unsuccessfully, for loss of business.[48] Interesting though the story is, it does not even reveal how the goods were to be carried, and the man may well have been a trader with his own cart rather than a carrier. The legal historians have brought nothing to light that helps to answer our question about the beginnings of the regular carrying trade, which seems to have presented no legal issues peculiar to itself.

A wider investigation in legal records does produce cases that probably concern regular carriers, but it leads us to no examples earlier than we found through the dictionaries. At the end of Edward IV's reign John Jakson, 'a pore comon caryer', appeared in chancery litigation; he had been the subject of complaint for the non-delivery of a fardel of cloth.[49] He styled himself as poor, though any carrier had to have some financial surety. Another law-suit produced testimony from a man, William Naynow, who 'saith and deposeth that he used to cary lynnyn cloth and other marchaundisez from Excestre to London by the space of xxxv yere last past'; the editor dated the case to 1484, leading by subtraction to 1449, but he was in error by some sixteen years.[50] The case dates from 1500 or 1501, leading to 1465 as the earliest implied date.[51] In the 1450s, Henry Parker, of Shelford in Cambridgeshire, was described as

[45]   T.F.T. Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law*, 5th edn (1956), p. 482, citing B.H. Putnam (ed.), *Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (1938), p. 440, 'Robertus Clerk cariour de Cokeward'.

[46]   Simpson, *History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 230, citing an order by the keepers of the town of Beverley (1418), when the old ordinance (1377) was read and amended: 'antiqua ordinacio de portitoribus et crelers et aliis communibus cariatoribus, uidelicet quod cariarent supra equis in crelys et saccis omnia bona que supra eisdem comode et tranquille cariari possent et non supra sleddis'. The two orders are copied together (A.F. Leach (ed.), *Beverley Town Documents*, Selden Society, 14 (1900), p. 22), and it is beyond doubt that they refer to the porters or carriers who delivered goods to houses in the town. Simpson inferred: 'the term carrier embraced a number of different medieval jobs, so that a man who was a carrier would usually also be a porter, a hoyman, a creler, or whatever it was, and would be so described and named. Hence there was no guild of carriers, though there were guilds of porters'. I disagree. Someone who offered his labour on foot one day was not likely to be in possession of a cart and team another day, still less to ply a regular route between towns.

[47]   M. Bateson et al. (eds.), *Records of the Borough of Leicester* (1901–67), vol. 1, pp. xxix–xxx, text at pp. 12–35. The first roll of admissions to the guild, 1196–1225, has a porter in 1205–6 (p. 12) and a carrier in 1210 (p. 22).

[48]   Fletcher, *Carrier's Liability*, p. 16, citing the case from C. Gross, *Select Cases concerning the Law Merchant AD 1270–1368*, Selden Society, 23 (1908), p. 43, printed from Court Rolls, SC2/178/97, m. 3. The distance is sixty miles along the direct route provided by the Roman road Ermine Street.

[49]   Salzman, *English Trade in the Middle Ages*, p. 206, dating it to the fifteenth century. The case comes from the files of Early Chancery Proceedings, C1/61/345, datable when [Thomas Rotherham] archbishop of York was chancellor, 7 July 1480×22 April 1483.

[50]   Cited as attesting William Naynow as carrier in 1484 by Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p. 160, and by Fifoot, *History and Sources of the Common Law*, p. 157, both from I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Select Cases before the King's Council in the Star Chamber AD 1477–1509*, Selden Society, 16 (1903), p. 84.

[51]   The whole document, STAC1, no. 78, printed by Leadam, pp. 71–95, is a suit before the King's Council, datable when [Henry Deane] bishop of Salisbury was keeper of the great seal, 13 October 1500×26 May 1501, and in it several Exeter merchants depose that they had sent cloth to London by carrier and also by ship, their earliest dated point of reference being in the deposition of John Guscote (p. 80), using carriers between

a common carrier who petitioned the courts after a barrel of pike that he was carrying from Cambridge to London was seized from him for the king's use; in view of the high value of pike, perhaps not a very large barrel.[52] And cloth delivered by carriers to an inn at Oxford was seized 'on pretence of debt' by one Richard Sharp, of Coventry, becoming the subject of litigation. Given the stated value, £49, this might have been a full load, or more than one load, since carriers are mentioned in the plural. Delivery to an inn, however, may suggest otherwise, but it would help to know more of the context than the petition has recorded. Its date, 1432×43, expressed as 1439 by the Middle English dictionary, takes us back a decade or more earlier than other sound evidence.[53] The petition of James Vale, 'comon servaunt and cariour of Oxenford', must date from just this period too.[54] Goods had been put in his hands in London 'by one John Luky, skynner, for to delyver unto a scoler of Oxenford, and to bring on to the same John an obligacioun of iiij marc fro the same scoler'; the pledge had erasures and was not legally valid, so it was rejected by Luky, who accused Vale of breaking their covenant; Vale had obtained a fresh pledge with no erasure from the scholar in the presence of the chancellor, but refusing this Luky was seeking his four marks from James Vale. James Vale has not been found in other records, but John Luky is documented as a citizen and skinner of London in the 1420s; he appears to have been a Cornishman known also as John Trethewy.[55]

12 and 22 Edward IV, 1472–83. Reference, for example, to 'xvj peces of lynnyn cloth caried from Excestre to London by one William Naynow, cariour of Excestre', points to part-loads. William Naynow was aged 56 at the time of the suit and said he had worked as carrier thirty-five years, i.e. since 1465. He is found also in C1/103/39, Neynowe v. Bulwyck, datable when John [Morton], archbishop of Canterbury was chancellor but not yet cardinal, 1487×93, a case concerning a parcel of silver plate carried to Salisbury and lost.

52   C1/19/469, datable 1452×54, when John [Kemp] archbishop of Canterbury was chancelor: 'Besechet mekely youre pore bedeman Harry Parker of Shelford, Carter, that where the seid Harry which is a comen' carier late toke in to his cart atte Cambrigg' a tonne of pykes of oon Richard Webster of Cambrigg', ffyssher, to haue caried it vnto London'; and as he was commyng to London' warde the seide tonne fysshe was taken of hym'.

53   Briefly noted by Abram, *Social England*, p. 15, from Somerset v. Sharp, C1/9/124a, datable 1432×43, when John [Stafford] bishop of Bath and Wells was chancellor: William Somerset had bought 'of diuerse marchauntes of London' as muche clothe as drawes to þe somme of xlix li. [. . .] And soo it happed as þe seid William dyd send þe seid clothe before hym with Cariers vnto Oxenford', vnto his Inne þere to be kepyd sauf vnto his comyng, come oon Richard Sharp' of Couentrie, Marchaunt, vnto þe same Inne and there toke and bare away þe seid clothe withoute any processe of lawe'. C1/9/124b adds that the cloth was 'of skarlot and of other diuers colours'.

54   C1/11/467, Vale v. Luky, when the bishop of Bath and Wells was chancellor. Those petitions that name the bishop as John, that is John Stafford, 1432×43, were assigned to C1/9, while hundreds of chancery petitions that are indeterminate between him and Robert Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells and chancellor, 1467×70, 1471×73, were assigned to C1/10 and 11. With C1/11/467, the handwriting is decisively in favour of Bishop John (but C1/11/469 is for the same reason surely from Bishop Robert's time). Summarized by Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, pp. 72–3, whose only dating is 'much earlier than Makyn's time', taking one to another case (ibid. pp. 33–4), C1/34/125, Marchall v. Frowyk, when the archbishop of York was chancellor, perhaps George Nevill, 1465×67, 1470×71, or Thomas Rotherham, 1480×83. Thomas Makyn had written to Thomas Marchall's father William (below, n. 123).

55   In 1424 we find John Luky, citizen and skinner of London, in debt to two other men, John Denys and William Tretheck, the latter with a distinctively Cornish surname, 19 May 1424 (C241/217/20); again in 1440 John Luky, citizen and skinner of London, was a creditor in a plea of debt, 27 April 1440 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1436–41*, p. 328). Two sources for his alternative surname are problematic: John Luky, citizen and skinner of London, *alias* John Trenewyth, had letters of protection cancelled since he was not now going to France, 9 January 1423 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1422–29*, p. 22); John Trethewy *and* John Luky, skinners, quitclaimed, 27 November 1425 (*Cal. Plea and Memoranda Rolls, 1413–37*, p. 182). Trethewy and Trenewith are quite different names, so we may have two Cornishmen called John Luky, both skinners in London, with different alternative surnames; I have not verified whether Thomas was correct to say 'and' rather than 'alias'. John Trethewy, citizen and skinner of London, was owed money by Cornishman John Resculyan, 27 May 1424 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1422–29*, p. 151); John Trethewy, citizen and skinner of London, was owed money by John Mayhew of Lesnewith (Cornwall), 23 October 1428 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1422–29*, p. 505), by John de la Haye of Hentlowe (Herefs), 24 November 1431 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1429–36*, p. 161), and by Richard Treage, of Treage (Cornwall), 24 October 1437 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1436–41*, p. 103). To add confusion, John Trethewy, citizen and skinner of London, was owed £20 by John Luky, of Wadfast, Cornwall, 12 June 1437 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1436–41*, p. 15). Going further back, one can only wonder whether it was the same John Trethewy, citizen and skinner of London, who made a bond for £50 on 12 July 1407 (C146/6140).

Vale was carrying goods, therefore, and returning promise of payment, though we do not know whether he plied a regular route or carried these goods under private contract. We have two possible, even plausible, cases here from before 1443, but neither is secure. The great expanse of legal records, if explored, may yet deliver better evidence for regular carriers at so early a date, even if these cases do not.

THOROLD ROGERS'S FALSE START?

Studies concerned with medieval trade and medieval life have done less to harvest even such random information. Owing no doubt to scarcity of evidence and the fact that his handling of more or less any kind of small load is not susceptible to quantitative treatment, the common carrier has not attracted the attention of medieval economic historians. Even the specialist searcher for anecdotes of the road tells us nothing about the medieval carrier.[56] Agrarian and economic historians have instead been led to build too much on slight evidence not properly understood. A point of reference long available was the work of the economist James Thorold Rogers (1823–1890). In a chapter with no apparent sense of time, but flagged chiefly by reference to the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth centuries, we read:[57]

> The ultimate test is the rate paid for carriage by the common carrier. Here, however, it should be remembered that the carrier was by common law a bailee of the goods, and liable to the consignor for their safe delivery. Hence his charges involved a variable sum for insurance. When he conveys money his rate is high, as it also is, though in a less degree, when he conveys, as he sometimes does, personal baggage. Now an excellent test of the cost of carriage over known distances is the charge for conveying wine, for the distance is considerable at any inland town, and the carrier may, in some cases must, have passed several days and nights on the road. The article is bulky, packed with labour and difficulty, and is peculiarly liable to being pilfered. I find that it was conveyed in winter time at about 3½d. per ton per mile for the double journey; and I think that no article could be found of more difficult and laborious conveyance than a tun of wine (252 gallons) in bulk during winter, over the ancient road from Southampton to Oxford, with the loading from the wharf, and unloading at the place of destination.
>
>   The very existence of a class of common carriers, who got their living by conveying the most valuable kinds of goods, and by regularly traversing the country from Southampton and Winchester to Oxford, from the midland counties to Stourbridge fair, near Cambridge, and even from Oxford to Newcastle-on-Tyne, is proof, not only that there was a demand for the carrier, but that the means of communication were fairly good, and the principal roads, even in winter time, were kept in decent repair.

This may be backed up in some part by reference to Rogers's earlier work, closer to the evidence, and for one point expressly drawing on the records of Merton College:[58]

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[56]   J.J. Jusserand's very successful *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* (1889), draws largely on sources of the fourteenth century and not later. The chapter on 'Messengers, Itinerant Merchants, and Pedlars' (pp. 223–53) is the obvious place to look, but there are no carriers, though some unusual small goods are mentioned, for example the fetching of three greyhounds in 1396 or the delivery of the quartered body-parts of an executed traitor in 1371 (p. 231).

[57]   J.E. Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (1884), pp. 134–5.

[58]   Idem, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, 8 vols. (1866–1902), vol. 1, p. 660, referring to his tables, vol. 2, p. 605, recording that Thomas *Cursor* was paid 1s 8d in 1398 'pro 15 valect liveries carried from London'. The tables of the price of carriage between 1263 and 1400 (vol. 2, pp. 600–605) make no distinctions as to how the service was bought. His tables for 1401 to 1582 (vol. 3, pp. 664–73) do not include the name of a single carrier but do repeatedly refer to the hire of a cart.

There is a carrier alluded to now and then in the Merton accounts who traverses the country between Oxford and Newcastle. So in 1394 and 1395, we read of the carrier from Winchester to Oxford, and in the latter year of a similar functionary between London and Oxford. Perhaps, however, Thomas Cursor, of Cat Street, Oxford, is the earliest carrier whose name and place of business has been recorded. [. . .] Thomas Cursor of Cat Street carries servants liveries from London, ready made, at the rate of little less than 1½d each.

These passages have led some to accept that there were regular carriers in the late fourteenth century, even between Oxford and Newcastle, for which there is no justification whatever. It was the late fifteenth century when Merton College used the northern carrier designated by the university. Rogers's 'So' is unhelpful. For 1394 and 1395, Merton accounts are very incomplete and contain nothing relevant.[59] Mention of Winchester, however, points more towards New College, where he would have found payment for carriage of cloth from Winchester in 1394:[60]

> 1393–4 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii et forinseci* Et in expensis fact(is) pro cariag(io) liberat' soc(iorum) Colleg(ii) a Wynton' usque Oxon', videlicet xx pannorum, cap(it) pro panno iiij d. ob., vij s. vj d. (NCA, 7342).

> *Necessary and external outgoings* And on expenses incurred for the transport of the liveries of the fellows of the College from Winchester to Oxford, namely twenty outfits; he receives 4½d. for one outfit. 7s. 7d.

He has interpreted 'pro cariagio' as connoting a common carrier, and charging per suit of clothes rather than for a whole load tends to support this. In isolation can we rely on this reasoning? The name Thomas Cursor of Cat Street certainly comes from the New College account for 1399, but it is far from certain that he was a common carrier:

> 1398–9 New College bursar's roll, 'Et solutum Thome Cursori de Catstreet pro cariacione liberat' xv valect(orum) ab Oxon' usque London' xv die December' xx d.' (NCA, 7348).

Carrying fifteen servants' liveries from Oxford to London is the kind of business a carrier would undertake—Rogers inadvertently reversed the route—but there is no evidence to say whether Thomas Cursor was contracted under private hire or plied a regular route between Oxford and London. His charge for each livery is less than one third the charge 'pro panno' from Winchester to Oxford five years earlier. There is no roll from 1395, but the New College account for 1393 may have been the source of Rogers's first unnamed and misdated London carrier:[61]

> 1392–3 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii et forinseci* [. . .] [*near the end of a long section*] Et in stipendium Willelmi Southam cariant' fardell' dicti Roberti Paunton ab Oxon' usque London' ij s. vj d. Et in stipendium eiusdem Willelmi Southam cariant' fardell' domini Willelmi Skyflyng' capellani paroch' de Hornchurch ab Oxon' usque London' xxiiij^to die Decembr' ij s. iiij d.' (NCA, 7340).

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[59] In any given year there can be warden's, sub-warden's, and bursar's accounts, the latter usually divided into three rolls, each for a part of the year. From these two years there is now only MCR, 3721, a bursar's account April–July 1395, which mentions two clerks 'qui venerunt de Northumbria' but no carrier.

[60] Such quotations are not generally translated hereafter, and suspensions are not always extended. The vocabulary is for the most part straightforward, well covered by the Medieval Latin Dictionary, and the syntax is limited. Here uncertainty attends whether the word written as *liberat'* should be expanded in the singular or plural: usually *liberata* (OF *leveré*), occasionally *liberatum*, the past participle of *liberare* is used both individually, as in the next quotation, the liveries of fifteen servants, or collectively as in the headings for 'Empcio liberate sociorum', sometimes written in full in these rolls. The word *pannus* is used both for a piece of cloth, up to an entire bolt, and for a set of apparel.

[61] There are no college rolls extant at New College for the four years 1394–8, and the receipt rolls do not include such expenditure. Emden found little to reveal William Skyflyng's career beyond this time, but Mr Robert Pawnton held benefices in Essex and later in London until his death in 1426.

Two examples from one year of paying a *stipendium* to the same man to take what may well be personal luggage to the same place can easily be construed as evidence for a common carrier. Merton College accounts allow us to backdate Southam, who features in accounts there a decade earlier, described in Latin as *cursor*, a word used for couriers in England and for pedlars in Aquitaine. There is no meaningful context but the cost is small:

> 1381–2 Merton College bursar's account Nov 1381–Mar 1382, '*Mutuat' pro Custod' et dat'*: Item Southam cursori pro car(iagio) librorum xij d.' (MCR, 3711; Thomson, *Merton*, 273b).

In the Middle English Dictionary the headword *cursor, corsour* 'messenger, courier' (from Latin and Old French) is attested thinly in the fourteenth century, only as an occupation or surname, but there were five of them in Oxford in the poll tax roll from 1381 as well as eight carters and three porters.[62] The only Southam was William Southam and Jane his wife, described as *corpour*, surely an error for *corsour*.[63] The cost in this case is low, but how much hypothesis can rest on that? Between 1384 and 1398 the accounts of University College show Southam only as hiring out horses.[64] A separate headword in the Middle English Dictionary is *corser* 'a dealer, especially a horse-dealer' (from ML *cursor*) and another is *courser* 'a swift spirited horse', 'an ordinary horse, an ambler' (from OF *coursier*). Quotations grouped by sense have been assigned to distinct lemmata, following OED. The evidence in the three languages should be looked at afresh. The word courserman, someone who looks after horses, escaped both dictionaries.[65] It is difficult to tell how *cursores* provided a carrying service, but it seems to involve horses more than carts. Another very early example again shows low cost but no detail:

> 1388–9 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii cum expens(is) for(insecis)* [. . .] Et in vectura candelabrorum per cursorem diuers' vic' xij d. (NCA, 7333 dorse).

Candlesticks would be a very small part-load for a cart, but how much could a *cursor* carry? We are given no clue as to where they were carried, and I make no other sense from the last two words than 'diuersis uicibus', 'several times' or 'on several occasions' (we cannot know whether the same candlesticks were carried more than once). Was the *cursor* a man with a cart and horses, a man on horseback, or a man with a string of packhorses? Did he take on whatever carrying job came along or did he work a particular route? How close is a courser to a courier, ME *corour* 'message-bearer, courier' (from Old French *corëor*). Before 1410 in English one may read, in connexion with the flight into Egypt, 'that is to say after the comoun sawe the space of xij or xv dayes iournees of a comune currour, perauenture it was to hem the

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[62]   *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 45, drawing on poll tax returns, E179/161/47, as printed by J.E. Thorold Rogers (ed.), *Oxford City Documents*, OHS, 18 (1891), pp. 8-45.

[63]   Rogers (ed.), *Oxford City Documents*, p. 21, printed from E179/161/47.

[64]   A.D.M. Cox and R. Darwall-Smith (eds.), *Account Rolls of University College Oxford*, 2 vols., OHS, 39, 40 (1999–2001), vol. 1, pp. 42, 57, 68, 76, 80, and 113 ('Southam certori', surely a misreading by the seventeenth-century transcriber William Smith). The lowest payments were 3s. 4d. for horses in 1384/5 and the same sum 'pro debito antiquo' in 1397–8; the highest, 26s. 4d. in 1388–9, lacks reference to what was paid for.

[65]   The Middle English Dictionary appears to follow the OED, which has four separate lemmata for (1) corser, courser, 'a jobber, esp. a horse-dealer' (which OED derives from a verb meaning to barter), (2) courser n.[1], 'a runner', (3) courser n.[2], 'a large powerful horse', and (4) courser n.[3], 'a bird noted for swift running'. Neither has courserman, for which see *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic. Henry VIII*, 21 vols. in 28 (1863–1910), vol. 3, pt 1, no. 1114 (at p. 408), where in 1520 several men who work with horses are described as coursermen, though their pay is less that that of those described as horsekeepers. The word is also used by American writer E.S. Brooks (1846–1902), in his *Historic Girls* (1887), 'Launcelot Crue, the Lord Protector's fleetest *courserman*, galloped across the Hertford fells or hills'. The extant household account of Thomas of Lancaster (1388–1421), duke of Clarence, *c.*1418–21, shows Robert and Simon Courserman, paid for keeping horses (C.M. Woolgar (ed.), *Household Accounts from Medieval England*, 2 vols. (1992), vol. 2, pp. 655, 684), and in an earlier account, 1413–14, the hire of a horse, 'pro equo pro cursyrman xij d.' (ibid. p. 596), where the courserman appears to be a rider.

trauaile of two monthes and more'.[66] The word hints at speed of travel, but common courier is a challenging phrase, for couriers were not common. With such difficulties in the language, we must not be hasty in assuming we understand what these accounts refer to.

Thorold Rogers was perhaps too familiar with what carriers did to probe his evidence sufficiently. He did not define a carrier's role, and his easy glide from personal baggage to a tun of wine shows that he drew no distinction between a hired carrier and a public carrier plying a regular route. His discussion of evidence from the fifteenth century and after equally ignores the regular carrier.[67] Someone of his generation cannot have been unaware that the man who would take his personal luggage to London or to Oxford would not be able to handle such a tun of wine.[68] He has been influential. He was Michael Postan's undeclared and unreliable source for his mention of common carriers in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries in the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*.[69] Others have followed without verification.[70] Rogers was the authority also for Dorian Gerhold's statement, 'A London carrier is first recorded in 1398, at Oxford, and in the fifteenth century', he continues, 'they existed at least at Exeter, Bristol, Gloucester, Worcester, Coventry, Cambridge, Colchester, Norwich, and Higham (Norfolk)'.[71] Accepting that there were London carriers before 1400, and knowing Bennett's valuable discussion of the Paston evidence, he had no pressing reason to look more closely at the dates when these ones were first recorded. We shall see that it is not quite so simple. The cited evidence for Bristol refers to carters' carrying goods to Bristol from Southampton as recorded in the brokage books.[72] Gloucester offered one exceptionally early instance from 1381: Reynold, a carter, owned a wagon and a team of eight horses which met with an accident at Coates, near Cirencester, while carrying a load of wine, 'but the fact that men of Oxford and Tetsworth (Oxon), places on one of the London routes, acted as Reynold's mainpernours suggests that he also operated a service to the capital'.[73] Hiring out a cart on a well-used route does not amount to a service, and to infer a regular carrier from this evidence is going too far. Carriers for hire predated common carriers, but telling one from the other in such records is difficult.

DEVELOPING A MORE COHERENT APPROACH: BOOK CARRYING IN COLLEGE ACCOUNTS

In seeking to date the development of the regular carrying trade the question is not simply one of looking for early references to carriers. It is absolutely essential to ask whether a carrier was

[66] Middle English Dictionary, s.v. *corour*, from Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.
[67] Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. 4, pp. 692‒713.
[68] Thorold Rogers grew up at West Meon, near Petersfield (Hants.), but he was sent to school in Southampton, and he studied at King's College London (opened as recently as 1831), from there entering Magdalen Hall, Oxford, in 1843 and graduating in 1846. The Great Western Railway first opened a branch-line to Grandpont for Oxford in June 1844.
[69] M.M. Postan, 'The Trade of Medieval Europe: The North', *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 2nd edn (1987), p. 192; 'English records have preserved evidence of common carriers traversing the country in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from Southampton to Winchester and Oxford, from the Cotswolds by road and river to London, from the midland counties to the Stourbridge Fair near Cambridge, from Westminster and Oxford to York and Newcastle-on-Tyne'.
[70] A.S. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century* (1894), vol. 2, p. 28; Abram, *Social England*, p. 13; L.F. Salzman, *English Trade in the Middle Ages* (1931), pp. 205–6, 'There were also, at least from the end of the fourteenth century, regular carriers between some of the chief towns', and he cites Rogers for Winchester and Oxford in 1395 and for Newcastle 'about the same time'; Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon, and Post*, p. 29; Philip Beale, *England's Mail* (2004), p. 130.
[71] Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters*, pp. 3, 240 n. 4. The Paston letters and Early Chancery Proceedings are among the sources used.
[72] E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages*, Bristol Record Society (1937), pp. 101–2 (§ 110), from the Southampton brokage book 1451–2.
[73] The inference was drawn by N.M. Herbert, 'Medieval Gloucester 1066–1547', *VCH Glos*. 4, p. 45, citing *Cal. Close Rolls, 1377–81*, pp. 455–6.

a public carrier or merely someone who hired out his services with a cart. The sources for the most part do no more than record what was paid for carriage, sometimes naming the carrier. It is down to the reader to work out how to tell whether or not someone was a common carrier of the kind met in the Paston letters.

The following pages will look first at further early evidence from New College Oxford. After that an attempt will be made to build a picture around sources that deal with the bringing of books to Oxford over an extended period of time, intending that, by looking at one commodity, we may be able to detect a revealing change in the terms of its carriage.

Oxford archives are comparatively fruitful in entries dealing with carriage from the client side, but there has been little systematic exploration. They are often too concise to help our inquiry, yet they provide some body of evidence for carriers of one kind or another who served Oxford. As long ago as 1936 H.E. Salter, introducing the first issue of *Oxoniensia,* reported that 'it is believed there is a paper on the Oxford carriers, which is almost ready'.[74] Who was writing it was not disclosed, and it has not been possible to trace the paper. Geoffrey Martin, an urban historian who was working in Merton College, used the college evidence for a paper of broader scope, tracking the expense of journeys made by members of the college.[75]

The New College accounts are both rich and frustrating. We have seen already that they provided Rogers with his earliest examples, while an even earlier payment 'in vectura' from 1388–9 offered an antedating with no intelligible context. Under the statutes the college provided clothes for fellows, chaplains, and college servants every year, and the accounts contain extraordinary detail about this annual livery. The purchase of cloth, the measurement of fellows, the making-up, and the delivery are covered under two headings, 'Empcio liberate sociorum capellanorum et seruiencium collegii' and, for carriage, 'Custus necessarii et forinseci'. We have suggested above that Rogers noted the payment from 1393, when the charge for carriage of cloth was 7s. 6d., and he noted the cost of Thomas *cursor* in taking servants' liveries to London on their way, no doubt, to estates in Essex. Such entries continue whenever the college account survives, but they vary from time to time. In 1406–7 the cloth was bought in Winchester and carried to Oxford for 12s. In 1408–9 it was bought in Salisbury, a thriving centre of cloth production at this time, and there were small payments, 8d. to 'one man' bringing cloth from Bagley to Folly Bridge ('a Bagley usque ad pontem fratrum predicatorum') and 12d. to another man bringing the liveries for the better servants (*generosi*) 60 miles from Salisbury to Oxford, and 20d. to Thomas Steer, bringing three other servants' suits 54 miles from Winchester. In 1409–10, this Thomas Steer, based in Winchester, began a regular trade of bringing the fellows' liveries from Winchester at a rate of 6d. per suit, so that he usually received between 12s. and 16s. And so this continued until 1420–21. In that year we see more elaborate detail:

1420–1 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii forinseci* Et solut' cursori Sar' pro cariag' stragul' pro generosis valectis et garcionibus a Sar' usque Oxon' iij s. iiij d. Et solut' Thome Stere pro cariag' xxij pannos pro Custod(i) soc(iis) capellan(is) et generosis, cap(it) pro panno vj d. et pro cariag vj pan' panni coloris pro valectis et garcionibus capit pro panno v d., xiij s. vj d. [. . .] Et solut' Hawtfeld' pro cariag' j mantice continentis res Beusaint et Louthe ad Wynton' et abinde ad Oxon' xvj d.' (NCA, 7396).

1423–4 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii forinseci* Et solut' Cuarr' pro cariagio xxx pannorum liberat' soc' et valect', capit pro panno vj d. cum v d. allocac' eidem per Custod(em) pro pabulo equorum xv s. v d. Et solut' Michael Autfeld' pro cariag' j panni coloris de sect' garc' vj d. [. . .] Et solut' Roberto Chynchon cursor' de Sar' pro cariag' vij pann' stragul' empt' pro generosis valect' et garc' iij s. iiij d. Et solut' Ric' cursori pro cariag'

[74] H.E. Salter, 'Introductory', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), p. 5.
[75] G.H. Martin, 'Road Travel in the Middle Ages: Some Journeys of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College Oxford 1315–1470', *Journal of Transport History*, ns, 3 (1975–6), pp. 159–78. His appendix (pp. 173–7) prints substantial extracts from MCR, 3886, the bursar's roll for the period from Sep. 1330 to April 1331.

xxiiij liberat(arum) London' pro firmar' vicar' balliuis et senescall' in Essex iij s. iiij d. [. . .] Et solut' Michaeli Autfeld' pro cariag' hernes' dict' Clerk et Louthe et recar' xvj d.' (NCA, 7399).

In the first of these accounts Michael Hawtryve or Hawtfeld was paid 16d. for carrying the belongings of two fellows, Robert Beausant and John Lowthe, between Winchester and Oxford.[76] In 1423–4 he provided the same service for John Clerk and John Lowthe for the same charge, there and back. He looks very much like a Winchester carrier. From 1424–5 he took over Steer's role, charging 6d. to bring a fellow's suit, 5d. a servant's suit, and he made 13s. to 18s. most years. A new feature in 1420–21 was the Salisbury *cursor*, named as Robert Chynchon, and paid 3s. 4d. in most years for bringing variegated cloth (*stragulata*, ME *motle*) from Salisbury. In 1433–4 this route was taken over by William Soper 'de Homyngton prope Sar'', a village three miles south of the town. And a third carrier, Richard *cursor*, was paid 4s. for taking liveries to the college's estates in Essex; in 1428–9 he was referred to as Richard *vector*, the earliest equation of the two words and an indication that Richard the carrier was meant and not someone surnamed Courser. From 1420 we see different carriers on three different routes, all serving New College. Are they public carriers? They stand in isolation, unconfirmed by other college accounts, leaving me doubtful. They may be all hired carriers, making one delivery per year for the college and an occasional extra trip from Winchester. If Richard who carried to London plied the route weekly, there may be some hope that he will be visible in other evidence, carrying small goods for other clients.

Books represent a commodity of particular interest to colleges. They are also an excellent example of the kind of thing that a carrier might carry as a part-load, high value, not very bulky, though heavy in any quantity, and, unlike many commodities such as fuel, liable to be brought to Oxford from a considerable distance. Early printed books are of exceptional interest for economic history, because, unlike any other commodity from more than five hundred years ago, they survive in considerable numbers, their place of production is in most cases stated or inferable from the books themselves, and they not infrequently carry internal evidence of their early owners. They allow the mapping of an international market.[77] Before printing, however, manuscripts were valuable and were often handed down from user to user or, in the universities, bequeathed to colleges by former fellows, who followed clerical careers around the country, for shared use by succeeding fellows. In such circumstances it fell to the college as beneficiary to bear the costs of fetching or carrying the books to Oxford. In his *Biographical Register* A.B. Emden often recorded such information as bearing on individuals connected with the university and on their books.[78] His work has been added to by Rodney Thomson in his edition of the library records of the colleges and university of Oxford. In his catalogue of the medieval manuscript books of Merton College, Professor Thomson has printed extracts from college accounts relating to books and the library of the college. Behind these excerpts lies much combing of the records by N.R. Ker in search of information about books and libraries, information that he did not publish himself.[79] Combining these sources, we have a ready-made sample of data from the accounts, data that need to be considered in chronological order. There must be similar evidence from the colleges in Cambridge, but it has

[76] He was perhaps related to William Hawtryve or Hawtfeld (d. 1441), who served the college as notary 1423–35, and whose name displays much the same wide variety of spellings (A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, 3 vols. (1957–9) [*BRUO*], pp. 892–3). One John Hawtfelde appears in the Southampton brokage book for 1439–40, carrying loads of fish to Henry Baron in Salisbury.
[77] C. Dondi, *The Fifteenth-Century Book-Trade*, is a current ERC research-project based in Oxford.
[78] Emden, *BRUO*.
[79] Neil Ker's extracts were available to R.M. Thomson and used in his *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts of Merton College, Oxford* (2009), pp. 269‑81; Ker's notes from other colleges were further used and augmented by Professor Thomson and Dr James Willoughby in R.M. Thomson, *The University and College Libraries of Oxford*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 16 (2015), pp. 1250–1389, listing donors and former owners of books.

not been so well studied, and even the extraction of information regarding books provides less material to work with.[80]

In what follows, a leading name in most cases is the donor or testator of books, whose career can be found in Emden's *Biographical Register* by surname. Knowing the career is often necessary to working out where books were carried from. The accounts have been checked to verify extracts and to read around in search of carriers, but no comprehensive trawl has been made. Such a trawl would be time-consuming and is best left to someone with a wider interest in what the accounts may reveal about the college economy. For our purpose, books are good things to sample: we can be fairly sure that, unlike a load of firewood, they were carried from some distance and in quantity small enough not to require the hiring of a cart and driver. What leaps out from a chronological view of the excerpts relating to owners and donors of books is that early examples usually involve a fellow's expenses in going to fetch the books bequeathed to the college. This remains normal from the first examples around 1320 and until about 1420. After that carriage may be paid for more cheaply, but the sources often do not explain the manner of carriage. From about 1450 clear references to carriers begin to appear. This invites a tentative inference that, as far as Oxford is concerned, carriers may have begun to ply regular routes early in the reign of King Henry VI and were certainly on the roads later in his reign. Before 1420 the evidence is negative: why should fellows have undertaken expensive journeys, if books could be brought by carrier at comparatively little cost? The older and more expensive practice does not entirely disappear, but the cost of moving items such as books does fall very dramatically. The accounts, however, are often too laconic to allow an unambiguous understanding, and it must be recognized that there was always carriage by other means. Colleges were always paying carters to handle a great range of other needs. Finding revealing examples requires attention to detail, terse entries in the accounts require interpretation, and the temptation to select only what supports a clear connected narrative has to be resisted as falsifying the picture.

In the earliest examples, as already stated, a member of the college was often sent to bring the books from the testator's last residence. The fetcher may be given the title Master, M' for *magister*, in the accounts, indicating his graduate status, and his name may be known from other university records. The earliest instance dates from 1320:

> 1319–20 William Shireburn, sub-treasurer of Salisbury cathedral: Merton College bursar's account 1319–20, 'pro expensis M' Iohannis de Osmintone ad Sarum et in redeund' et pro j notario ibidem pro libris quos M' Willelmus de Schirborn' legauit domui v s.' (MCR, 3647; Thomson, *Merton*, 271a).

The cost includes the fellow's riding to Salisbury, lodging and food for himself and his horse, and a fee to the notary. Mr John de Osmyngton himself hailed from Salisbury diocese. How many books were left to the college on this occasion is unknown. In the next instance, it was the warden of the college who went to London to collect the unspecified bequest to the college:

> 1334–5 William de Reynham (d. 1333), chancellor of St Paul's cathedral: Merton College bursar's account Nov. 1334–March 1335, 'pro expensis C(ustodis) uersus Londoneas pro habendis legat' domui per magistrum Willelmum de Renham [[*damage*]] iij d. ob. ut patet per indenturam' (MCR, 3668; Thomson, *Merton*, 271b).

A similar source from Cambridge mentions the expenses of a servant sent to London to deliver a receipt for two books bequeathed to the King's Hall in 1365.[81] Another early example refers to the servant of the testator, who brought books from Lincoln to Oxford:

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[80]   P.D. Clarke, *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge* (2002), pp. 655–752, includes in brief summary mentions of the carriage of books to colleges.

[81]   'Item traditum fuerat uni garcioni transeunti uersus London' deferenti unam acquietanciam pro duobus libris recipiendis de magistro Iohanne Wormenhale, uidelicet Rosario et Speculatore, legatis comitie [*to the fellowship*] ex testamento magistri T. Powys xj d.' (Clarke, *University and College Libraries of Cambridge*, p. 361, UC40. 1–2).

?1372 John Swyneshed, canon of Lincoln 1369–72: Merton College bursar's account, fragment, no date, 'dat' famulo M' J. de Swyneshed v s. pro libris cariandis de Lincoln' (MCR, 3685c; Thomson, *Merton*, 272a).

In the next example two members of the college went to see the college's benefactor, William Reed, bishop of Chichester, hiring horses for the journey:

1374–5 William Rede, bishop of Chichester: Queen's College bursar's account 1374–5, 'Item de vij s. ij d. pro expens(is) Middelworth et Joh(annis) Spenser versus London' et ibidem quando receperunt ab episcopo Cicestren' libros et donar' dat' domui. Item de vj d. pro cariag' quinque librorum a London' ad Oxon'. Item de ij d. ob' pro prandio equi portant' eosdem. *Conductio equorum*. In primis r' (*sic*) de iiij s. pro duobus equis usque London' pro Middelworth et Iohanne Spencer qui fuerunt cum episcopo Cicestren' pro libris et aliquibus donar' in negoc' domus' (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 23).

William Middelworth was a fellow of Queen's from 1369 to 1378 and was himself bursar in 1374–5. In this case it appears that 6d. 'pro cariagio' represents hire of a packhorse to carry the books, with its food separately accounted, while the two fellows hired horses for riding. In the next example, we have the uninterpretable 'pro cariagio', but it cost the tidy sum of seven shillings:

1377–8 John Reynham (d. 1376), rector of Hollingbourne (Kent): Merton College bursar's account for 1377–8, 'Item vij s. solut' pro cariagio libr(orum) legat(orum) per M' Joh(annem) Rayn(ham)' (MCR, 3973; Thomson, *Merton*, 273b).

In succeeding examples, it appears to be still usual for a member of the college or a servant to go and fetch the books left to the college:

1386–9 Henry Whitfield, canon of Exeter and archdeacon of Barnstaple: Queen's College bursar's account 1386–7, 'Item M' Ric' Broun in expensis versus partes suas pro libris quos legauit nobis M' Hen' Wythfild' xij s. iij d. Item vni qui fuit cum eodem pro labore suo ij s. Item pro cariagio predictorum librorum xx d. *Pro conduccione equorum*. Item pro equis M' Ric' Broun ad partes suas pro libris nobis legatis x s. vj d. (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 31). For 1388–9, 'Item pro communis [*commons, subsistence*] R(icardi) Broun per duos septimanas in quibus laborauit pro tribus libris legatis per M' H. Whitefeld' apud Exon" (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 33).

At this date Richard Browne, from Exeter diocese, was a fellow of Queen's College, elected in 1379 and still unbeneficed. This was a costly business, the hire of horses was expensive, but what did the 20d 'pro cariagio' actually pay for? In the next example John Campden was master of St Cross hospital in Winchester and still alive:

1402–3, 1408–9 John Campden (d. 1410): New College bursars' roll 1402–3, '*Custus necessarii et forinc*' Et solutum pro cariagio ij pann' et xviij virgar' pann' et v librorum iuris canonici de dono Campeden' a Wynton' usque Oxon' in mense Novembris iij s. iiij d. Et in expensis Willelmi famuli Custod(is) equitant(is) Winton' pro libr(is) de don(o) Kampeden' et pro pann(is) de liberat' soc(iorum) querend(is) per v dies in mense Novembris iiij s.' (NCA, 7357); New College bursars' roll 1408–9, 'Et solut' pro libro magistri Iohannis Campeden' ultra summam ab eo receptam iiij s. *Custus necessarii et forinceci*. Et solut' pro j equo conducto pro libris Campeden' deferend' Wynton' et reportand' xvj d.' (NCA, 7370).

Five books were carried along with cloth for the fellows' liveries, which we have already seen brought from Winchester. Costs clearly fluctuate, lower now than in 1394 and much lower than what Thomas Steer charged from 1409–10 onwards. The hire of a horse in 1408–9 to bring one book from Winchester may refer to one horse that carried both bringer and book.

The charge of 16d. for a packhorse to Winchester and back is the same as we saw in the 1420s for carrying fellows' luggage.

In the same year, 1408–9, accounts from Durham College in Oxford show a payment, 'cursori pro vectura librorum a Dunelm' x s.', which is a substantial cost; if a surviving list of books is correctly linked to it, twenty-one books were carried.[82] Someone was paid to carry these books over the long road from Durham to Oxford, 235 miles, eight to nine days' distance, perhaps a *cursor* on horseback. As it happens, the same sum, ten shillings, was given to two monks 'pro vectura sua versus Oxon' in 1442, who were themselves more likely conveyed by horses than by any kind of carrier.[83]

The next examples maintain the pattern of a fellow's acting as fetcher. The first names the person paid, Thomas Martyn, a fellow of Merton since 1399, for bringing a book to Oxford from the college's property at Watford:

1411 Merton College bursar's account Mar–Aug 1411, 'Thome Martyn pro cariagio cuiusdam libri de Watford xij d.' (MCR, 3736; Thomson, *Merton*, 275b).

1414 Robert Hodersale (d. by 1414), rector of Little Berkhamsted (Herts): Merton College bursar's account 1414, 'Magistro Ade Redeford' adducenti ad collegium libros legatos per magistrum †Willelmum Hodersale iij s. iiij d.' (MCR, 3740; Thomson, *Merton*, 275b).

1415–16 William Loryng (d. Dec. 1415×March 1416), canon of Salisbury cathedral: Merton College bursar's account 1415–16: 'Item magistro Roberto Maslyn versus Sarum pro libris Loryng adquirendis collegio xv s. viij d. ob.' (MCR, 3741; Thomson, *Merton*, 275b).

In all three of these cases the person fetching the books was a member of the college, Thomas Martyn, a former bursar and still a fellow; Adam Redyford, bursar in 1413–14; and Robert Maslyn, chaplain and soon to take his first benefice in 1416. The costs, however, vary widely, despite the fact that we have seen that there was a *cursor* from Salisbury, whose charge would surely have been less than the 15s. 8½d. paid to cover Maslyn's expenses.

1418–19 John Elmer (d. 1419): New College bursars' roll 1418–19, 'Et solut' Gugg' quondam famulo M' Iohannis Eylmer' pro cariag' diuersorum legatorum per Eylmer' vj s. viij d.' (NCA, 7392).

The testator's servant brought the books and was paid for his trouble; it is one of several examples where the payment was 6s. 8d., half a mark, which was an honorarium more than enough to cover a servant's expenses.[84] At the time of his death John Elmer, a former fellow of New College and a long-term associate of the founder, Bishop William Wykeham, was a canon of Chichester and perhaps still the official of Bishop Henry Beaufort of Winchester. In the next example Wyttham may be Thomas Wytham, fellow of Merton and soon to be installed as rector of All Saints' church in Shaftesbury; he was riding, I guess, to Shirburn, twenty miles west of Chalfont St Giles and on the road from there to Oxford:

1419 John Campden, rector of Chalfont St Giles (Bucks.): Merton College bursar's account, 1419, 'Wyttham equitanti vsque Schyrborn' pro libris dat' Collegio per Campeden x s. ut patet per cedulam' (MCR, 3743; Thomson, *Merton*, 276a).

[82]   Durham University Library, DCD Oxford Accounts 1408–9 (A) and (B), 10 August 1408×5 April 1409. An undated list of twenty-one books in DCL MS B. IV. 46, f. 15r., datable to May 1406×October 1409, has been associated with this payment by A.J. Piper and R. Sharpe, *Libraries of the Monks of Durham* (forthcoming); printed as *c*.1400 by H.E.D. Blakiston, 'Some Durham College Rolls', *Collectanea*, 3, OHS, 32 (1896), p. 39. A further fifteen books were despatched in October 1409, for which carriage costs were not recorded.

[83]   J.T. Fowler (ed.), *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, 3 vols., Surtees Society, 99, 100, 103 (1898–1901), vol. 1, p. 184.

[84]   Cambridge provides another from 1442–3, when William Alnwick (d. 1449), bishop of Lincoln, gave a copy of Gregory's *Moralia* to King's Hall, and two of the bishop's servants were given 6s. 8d. and their dinner, presumably when they delivered the book (Clark, *University and College Libraries of Cambridge*, p. 364, UC40. 35).

In the next instance, with no clear information as to what was paid for, the cost of carriage is much less, but the person paid for carrying is still a fellow or perhaps former fellow of the college:

> 1419–21 Ralph Deram, former chaplain of Queen's College: Queen's College bursar's account 1419–21, 'Item M' Roberto Dik(es) pro cariagio librorum M' Radulfi Direm collatorum Colleg' x d.' (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 57).

Mr Robert Dikes was a former fellow who took a benefice in the diocese of Carlisle in 1419, though there is some uncertainty over this point of his career. The cost of 10d. is low, and it is not known where Mr Ralph Deram was living. Such low cost may lead one to think of a carrier's small part-load, but Mr Dikes was no carrier. At this point we leave the negative evidence, when books were fetched because, it is inferred, carriers were not there to provide the service of bringing at a lower cost.

After about 1420 accounts for fetching become very infrequent and instead small sums are recorded for carriage, whatever word may be used. Of course, keepers of accounts were not concerned to provide details about means of carriage, and they tell us very little. Practice in reading between the lines of such records does not help with interpretation. For some thirty years we are dealing with uncertainty. Accounts relating to the books of one testator who died in 1423 record two payments, but it is just not possible to work out what the expenditure paid for:

> 1422–3 Roger Whelpdale (d. 1423), bishop of Carlisle: Queen's College bursar's account 1422–3, '*Custus capelle*. Item pro cariagio ij librorum quos idem dominus Carliolens' legauit ad catenand' [*to be chained*] in libraria nostra xij d.' (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 60); bursar's account 1427–8, '*Custus forinc*'. Item Preposito pro cariag' librorum nobis collatorum per Episcopum Whelpedale vj s. viij d.' (QCA, Long Roll, 2 P 62).

Bishop Whelpdale's books were brought over a period of time, but whether they actually came from Carlisle is not certain. A charge of 12d. for bringing two books is low by comparison with what we have been seeing, but what did 6s. 8d. paid through the Provost actually pay for? The manner of carriage is not evident. Just a little earlier Durham College in Oxford received a consignment of books from the priory:

> 1418–19 Durham College account 1418–19, 'Willelmo Leltoft pro cariacione librorum assignatorum collegio per dominum Priorem xx d.' (Durham University Library, DCD, Oxford Account 1418–19).

If we knew the identity of William Leltoft, we should be better placed to interpet 'pro cariacione', but 20d. is not a heavy charge for such a distance. This was presumably a part-load in addition to whatever load paid the expenses of the journey. In the next example, it is possible that the payment was made to a carrier from Exeter but 'pro cariagio' on its own is insufficient as evidence:

> 1432 John Orum (d. before 1436), canon of Exeter: Exeter College rector's account 1432, 'Item pro cariagio duorum librorum ab Exon' ex donacione M' J. Orum xvj d.' (ECA, rector's account, summer 1432).

Two books are certainly no more than a part-load. Further examples from Durham College are similarly too brief to allow one to feel secure in any inference:

> 1435–6, 1437–8, 1438–9 Durham College accounts, '*Expense intrinsece*: Item in scriptura vnius tabule et cuiusdam libri Laurencij prioris Dunelm' [*Prior Lawrence, d. 1154, presumably referred to as author*] cum uectura librorum a Dunelm ad Oxon' ix s. v d. ob.' (DCD, Oxford Account 1435–6); 'in vectura librorum iiij s. iiij d.' (DCD, Oxford Account 1437–8); 'Item in vectura vnius libri ad Oxon' xij d.' (DCD, Oxford Account 1438–9).

In the first case without a breakdown between headings it is not clear what carriage of books cost, but in the second it clearly cost a good deal, though we do not know the number of books carried. At least the carriage of one book for 12d. indicates a part-load and, considering the distance, a good price, but how it was carried is entirely unclear. It might have come as a small extra on top of a full load carted to Oxford for someone else.

The first instalment of books for the newly-established All Souls College arrived in 1438, and a second instalment, seemingly larger in 1439:

> 1438 All Souls College, computus roll 1438, 'Et solut' pro vectura xlix librorum Oxon' destinatorum ponderancium iij^c xij lib. et quart. vij s. vj d.'; 1439 All Souls College, computus roll 1439, 'Et solut' Moricio Carior locato ad cariand' libros London' Oxon' ad opus collegii xiij s. iiij d.' (S. Walker and J.T. Munby (eds.), *Building Accounts of All Souls College 1438–1443*, OHS, ns, 42 (2010), pp. 5, 97).

Between them these two entries provide valuable information. In 1439 it is clear that Maurice Carior was hired (*locatus*) for this job, bringing a load of books from London to Oxford for 13s. 4d. The same Maurice Carior also bought hay for his horses from All Souls in 1443, when Henry Carior rented grazing in the same meadow, Aston's Eyte in east Oxford.[85] It was presumably a big load, costing nearly twice as much as the *vectura* of forty-nine books weighing more than 3 cwt. We do not know for certain that hire of a cart for the job was charged at a standard price for the distance, regardless of the load. It seems more likely that the 1438 delivery represented the hire of a carrier rather than the use of a regular carrier from London. In 1440, however, All Souls paid 22d. 'pro cariago iij librorum' from York, bought through Mr Thomas Howthorpe and sent to Oxford.[86] A regular carrier between York and Oxford at this date would seem surprising, but that is the problem of this kind of evidence. We are left merely to surmise that this may have been a small part-load on top of a hired carrier's basic load.

Now, between about 1420 and 1430, what we are seeing is much cheaper carriage costs entered in the account rolls in a few words. Payment of expenses to a fellow can still occasionally be found, but simple payments for carriage, whatever the Latin word, are impossible to interpret. We do not know who was paid, and guesses based only on cost without knowing the size of the load or the means of carriage available at the time are foolhardy. Attempts to tabulate costs without details of weight, size, and distance are unlikely to lead to worthwhile results.

There is a lack of coherence in our sources. From the late fourteenth century, New College usually hired a carrier, whether *cursor* or *vector*, to bring the annual liveries to Oxford. From 1420 onwards, there was also a carrier from Salisbury, working at a cheaper rate, and one taking clothes to London. The evidence does not make clear whether these were also privately hired carriers or public carriers, on the road anyway. The evidence concerning books argues against the ready availability of common carriers so early, but after 1420 we find low charges 'pro cariagio', again without real clarity in the evidence.

Proving the absence of regular carriers in this period is impossible, but the burden of proof must be shifted from simply finding carriers to showing that they plied a regular route, carrying for multiple clients. The extant household account of Sir William Mountford, of Kingshurst (Warks.), from the year 1434, may give us our earliest example yet, though the reading is obscure: 'item solutum pro cariagio dupliceter et aliarum rerum to þe carier of Coventr' viij d.', from 'dupliceter' the words are written over erasure. Kingshurst is twelve miles from Coventry, and this is more likely to indicate a long-distance carrier between Coventry and London than a local route between Kingshurst and Coventry. It may perhaps be taken

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[85]   S. Walker and J.T. Munby (eds.), *The Building Accounts of All Souls College 1438–1443*, OHS, ns, 42 (2010), p. 327.

[86]   Walker and Munby (eds.), *Building Accounts of All Souls College*, p. 166.

with other entries, 'Item solutum Ricardo de Botre pro cariagio unius psalterii a London' viij d. Item solutum eidem eundo versus Wlston' [*?Wolston (Warks.), on the other side of Coventry*] pro Edmundo Mountfort vj d.'; the first refers to a book bought in London and brought to Warwickshire, but the second suggests a case of local private hire.[87] Other payments for carriage in this account are not easily interpreted.[88]

In Oxford we can be certain that the agreement between town and university in 1459, long known to scholarship, refers to common carriers' serving Oxford. Its purpose was to determine who came under the jurisdiction of the university rather than the town, and it says something about the users of the service that the town agreed that carriers came under the university's jurisdiction. It may be noted, however, that the register of congregation at this time has no reference to carriers.[89] Earlier sources have proved impossible to pin down. The notion that the indenture repeated an earlier agreement made in 1448 is an error.[90] The suggestion that John Kytsell was a regular carrier between Oxford and Southampton in 1443 is not borne out.[91] No source has been found to support the statement that a Bristol carrier was serving Oxford in 1442.[92]

THE FIRST OXFORD–LONDON CARRIERS

We have seen mention of James Vale, 'comon servaunt and cariour of Oxenford', no later than 1443, who was caught between seller and buyer of the goods he carried from London to Oxford. In connexion with that particular case he must have done the route twice, and he may well have been a regular carrier, but without other evidence we cannot know that.

The earliest example of a regular carrier so far identified in Oxford is Henry Bathe. That is not to say that scouring earlier accounts in search of carriers will not discover examples. Henry Bathe worked as a carrier from at least 1449 until 1473 or after, and it is his recurrent appearance with small loads and low costs that establishes his regularity. In the accounts of All Souls College he appears to be trading as common carrier between Oxford and London:

1448–9 All Souls College, Computus roll 27–28 Henry VI, '*In uariis expensis et reparacionibus*: [. . .] Et de iij s. solut. Henrico Bath' pro vectura octo librorum et ali(orum)'; 1449–50 All Souls, Computus Roll 28–29 Henry VI, '*In uariis expensis et reparacionibus*: [. . .] Et de viij d. solut' per manus Cust(odis) Henrico Bath pro vectura duarum togarum Lond' cum mantica. [. . .] Et de viij d. solut' pro vectura libri Ianuens(is) a Lond''.

Henry Bathe appears in almost every computus roll from All Souls during the 1450s, sometimes more than once.[93] In 1451–2 he was paid 16d. 'pro vectura duarum togarum Custodis et Bursarii London' et itiner' Oxon' prima die Augusti', though it is hardly likely

87   Woolgar (ed.), *Household Accounts*, vol. 2, pp. 448–9.
88   Two references to Roger at the Key tempt one to think of a carrier plying from an inn, but I have found no evidence for an inn with a sign of the key, and there is no clue in the entries to the distances involved, 'Item solutum Rogero at þe Key pro cariagio unius toge domini vj d', 'Item solutum Rogero at þe Key pro cariagio predictorum barells vij s.' (Woolgar (ed.), *Household Accounts*, vol. 2, pp. 449–50). One John Carter is also paid more than once for carriage.
89   Oxford University Archives, Register Aa, ed. W.A. Pantin and W.T. Mitchell, *Register of Congregation 1448–1463*, OHS, ns, 22 (1972), with subject index by Mitchell.
90   *VCH Oxon*. 4, p. 289, citing Bodl. MS Twyne-Langbaine 4, ff. 26v.-27r. Here John Wallis (see n. 119) miscopied the date as 23 February 27 Henry 6, which would be 1448/9, but in the margin he correctly gives 37 Henry 6.
91   *VCH Oxon*. 4, p. 44, citing the Southampton brokage book for 1443–4, ed. O. Coleman, Southampton Record Society, 4, 6 (1960–1), *passim*. This carter carried full loads to a number of different places rather than plying a regular route; Hicks, *English Inland Trade*, pp. 50–1.
92   *VCH Oxon*. 4, p. 290, citing no source.
93   I am grateful to Bronac Holden, who has transcribed many rolls for All Souls College and who supplied me with pages of excerpts.

that the return trip was done in one day. In 1452–3 he was paid 6d. for bringing spices from London. In 1453–4 the rolls record 'de xxij d. solutis Henr' Bathe iij die Decembr' pro cariagio liberat' serviencium de Collegio. Et de iiij d. solutis pro vectura toge M' Thomas Leymster', presumably bringing these clothes from London. Mr Thomas Leemster had been a founder fellow in 1438. Rolls from the 1460s are less well preserved at All Souls, but Henry Bathe continued to bring fellows' gowns from London to Oxford. In 1469–70 he was paid 9s. by All Souls 'pro vectura trium sarcinarum piscium et aliorum', a high charge, so perhaps big parcels or perhaps a premium charge because of the perishability of the load. In the same year he brought clothes for *generosi* at New College and he carried the warden's luggage while the warden rode:

> 1469–70 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii et forinseci* [. . .] Et solut' Henrico Bathe pro vectura vestim(entorum) domini Custodis et aliorum secum equitancium in secundo progressu sicut patet per peticiones v s. [. . .] Et solut' Henrico Bath' pro vectura liberatorum pro generosis valectis et garcionibus' (NCA, 7719).

Now, in this example, the words 'in secundo progressu' are likely to mean that he provided carriage for the warden and those riding with him 'on the second progress', wherever the need to view estates took them and not on his regular route.[94] From 1443 to 1458, Henry Bathe was a tenant of University College, renting at 40s. per annum the High Street property named the Cock on the Hoop.[95] It had been an inn in the late fourteenth century and no doubt provided space for a yard and stables. He appears as 'Henr' Bathe of Oxenford' Cariour' in chancery petitions, one of them datable 1460×65, when he said that he was residing in Oxford and carrying between Oxford and London.[96] He was still trading in 1473–4.[97] As well as London, New College accounts show him bringing an expensive load from Winchester:

> 1470 William Darset, precentor of St Mary's Southampton: New College bursars' roll 1470, 'Et so' Henr' Bathe vectori pro vectura vestimentorum domini Custodis et opponent' et librorum donat' Coll' per M' Dorsett a Wynton' vj s. viij d.' (NCA, 7720).

The charge appears unexpectedly large, albeit a round figure, 6s. 8d., but the load may have been very bulky, and there may even be hidden complications. New College accounts often show payments 'pro vectura vestimentorum domini Custodis' alongside hire of horses for the warden himself and anyone with him; the context usually means that Bathe had carried the warden's luggage to or from London, presumably on a regular trip. We have seen his carrying 'in secundo progressu', however, and here we should probably suppose that his going to Winchester was not on a regular route but two days' private work. As so often, the record comes with too little context to be fully interpreted. Even so, with Henry Bathe we have pretty secure evidence for an Oxford carrier who worked the London route for more than twenty years.

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[94] At New College the founder's statutes required annual progresses, and in the fifteenth century the practice seems to have been for the warden, a fellow, and a servant to make progresses twice a year, the first in spring, the second in late summer. NCA, 3856 and 3857 are bundles of loose bills and receipts from progresses in 1488 and 1495, which, unusually, have been retained. Other colleges also had arrangements for such progresses to inspect estates from time to time.

[95] Cox and Darwall-Smith (eds.), *Account Rolls of University College Oxford*, vol. 1, pp. 510, 518, 528, 538, &c.; vol. 2, p. 566; the college paid for repairs, vol. 1, pp. 524, 531, and after he moved out, it spent over £10 on refurbishment, pp. 630, 632. The Cock on the Hoop had been an inn in the late fourteenth century. Bathe continued to rent a smaller tenement in the High Street for his wife Margaret (vol. 2, pp. 567, 569), leaving one to wonder whether he was himself spending more time in London.

[96] C1/29/417, datable 1460×65, when [George Nevill] bishop of Exeter was chancellor: 'Mekely besecheth your gracious lordshipp your Pore Oratour Henr' Bathe of Oxenford' Cariour'. One John Bylton had filed a claim against him in London for debt, but Bathe had denied that he was resident in the City, and a jury accepted his account that his place of residence was Oxford.

[97] C1/48/511, datable 1473×74, when [Lawrence Booth] bishop of Durham was chancellor, the action was brought by John Haddon, clerk [*BRUO*, p. 845, shows he was beneficed in London from November 1473], for the alleged loss by Henry Bathe of a book of grammar, who petitioned the court.

What is clear from the accounts is that over the same period All Souls was frequently making payments to others 'pro vectura', sometimes 'pro vehicione', of whole cartloads of fuel or building materials. Richard Bigger of Holywell, Roger Foliot, William Sawyer, and William Dagville are names frequently mentioned, and it is likely that they worked also for other colleges.[98] Their rate is usually 4d. for a cartload (*bigata*), though the cost of the goods is sometimes accounted in the same entry. These are local carters, but perhaps in some cases rather the suppliers who charged on top for delivery, and their trade is easily differentiated from the small part-loads brought from or taken to London.

In the 1470s and 1480s other carriers are visible in Oxford. John Bennett appears several times bringing or taking goods for different colleges.

> 1473 Thomas Paris (d. after 1473), principal of St Mary Hall: Oriel College treasurer's account 1472–3, 'item memorandum quod 26º die Junii sol' M' Pares per manus vectoris Benett ex decreto capituli xx s.' (G.C. Richards and C.L. Shadwell, *The Provosts and Fellows of Oriel College Oxford* (1922), p. 34).

> 1476 John Middleton: New College bursars' roll, 'Et so' Benet vectori ducenti ducenti (*sic*) libros M' J. Mydylton iij s. vj d.' (NCA, 7721).

In this case Emden shows no John Middleton connected with New College in the late fifteenth century. It is merely a matter of probability on current evidence that Bennett worked the London route. At a later date John Baker was certainly a London carrier. We have met him already in November 1489, bringing altar plate from London to Merton College, referred to in the college annals.[99] He appears again in the same source a few months later, and again London is referred to as the City:

> 1490 Walter Knyghtley (d. 1501), canon chancellor of St Paul's cathedral: Merton College register, 4 April 1490, 'Custos misit a ciuitate [*London*] per Baker vectorem unam pulcram Legendam, datam collegio per venerabilem magistrum Walterum Knyghtley, doctorem in medicinis, cancellarium ecclesie cathedralis sancti Pauli' (Salter, *Registrum Annalium Collegii Mertonensis 1483–1521*, p. 130).

He was bringing books to Oxford for other colleges as well:

> 1487–8 John Dodde (d. by 1489): New College bursars' roll, 'Et so' Bakar' pro vectura libri de dono M' Dod iiij d.' (NCA, 7447).

John Dodde was a Londoner who had studied at New College between 1449 and 1466; after a short time in a benefice in Berkshire, he was for twenty years vicar of St John Maddermarket in Norwich, vacant in 1489. The sum of 4d. for carriage of a single book appears again below in the example of Henry Upnore's glossed psalter, and multiples of 4d. are not uncommon. One year's outside expenses at New College will allow us to see John Baker in a broader context:

> 1488-9 New College bursar's roll:
> '*Custus necessarii forinseci*
> Et so' Willelmo Taylor pro vectura liberate ponderant' c li. pro anno precedent' xvj d.
> Et so' eidem pro vectura vestimentorum famulorum domini Custodis tempore parliamenti pro anno precedent' vij d.
> Et so' uni ducent' libros dat' collegio per doctorem Yue per manus vic' viij d.
> [. . .]

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[98]   The only indexed accounts for this period are those of University College, which show William Dagville as a tenant in All Saints' parish between 1446–7 and 1450–51 (Cox and Darwall-Smith (eds.), *Account Rolls of University College Oxford*, vol. 2, p. 577). In the 1460s and 1470s he served several terms as mayor of Oxford and died in 1476.

[99]   Above, nn. 37, 38.

Et so' Iohanni Baker pro vectura vestimentorum domini Custodis et aliorum secum equitant' London pro defensione annui redditus ad Mildeborne tam in exitu quam in reditu mense Nouembris iij s. vij d.

Et so' Iohanni Warlemonde pro vectura psalterii glosat' nuper magistri Henri Upnor' iiij d.

Et so' Waltero Taylor pro vectura vestimentorum domini Custodis et secum equitancium London' in tempore parliamenti post festum Natalis Domini tam in exitu quam in reditu iiij s. vj d.

Et so' famulo Walteri Taylor pro ij c vij li. ponderis liberate vect' London' iiij s.

Et so' seruient' matris domini Yng pro vectura librorum colleg' dat' per doctorem Sugar vj s. viij d.

Et so' Iohanni Warlemond pro calatho [*basket*] empt' London ad inuehendum nouam crucem v d.

[. . .]

Et so' pro expensis magistri Ashekum et famuli secum equitant' Welliam pro adquirendis bonis dat' collegio ex dono doctoris Sugar x s.

[. . .]

Et so' pro expensis magistri Ashekum 2º equitant' pro eisdem bonis cum duobus seruientibus et eadem bona deferent' xx s. vj d.' (NCA, 7448).

The omitted entries are not extensive: carriage is undoubtedly the major expenditure under this heading. And it is noteworthy that two entries indicate the weight of livery, 100 lb for 16d. and 207 lb for 4s. Wardens of New College since 1455 had stayed in London during sessions of Parliament.[100] The warden himself rode. For one trip on college business John Baker carried his luggage, and on two occasions in the same year during Parliament the same service was supplied by William Taylor and Walter Taylor. William features right through the published accounts from Merton College over the period 1482–94, renting property called Fleur de Lis from the college and supplying horses and horsebread.[101] William we shall meet again, while mention of Walter's servant tells us that the business was carried on by paid hands and not just by the owner. It is tempting to guess that William and Walter may have been brothers in partnership. It is possible that the record names the carriers precisely because there were several of them. And before we assume competition, we may imagine that they provided a service on different days of the week. John Warlemond occurs more as merchant than carrier, here supplying a basket for carrying the new cross, a rare hint at the manner of packing.[102] He also carried a book left to the college by Mr Henry Upnore (d. 12 Feb 1487/8), rector of Great Horwood (Bucks.): was this perhaps a one-off trip thirty miles or so to Great Horwood? The bursar did not know who had received 8d. from the sub-warden for bringing books bequeathed by Dr William Ive (d. 1486), canon chancellor of Salisbury cathedral, who had left money to the University, for the fabric of the Divinity School, and books to two Oxford colleges and to the fellows of Winchester College. Mr Robert Ashcombe was at this date college bursar, going to Wells at serious expense to collect the goods bequeathed by Dr Hugh Sugar *alias* Norris (d. 1489), vicar general of the diocese of Wells. Dr Sugar's books, meanwhile, were fetched through a personal connexion: Hugh Inge had been fellow of New College from 1484; he appears to have come from a family in Wells, and his mother's servant brought the books to Oxford at a cost that seems greater than the likely charge of a carrier. Half a mark looks like a tip for the servant including his subsistence costs on the road. Perhaps sending books from Wells would have involved more than one carrier, perhaps it was beyond the reach of any network of carriers.

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[100] R.L. Storey, 'University and Government, 1430–1500', in *History of the University of Oxford, 2: Late Medieval Oxford* (1992), p. 722.

[101] Fletcher and Upton (eds.), *Domestic Accounts of Merton College*, pp. 42, 283, 515 (horses), 268–9, 340 (as tenant of Fleur de Lis). He was indexed as a horse dealer.

[102] In the previous year New College paid him 2d. for paper (NCA, 7447).

WIDENING NETWORKS

Carriers serving routes other than London also appear in the third quarter of the century, but the traces are quite faint. In 1469 and 1470 New College accounts show payments to the Salisbury carrier for bringing goods to Oxford:

> 1469–70 New College bursar's roll, '*Custus necessarii et forinseci* Et solut' vectori Sar' in mense Julii pro vectura stragularum a Sar' viz. pro vectura vnius panni et cum iij d. solut' pro refeccione illius illa vice vj d.' (NCA, 7719).

This is much cheaper than the payments made to Robert Chynchon, *cursor Sar'* in the 1420s.

> 1470 John Stanlynch *alias* Cok (d. by June 1464), rector of East Chaldon (Dorset): New College bursars' roll, 'solut' cursori Sar' pro vectura trium librorum de dono M' J. Stanlynch' 2º fo \primi/ *sicut impressio* 2º fo 2ⁱ *Semen* 2º fo 3ⁱⁱ *et catarrum* vj d.' (NCA, 7720).

The word *vector* was by this date the usual word for carrier, with *cursor* here employed as a synonym. The wording appears transparent: although he is unnamed, payment was made to the carrier who plied the road to and from Salisbury. Perhaps his charge for bringing a bundle of cloth was in reality 6d., paid half in money and half in kind; perhaps 'illa vice' denotes that the bursar just felt benevolent or thought he had paid too little for the service. John Stanlynch had entered New College in 1410 and had been rector of East Chaldon in Salisbury diocese from 1454 to his death; the three medical books were slow to reach New College, but we do not know his will, and we should perhaps allow that someone in Salisbury or on the Salisbury carrier's route was left a life interest in them. Three books from the bequest of Thomas Hawkins (d. 1479) were brought from Salisbury to Oxford in November 1488 for 6d., 'pro vectura', a sum small enough to suggest that they were brought by a regular carrier and allowing us to hazard that the route was served right through this period.[103]

Bristol was a bigger and busier town than Salisbury, but it was a trading city, needing bulk goods transport more than the small carrying trade. The Bristol carrier at any rate makes an unmistakable appearance in college accounts, bringing books to Oxford:

> 1494–5 Richard Vincent, career obscure after 1479: Merton College bursar's account 1494–5, 'Item vectori de Bristolia pro duobus libris ex dono magistri Vyncent nobis missis quondam socii domus vj d.' (MCR, 4012).

All Souls provides less secure evidence. In 1480–1, 1489–90, and 1492–3 there are payments to one John Thomas, two or three times in each of these years, usually bringing cloth. In only one entry is the source of the cloth mentioned, 'Et de iiij s. vj d. solutis Iohanni Thomas pro vectura nouem pannorum frisiat' de Bristow'. Before we deduce that he was the Bristol carrier, however, he is sometimes paid 'pro vectura et sigillacione pannorum', so he may rather be a cloth merchant who provided long-distance delivery. The writer of the account knew whose bill he paid. The Bristol route, however, certainly existed at an earlier date. There are explicit references to the Bristol carrier in All Souls College accounts in 1473, in each case referring to the carriage of letters.[104]

The precise wording referring to the Salisbury carrier or the Bristol carrier is a necessary element in reading these passages as evidence for a regular carriers' route. This is relevant to our whole inquiry: wording is sometimes precise in such a way as to make it certain that a public carrier was meant. Mention of carriage from this place or that place is no more helpful to us than a simple 'pro cariagio', but 'vectori de Bristolia' now appears crystal clear, though we can be sure that the writer was not concerned to resolve ambiguities of this kind. It is wording

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103   'Item sol' pro vectura 3 librorum legatorum per M' Hawkyns a civitate Sarum 6 d.' (G.C. Richards and C.L. Shadwell, *Provosts and Fellows of Oriel College* (1922), p. 33). Other books from his bequest came to the college in March 1479 (Thomson, *University and College Libraries of Oxford*, pp. 1231–2).
104   Below, pp. 57–8.

in wider context that gives the clarity: 'cursori Sar" back in 1420–1 appeared to go against the contextual information.

Regulation, as has been mentioned already, was not imposed on carriers. In an obvious sense they lay outside any local jurisdiction, in an age when matters of trade were generally regulated by boroughs. The suing of Henry Bathe in London had been diverted because he persuaded the court there that he lived in Oxford, but it was not a practical possibility for either city to impose a regulatory framework on the other. In Oxford, however, the university did move towards adopting carriers. In one case the purpose was to designate a carrier in the north of England in the hope that he would provide the service, but it was mere blessing without any subsidy to make it worth his while. For that he was reliant on there being trade. The university's action would help, presumably, to concentrate the trade on one carrier and on his one visit per term, thereby making the operation more viable. This was the carrier from the north of England. A register has preserved a copy of the licence, dated 27 October 1492, issued to one such carrier. The preamble explains the circumstances:[105]

> Postquam apud nos frequenter cogitassemus paucos uel nullos per aliquot tempora fuisse vectores, qui studentium in nostra Universitate, eorum maxime qui sunt atque fuerunt ex partibus aquilonaribus, uel pecunias uel res alias quascumque eorum usui necessarias ab illis partibus aquilonaribus ad nostram Uniuersitatem Oxoniensem deferrent, . . .

> After we had often considered the fact that for some time there had been few or no carriers who might carry either the money of students in our University, especially of those who are and were from the north country, or the other goods necessary for their use, from those northern parts to our University at Oxford, . . .

The chancellor now licensed one John Bayly, who was willing to take on the burden of carrying (*onus vehendi*), as northern carrier, 'for as long as the foresaid John, having sufficient load of goods for carrying, keep the old custom of carriers of coming to Oxford once per term and discharge in person that office of carrying faithfully and diligently without falsehood or deceit'. His direction of travel is unambiguously to Oxford from the north, and it appears that a mid-term delivery is envisaged, not the travel of students at the start and end of terms. The mention of 'antiquam vectorum consuetudinem' tells us that this is no innovation but replacing an interrupted service. Eighteen months later the licence was transferred to his son William.[106] A few years later, and again for the benefit 'of our scholars born in the north', the negligent John Richardson was deprived of the position and Christopher Rothemel licensed in his place.[107] Some years before this, in November and December 1484, the Merton College register names Thomas Lincoln, of Darlington, as 'vector Northumbrie'; at that time he was required to pay the college £20 as a bond that he would collect a debt of £18 13s. 4d. in the north, proof that a carrier was a person of some substance.[108] He appears a little earlier in bursars' accounts, usually carrying money to Oxford.[109] His last appearance in college accounts was in 1490.[110] It was to end a gap of two years, therefore, that the university acted to licence John

[105] Oxford University Archives, Register F, f. 174r., ed. H. Anstey, *Epistolae Academicae Oxon. (Register F)*, 2 vols., OHS, 35, 36 (1898), p. 611.
[106] Reg. F, f. 175r., ed. Anstey, p. 615, dated 15 March 1493/4.
[107] Reg. F, f. 183r., ed. Anstey, pp. 657-8, dated 23 Jan. 1500/01, his negligence 'propter quod hoc tabellionatus aut vectoris publici officio privavimus'.
[108] Salter (ed.), *Registrum Annalium Collegii Mertonensis 1483–1521*, p. 51 ('Thome Lincoln vectori'), p. 55 ('Lincoln vectori Northumbrie'). The debt was owed by the executors of Mr Robert Watson, who had farmed the college's northern livings of Ponteland and Embleton since 1483 (pp. 15, 18, 41).
[109] MCR, 3802, Nov. 1482–March 1483, 'de xj li. receptis de Styllyngton [*Co. Durham*] per manus Lyncolne vectoris', with other sums from Ponteland and Embleton, amounting to £27 13s. 4d.; MCR, 3803, July–Nov. 1483, 'Lyncolne pro vectura viiij li. vj s. viij d. a partibus Northumbrie vj s. j d.'; MCR, 3804, March–July 1484, 'communi vectori Northumbrie pro vectura quinque librarum iij s. iiij d.' (Fletcher and Upton (eds.), *Domestic Accounts of Merton College*, pp. 7, 50, 56).
[110] MCR, 3808, March–Aug. 1490, he paid £13 6s. 8d. in rent for lands at Stillington and Seaton Carew, now

Bayly. Five different northern carriers were licensed within a period of less than twenty years, but such licences were not consistently recorded.[111] If fuller records had been preserved, we might have been able to say when the university first licensed a carrier from the north. Merton College used this carrier because it had livings and farms in Durham and Northumberland, and it was from Merton College records that Thorold Rogers learnt of the existence of someone whom he represented as the Newcastle carrier. His wording was so injudicious as to convey the idea that this route was already in operation in the 1390s, but that should be treated as distinctly unproven.

The other context in which the university decided to license a carrier was the London trade. The New College accounts give reason enough to think that in the late fifteenth century there were at one time perhaps as many as three or four carriers plying the roads between Oxford and London. The name of William Taylor we have seen alongside Walter Taylor in New College accounts in 1488–9. He appears still in University registers between Christmas 1499 and October 1501.[112] At the same time there also appears John Walker, carrier, from at least 1499.[113] Walker is well attested in college accounts over a period of years:

1505 Mr — Martyn: Lincoln College account 1505, 'To John Walkar for karrying of ii c. weght and xx li. from London of the bookes that Mr Martyn gaf to Lyncoln college v s.' (V.H.H. Green, *The Commonwealth of Lincoln College 1427–1977* (1979), p. 671 n. 1).

1508–9 John Cole (d. by Mar 1536), canon of Wells, rector of Bigbury (Devon), &c.: All Souls College, Computus roll 1508–9, '*Varie expense*: . . . iiij s. iiij d. sol' Walkare pro vectura librorum quos dedit M' Cole'.

1509–10 Thomas Clerk (d. by Jan 1509), canon of St Teath (Cornw): New College bursars' roll 1509–10, '*Custus necessarii ad intra* Sol' vectori London pro vectura vj librorum datorum per M' Clerk et candelabrorum et rerum domini Custodis a London' post parliamentum ponderant' in toto ccccc et dim. et capit pro c. xvj d. in toto vij s. iiij d.' (NCA, 7726).

1512–13 Robert or John Norrys (removed for insanity 1509): Oriel College treasurer's account 1512–13, 'Item sol' Walker vectori pro vectura ornamentorum ab Oxon ad magistrum Nores in Bethleem [*Bethlehem hospital, London*] viij d.' (Richards and Shadwell, *Provosts and Fellows of Oriel College*, p. 42).

The first of these represents a substantial gift of books, weighing perhaps 220 or 244 lb, though neither Martyn nor any of his books has been traced. A still more massive weight of books is found a generation later: those of the late Archbishop Warham came to 6 cwt and cost 8s. to bring from Lambeth; with folio volumes often weighing six or seven pounds, this does not represent a huge library.[114] Here the word *vectura* indicates a road-carrier

described as *firmarius*, and he was given a meal, 'pro prandeo Lyncolne balliui nostri iiij d.' (Fletcher and Upton, pp. 304–5).
[111] Most documents in Register F are addressed to persons of rank and are numbered in the register. Testimonials, acquittances of debts and such like are sometimes added but are not numbered. Their inclusion was arbitrary, and the lack of earlier examples means nothing.
[112] Hyp/A/2 (Register D reversed), calendared by W.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Registrum Cancellarii 1498–1506*, OHS, ns, 27 (1980), pp. 45, 91, 95, 105.
[113] Reg. D reversed, calendared by Mitchell, *Registrum Cancellarii 1498–1506*, p. 38 (Walker gives sureties, 26 August 1499); he evidently lived in All Saints' parish in 1501 (pp. 107, 109), which may point to the Mitre as already the coaching inn for London, and he appointed a representative for the chancellor's court in 1504 (p. 84).
[114] The entry from All Souls accounts in 1438 (above, p. 48) shows manuscripts weighing on average a little over 6 lb. On the same basis, a hundred books may have been brought from Warham's library, but printed books may have been on average lighter. His will shows that he bequeathed his books of canon and civil law to New College together with liturgical books; Ker and Emden identified above fifty of them, more printed than manuscript (*BRUO*, p. 1990). He also bequeathed ninety books of theology to All Souls College (UO17).

despite the fact that the Thames would have offered a viable alternative.[115] The entry from 1509–10 is unusual in giving the rate of charge, 16d. per 'hundred'; whether that means 100 lb or a standard hundredweight of 112 lb (attested in 1543, OED), it is far cheaper than 6d. for carriage of a suit of clothes from Winchester, which New College was paying a century before.

In the first weeks of 1509 another carrier William Huddleston proved unreliable, and there was a dispute that involved the hostess of the Saracen's Head without Newgate, later the London end of the Oxford coach route and evidently already used by the carriers.[116] This led the regent masters to consider the situation. On 21 April 1509, the last day of Henry VII's reign, they deliberated the advantage of designating just one carrier between Oxford and London, who should have sureties for his trustworthiness, and at this point a new term appears in the record, *tabellarius*, 'carrier'.[117] On 24 May John Walker was appointed carrier, admitted on 27 May, and on 3 July 1509 a patent was issued for him.[118] His charge was capped at 2s. 'per equos vectarios' and 1s. 4d. 'per bigas', suddenly revealing that an individual carrier might provide carriage by packhorse or by cart. The cap on charges appears low, and one can only guess at whether the extra cost for *equi vectarii* reflected faster delivery. The entry from 1509–10 that refers only to 'the London carrier' must refer to Walker, who had a monopoly by that time. He lived in the parish of All Saints, which leads one to wonder whether the Mitre, across Turl Street from that church, may already have been the inn from where the London carrier operated, as it would be for the London coach from the seventeenth century.

Dr John Wallis (1611–1703), keeper of the university archives from 1658, had identified this as a significant development, and from the registers he put together a list of other appointments.[119] In 1501, as well as noting the replacement of Richardson as northern carrier, he found the appointment as carrier of John Bosewell, of Monks Risborough (Bucks), and a plea by Robert Wodkoke, 'nuncius scolarium' or (in Wallis's words) 'carrier of letters into the country'.[120] On 8 March 1515/16 Richard Kyber was admitted carrier for Somerset, in 1527 John Spenser for Worcester and Hereford, and in 1535 John Berle for Devon.[121] These appointments are widely spaced, leaving the impression that the record can hardly be complete. From 1515 at least there was a regular carrier between Exeter and Oxford, who appears as 'vectori Exon'' and from 1521 onwards as 'tabellario Exon''. No evidence has been

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[115] New College bursars' account 1531–2, 'Et so' Finon' pro vectura librorum ab episcopo (*sic*) Canthuarien' ponderantium vj centum in toto viij s.' (NCA, 7484). Finon is named several times in this account, on one occasions carrying letters to London.

[116] Oxford University Archives, NEP/supra/Reg. F, ff. 78v., 83v., 85v. Huddleston had to pay £5 in compensation to Mr Robert Dyker, at this date principal of Greek Hall. By coincidence he would serve as vicar of St Sepulchre's church, Holborn, close to the Saracen's Head, from 1524 to his death in 1532 and he was buried in the chancel (*BRUO*, p. 616).

[117] Oxford University Archives, NEP/supra/Reg. G, f. 74r., ed. W.T. Mitchell, *Register of Congregations 1505–1517*, OHS, ns, 37, 38 (1998), vol. 2, p. 28, 'positum est in deliberatione an constituendus est tantum unus tabellarius qui vehet ab hac universitate Londinium et e contrario, qui etiam inducet fideiussores quod erit diligens et fidelis tam in liberatione quam in receptione'. The use of *tabellarius* as equivalent to *vector* was missed by the Medieval Latin Dictionary.

[118] Reg. G, ff. 77, 79, ed. Mitchell, *Register of Congregations 1505–1517*, vol. 2, p. 37 ('ut Ioannes Walkar de villa Oxon' admitteretur pro tabellario sive vectore'), 42 ('debet admitti in vectorem'). His patent was copied into Registrum FF, now Bodl. MS Bodley 282 (*SC* 2949), f. 2, ed. W.T. Mitchell, *Epistolae Academicae 1508–1596*, OHS, ns, 26 (1980), pp. 7–8; this reveals that the decision was prompted by the difficulties experienced earlier in the year, on which Mitchell, p. 364, provides references to Register F.

[119] 'Common Carriers in Oxford' (in Wallis's hand), Bodl. MS Twyne–Langbaine 4, ff. 26v.–27r., 28v.–29r. The heading on f. 24r. appears to date these notes to 1693.

[120] Reg. D reversed, ff. 92r., 94r., 95v., calendared by Mitchell, *Registrum Cancellarii 1498–1506*, pp. 95, 97–8.

[121] Reg. G, f. 278v. (Kyber), ed. Mitchell, *Register of Congregations 1505–1517*, vol. 2, p. 459; OUA Hyp/A/4 (Register B reversed, Register EEE), f. 35v. (Spenser), 'vacante officio aurigae siue tabellarii pro parte diocesis Wigorn' et Herford', admissus erat in veredarium illarum partium'; ibid. f. 383r. (Berle), 'tabellarii comitatus Deuoniensis'.

found to suggest that this service was recognized by the university, but there is no reason why some routes should be recognized and others not. The likelihood is that the record was simply incomplete.

University records from a later date provided Andrew Clark with a list of carriers approved by the University from 1553 to 1642.[122] London, Devon, Somerset, Bath and Bristol were served by a succession of carriers, while other parts of the country appear in the list only once or twice. The places or areas served were Eton and Windsor, Worcester, Dorset, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and parts of Leicestershire, as well as Cumberland and Westmorland.

CARRYING LETTERS AND MONEY

Before bringing this discussion to a conclusion, there are two aspects of the common carrier's role that merit special comment. Already in 1459 the indenture between university and borough referred to the carrier's bringing for scholars and clerks 'money, letter, or eny especiall message'. Message here should be understood as 'errand' rather than something conveyed by word of mouth, and it almost certainly referred to the usual range of small goods. The carrying of letters, however, was one of the distinctive roles of the common carrier.

Perhaps the earliest example from Oxford is found in the correspondence of William and Thomas Marchall, which can be recovered from various guardbooks among the files of Ancient Correspondence in the public records. Thomas Makyn in Woodstock wrote to William Marchall, addressing the letter for delivery to him near St Bartholomew's in Smithfield, London. He referred to several letters that had miscarried and went on to ask for money to be sent, hidden in pepper or rice:[123]

> I sende yow thys letter by a carryer of Oxforde, to the whiche I pray yow delyuyr xl s. with out more and charge him to send hyt to me in haste, and yf ye will bye j lb of powder pepper to carye money surely [*securely*] I will pay therefor, other ellys ij lb of Rys for that makyth grette bolke. And the caryer is at the Inne in Friday Strete, or at the Belle, other ellys at the Sarasens hede as I suppose.

The letter was dated only to the Saturday after St Luke (18 October), with no year. Kingsford proposed a date *c.*1465; Lyell worked out the dates for other letters to William Marchall between about 1440 and 1450, an early date indeed, but the catalogue of Ancient Correspondence refers it to 'late Edward IV'. The reference to three different inns in London opens up an unexpected uncertainty, but the Saracen's Head is one that was the terminus of the Oxford coach at a later date.

The first dated Oxford examples that I have noted come from a single year, 1473, when on different occasions letters were sent from All Souls to addressees in Bristol:

> 1473 All Souls, computus roll 1472–3, '*Var' expens*' Et de j d. solut' vectori Bristoll' pro littera deferend' domino Iohanni Howell. [. . .] Et de j d. dat' vectori Bristoll' pro littera differend' Iohanni Amere. [. . .] Et de j d. solut' vectori Bristoll' pro una littera deferend' Henrico Weston legis perito.

The spacing of the payments confirms that this refers to letters sent on different occasions; three letters sent together would surely be entered together with a single charge, since the bursar had no real reason to record the addressees' names. By coincidence, 1473 is also

[122] OUA Hyp/A/5 (Register GG), including various lists of matters within the vice-chancellor's jurisdiction from the middle of the sixteenth century to the Restoration; C. W. Boase and A. Clark (eds.), *Register of the University of Oxford 1449–1622*, OHS, 1, 10–12, 14 (1885–9), vol. 2, part 1, pp. 315–17, with further extracts concerning problems with individual carriers in the late sixteenth century, pp. 317–20.
[123] Noted by Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, pp. 32–3, who proposed a date around 1465. The letter was printed in full from Ancient Correspondence, SC1/46/263 by L. Lyell, *A Mediæval Post-Bag* (1934), pp. 290–2 (no. 109), among what she calls the Marchall correspondence, ibid. pp. 283–302 (nos. 103–114).

the year in which we find a letter sent by carrier from Merton College to the north of England:

> 1473 Merton College bursar's account July–Nov 1473, '*Liberata forinseca*: [. . .] Et ij d. filio Thome Law pro vectura cuiusdam littere ad dominum Robertum Watson' (MCR, 3790).

Thomas Law and his son have not been identified, but Robert Watson farmed two northern benefices from Merton College, Ponteland and Embleton, so the letter would appear to have been carried more than 250 miles for 2d. Without a load as well, this would not cover his expenses on the road. The Paston letters provide explicit evidence that the Norwich carrier was carrying letters in 1465, and they are perhaps themselves implicit evidence earlier than that—carriers made correspondence easy—though the Pastons are never concerned to mention the penny paid for carriage of a letter. We have not the means to begin inquiry into the details of this kind of postal business, long before there were posts. In the seventeenth century, when posts were available to a few, carriers often carried letters and, it appears, in a place like Oxford the carrier was required to deliver them to the addressees, who, it must be presumed, were not expecting to receive such a communication on any particular day.[124]

The other distinctive role was carrying money, which is also attested in the Paston letters. It is an indication of the security of the service. In 1466 the extravagant funeral expenses of John Paston included, 'To Gresham the London carrier, in full payment for the chaundeler of London, v l. xix s. iiij d.', and Gresham also delivered smaller payments in alms money more locally.[125] A few years earlier, however, John Paston appeared circumspect about sending a large sum of money with a carrier, who was not to know that there was money in his load.[126] We have seen carrying of money mentioned in the licence for a carrier from the north of England in 1492, and Merton College relied on the carrier to bring rents from Co. Durham. I have noticed only one entry that also mentions the carrier's charge, 6s. 1d. for bringing £9 6s. 8d.[127] The first example found by the present author that involved litigation over carrying money arose in Henry VIII's time and concerned a bag of gold handed to the carrier Richard Stone in Devon.[128]

Letters and money raise a practical question to which we do not know the answer. The consignor of goods may have taken them to the carrier's inn or yard, but consignees cannot have collected them without knowing that there was something to collect. Were they notified, perhaps by a messenger boy at the carrier's depot? Or did the carrier actually deliver? We have seen mention of loads measured in hundredweight: delivery would have avoided secondary handling. One aspect of our information may provide a clue. We have been dealing with records in which colleges recorded paying for carriage as consignee. If payment was usually made on receipt—when the bailor's trust has been faithfully carried out—by the consignee, then the carrier had an everyday need to see the goods delivered and to claim payment.

There is much more that we do not know. The rate of charges, for example, cannot be reconstructed from the kind of evidence we have studied. Without knowledge of the size of

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[124] *VCH Oxon*. 4, p. 290, citing the university's requirements in 1626.

[125] *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 4, p. 230 (no. 637). Davis, vol. 3, p. lxxxvi, was unable to trace this interesting document beyond its being printed in Francis Blomefield, completed by Charles Parkin, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* (1739–75), vol. 3, p. 694; 2nd edn (1805–10), vol. 6, p. 485. The roll of expenses was in the writer's possession when first prepared for publication, in the part of the work written by the Revd Charles Parkin (1689–1765), rector of Oxburgh. Funeral costs amounted to some £230, making this an important and interesting record.

[126] *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 4, p. 65 (no. 535, 14 Jan [?1463]); ed. Davis, vol. 1, p. 126 (no. 71); above, n. 9.

[127] Above, n. 109. Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. 4, p. 709, rounds the charge to 8d. in the pound, adducing three examples.

[128] C1/479/14, Bensell v. Stone, datable when Thomas Wolsey cardinal archbishop of York and papal legate was chancellor, 1518×29.

the loads and the distances travelled, it would be foolhardy event to attempt a scale of prices. We have seen, in the careers of William Southam in the late fourteenth century and of William Taylor in the late fifteenth, strong connexions with the management of horses. What kind of carts were used, what size of teams, are not revealed in the documentary evidence. We can make comparison with the standard four-horse carts used by carters from Southampton, but we do not know whether they hold good. The legal proceedings have not yet been studied, which might provide more colour. The evidence from accounts is dry and gives little sense of the social setting of the carriers, who were very likely already using inns as places to pick up goods carried and perhaps to change horses. One might speculate that the growth of inns in the second half of the fourteenth century was a precondition for the carrying trade to emerge.[129] The witness of private correspondence quoted early in the paper allows a richer sense of what the carrier did for his clients and paints a picture similar to what is found in correspondence two centuries later.

CONCLUSION

The principal question posed in this discussion was this, 'When did the first regular carrier ply his route?' The general gathering of random references in the first part of the paper suggested that there was little evidence before the middle of the fifteenth century. The sources brought together more systematically in the second half of the paper concern Oxford and towns connected with Oxford by carrier, and here the evidence points in the same direction. By 1450, it looks pretty certain, there were some regular carriers, and Oxford enjoyed the benefit of a service to and from London. They did not entirely replace older ways; the hiring of packhorses no doubt continued, the use of a carrier to do a bespoke journey certainly did, and there are even examples as late as 1470 of fellows' going at considerable expense to collect books bestowed on their colleges.[130] That this was the normal pattern before about 1420 argues that, in those days, there were no common carriers ready to take a small part-load at a much lower cost. For a period of thirty years between about 1420 and 1450 the laconic nature of the entries 'pro cariagio' and the lack of fuller information leaves uncertainty. It is possible that they reflect a growing readiness on the part of some hired carters to take on small goods as occasional part loads in addition to a basic load. If all there is to judge by is price paid for what appears to be a small burden, we have not the knowledge to be able to draw any conclusions from that. Since scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were ready to treat as one and the same carting under contract for the vehicle and the public carrier's taking small loads for a small payment, it has been salutary to lay some emphasis on a distinction generally recognized in Elizabethan and Stuart England. It has led us to think that carriers under hire may have offered an additional, small-scale, service on an occasional or opportunistic basis. In the 1460s the Paston letters show that there were carriers, among whom one might look for trustworthy ones. In 1466, however, Gresham the London carrier and from 1469 Corby the carrier appear to have had an established regular route. In Oxford Henry Bathe has such a

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[129]   W.A. Pantin, 'Medieval Inns', in E.M. Jope (ed.), *Studies in Building History. Essays in Recognition of the Work of B.H.StJ. O'Neil* (1961), pp. 166–91; J.T. Munby et al., 'Zacharias's. A 14th-Century Oxford New Inn and the Origins of the Medieval Urban Inn', *Oxoniensia*, 57 (1992), pp. 245–309; J.N. Hare, 'Inns, Innkeepers, and the Society of Later Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 39 (2013), pp. 477–97.

[130]   The example of William Say (d. 1468), dean of St Paul's cathedral, makes this point in 1469–70, when the New College bursar's roll records, '*Custus necessarii et forinseci* Et solut' pro expensis magistri Richardi Mayhow equitantis London' pro libris recipiendis legatis nobis per M' Willelmum Say vna et pro scriptura indenturarum et pro j pipa [*hogshead*] empta pro eisdem libris conseruandis et cum conduccione ij equorum per septimanam. xix s. x d. Et solut' pro vectura librorum legatorum collegio per Willelmum Say a London' Oxon. vj s. iiij d.' (NCA, 7719). Fellow Richard Mayhew may have gone to London because of the importance of the bequest and the need to document it rather than to carry the books to Oxford on his hired horse. He bought a hogshead in which to pack the books, hired two horses to ride back to Oxford, but sent the books by carrier.

route from 1449. If James Vale were carrying regularly from Oxford to London, the date may be pushed back another decade.

What is needed now is engagement with a wider range of evidence. Finding that evidence is the problem. The archives of Oxford and Cambridge colleges may yet deliver better results. Some monastic accounts or household accounts may provide analogous evidence. The letter-books of the corporation of London, on the other hand, show nothing, for carrying was not a regulated trade. It is possible, even likely, that other records of accounts will reveal payments made to carriers, but they must be harvested with a measure of discretion. Mentions of the *vector* associated with a particular route have been our safest sources. Even references to named *vectores* are less secure, because someone like Henry Bathe would take on bespoke jobs as well as plying his ordinary route, and we are, in truth, not really certain whether William Taylor's trade was carrying goods or hiring horses. The naming of a carrier cannot be taken as secure evidence without sufficient data to allow a sense of how he conducted his business. Much more detail is needed if one is to build a wider picture. That there was a network across much of England is surely probable by the time of the Oxford indenture in 1459. Once it was realized that there was a good living to be made from providing a regular carrier service, carriers will have begun to trade between many English towns, and it is possible that within ten or twenty years many towns were so served.

One could speculate that routes between major commercial centres were established before routes to a smaller county town such as Oxford. London might have been connected with Bristol, Norwich, York at a relatively early date, but without the kind of sources used here evidence for these routes has not come to light. Serious mercantile business, no doubt, employed fully laden carts, while Oxford and Cambridge are unique in their networks of connexions that made small loads peculiarly relevant. Yet there were families like the Pastons all over the country, who would use common carriers, and the demand for such services must have been widespread. Now that the question has been put, it may be hoped that evidence to refine the answer attempted here will be noticed and brought to light.

Supposing that our answer to the question 'When?' holds good, there is the further question, 'Why then?'. To this I have no answer except to point to the trend evident in other aspects of late-medieval trade towards increasing specialization. There were carriers for hire in the fourteenth century, and some may have decided, whether from the experience of being asked to carry small goods by secondary hirers or of turning away such requests, that there was a steady demand that could be met with a relatively light cart on a familiar route.

The impact that common carriers had will not be measurable in economic terms. Their loads were small and varied, some represented goods in trade, some were personal possessions or private gifts, and without a mass of detail they cannot be analysed. They were doubtless only a small part of the inland transport sector. In social terms, however, it must have made a major difference to people that small packs of goods or household items or personal possessions could be sent from one town to another, whether for commercial reasons or for family reasons. Carriers could even be relied on to carry perishable delicacies such as eel pasties.[131] Without the easy movement of small goods and money around the country the economy would have been more layered between the local—as far as a person could go and return in a day—and the regional or national. Common carriers brought mobility of goods to more people and to the capilliaries of the economy. It is worth more work to try to establish over what period the network of carriers came into being. In a sense it marked a new age in transport for the

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[131] Thomas Allen, chaplain, based at Coldharbour House in London, sent to his master, George Talbot, 4th earl of Shrewsbury, sick, and sheltering from the plague in his lodge at Worksop (Notts.), ten pasties of baked conger eel, made by an old servant and obviously a special delicacy, first on 10 May [1516], 'by this bearer, Richard Woodhouse, carrier of Rotherham', and again on 28 May another ten pasties by Thomas Parr, carrier of Derby (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3192, ff. 35, 37; the first printed in E. Lodge, *Illustrations of British History*, 2nd edn (1838), vol. 1, p. 15, no. 6; *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic. Henry VIII*, vol. 2, pt 1, nos. 1870, 1941, and for Thomas Parr's name, 2018).

people of early fifteenth-century England. Its impact is less conspicuous than the proliferation of wagons and coaches that followed the general adoption of four wheels instead of two.[132] It was not quite the railway age, but it was an important step towards a more modern economy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[132]   J.T. Munby, *Medieval Carriages and the Origins of the Coach: The Archaeology of the European Transport Revolution* (forthcoming).