

In the 1851 Census he described himself as a farmer and the journals contain many records of dealings in wheat, barley, oats, hay and potatoes. These give some evidence about prices: in 1846 a ton of hay was £1.15.0 but in 1860 half a ton cost £2.10.0. In 1839 seven quarters of oats went at £1.4.6 a quarter. In 1856 ten sacks of potatoes cost £2.10.0. He also kept pigs and the price in 1846 for a pig weighing 28 score 6 lbs was £14.3.0 and this had changed little by 1855- In 1847 he listed the food bought for 2 pigs, including 2 bushells of beans at 11/10 and one of barley at 4/6.

Another major enterprise was the buying and selling of timber. Dealings in bark occur constantly: in 1849 a load of 114 cwt was worth £2.1.0 and in 1855 the price was £3.6.6 a ton. Trees bought include walnuts: in 1856 two cost £11.0.0 and at the same time 27 sycamores and 1 large ash were £46.10.0. He often gives lists of trees measured, for example 17 oaks at WaterperryWood. Other timber bought or sold was yew, lime, fir poles, faggots, sacks of shavings: planks 'yall' (presumably yellow) frequently occur. He was often charging for drawing timber 'home' or to Oxford or to Islip station. In 1855 he quotes sixpence a foot for drawing 42 foot of oak timber from Stanton to Oxford. This activity carried him to many neighbouring areas: the Baldons, Oakley, Shabbington, Garsington, Abingdon and Worminghall, to mention a few.

He built barns and stables: in 1858: 'Stable for 8 horses. Chaff House in middle, Cow hous for 6 cows, 2 Pigstys and hog tub house'. The cow house was to be 42ft by 14ft, and the buildings were to be tiled, though he sometimes undertook thatching.

James Robbins' father, Edward Robbins, was a founder member of the Wheatley Friendly Society and in 1847 and 1848 the pocket books show that James was an officer, presumably treasurer, for they include many such entries as: 'Received of Thomas Smith for 2 Quarters Club 11.6d. For one member, Mr Tooms, a full record is given from January 1847 to December 1848. He paid in a total of £3.2.2., including two fines of a shilling 'for not going to Church' and two sums of 2/6 for 'Dinner'. At Whitsuntide the Club evidently met for a dinner at the White Hart; the entry reads:

Whitsun 1849	£	s	d
To 73 Members	10	19	0
To 10 Musicians		15	0
To Ringers		5	0
To Pipes		7	0
To Bread and Cheese		1	2
To 2 barrells of Beer	4	19	0
To Kilderkin Do	1	10	0
To Extra		10	0
To Cash to Pay the Musicians	2	15	0

It is not clear whether the following entry refers to the same convivial occasion: 'Had of Mr Wilkins for Whitsuntide

	£	s	d
To 102 lbs of Boiling beef	2	6	9
To 86 of Rost Beef and Veal	4	6	2