



Riverhead Overview

The Riverhead, Louth 1820 - 1850.

This period was the time of the greatest expansion in the population and prosperity of Louth. This was to a large extent linked to the trade arising from the role of the Riverhead as an inland port. Corn and wool were exported from the farms of Lincolnshire to the industrial towns of West Yorkshire. Coal was imported on the return journey.

As the railway did not come to Louth until 1848, the canal was the main means of transport, especially for bulky or heavy goods over long distances.

The Riverhead was the cluster of buildings that grew up around the point where the canal ended to the east of the long established market town. Their purpose was to enable its trade to be carried on. There were granaries, drying kilns and malt kilns, as well as coal yards, rope makers, shipbuilders, warehouses and wharves. In addition to buildings designed for trade and employment there was a range of different housing types. The Riverhead was a place where many different people lived as well as worked. Many of the residents worked here. It was a case of living on or with the job.

Padley's 1828 survey and the 1841 Census show The Riverhead as a clearly definable enclave. It was not independent of the rest of Louth, but certainly existed as a community in its own right. It had two public houses, the Woolpack and the Ship, a butcher's shop and a druggist who also functioned as a grocer. It was a busy world with the arrival and departure of boats, goods being loaded and unloaded and grain being prepared for the brewing trade in the drying kilns. Boats were built and repaired here in the two dry docks.



The 1841 Census reveals a community that included a cross section of society. There were a few people of 'independent means,' who did not have to work, a thriving commercial middle class, a large and varied group of craftsmen, labourers and servants. The commercial middle class was directly linked to the work of the Riverhead.

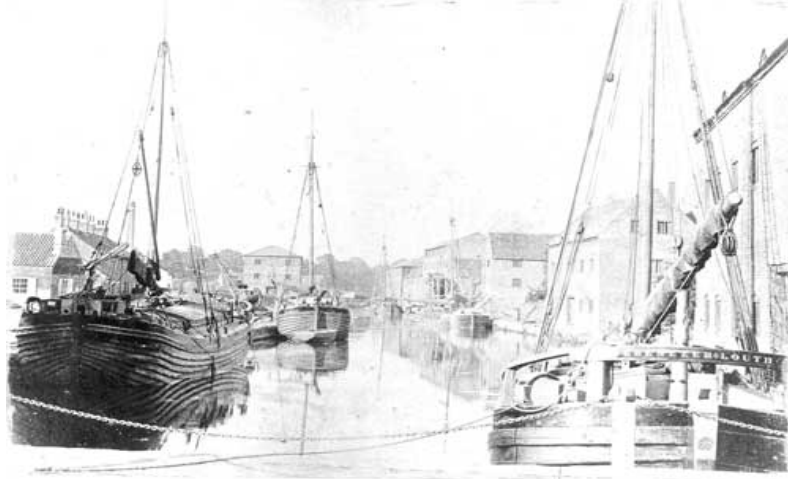
Many chose to live close to their businesses. Other than the farmer, druggist and butcher all were connected with the import/export trade of the Riverhead as merchants, shipwrights, millers and rope makers. They lived in large houses with gardens. Many of them maintained servants. This was the mark of prestige and status at the time. For example the household of the merchant George Sutton included one male servant, two female servants and a governess.

For the craftsmen and labourers there were rows of small terraced houses known as tenements. The artisans who lived here mostly had trades or skills linked to the work of the canal. The largest group were mariners, followed by ship's carpenters and rope makers. Of the labourers nine were linked to the coal trade as porters. The Riverhead also provided housing for labourers working on farms around Louth.

These three views show the Riverhead at various stages in the 1800s. The top right is a detail from Brown's 1844 Panorama of Louth, on view in Louth Town Hall. The other two show the west and east views of the riverhead in the late 19th century. It is interesting to note the amount of river traffic in the third photograph.



River Head, Louth.



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