

The River Lode and Yards End.



A barge entering the Little Ouse from the Lakenheath Lode.

Just to the left of this panel is all that remains of the Yards End spur of Lakenheath Lode, or River Lode, which until the 1960's, was an old channel which joined the River Little Ouse to the north-west of the village.

The lode continued south until just past Eriswell and acted as a flood defence and a source of water for parts of the village. It was probably part of the 17th century drainage of Lakenheath Fen which flooded each winter. Until the River Lode was dug the fens reached almost to the village.

The Yards End spur was accessible directly from the High Street and gave easy access to the horse drawn barges also known as fen lighters.

The original River Lode channel may have been widened as part of general improvements made in the 19th century when barges or fen lighters up to a width of 12ft. 6inches and draught of 2 ft. 6 inches could be accommodated with no practical limit to their length.

Ely and Kings Lynn were accessible by boat from the village into the early-mid 20th century when the lode began to silt up due to reduced use.

More information is given in **Timeline 4 at 1833: Travel and Transport.**



General view of village and fen with Lakenheath Lode and the Yards End spur.

OS 1905 25" Suffolk XII.5. 1903. By kind permission of National Library of Scotland. Re use: CC-BY-NC-SA

The Yards End spur existed at least as early as 1783 (Hodskinson's Map), suggesting that sand from the sandpits area in the north of the village may have been the reason for its development. It passed behind the Half Moon Inn, now a private house, and ended in a quay. In 1829 the Hockwold and Lakenheath Road was constructed, later becoming Station Road when the railway arrived in 1844-5.

Until the early 20th century sand continued to be dug from sandpits in the area and was carted to the Yards End quay to be loaded onto barges. No doubt sand was not the only cargo and incoming goods from Ely and Kings Lynn may also have arrived here.



Enlarged map of Yards End and the area occupied by the Half Moon.

*OS 6" Suffolk Sheet XII. NW revised in 1903 with additions in 1950.
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