



Appledore Archive

Memories and Milestones from Appledore's Past



The Appledore 'Narrows'

The landscape at the entrance to Appledore village was dramatically reshaped in the early 1800s, when the **Royal Military Canal** was cut as part of the nation's coastal defences. Before this work began, the area looked entirely different.

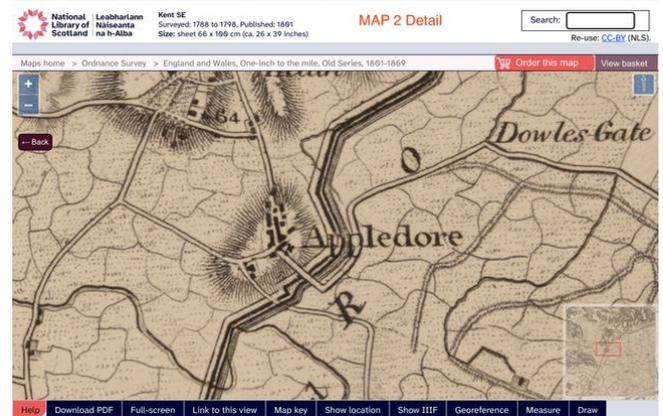
The road system before the Canal

Two principal routes once led from the village out onto the Marsh. **Old Way**, then known as **Swan Lane**, served as the main road to New Romney, joining what is now Station Road near **Pumping Station House**. The second route climbed Court Lodge Road, passed through the Court Lodge stackyard and met today's Becket Road near Priory Lands House. Swan Lane was lined with cottages, some dating back to 1666, though several had disappeared by the 19th century. Between these houses (now the narrows), lay a patchwork of garden plots, the open town drain and a footpath across the Marsh towards Fairfield and Brookland.

The cutting of the Canal and creation of the Narrows

Between 1803 and 1806, the Royal Military Canal was dug. The town drain was enclosed in a brick culvert, sections of which still survive and the new defensive waterway cut across the fields. The present road from the canal side was created at this time, carved through the garden of Well House to accommodate the altered ground levels. The Narrows, the distinctive pinch-point between the houses, emerged

as a direct consequence of this engineering. With steep new banks on either side, the road had to be threaded between them to reach the Narrow Bridge. From the far side of the bridge, new roads were laid out to reconnect with the routes to New Romney and Becket.



A village transformed

Many buildings now regarded as historic were relatively new then. The Ashbee (Vine House), constructed by Isaac Munk, was only around forty-five years old. The Watch House, built in 1809 as a Station House at the canal crossing, stood as a reminder of the waterway's defensive purpose. Canal Cottages began life as simple open shacks for workers.

Today, visitors see a tranquil, tree-shaded approach grazed by sheep and framed by the Narrows, but this beauty is the product of two centuries of gradual change.