

STOP 10 – APPLEY ESTATE AND TOWER

You should be by the shelter at the eastern end of the canoe lake. Look east across the bay. Here the sands are at their widest, and it was in this area that the prototype of the hovercraft was tested already mentioned in Stop 7. In the 1920s, planes were flown from the foreshore just in front of us, near the former site of Appley Pier. A little later, one of the best viewing points for the seaplane race for the Schneider Trophy in 1929 and 1931 was from Puckpool Point on the other side of the bay.

“1929 Schneider Trophy. The charges for parking to be: Bicycles 3d, Motor bicycles 1/-, Motor cycle combinations and small cars 1/6, Large cars 2/6, Char-a-bancs 3d per seat (not including drivers seat), it is further resolved that in the case of cars driven by chauffeurs, the chauffeurs should pay for admission or seating in the ordinary way.”

The land to your right is Appley, a name which is even older than Ryde, first being recorded in 1219, and meaning the clearing where apple-trees grow. Appley housed a succession of seaside homes for the wealthy, St John’s, Appley Towers, St Clare, and Puckpool House – each with parkland running down to the sea. To your right, behind the brick wall, was Appley House, home of the smuggler David Boyes, who had made a fortune of £40,000 from the illegal trade, before he came to the Island. It later became a school, the Isle of Wight College, and in 1906, the Convent of St Cecilia, home for nuns seeking refuge from a hostile government in France. The nuns had previously been based at Northwood House in Cowes. The brick wall, built in 1907 was described by a local newspaper as *“this atrocity of red brick”* which *“ought to rank as a crime.”*

The castle-like folly on the shore in the centre of the bay is Appley Tower, constructed c1875. Near the tower is a plaque commemorating HMS Sirius and the journey of the First Fleet to Australia. This set off from the Motherbank, which lies offshore at this point, on May 13th 1787. The walk to see the plaque is an optional extension to this trail, but take care as you go - To the Editor of the Isle of Wight Observer January 1856: *“Sir – Will you call the attention of the Commissioners to a dangerous hole on the Appley wall in a direct line with the traffic. It has been left for several days, and I had the misfortune to step into it on Wednesday, and hurt myself, besides making myself all over dirty and otherwise annoying me.”*

This is the furthest point of the trail. Now walk back by the path on the other side of the canoe lake then stop at the low wall by the sandy playground next to the lifebelt.