



Appledore Archive

Memories and Milestones from Appledore's Past



The Sick, Lame & Lazy Club

In the late 1980s, when the Victoria Inn (pictured above in 1911), still stood at the heart of the Heath next to Heathside estate, a small group of regulars created one of the most unusual social clubs Appledore has known. It was not a formal society, nor a charitable endeavour, nor even a serious undertaking. Instead, it was a product of friendship, humour, and the kind of everyday camaraderie that once defined village pub life.

The club's founders were three men who drank together most evenings: **Reg (Oven)**, known as "the sick" because he suffered from emphysema and cancer; **John (surname lost to time)**, "the lame", whose gout was so severe he often struggled to put on shoes; and one or two others who fell under the affectionate label of "**the lazy**", remembered for their reluctance to work. Their names have faded with time, but their reputation was well known among the Vic's regulars.

Together they formed what they jokingly called **The Sick, Lame and Lazy Club**. Each man paid a small subscription into a shared pot, and the rules were simple: *the last surviving member would inherit the money*. When Reg died first, followed by poor John, the remaining "lazy" member eventually collected the winnings—though by then, the story itself had become the real treasure.

John's gout was the source of many tales. On one occasion, when he complained that his feet were getting soaked on the way to the pub, a friend suggested he put plastic bags over his feet before slipping them into his shoes. John misunderstood and thought he was meant to wear the bags *over* the shoes. The misunderstanding and the resulting hilarity of seeing John walking in plastic bags, became one of those stories that travelled round the bar for years.



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Life at the Vic

The Victoria Inn was more than a pub; it was a social hub for the Heathside estate and surrounding area. In the 1980s it hosted everything from men-only weight-loss competitions to charity feasts. One memorable event saw **Spenn Addy**, an elderly resident of White Wings, carry a sack of corn on his back (approx. 25 kgs), from the Victoria Inn to the Swan Hotel, for charity. Another year, the regulars competed to grow the biggest marrow—a sort of unofficial village show run entirely by the “old codgers”, though plenty of younger men joined in too.

Despite its popularity, the Vic's fortunes declined. After the long-serving landlord Percy Pratt died, the pub changed hands several times. Standards slipped, the building deteriorated and eventually the land was sold for housing. The demolition of the Vic marked the end of an era—one of the last truly estate-based pubs where everyone knew everyone, and where village ‘clubs’ like the Sick, Lam and Lazy Club could take root.

Other Pubs & Village Characters

The conversation that preserved this story also wanders through the wider landscape of Appledore's pubs: the Railway Inn near the station, the Swan, and

the Red Lion—later renamed the Black Lion. Each had its own cast of characters.

These recollections sit alongside memories of village customs now vanished: open gardens at the Quillet, teas on the lawn, peacock feathers sold to children for a few pence, and the sense that everyone knew who you were—or, in the case of newcomers, who you *belonged* to. Reg (Oven), who came from Derbyshire, was known for years not as himself but as “Eileen's husband”, a reminder of how tightly knit the community once was.

A Village Remembered

What emerges from this oral history is not just a collection of anecdotes, but a portrait of a village in transition. The Sick, Lam and Lazy Club may have been a joke among friends, but it captures something essential about Appledore's past: the humour, the closeness, the characters and the sense that life revolved around the village and the people who lived there.

It is a reminder that history is not only found in buildings and records, but in the memories of those who lived it—in the laughter of a pub, the weight of a sack of corn carried for charity, the misunderstanding of a plastic bag and the knowledge that even the smallest tales can become part of a village's heritage.



New houses on the Victoria Arms Site