

John's 13 years of photograph hunting

Snaps down the years

AMATEUR family historian John Whitlock says there's nowhere in the world quite like Appledore.

"I've discovered that nearly everyone down here is related if you look back far enough," he says. "At one time just two families occupied nearly half of Irsha Street, one of the village's longest streets."

John has spent 13 years tracing his Appledore family tree, slowly building up a picture of long-ago life in the village from photographs, parish registers, old newspaper reports and conversations with old people.

He has held an exhibition of over 175 old Appledore photos in conjunction with the Appledore Maritime Museum and the Bideford Archive.

He says: "Ploughing through old records can be a bit dry — it's the photo's and word of mouth stories that make it all come alive for me."

"Appledore was certainly a lively and ribald place with lots of drunkenness and salmon poaching."

He has read old newspaper reports which describe Appledore defendants taking gangs of "supporters" to the magistrates' court to cheer them on from

By JO WATERS

the public gallery. And heard tales of how one of his female ancestors floored drunken sailors with her punches when she worked as a "bouncer" at one of the village pubs.

However he has also found that the church played an important part in community life and has collected countless photographs of confirmation "brides" in white veils and stern looking bible classes.

"One of Appledore's most colourful characters was the Reverend Hugh Muller who was vicar between 1897 and 1913.

"Apparently he stopped the football team from going to the pub to celebrate a match victory and arranged for them to attend a service of thanksgiving instead."

John has also discovered pictures of a long disbanded village rugby team circa 1896 and of a second world war ambulance volunteer corps, who had to rely on a cleaned-up coal lorry for transport.

One of the more unusual photographs he has unearthed is of villagers who acted as "extras" in the Walt Disney *Treasure Island*, which was filmed in the area in the 1950's.

John is publishing a collection of the photographs and is currently sounding out publishers about the project.



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