



The Apple Tree Initiative – local heritage

The Door Knocker.



Let's have a think....

(image. www.willowandstone.co.uk)

How do you know when someone comes to your door?

- a) They ring the doorbell.
- b) They have to buzz and speak via an intercom, before we let them in.
- c) They bang the door knocker.
- d) They pull the bell pull.
- e) We have a butler, who answers the door for us.

What did you answer? I expect most of you said a, b or c.

Do you know anything about the history of the door knocker?

In Appledore some of them are quite old, maybe two hundred years old, maybe even older than that! Some of them will also be very new.

Let's have a look. As we go along remember to ask questions.

I wonder, who had the first door knocker?



Door knockers have a bit of a dubious past. The earliest were thought to originate from Ancient Greece where enslaved people were chained to a heavy ring, attached to the door, in order to announce the arrival of visitors.

The Romans continued to use the door knocker and its use spread across the empire.

Here is an example of some fine lion head door knockers, which can be found in the Museo Nazionale Romano (Roman National Museum) in Rome. There are quite a few houses in Appledore that have this door knocker, but they are not Roman. How old do you think they might be?



Early door knockers....

(image.www.willowandstone.co.uk)

As early as the 16th century door knockers adorned peoples' homes. They were mostly fairly plain. As blacksmiths developed their skills, wealthy people began to have detailed designs, often relating to local patterns and traditions.



(image.www.willowandstone.co.uk)

What do you think is meant by 'local patterns and traditions'? What do you think these might be in Appledore?

Can you find a door knocker in the village that you find really interesting? Why not draw it, or take a picture?

During the 1800s door knockers became widely used. It became fashionable to have more elaborate door knockers, such as lion heads and Sphinx-like creatures.

Can you find any black iron door knockers in Appledore?

The later part of the Georgian era saw brass become the main material for door knockers. It also was the time when bell pulls came into use (1830's) and the penny post began (1840s), starting the need for letter boxes.

As the door knocker became more elaborate many designs were inspired by mythology and religion. For example, in China they took on the form of a dragon, a symbol of power, strength, and good luck.



The lion head door knocker with its mouth gripping the ring became very popular in the early 19th Century and has remained a favourite today.

Might this be the most popular one ever? It has been used since Roman times and can be found all over the world. Why do you think it is so popular?

Another beautiful door knocker spotted the world over, is the **hand shaped door knocker**. Originating in Muslim countries, it symbolises the Hand of Fatima (recognised and used as a sign of protection). Fatima was the prophet Mohammed's daughter, and this door knocker would indicate that a person of Muslim faith lived in the house.



Image. www.willowandstone.co.uk

Can you find one of these in Appledore? In which street?

Apparently, there were two types of hand door knocker, a male and a female, both of which would be on the front door, each with its own distinct sound. The visitor would then use the appropriate knocker to signify if they were male or female.

If you could have a door knocker to symbolise something about you, what would that be? For example, if you liked football, you might choose Marcus Rashford's boot. Would you like to design one?

Fish shaped door knockers

A foundry in Falmouth suggests that door knockers with a maritime theme were often seen on the houses of shipping merchants and other mariners.



(images.www.willowandstone.co.uk)

There are a wide variety of styles of dolphin and mythical fish knockers and some have their meaning. A carp, for example, is a symbol of good luck and abundance and a fish with a Poseidon fork design depicts power and a mastery of the seas.

What do you know about Poseidon? What is Poseidon's fork?

What are mythical fish?

If you are in Irsha Street, try and find how many fish door knockers there are. Can you find a dolphin with a tail like Poseidon's fork? Can you find any mythical fish?

In Appledore....

Can you find examples of door knockers that are linked to the sea?

Seahorses

Boats

Crabs

Anchors

Ship's wheel

Fisherman