

## Knocker up stick



Fully extended knocker upper

We often forget that there was a time when mechanical alarm clocks were unreliable and expensive. Now battery clocks, smart watches or phones and digital clocks, are more commonly used to remind us when to get up and go to work. During the Industrial Revolution your livelihood frequently depended on being at work on time.

So, what did you do if you were expected to work different shifts in factories driven by modern industrial machines, or indeed by the tides in maritime environments, if you had no clock to tell you when to get up?

The answer is that you employed a 'knocker upper', a human alarm-clock<sup>1</sup>. The job began to be a regular trade and was a respected profession as it was important to be reliable. These men and women were paid by each client and they only wanted to wake 'their' client so they had sticks – or sometimes, pea-shooters – with which to target the right windows in the houses in the street. It seems that they were mostly employed in industrial cities, and it was not until 1973 that the last knocker upper retired in Bolton, Lancashire<sup>2</sup>.

Until the 1860s the mechanised weaving factories were not a feature in Newtown and it is likely that the hand-loom weavers who worked in our building used all hours when there was light, and had no need of a knocker upper to wake them, but we have a carved knock-up stick from Lancashire as part of our collection.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/knocker-upper-47bc8c5bfdbf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-35840393>

[Type here]

Our beautifully carved but functional stick – shown above when fully extended to 2.64m - has an important history and the carving on the handle demonstrates how cherished it was.

