

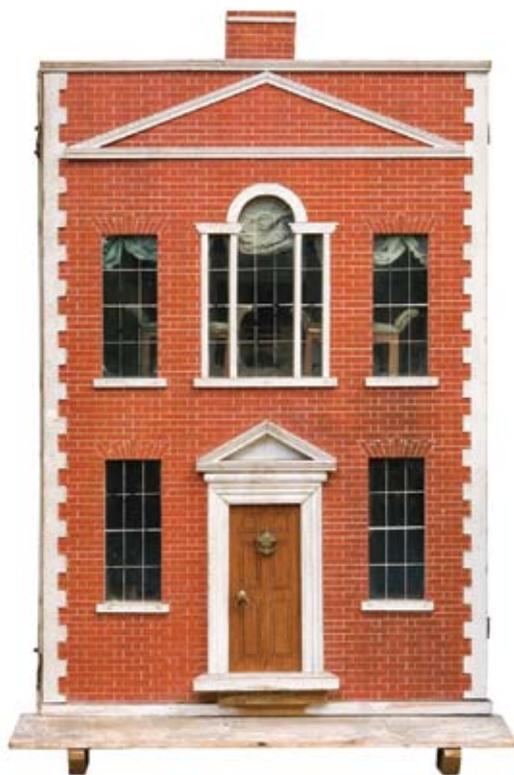
No. 1 | ONE
ROYAL
CRESCENT

small worlds

AN EXHIBITION OF DOLLS' HOUSES
FROM THE 18TH & 19TH CENTURIES

from the private collection of Liza Antrim

9th May - 8th November 2015



EXHIBITION GUIDE

Introduction

For centuries, dolls' houses have delighted and excited people of all ages, who have been fascinated by the miniature details of these small worlds.

That same fascination and curiosity sparked the imagination of eleven-year-old Liza Antrim, when she first discovered *English Dolls' Houses* by connoisseur Vivien Greene. Treasures such as miniature food immediately caught Liza's eye. She went on to collect and restore an extensive group of historic dolls' houses over the next fifty years.

'Small Worlds' is a unique opportunity to explore the collection of Liza Antrim and share her passion. See this collection through the eyes of its restorer, as she takes you through the fascinating stories behind each house.



Liza Antrim

“I don't know exactly when my hobby became an obsession. In my professional life as a museum-trained picture restorer, I had plenty of outlets for my love of conservation. But when eventually I had to give up work, due to ill health caused by the chemicals we used, I found an alternative for my frustrated talents in restoring old dolls' houses to their former glory.

For me, it has always been a crucially important ethic to restore, not to redecorate. My training in the museum world helped. Although I learned many new skills, the guiding principles were always the same: put back what was missing; go back as far as you could to what was originally there under the layers of wallpaper or paint; and try to keep houses together with their original contents, should you be lucky enough to find them still intact. It is thrilling to come across a house untouched and fully furnished. I have been lucky enough to find several - some of them displayed in this exhibition. They tell a fascinating story about both the skills of their former owners and the paraphernalia of their times.”



Swallowcliffe c.1826-30

Swallowcliffe c.1826-30

Swallowcliffe is on display in No. 1 Royal Crescent's historic Dining Room.

Made for the daughter of a Somerset family.

Supposedly a copy of Swallowcliffe House in Yeovil, this doll's house was made for Emma Mayo, the daughter of George Mayo, a prosperous glover of the town. It was passed down through the family for four generations before being loaned to Vivien Greene at The Rotunda Museum in Oxford, and subsequently to the local museum in Yeovil, where the interior was stripped. Some years later, it was acquired by Liza Antrim, who comments:

“After its acquisition it took a long search for suitable papers to restore it. Eventually I was shown a pattern book of 18th century Italian book papers by Edward Bayntun Coward. Made by Remondini of Bassano in Northern Italy in the late 18th century, each paper was more beautiful than the one before and after a great deal of dithering I chose enough to do the house. Somehow his brilliant assistant, Annie Logan, extended the repeats and made copies of them, printed on fine paper, and the house has come back to vibrant life.”

The real Swallowcliffe House had been built for Emma's father by master builder, Charles Vining. When she grew up, Emma married Vining's son, James.



The Kitchen c.1810-30

The Kitchen c.1810-30

The Kitchen is on display in No. 1's Royal Crescent's historic kitchen.

A well-stocked Kitchen for every occasion.

This kitchen was given to Sarah White by the family in Brompton for whom her father worked as a coachman. It is a fine example of a well-stocked kitchen, with a lead-lined sink and plate rack, a capacious dresser, custom-made range, and plenty of cupboard space (including one on the exterior). Children were allowed to play with it - but only on special occasions.

The kitchen has never been redecorated or otherwise 'improved', which makes it all the more special. It has survived so well because it was kept in a sturdy wooden travelling box, with brass handles and hinged front and lid.

Don't miss:

- The hastener
- The pestle and mortar
- The alphabet plate



History of Dolls' Houses

Commissioned for the enjoyment of wealthy adults and furnished by the finest craftsmen, Dolls' Houses (or Baby Houses, as they were initially known) first emerged in the 17th century. The earliest examples were made in Germany and later became popular in Holland. They were renowned for their wonderful furniture, fine silver, and Chinese porcelain, and were in essence cabinets of curiosities.

The first English dolls' houses were no less spectacular, with fine architectural detail and sumptuous interiors intended to reflect - although not necessarily replicate - the grandeur of the real house and the status of the owner. The earliest surviving English house belonged to Ann Sharp (born in 1691) and was presented to her by her godmother, who later became Queen Anne.

Commercially produced houses were more common by the early 19th century, such as box-back dolls' houses. As the name suggests, these are just boxes, with more or less elaborate façades. Many dolls' houses of this period originally belonged to Quaker families (including the Fry chocolate dynasty). Quakers were traditionally supporters of social reform and education for all.

Dolls' houses were thus no longer just perceived as showpieces for adults but also as a means to assist play and learning, especially for girls. It was much later in the century that they became simple children's toys.

Childhood in the 18th Century

For most of the 18th century, the word 'toy' meant small luxury goods for adults, not playthings for children. Childhood was not viewed as it is today and was not a time of freedom. Children were expected to dress and behave as 'miniature adults'; boys of aristocratic families were taught to become 'gentlemen of taste', capable of running a family estate, while girls learnt the feminine attributes required to make a good marriage. For children born into poverty, early years were as wretched as adulthood.

The Enlightenment changed the way people thought about childhood. 18th century political philosophers (such as John Locke and Jean-Jacque Rousseau) argued that children, born naturally good and innocent, should thus be allowed to learn by experience, not by rote. Furthermore, learning through reasoning and personal experience meant that those who worked hard could better themselves - an idea fundamental to the emergence of the middle classes. The late 18th century saw a flood of 'improving' toys, books, and games for boys and girls. For the first time, children started to play with dolls' houses for pleasure.



The Vickerman House c.1816

The Vickerman House c.1816

Returned to England after 80 years in America.



This beautiful English house went to America circa 1930. By the time it re-crossed the Atlantic in 2010, much of its overpaint was badly flaking. It had to be removed, thereby revealing what you see today - a beautiful Georgian town house, with many of its original furnishings. These items include:

- The cast metal pieces sold by the toyman John Henry Bielefeld, made between 1790 and 1833 - the tea tables, mirror, and knife box in the drawing room, as well as the gilt dining room chairs.
- The wooden furniture made between 1808 and 1835 by John Bubb - the dining table and bedroom chest of drawers.
- The sets of rout chairs and settees from an unknown maker in the dining room and kitchen.

The dolls are original to the house, but were re-dressed by the previous owner.

Don't miss:

- The unique fire grates
- The china food



The Fry House c.1840

Made in Bristol for the children of Francis Fry, chocolate-maker and leading Quaker.



The Fry House could perhaps legitimately claim to be one of the most beautiful 19th century English Baby Houses. It was made for the children of Sir Francis Fry and remained with the youngest daughter Priscilla until her death in 1917, when it passed to her niece, Hilda Bates Harbin, daughter of Sir Theodore Fry.

The house has all its original décor and furnishings. Some of the contents were possibly copied from originals in Tower House (Cotham, Bristol), built by Sir Francis Fry.

The grandest of the four-post beds and the dining room sideboard have labels from 'Beacham's Fancy Depot, 24 North Street, Bristol'. The House has a fine collection of tinplate Evans & Cartwright furniture (some of the chairs charmingly upholstered in pale blue silk), as well as good early Grodnertal wooden dolls, and china-head dolls.

Don't miss:

- The pineapple on the roof
- The fancy filigree German furniture
- The hearth rug embroidered with a sheep
- The globe on a stand

The Fry House c.1840





Museum c.1820-30

Brought to life with an outstanding collection of miniature pots, mosaics, and statues.

The earliest Baby Houses, notably in the Netherlands and Germany, were really showcases for the collector of small and exquisite items. Liza Antrim had always longed to find a house which she could make into a museum of the Grand Tour.

When she came across this wonderful cupboard, she realised it was perfect for conversion.



This is the only dolls' house on display with a sliding front. It has windows painted to resemble the architectural style briefly in fashion after the Egyptian campaign of 1797. The Oriental gallery has been decorated with 1850s book papers. In this area, a display of Japanese lacquer is still sewn onto its original plinth. The piece in the foreground is a particularly fine 19th century *sage-jubako* picnic box made for the traditional Girls' Festival (also known as Dolls' Day). The Greco-Roman gallery is painted and then edged with an early border paper. The walls are covered with plaster impressions of classical figures and 'Roman' pot souvenirs - some purchased from Ahrends (109 Piccadilly, London). Other notable features are a fine Viennese sculpture of George and the dragon, a small Egyptian faïence figure, micro mosaics, and a *pietra dura* plaque. The top room is decorated with modern paper and has a display of European sculpture and ceramics.

Don't miss:

- The Japanese gilding
- The coloured bird plaque
- The tiny ivory of Cybele reclining on a lion.



Elkington c.1840

Elkington c.1840

Bought in c.1860 by the Hardy family, who lived in Portland Place, London.

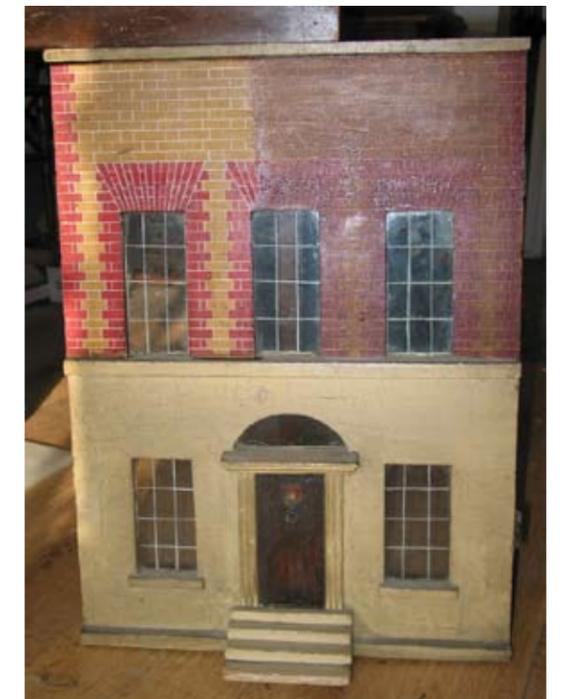
Elkington House is a second generation, box-back dolls' house. It had stayed in the Hardy family since it was first bought, carefully preserved and cherished by each generation and acquiring the name 'Elkington' from one of these descendants. The styling of the house is similar to the National Trust's Baby House in Nunnington, Yorkshire. Last played with in the 1940s-1950s, it was then packed away in the attic with all its original contents. Restoration work to remove the 1860s papers revealed the wonderful decoration you see today. Though the dolls date from its second renaissance in the 1860s, the furnishings are all original.

Don't miss:

- The two cooks - a sign of a prosperous household
- The clockwork jack and roasting joint.



During restoration





Bellamy's House c.1762

Bellamy's House c.1762

Earliest commercially-made Georgian dolls' house in the collection.

Remarkably, this beautiful Georgian box-back dolls' house has the retailer's name and address in pencil on the reverse, as well as in ink beneath the two window seats. The shop's trade-card (dated 14th December 1762) advertises their wares, 'At the GREEN PARROT, near Chancery-Lane, Holborn... Fine Babies and Baby-Houses, with all sorts of furniture at the lowest price... Wholesale and Retail'.



Since this shop went out of business in 1795, the house can be reliably dated to the late 18th century. Its furnishings are all original, except for the little man and the pole screens.

Don't miss:

- The rare clockwork spit jack and the joints on spits
- The brass warming pan
- The chairs with striped upholstery made entirely of wood





Stamford
Cottage 1855



Stamford Cottage 1855

A design for the most modern detached terraced house of its time.

Stamford Cottage has almost every Victorian 'mod con' - fitted cupboards and wardrobes, fine panelling in the dining room, a kitchen with a built-in dresser and a 'modern' range, a scullery with water tank and copper, and underfloor ventilation. There is even a conservatory accessed from the drawing room through French windows with stained glass margin-lights. Indeed, the only thing missing is a privy. Perhaps this was down the garden and thus got separated at some point when the cottage was moved.

Given its meticulous construction, it is possible that Stamford Cottage was not built as a toy, but as an architectural model.

Don't miss:

- The wisteria
- The panelling in the dining room
- The fireplaces which slot into the rooms when the doors are closed





Norfolk Lodge 1862-4

Mrs Boase's Victorian Showstopper

This house was commissioned in 1862 by Mrs Francis Boase of Burlton House, Penzance. She paid the local carpenter, George Tregarthen, £5 15s (about £3,000 in today's money) to make her a large-scale Victorian mansion. What is especially interesting about this house is that Mrs Boase, a doctor's wife, kept a list of all her purchases in an 1864 handbook noting what she had paid for each one (such as '2 boxes tin utensils 6s 0d'). Tregarthen also made the splendid half-tester bed.

The kitchen is comprehensively stocked with utensils and gadgets. Mrs Boase bought every piece she could get at the time, listing them in her book. These include a pie funnel, flour dredger, a Wedgwood pestle and mortar, and graduated skewers.

Mrs Boase was also a fine seamstress and there are numerous examples of her handiwork around the house. Given its original furnishings (including the rare German Kestner organ with its dancing figures), this dolls' house was never intended to be a child's toy.

Don't miss:

- The wax jack for sealing letters
- The finest doll in the house, with waxed face and real plaited hair. (She was made in Sonneberg in Germany - a renowned centre for toy-making.)
- The tiny pair of kid dancing pumps in a shoe-bag on the wall



Mrs Boase

Victorian Social Enterprise: An Education

The partnership between Ragged Schools and the Ladies Guild enabled the production of rare dolls' house furniture in Victorian Britain.

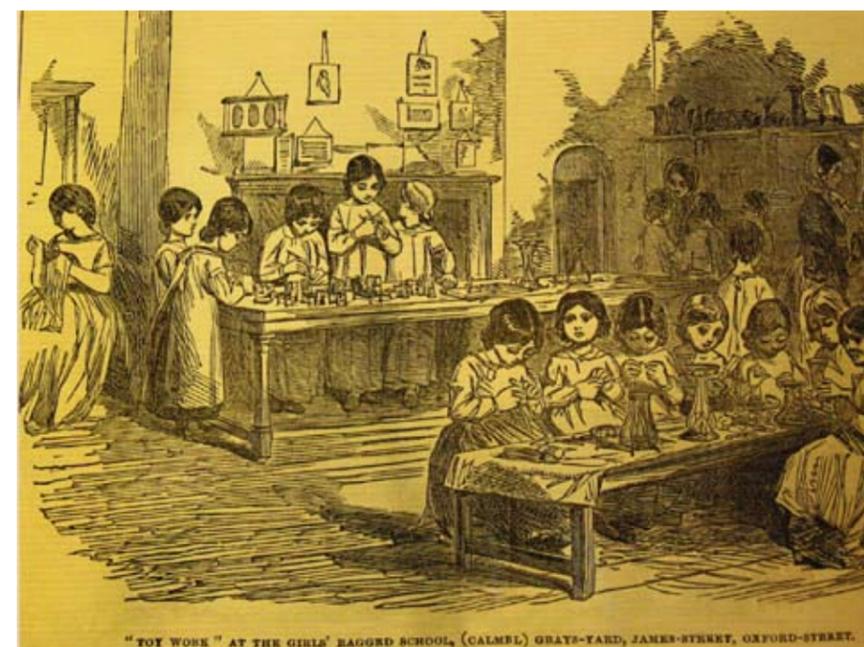
The Ragged Schools were developed by Portsmouth shoemaker John Pounds in 1818. The schools were dedicated to the free education of destitute children and were developed in working-class districts of rapidly expanding industrial towns.

The Ladies Guild grew out of the collaboration of two remarkable women: Eliza Wallace, who wanted to help respectable ladies to earn their own income, and Caroline Southwood Hill, who took this initiative forward. The latter's advertisement in the *Illustrated News* prompted three hundred applications for employment from women across the world.



It was around 1852 that the two organisations began to work together. Caroline's daughter, Octavia (later one of the founders of the National Trust), was put in charge of educating girls at a number of Ragged Schools across London. Octavia taught them how to make dolls' house furniture, which made a pleasant change from their academic studies, and provided them with useful modelling and needlework skills. The items made were then sold by the Ladies Guild, under the label of 'Art Toys'. It was the task of the ladies from the Guild to produce the decorative glass for the table tops, whilst the furniture and upholstery were made by the girls.

Although these historic dolls' houses were made for the pleasure and edification of the better-off child, it is important to remember that they were often furnished with the labours of the poorest.



'Toy Work' at the Girls' Ragged School.

Evans and Cartwright of Wolverhampton

The collection displayed here was made by the Wolverhampton tin toy manufacturers Evans & Cartwright. John Evans was listed as a toy manufacturer in Dudley Road, Wolverhampton, in 1816; by 1827, he and his stepson Sidney Cartwright were in business together. Many of their workers were children, some of them as young as ten.

As with other social enterprise schemes like the Ragged Schools, Sidney Cartwright strongly supported the education of children. Cartwright was convinced that educating children up to the age of nine would be in the best interest of the nation, but appreciated that their earning capacity after that age was a crucial contribution to the well-being of their families. Employees were expected to participate in every aspect of manufacturing, from pressing and soldering, to japanning and painting. Cartwright looked after his workforce well; they received two meals a day and a good wage.





Pedlars

Pair of pedlar dolls, circa 1830. They have finely detailed wax heads on wooden bodies. The man sells necessities for improving the mind, personal cleanliness, and the kitchen; his partner deals in live poultry, eggs, and a pig.

Grocer's Shop

Mid-19th century German grocer's shop, with drawers and barrels labelled in German, French, and English. The slot in the counter is for putting money into the drawer.

Don't miss:

- The sugar cones wrapped in dark blue 'paper'



Butcher's Shop

Late 19th / early 20th century Gottschalk butcher's shop with his characteristic lithographed windows. A few of the meats are original, but some have been added. They are mostly made of plaster.

Don't miss:

- The original butcher's head in a basket.
(He has lost his body.)



Warehouse

German warehouse made by the Christian Hacker company, mid to late 19th century.

Caravan

Caravan made by the German firm of Moritz Gottschalk, late 19th /early 20th century. Living in cramped accommodation, the inhabitants of the caravan make a living by selling baskets - some from as far afield as Japan.

Conclusion

Finding, restoring, and researching dolls' houses and their contents has been a lifelong study and delight for Liza Antrim. She observes:

“These ‘small worlds’ reveal so much about life in the 18th and 19th centuries. They have a touching intimacy and an immediacy that brings you into close contact with those craftsmen and women, adults and children, who designed and made them, played and learned from them. One of my greatest pleasures is sharing what I have discovered with others.”

Dolls' houses have held a special fascination for generations of children. They offer a perfect miniature world, which inspires us to create stories and imagine the lives of the tiny people living in them. The parallel between these ‘small worlds’ and our own is powerful, sometimes even eerie.

Dolls' houses have been passed down through generations. Each generation cherishes them, not just because they are beautiful, but because they belonged to people we loved, when they themselves were children.

Liza Antrim's restorations are remarkable because she recognises the importance of historical authenticity. She restores the dolls' houses in her collection as near as possible to their original condition, with an attention to detail worthy of the children who loved them so long ago.

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