

# **Toys Through Time**

**The dolls and toys in this display date from around 1800 to the present day.**

**Most of the early examples would have been luxury items, played with by children of well off parents who could afford to buy them.**

**The children of poorer families were more likely to have owned homemade peg or rag dolls, but these types of toy rarely survive, as they were passed down through the generations and played with until they were worn out.**

**Before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century dolls were made to look like little adults, and were only later manufactured to resemble babies and young children.**

**Since the 1950s, this fashion has been partly reversed with adult dolls such as Action Man and Barbie becoming more popular.**

**Constructional toys became very inventive, whilst games historically have often had an instructional and moral purpose.**

**The development of toys reflects advances in technology, the science of plastics, and electronics.**

**Increasingly toys and games are now linked to Film and TV merchandising.**

## THE DOLLS' HOUSE

The dolls' house is a miniature replica of Clare Priory, Suffolk. It was made in 1804 for the children of the Barker family, who lived there. The dolls' house, and Clare Priory itself, later became the property of the May family.

The dolls' house has 'play' furniture, which the children were allowed to use, and 'good' furniture which was used when the house was shown to members of the public. Examples of both are now in the dolls' house. The chairs you can see downstairs were modelled on actual furniture in Clare Priory. The coat of arms on some of them is that of the Barker family.

## MATERIALS USED TO MAKE DOLLS

### WOOD

Wooden dolls were made in ancient Egypt and from very early times in Europe. Their manufacture increased in the 17th and 18th centuries in parts of Southern Germany and the Austrian Tyrol. Wood was also used for dolls in France and England. Most 18th century wooden dolls have the head and torso made in one piece. Faces made of 'gesso' (a mixture of plaster of Paris and size) moulded over the wood appeared in the 19th century. 'Dutch' dolls, were made with articulated joints. 'Dutch' is a corruption of Deutsch, meaning German.

### WAX

Wax dolls have a continuous history from the Roman period to the present day. Resin was added to the wax to make it stable. Heads were rarely made of solid wax. More often the wax was poured into a mould and reinforced with plaster or composition. 'Waxed' heads were made of other materials coated with wax.

## **RUBBER**

**Rubber became important in the manufacture of dolls after the discovery of the vulcanization process. This involved mixing rubber with other materials and heating it. After 1851 heads were often made of solid rubber formed in an iron mould.**

## **BISQUE**

**Dolls with bisque heads were popular from the 1860s. The term bisque means unglazed or 'biscuit' porcelain. When used to describe dolls, bisque implies that the heads are tinted. 'Parian' is used to describe un-tinted porcelain heads. Bisque heads were often press-moulded prior to 1890, but could also be slip-cast.**

**Many porcelain factories in Southern Germany and around Paris and Limoges, produced dolls' heads, often in the white, for small companies to decorate. The United States and England produced bisque heads about the time of the First World War, when German dolls were not available.**

## **PAPIER MACHE**

**Papier mâché is made from paper pulp containing ingredients such as size, oil and resin, with clay or flour for stiffness. Papier mâché dolls and toys were made in France and Germany before the 19th century. Between 1800 and 1810 it was discovered that they could be mass-produced in moulds by a pressure process. By 1820 papier mâché heads were used extensively, with kid bodies and wooden limbs. They reached the height of their popularity in the mid-19th century.**

## **COMPOSITION**

**Composition implies various ingredients mixed together, usually with glue and wood pulp. One recipe in 1908 involved throwing sawdust into boiling water. Although composition dolls were often advertised as indestructible, they were easily damaged. They also tended to be more expensive than their bisque counterparts.**

## **CELLULOID**

**Celluloid is a form of plastic, and although rather expensive, it became popular for dolls during the early 20th century.**