

Amelia's Adventures in the Museum

1. The Costume Room

**Story and pictures
by
Michael Downes**



Amelia's Adventures in the Museum
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Once upon a time there was a little girl called Amelia.

**FAIRLYNCH MUSEUM
AND ARTS CENTRE**

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Amelia and her sister Maisie were staying with Grandad Ralph and Nanny Julie in Exmouth, where they had seen this poster.

“Let’s go to Fairlynch Museum,” said Nanny Julie. “I’ve always wanted to look at the old newspaper cuttings about Budleigh Salterton in the Local History Room.”

“And there’s a wonderful exhibition about sponges,” added Grandad Ralph.



The journey from Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton didn't take long on the bus. It's only a few miles along the coast.

Grandad Ralph, Nanny Julie, Maisie and Amelia walked from the bus-stop through the town. There were lots of interesting shops on the way, especially an ice-cream shop called The Creamery.

Fairlynch Museum was unfortunately on the other side of the road, and there were some steps to climb. But the garden was lovely and the door of the Museum was open. "It's free entry!" said Grandad Ralph. "Let's go in."

"It's like a dolls' house," said Amelia to the lady behind the desk at the Museum.

"Yes, we love working here," said the lady. "It's such a pretty house. It was called Primrose Cottage 200 years ago when it was first built... If you like dolls' houses we have a lovely one upstairs."



Grandad Ralph wanted to see the sponges in the Exhibition Room.

“Please Grandad, can’t we do that later?” asked Amelia. “I want to see the dolls’ house.”

So up they went to the Costume Room where they found the magnificent dolls’ house with its little figures.



“Aren’t they fun? said the Museum lady upstairs.

“They’re beautiful,” said Amelia.

Maisie wasn’t so sure.

She held Nanny Julie’s hand tight.



“Look children,” said Nanny Julie. “Such wonderful little dolls.”



“They’re all in national costumes. Look, there’s a Dutch boy doll.”



“And here’s a doll from Lithuania.”



“And I just love those little Japanese peg dolls,” added Nanny Julie.

Grandad Ralph looked rather bored.



Maisie wondered why the mermaid doll looked so sad.



“Have you noticed Muffy sitting in the chair?” asked the Museum lady.

“We call him the Fairlynch bear. They say he fought in the Boer War.”

Grandad Ralph looked extremely doubtful but didn't say anything because he is very polite.



“And look children,” said the Museum lady, whose name was Iris. “There’s a big basket of clothes that you can try on.”

Amelia and Maisie thought this was brilliant.



Even Grandad Ralph was interested to see what was in the basket.

“Look,” he told Maisie. “There’s a notice on the basket.

It says ‘Why not have a go and dress up? Just try us on.’”



The children had a lot of fun discovering what was in the basket.

There was a funny hat that Amelia tried on. It was a bit too big for her.

Iris told her that it had been made in India. “Can you see the label inside? Lots of people who lived in Budleigh Salterton worked in India and then came to live here because they thought it would be as warm as India here in East Devon. I think they might be disappointed today.”



There was another type of hat.

It was black with a round top.

Amelia remembered that she'd seen people on horseback wearing hats like that.

She looked thoughtfully at the pony.



Iris showed Grandad Ralph and Nanny Julie the Victorian workroom display where there was a model of a seamstress.

She explained that very often these workrooms were no more than a cramped attic room, and the girls working there had to pay for their apprenticeship, and only received board and lodging in return.



“Oh Amelia, what a mess you’ve made!” said Nanny Julie when she turned round and saw all the clothes on the floor.

“It doesn’t matter” said Iris. “We want the children to enjoy themselves. Look, Amelia’s discovered a fan.”

“Don’t worry, Nanny,” said Amelia. “I’ll tidy up while you’re looking at the newspaper cuttings.”



“All the old archives are in the Local History Room,” said Iris. “I’ll show you.”

Amelia was left on her own while the others went next door. “I wonder if I’ve got time for a ride on the pony before I put that hat back in the basket,” she thought.

No sooner had she sat on the pony than it began to rock, and then something very strange happened.

“Hello Amelia” said the pony. “Where do you want to go to?” “I didn’t know you could talk,” exclaimed Amelia. “What’s your name?” “Well, they call me Phoenix here at the Museum,” said the pony. “But I hate that name. It brings back some very unpleasant memories.”

“I’ll call you Emmie,” suggested Amelia. “That’s a good name,” said the pony with a little whinny. Now let’s be off.

Let's go back a century. That's a good round number. Start counting: 100, 99, 98....



“97, 96, 95...” continued Amelia. But she didn't get very far before her eyes began to close and everything seemed to be getting darker and darker. Suddenly she saw herself reflected in a mirror from the flickering light of a funny old candle-holder that she had in her hand. She was wearing an old-fashioned nightdress and bonnet and getting ready for bed.



She couldn't remember how long she'd been sleeping when she heard music in the distance.

A piano was making strange faraway sounds and someone was singing.

Amelia made her way downstairs in the darkness towards the light coming from the half-open door of the drawing room.

There were ladies in long silk dresses of different colours with strange pale faces. One of them was seated at the piano.

The music was odd but nice.



“What was the song called?” wondered Amelia.

Tip-toeing towards the piano so as not to be noticed she read the words of the song-book.

“Sing me to sleep” she read.

Well, it obviously hasn’t worked for me, laughed Amelia.



And then, suddenly, as though the laugh had broken the spell, she found herself in her ordinary clothes with Nanny Julie, Grandad Ralph, Maisie and Iris in the Costume Room admiring all the gloves, fans and other things on the shelves of the display cabinets.

“Can I have shoes like that?” asked Amelia.



“Those are very special shoes,” said Iris. “But we’ll try to find some like that for the dressing-up basket so you can try them on next time you come to the Costume Room.”

“And now we’d better go downstairs to see those sponges that Grandad Ralph’s been taking about,” said Nanny Julie. “Do you want to say good-bye to the pony? Perhaps you can ride him next time.”

“Poor thing,” said Iris. “His mane and tail were damaged in a fire at the school where he used to live. That’s why he’s called Phoenix.”

Amelia winked at Emmie.

And she was sure that Emmie winked back.

THE END

If you enjoyed this story why not visit Fairlynch Museum in Budleigh Salterton and have your own adventure?!

Iris, Muffy, Phoenix also known as Emmie and all the dolls would love to meet you. And who knows what you might find in that dressing-up basket?

The Museum is open every afternoon from 2.00 - 4.30 pm until the end of September.

Except for Saturdays because that's Muffy's day off.