



MARCH 2005
Volume 2
Number 1

THE **Lundby** LETTER

A Quarterly Newsletter Published for Members of the We Love Lundby Club

DOLLHOUSE EXHIBITION RETURNS TO STOCKHOLM

AFTER DELIGHTING DOLLHOUSE collectors in London for more than four months, the Home Swede Home exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood closed on February 6. We Love Lundby Club Advisory Member Yvette Wadsted has informed us that a new exhibition is planned for viewing in Stockholm in the coming months. There's even more great news for Lundby collectors—a U.S. museum is also interested in showing the exhibition!

Yvette described the exhibit in London as consisting of four showcases showing Lundby, Brio, and Micki Gemla dollhouses and four cases containing Lundby and Brio furniture from 1950 through 2000. Each of the four dollhouses was creatively furnished and accessorized to show different Swedish customs, such as the mid-summer celebration, graduation day, a birthday party, and a Christmas Eve celebration.

Yvette's work on her book on Scandinavian design in the dollhouse is progressing very well. Her assistance with the Lundby and Brio article on how to pinpoint the differences between the 1960s Swedish dollhouses has been invaluable. ♥



Page from a Brio catalog. Note the small label centered on the gable.

Photo courtesy of Yvette Wadsted

Lundby and Brio: Subtle Differences in the 1960s

FIRST IN A SERIES

By Sue Morse

ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY the dollhouses of the three major Swedish firms of the 1960s, Lundby, Brio, and Micki Gemla, can cause even the most zealous collector to fall into a quagmire of doubt. As soon as one is certain of a conclusion, then a twist appears that creates even more confusion—the fact that each company manufactured subtle variations of their houses. We must applaud the Home Swede Home exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood for tackling this question. To help set our readers' minds somewhat



← Brio house with stone wall

Photo courtesy of Patricia Harrington



Lundby house with sunken room →

Photo from the Morse collection.

at ease, this article will discuss in more detail the differences between the Lundby and Brio houses, while the Micki Gemla house will be contrasted in the next issue.

The Brio house has misled many collectors, including this author, as it most closely resembles the two-story Lundby house in dimensions, 16"/41 cm to roof peak, 27"/69 cm long, and 10"/26 cm wide. However, the peak of the tiled paper roof is in the center of the house, not toward the left side. There is a white triangle of wood

Continued on page 2

Editor's Note: With many thanks to We Love Lundby Advisory Member Patricia Harrington (see her biosketch on page 5), *The Lundby Letter* is honored to reprint an article about Per Börnfelt, the founder of Lerro, a dollhouse furniture company, and later partner of Axel and Grete Thomsen, who created the Lundby dollhouse. Patricia went to extraordinary lengths to obtain and translate the article and we are deeply indebted to her for sharing this valuable Lundby historical information about the original designer of Lundby furniture.

Lundby Lore

By Carolyn Frank

Locating unique and interesting items is always a challenge for Lundby collectors. Both Sue and I were fortunate recently to win a rare “Kombinationsbord” on eBay. A Kombinationsbord, translated into English, is a combination or multi-use table.

The eBay seller was our own **Elisabeth Garner** of Plymouth, Devon, UK. Lis originally intended to use the little tables as desks in a schoolroom setting, but her business in vintage miniatures and caring for two lively daughters kept her interests elsewhere. Lis and her daughters, **Caitlin** and **Brodie Butchart**, are Charter Family Members of the We Love Lundby Club.

Prior to the eBay auction listings, the only illustration of the Kombinationsbord known to us was in a Lundby catalog, printed in Swedish, of 1982/83. Our member and good friend who knows the Swedish language, **Patricia Harrington**, graciously translated the captions for use in the present article.

The Kombinationsbord is made of a light colored wood, possibly pine or birch, and it is presented in the 1982/83 catalog as part of the #7508 Children's Den. The boxed set also included two nursery chairs. The little chairs are most frequently found with a round table instead of the multi-use version.



The unusual Kombinationsbord can be manually turned to form different furniture functions—a nursery table, a children's desk, a little girl's vanity with Mylar mirror, and a baby's rocker/bouncer. The table, vanity, and the rocker variants (along with the other nursery pieces) are shown in the photographs. In English the caption under the photographs on the right, reads: “Combination-table. Much more play!”

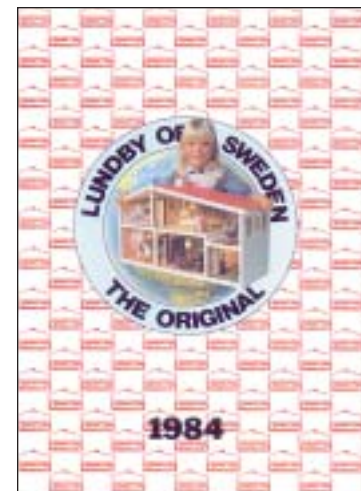
Post Scriptum: The oven rack for the #2531 Cooker, featured in the Autumn 2004 Issue has elicited considerable interest among our members, and knowledge of

other racks has surfaced. Caitlin Butchart has one for the cooker in her Stockholm house. Patricia Harrington emailed me that the stoves/cookers in Sweden have oven racks similar to US/UK baking sheets, so the rare oven rack was probably created for the foreign market. I was presented another rack recently by a former business associate, and this particular rack may have belonged at one time to a famed British actress and noted miniature collector. I am attempting to document the original ownership of the rack, and I will keep the members posted on my findings. ♥

Lundby and Brio Differences—continued from page 1

under the peak, and if you're lucky enough to find one with a logo, it will be found under the peak of the roof. The upper level has only two rooms, with no sunken room on the right as in the Lundby house. Various colorful wallpapers decorate the house; even a stone wall effect has been seen on the second floor of a Brio house.

The lower level has three rooms with the bathroom in the middle. Brio's grilled staircase from the bottom floor leads upward to the left instead of the right and emerges on the second floor farther to the left. Another version of the Brio house with a center staircase has been seen on eBay.



Last Issue's Question: Can you date this vintage Lundby button?

Answer: The Lundby of Sweden button found on eBay and pictured in the last issue is from 1984. Carolyn's catalog displays an identical lovely young lady hugging a Lundby house. ♥

The Lundby Dollhouse: Optimism about the Future on a Small Scale

by Olle Wilson¹

DURING THE POST-WWII PERIOD, optimism about the future, increasing prosperity, and intensive residential construction meant a boom period for the Scandinavian furniture trade. Modern housing was provided with furniture just as modern, in a practical size and functional design. Most important of all, everything was new—the location, the home, the furniture. For the generation who moved from rural areas to the cities, it may have felt like living in a dollhouse sometimes. So perhaps it was not just by chance that the cultural climate was the origin of the modern dollhouse: adapted for industrial mass-production and furnished with miniature versions of the parents' new household goods from IKEA, Dux, NK, and Fritz Hansen.

In 1947, Axel Thomsen delivered the first dollhouses from the Lundby section of Hising Island² to the Ferdinand Lundqvist Department Store in Göteborg. The houses were said to have been transported in a baby carriage (pram) over the Hising Bridge. Two years later, Per Börnfelt began producing dollhouse furniture. The company was named "Lerro" and production was done on the ground floor of his parents' home. The house burned down in 1959, one result of which was the two companies merged. Their joint factory was constructed in Lerum in 1962. Per Börnfelt was responsible for interior design, everything from wallpaper patterns and lamp fittings to coffee tables and TV sets. He is retired now and paints watercolors in his studio in Åkersberga. The need for aesthetic expression has always been there. Per said, "It was Pappa who saw I had ideas and invented things, and told me, 'You should not sit in an office.'"

Per Börnfelt decided to be a cartoonist and was admitted to drawing school at the Craftsmen's Association. The work suited



Per Börnfelt

Photo courtesy of Olle Wilson.

his feeling for detail and ability to create lifelike objects. Just for the fun of it, he built a group of dollhouse furniture, and when his father saw it, he encouraged Per to show his work to a wholesale toy dealer. And that is how Per Börnfelt obtained his first order.

"I was forced to leave school before I really got started, and started my own business when I was 23 years old."

The young businessman did a market survey in the city's toy stores and verified the available dollhouse furniture was dull and poorly made. "There weren't any fine details, and children love details; it has to look real!"

Per went back to the basics, could recall himself how it felt to play with cars and construct buildings and landscapes in damp sand. From that experience the interior designs were created. The biggest challenge was to recreate his "feel" for design in large volume; everything had to be able to be mass-produced and sturdy enough for children. In the beginning, everything was made of wood, and the house itself was the same as it is today, asymmetrical in a scale of 1:15 with three rooms, a kitchen, and a little bathroom. The style of architecture was developed from the technical and financial aspects of manufacturing, just as it is today.

The company expanded. Bror Åsberg, formerly a representative for Lego in

Sweden, was responsible for marketing and finances. One marketing gambit was to loan dollhouses to the toy stores during the Christmas season, and see to it they were set up and displayed like sparkling Christmas scenes in the shop windows.

It was the Christmas trade that was responsible for the greatest share of sales that year. At the peak of the season, seven tractor-trailers were loaded with dollhouses every week. Soon after, Lundby in Lerum was the largest supplier of dollhouses in Sweden. In 1967, 35,000 houses were manufactured. The factory had 40 employees and some of the production was done by people at home. Approximately 100 people were busy making furniture and other decorative accessories in their homes. They regularly received a box of materials, and had various patterns and templates to help them assemble the parts. Lundby's success can be attributed to the fact that production was based on the same foundation as modern design. Everything was carried out with a feeling for detail, made in a specially selected type of wood, and the original models came from the leading designers. The architecture of the dollhouse was also designed as a typical two-story house from that time period, suited for an average-sized nuclear family.

The full range of items grew in pace with the increase in prosperity in Sweden and homes began to be filled with more and more acquisitions. The TV set with Pippi Longstocking or the playful kitten



Pippi Longstocking TV set

Photo courtesy of Olle Wilson.

¹ Swedish journalist; published in *Dagens Nyheter* November 19, 2000. To contact the author: www.skrivoskruv.se. Translated by Patricia Harrington. Please contact the translator for permission to use the translation: newswedepat@yahoo.com. Additional footnotes added by the translator are for clarity to a non-Swedish reader.

² Hising Island is part of the city of Göteborg (Gothenburg) on the West Coast of Sweden.

on the screen was immensely popular, as was the aquarium, the telephone, and the vacuum cleaner.

Per Börnfelt did not want to name any prototype for his designing, but he admitted the pattern "Virrvar"³ on the kitchen table was stolen from Sigvard Bernadotte.⁴ The grand piano had been part of the whole line since the 1950s, but when pop music took over a decade later, one could also purchase a modern electric organ. It had the same sheet of music, and with a magnifying glass one can see it is the introductory notes to "The Marseillaise." Per Börnfelt recalls, "We sold the houses with almost no profit." By the end of the 1960s, the house alone cost about 50 kronor.⁵ It would then have to be furnished, and that is when profits were made. The Rococo bureau with an Oriental rug cost 5 kronor.



Virrvar table

Photo from the Morse collection

"For that matter, I designed the original of that rug," explained Per. That was how it was done. He sat there and meticulously drew by hand every brick of the house facade and the fireplace so they would look realistic. Lundby received a great deal of criticism for that in the 1970s. Dollhouses were said to represent a bourgeois and old-fashioned life style and reinforced out-dated gender roles. They inhibited fantasy and the furniture was not ergonomically adapted to children's hands. "A psychologist called me up one day and asked if I had any education, if I had studied child psychology. I replied that I was only self taught."

Traditionally, the dollhouse had been a girl's toy, but during the seventies it became more common for boys to play with dollhouses; however, there were few of them who had their own houses, and



1950–60 Lundby house showing the grand piano.
House wired by a third party.
Photo courtesy of Peter Pehrsson

perhaps that depended on their parents' fears of encouraging a feminine identity. In 1979, Lundby in Lerum had a turnover of 30 million kronor.⁶ A large portion was exported to, among others, the U.S. More luxurious models were made for that market and Lundby was forced to omit the bathroom bidet, which could give offense. On the other hand, Per Börnfelt felt compelled to design a car and a garage. It was an open, two-door model, the original of which was impossible to guess. The problem was to adapt the proportions to the dollhouse, and as a result, the car was as wide as a Mercedes and as short as a VW.

Lundby continued to expand internationally during the 1980s and a greater part of the production was moved abroad. Ownership changed and Lundby became part of a larger company that experienced difficulties in the early 1990s. The dollhouse factory went bankrupt in 1993 and the name Lundby was taken over later by Micki Leksaker. By then, Per Börnfelt had already retired.

"In any case, almost all the things I designed are still produced today, which is a good testimonial to my work." Besides those items, there have not been very many additions to the assortment. Except for a personal computer in miniature. A dollhouse for our time. ♥

³ word literally means chaos, jumble, tangle. See the table #2501, e.g.

⁴ Swedish designer, famous for applied art and industrial design which included furniture, entire interiors, silver for Georg Jensen, etc. Do a "Google" search for more information and photographs.

⁵ approximately \$10 using 1969 exchange rate.

⁶ approximately \$7.5 million using 1979 exchange rate.

Per Börnfelt

Born 1926 in Skövde, Sweden. Currently living in Åkersberga. Member of "Roslagens' Painters and Österåkers Art Association." Won First Prize, age 16, in a drawing competition among all the secondary schools in Göteborg. Won Fourth Prize, age 19, in a Walt Disney drawing competition. At age 23, founded a dollhouse furniture factory. Received a prize in 1968 called "Brunte" for the Best Toy of the Year from Sweden's Toy Dealers at a banquet in the Opera Cellar restaurant. Voted one of the world's best toy designers in 1978 by Harrods of London.

Retired from dollhouse furniture in 1982. Since then has studied live-model painting, sculpture and landscape painting on the West Coast, Öland, and Gotland. Had the privilege of painting with Lena Cronqvist in the Koster archipelago. Won First Prize in the Täby Spring Salon 1997 with a watercolor of Täby's old church. Has had several separate exhibitions, and is represented in hospitals and institutions. Most recently fascinated by the possibilities of painting watercolors. Most of the subjects are from Roslagen.

English translations and notations by Patricia Harrington. Permission to translate from the Swedish was granted by Einar Estréus of Galleri Norró. Please contact the translator for permission to use the translation: newswedepat@yahoo.com

For non-Scandinavians, the following notes may be helpful:

You can see two of Per Börnfelt's paintings on Galleri Norró's website: www.hem.passagen.se/gallerinorrok_bornfelt.htm?k

Åkersberga is a town about 18 miles north-east of Stockholm. Roslagen is the coastal section of the province of Uppland in Sweden; it includes several towns and an archipelago in the Baltic Sea.

Öland and Gotland are Swedish islands in the Baltic.

Sweden is a Second Home for Patricia Harrington

After graduating from Cornell University, Patricia Harrington moved to Sweden in the late 1970s where she taught English in the Swedish Public Schools. During that time she also studied the Swedish language at Kursverksamheten in Uppsala. Currently, she lives in Maine, has three adult sons, and is married to a Swede.

Although her standard rate for translating from Swedish to English is \$25.00 an hour, she is offering a special rate of \$10.00 per hour to We Love Lundby Club members. For more information, contact Patricia at newswedepat@yahoo.com. The fascinating story about how Patricia first started her extensive Lundby collection is being saved for a future issue of *The Lundby Letter*.

What's New at Lundby

By Carolyn Frank

Members Rita Goranson, Judy Mosholder, George Mundorf, and Roy Specht contributed advertisements from their personal collections to "Dollhouse & Furniture Advertising 1880s-1980s," a new soft-cover text by Dian Zillner. Ms. Zillner has compiled an interesting assortment of printed material in this highly recommended book. It was delightful to view miniature

houses and their furnishings as they were originally presented to their public (before "little mothers" and/or time would wreak havoc on many of them). There are a number of pages devoted to vintage Lundby catalogs and brochures.

Zillner, Dian, *Dollhouse & Furniture Advertising 1880s-1990s*. Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., Anglen, PA 19130. 2004. \$29.95. Email: info@schiffer.com.

Lundby of Sweden now has a new web address: www.micki.se/Lundby. Although the text is only in Swedish, photographs of the present collection are clearly illustrated. A visit to their site is well worth the trip.

The Popstars Instrument Set (#60.5061) is now available to accompany the Popstar girls (#60.8023). The Set includes an amplifier, microphone, guitar, and illuminated colored disco/stage lights.

Lundby offered a charming Advent Calendar (#62.5050) for the 2004 Christmas Season. The calendar has become a highly collectable item, and it may soon be hard to find in toy shops or by mail order. The 24 little "windows" open to display various miniature items. I won't spoil your fun by divulging the contents of the compartments. Caution, however, should be used in opening the windows, as the perforations are difficult to pierce without a sharp instrument. If the calendar is to be given to a child, adult supervision is strongly recommended. Sue and I hope that Lundby will produce another Advent Calendar for Christmas 2005. ♥



The Children's Corner

By Camryn Long

Right after Christmas, I received a PenPal letter. Here it is:

Hi Camryn,
I'm called Caitlin Butchart and I'm 9 1/2 too! I have a Lundby Stockholm. My mum is Elisabeth Garner. Her house is a Gothenburg like yours. Hers is nine floors high.

When did you start collecting Lundby stuff? I started when I was just turning nine. My mum has just joined and she showed me The Children's Corner and I saw your article and I would like to write to you.

My favourite room in my house has got to be the front room and granny & granpa's room. What's yours?

I live in England in a place called Plymouth in Devon on the south side of England. I go to a school called Weston Mill primary. I also like writing stories and Nature and fairies and anything magical, do you?

Please write back to me soon.

Love, your PAL, Caitlin Butchart

My letter back to Caitlin is an email, so I'm calling her my e-Pal! I wrote that my favorite room is the balcony because it has pretty pink furniture and pink is my favorite color. I told Caitlin that I live near Baltimore, Maryland, and that I'm in 4th grade at Bushy Park Elementary School. I play the flute and am also acting as Auntie Em in the Wizard of Oz.

I'm active in dog obedience in 4-H and I asked Caitlin if they have 4-H in England. I also like to ride horses and I asked her if she likes horses. I just got my own Lundby horse for Christmas this year. I hope Caitlin writes back soon. ♥



◀ Clockwise from the upper left: amplifier, disco lights, microphone, keyboard, and guitar (center). Popstars Instrument Set

Photo from the Morse collection.

Special thanks to Peter Pehrsson

Peter Pehrsson paved the way for Patricia to contact Olle Wilson, the author of our special reprint. Another version of the article is on Peter's website, <http://dollhouse.mine.nu>.

Peter has uploaded catalog pages, information sheets, and photos of many dollhouses, furniture, and accessories. His Home Page says it all, "My intention is to preserve older manufactured dollhouses for the future." This is a fantastic website for Lundby lovers. A thousand thanks to you, Peter.

Lundby Connections

Like the song goes, "It's a small, small world"! We have welcomed 42 new members from the U.S., Canada, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and Australia into the We Love Lundby Club. Lundby truly enjoys an international following.

Check out the Membership Directory included with your newsletter, along with this issue's Crafting with Lundby, to get all the information about our members.

Here's news from some of our members from around the world:

Heike Krohn from Germany has collected Lundby for 12 years and would love to hear from other collectors . . . Not only does **Gerda Westerink** from the Netherlands sell vintage Lundby, she dances the tango and her husband, **Dick**, collects Flintstones memorabilia . . . **Anna-Maria Sviatko**

Member Feedback

Those members who responded to our question about the American spelling of dollhouse(s) or the international spelling of dolls house(s) or dolls' house(s) prefer the American version. However, **Patricia Harrington** suggested that any bylined or guest writers could spell it their own way so that everyone is exposed to all the different usages that exist within the English language. The editors prefer that diplomatic approach! ♥

from Australia is very excited that she is our most far-flung member. She reports that for the first time in years, Australian buyers have a Lundby distributor. Check out www.lundby.com.au for information on stocklists, etc. . . . Has anyone ever seen a small square piece of masonite on the front part of the roof of a Lundby house? **Geraldine Scott** from Florida has one and no one has seen that feature before. Is it a base for the chimney? We love to solve Lundby mysteries. ♥

All We Want Is More Lundby

Our members are constantly searching for special items. Here are a few requests. If any of our members have extras to sell, please contact the person requesting the items.

Lori Van Houten of New Jersey would love to find the set of three white window boxes and the garden chairs.

George Mundorf of New York City is still looking for the big swimming pool and the horse lamp at a decent price.

Veronica Fuller from New York State wants a Stockholm house with the stable extension.

Louana Singleton from Indiana sent us the following list: #5392 bookcase, #8822 shower with striped wall, #4113 white round end table, #9709 white painted brass bed with two end tables, #4200 white table, plus various other accessories. ♥

Members in Focus

FIRST IN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

By Carolyn Frank

LARRY HOTALING, the Micki agent for USA/Canada, was recently in the States from his alternate base in Sweden. Larry is an ardent supporter and an Advisory Member of the We Love Lundby Club. Although his time was limited due to business commitments, Larry generously replied by email to a few biographical/professional inquiries. Our compilation of his responses follows.

While he was a pro basketball player in Europe, he met his future wife in Sweden, and eventually decided to settle in the Scandinavian country. He initially imported American sporting goods into Sweden; however, he later expanded his import business to include toys, which he imported for eight years.

Through his connections in the Swedish toy world, Larry met Per Aronsson, a high-level sales manager of the Micki Company. Per and Larry formed an agreement to distribute Micki's products (including their acquisition of Lundby) in the United States.

His parents, based in Sherrill, New York, joined Larry in establishing Hotaling Imports in 1998. Hotaling Imports distributes to the specialty toy, gift, hobby, and dolls house market. Larry now divides his time between Sweden and the United States.

Lundby, at the time it was first reintroduced in the US, proved profitable for Micki, as there was considerable interest among Lundby owners to update their Gothenburg/Stockholm houses with the newer accessories. Unfortunately, the demand for Lundby items decreased after the initial sales impact.

Larry's challenge, at the present time, is to encourage young girls to "return" to Lundby. Many new items have been added to the line in the past few years, and he feels that there is still a market for the product. *The Lundby Letter* plans to have a more extensive interview with both Larry and Per Aronsson in an upcoming issue. ♥



The Lundby Letter is published quarterly for members of the We Love Lundby Club. If you have any inquiries about an article, or if you are interested in submitting a story or project of your own, please do not hesitate to write or email us.

THE LUNDBY LETTER
We Love Lundby Club
P.O. Box 7429
Alexandria, VA 22307
Email: welovelundby@aol.com

Editor: Sue Morse
Associate Editor: Carolyn Frank
Advisory Members: Patricia Harrington
Larry Hotaling
Marion Osborne
Yvette Wadsted
Design: Don Christian

© 2005, We Love Lundby Club. All rights reserved.

Coming Up in the June 2005 Issue

- ☛ Danish competitors of Lundby.
- ☛ Differences between the Lundby and the Micki Gemla houses.
- ☛ Interviews with Members.
- ☛ Detailed plans for the club website.
- ☛ Wish lists.
- ☛ A letter and photo from Caitlin, Camryn's Lundby e-Pal.
- ☛ And much more.