



Tony Green with a recent acquisition from abroad, the largest 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' toy to be made.



The real 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' driven by Pierre Picton and full of lucky children leaving a toy fair where it had been on display



Original souvenir film booklets.



Tony Green's hobby is building a collection of anything to do with the famous 1960s musical movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. He has succeeded in gathering together the largest collection of its type in the country - perhaps in the whole wide world? One item he cannot add to his accumulation of such memorabilia is the magical car itself! The real *Chitty*, the star of the film, is owned by ex-Bertram Mills Circus clown Pierre Picton who resides in Stratford-upon-Avon. Pierre a few years ago turned down an offer of £750,000 for the famous vehicle from Michael Jackson, so there is little chance of Tony including *Chitty* itself in his collection!

What can a *Chitty* collector collect, you may ask? Well, his fabulous display of memorabilia includes several *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* models, including detailed die-cast examples like the ones produced by the Corgi company to plastic kits made in Spain. His latest model acquisition is from Spain and is large enough to accommodate a small child in the driving seat. Corgi, whose first example appeared round about the time the film first

appeared, made the most popular of *Chitty* models, a die-cast replica complete with its four plastic passengers. The Corgi model was later reissued to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the film and, more recently, it reappeared as an 'economy' version having only the lone driver instead of the full Potts family with 'Truly Scrumptious'.

The 'Magical Car' was also issued in the USA in similar size in line with the film's release, moulded from plastic by the American Mattel company. This car also, like the Corgi counterpart, also came with a plastic mattress that allowed the film car to travel on water! Both had flip-out wings! Mattel also, at the same time introduced a couple of dolls representing 'Truly Scrumptious' and a 'talking doll' of Caractacus Potts. In the film actor Dick Van Dyke aptly played the part of Professor Caractacus Potts whilst the parts his two young children 'Jemima' and 'Jeremy' were acted by Heather Ripley and Adrian Hall. 'Truly Scrumptious', played by actress Sally Ann Howes provided the love interest for Caractacus Potts.

The doll figures of the leading stars are not all that easy to come across, in the UK at least and tended to be circulated in America. The *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* memorabilia that collectors look out for covers a number of commercial products. Tony's vast collection contains hot-drink vacuum containers and sandwich boxes that feature brightly coloured pictures of *Chitty*, illustrated children's books with film illustrations. Wanted too are film stills and the photographs that once were displayed at cinema entrances, publicity material, posters, banners, LP records from around the world featuring *Chitty* on their covers, and autographed pictures signed by the stars of the film.

Tony's collection contains many such items and he has been able to add autographed material, a huge banner that once decorated the entrance to a cinema during the release of the movie, and an item from the film set. This is a very detailed scale model of 'Grandpa Potts' garden shed in which he sang 'Port out, Starboard home' as he was being towed through the air by the baddie Baron's airship.

"I managed to get this model from the son of the man who had created it for use in making the film," explained Tony. "He was evidently a first-class craftsman and it is beautifully made and very detailed in every way. I understand that it was actually used in the filming but I am unable to find out when or where. I am often asked the value of material related to the film but no one really can say. Most of the items will have never appeared in an auction sale and collectors will only pay the price that they want to. A largish film poster in good condition will always sell well as there is a market for such items. I have acquired my collection by offering whatever I can afford to make an item mine. It usually works!"

The pleasure that Tony gets from showing off his collection is in seeing the happiness it brings to people. He often puts on an impressive display at events such as toy fairs. Occasionally the publicity brings him the opportunity to be offered an interesting *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* item. Obviously there is little likelihood of Tony becoming the owner of the real *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* with Pierre Picton refusing to sell it for three-quarters of a million, so he is currently in the process of building his own full-sized model!

Pierre Picton continues the legend of *Chitty* by showing the car at steam rallies, motor gatherings, and at supermarket openings. He 'does' weddings with the fabulous car - much more magical than hiring a Rolls-Royce! The car's popularity continues across the years from generation to generation, thanks to TV repeats of the film and its availability on video recordings! Everybody loves *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*! Several mock-ups were made for filming purposes. Pierre's is however, the real version and legally displays its 'GEN II' legal numberplate that allows the car to be driven on public highways!

Many people are surprised to learn that the story of the magical car was written by Ian Fleming, creator of the James Bond stories. Film producer Cubby Broccoli decided he would like to film the adventures of 007 and bought the rights to the Fleming books. He discovered that the batch included Fleming's story for children, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. He read it, liked it - and filmed it as a very successful musical movie. The magical car was even created by the same team that produced the James Bond film cars!

Fleming had based *Chitty* on the cars run in the 1920s by racing enthusiast Count Zborowski at Brooklands. The Count favoured cars fitted with powerful aeroplane engines. Three of them he fondly named, one after another, 'Chitty Bang Bang', suggesting the sound their engines produced in operation. In the Fleming story an extra 'Chitty' was added for some reason, probably to suit the musical score. Zborowski had success with his 'Chittys' but, alas, in his late twenties, he crashed a Mercedes he was driving in the Italian Grand Prix of 1924 and was killed!



Tony Green enjoys showing off his 'Chitty' collection at various events, toy shows in particular. The serpent motor horn is an identical replica Tony had made to eventually appear on the full-sized replica 'Chitty' he is currently working on!



This game is by Milton Bradley of the USA and may be harder to find this side of the Atlantic and maybe a little more expensive for this reason?



'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' child's bracelet.



Books, models, games, jigsaws, photographs, all are reminders of the magical 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'! The boxed doll of Dick Van Dyke, in his role as 'Professor Caractacus Potts' is a rarity Tony found in America.



Two models of 'Chitty' by 'Molto' of Spain. These are 14 ins in length, much larger than the well-known Corgi examples.



Sandwich boxes and vacuum flasks also honour the memory of the movie, and make ideal collectables!



Jigsaw puzzles featuring scenes from the film are specially sought after and can still be picked up for the 'proverbial song' at car-boot sales and toy fairs.



The famous smaller Corgi model was issued at the time of the film, and again later, to commemorate the film's 30th Anniversary. A cheaper Corgi model is now available with driver only.



Ex-clown Pierre Picton was a 'stand-in' for Dick Van Dyke during some of the filming.