Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Exhibition opens at Beaulieu

Published: October 17, 2018

Author:

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/chitty-chitty-bang-bang-exhibition-opens-at-beaulieu/

Photo courtesy National Motor Museum.

This is a ‘Must see’ – It’s fantasmagorical, in fact…

Chris Adamson was there to see the display unveiled…

(Words by Chris; photos by Chris except where individually credited).

Say the name Ian Fleming to anyone and they will automatically link the English author with

his James Bond novels forever immortalised on the silver screen – but how many will remember that Fleming also penned the children's classic Chitty Chitty Bang Bang?

The much-loved book that led to the film about a magical flying car was inspired by the real-life exploits of racing driver Count Louis Zborowski, who designed and built four aero-engined racing cars that were reputedly named Chitty Bang Bang because of the sound they made while standing idle.

Fleming wrote the book for his son Caspar and it was published posthumously in 1964 – four years later in 1968 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang the musical movie, starring Dick Van Dyke, Sally Ann Howes and Lionel Jeffries, was given a Royal World Premier by producer Cubby Broccoli who was also the mastermind behind the James bond film franchise.

To celebrate the half century of one of the world's favourite films, the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu has installed a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang 50 years exhibition which opens on Saturday 20 October and runs until Novemebr 2019.

The display tells the story of Chitty as the star of the fantasmagorical family adventure and features an original screen Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (one of six made for the movie) and the 1909 Humber 8hp driven by Truly Scrumptious in the much-loved musical film – both have been long-time residents at Beaulieu.

Joining these is the horse-drawn Child Catchers carriage which stands outside Coggins' Garage (where Chitty – an early 20th century grand prix racing car – is found rusting away by the Potts children); this has been adapted from the museum's existing vintage garage.

It houses the inventive machines of prop designer Rowland Emett seen in the film, including the Humbug Major Sweet Machine, Clockwork Lullabye, Little Dragon Carpet Sweeper and Hot Air Rocking Chair.

Costumes as seen in the film include those of the infamous Child Catcher and Sally Anne Howes's life-size music box doll dress which she wore while dancing with Dick Van Dyke for Baron Bomburst's birthday surprise.

A cloud-shaped timeline wall charts the Chitty story from its beginnings and includes the exhaust and leather bonnet strap from Count Zborowski's original Mercedes based Chitty. Alongside these are first edition copies of Fleming's book and a programme from the World

Premiere of the film.

Weird and wonderful Chitty memorabilia includes signatures of the star-studded cast; original film posters; pedal and Corgi cars; comics; computer games; pop-up books and even lunch boxes made to celebrate the children's film.

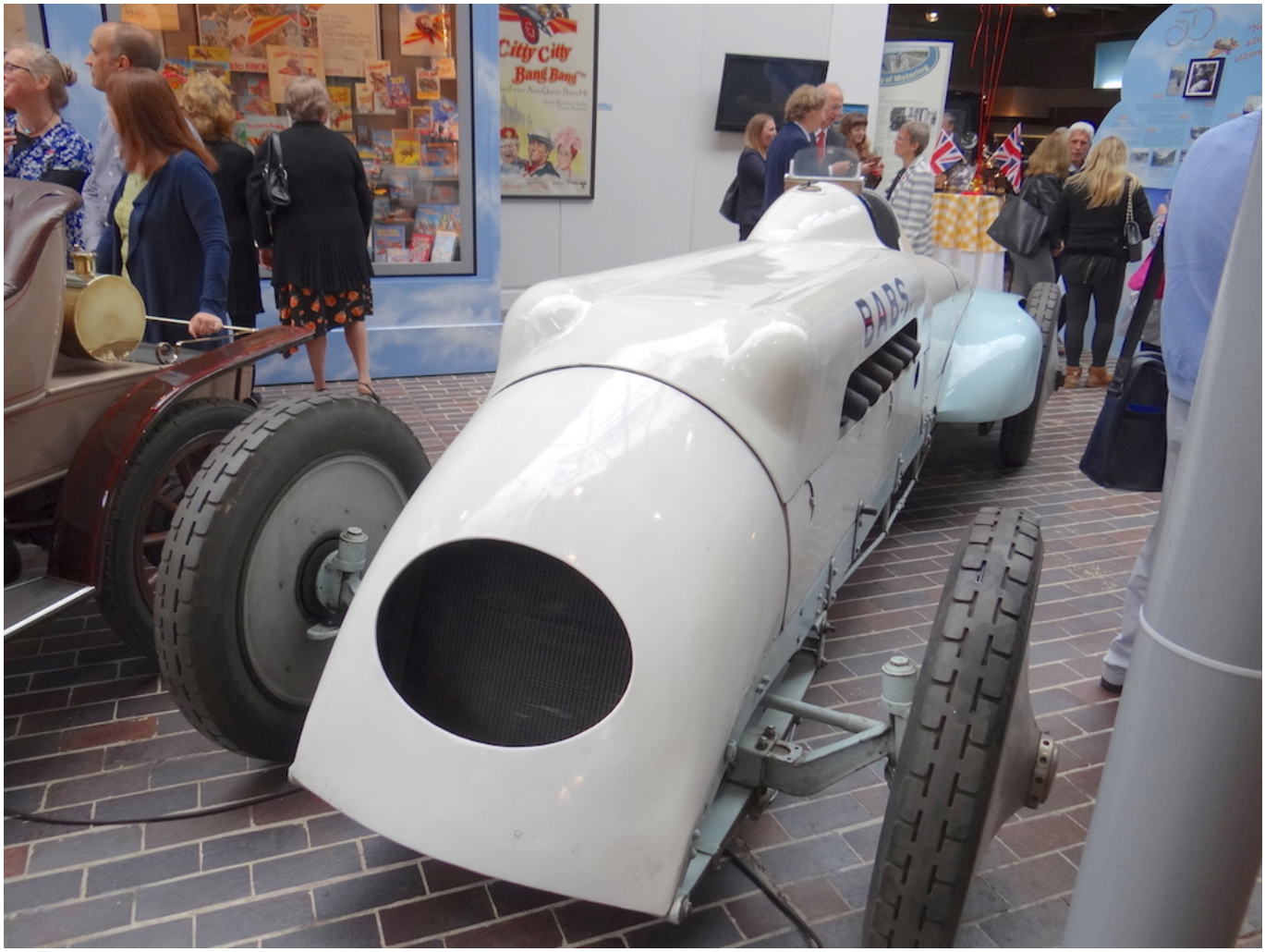
Never exhibited before original film concept art by Sir Ken Adam, storyboard watercolour artwork by Robert Laing and technical drawings by Peter Lamont are also on show, along with the solid silver Chitty model bought for producer Cubby Broccoli by his wife Dana.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Outside, in the grounds, visitors to Beaulieu can see a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang reconstruction being driven around the popular New Forest attraction.

An extra addition to the exhibition which will only be on show until February next year is Babs, the V12 27litre car that J.G. Parry-Thomas used to set a land speed record of 171.02 mph in 1926 – this started life as Chitty 4 and was acquired by Parry-Thomas and renamed Babs following the death of Count Zborowski.

BABS.



FILM FACTS:

Julie Andrews was originally asked to play the role of Truly Scrumptious (reuniting the pairing made famous in Mary Poppins) but she declined.

The fully working, road-going Chitty used in the film was purchased at auction by film director Sir Peter Jackson (he of Lord on the Rings) in 2011 for $805,000.

THE REAL CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANGS:

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Chitty Bang Bang was the informal name of a number of celebrated English racing cars, built and raced by Count Louis Zborowski and his engineer Clive Gallop in the 1920s.

The origin of the name Chitty Bang Bang is disputed, but may have been inspired by aeronautical engineer Letitia Chitty, the sound of an idling aeroplane engine or from a salacious World War I song.

They were built in Canterbury and stored at Higham Park, Zborowski's country house at Bridge. The cars were so loud that Canterbury reportedly passed a by-law prohibiting them from entering within the city walls.

Chitty 1 was a chain-driven customised Mercedes chassis containing a 23-litre 6-cylinder Maybach aero-engine. It won two races on its debut at Brooklands in 1921, coming second to another Zborowski car in a sprint race at the same event. It was fitted with four seats and a crude, oversized exhaust pipe, in order to misguide the handicappers and spectators. Its top speed on the day was 100.75 miles per hour.

For its next outing, it was refitted, as a two-seater with a cowled radiator and a properly plumbed exhaust. It attained nearly 120 mph on one occasion, and had its race handicap consistently reappraised. It subsequently crashed, removing three fingers from a timing official. The car was rebuilt, and passed into the ownership of the sons of Arthur Conan Doyle, but was quickly retired as a racing car, and was later bought for spare parts by John Morris, the Maybach engine being offered to William Boddy, editor of Motor Sport.

Chitty 2 had a shorter wheelbase, an 18.8-litre Benz IV aero-engine and the coachwork was carried out by Bligh Brothers of Canterbury. It was never as successful as its predecessor, but took part in several road races, including a Sahara Desert expedition in 1922. It later became the property of the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. It then became part of the private collection of Bob Bahre at his home in Paris Hill, Maine USA (the former mansion of Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's first Vice-President).

Chitty 3 was based on a modified Mercedes chassis with a 160 bhp Mercedes single-

overhead-camshaft six-cylinder aero engine, tuned to produce 180 bhp. The car recorded a lap of Brooklands at 112.68 mph. Zborowski later used it as his personal transport, and drove it to Stuttgart when he negotiated to join the Mercedes racing team.[3]

Chitty 4 (also known as the Higham Special) was Louis Zborowski's largest car yet. Using a 450 bhp V12 Liberty aero engine of 27 litres capacity, with a gearbox and chain-drive from a pre-war Blitzen Benz, it was the largest capacity racing car ever to run at Brooklands. Still not fully developed by the time of Zborowski's death in November 1924, it was purchased from his estate by J.G. Parry-Thomas for the sum of £125.

Parry-Thomas rechristened the car Babs and rebuilt it with four Zenith carburettors and his own design of pistons. In April 1926, Parry-Thomas used the car to set a new land speed record at 171.02 mph. However, he was killed in the vehicle in a later attempt on 3 March 1927. Babs was buried at Pendine Sands in Wales, but was later recovered and restored – it's usual home is the Pendine Museum of Speed.

DONT MISS THIS EXHIBITION!

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang 50 years runs until November 2019 and can be seen as part of the general admission to Beaulieu, which includes entrance to the National Motor Museum, World of Top Gear, On Screen Cars, the ancestral Montagu family home of Palace House, 13th century Beaulieu Abbey and the grounds and gardens.To buy tickets in advance online or for more information see www.beaulieu.co.uk or call 01590 612345.