

THE CHITTY-BANG-BANGS AND COUNT ZBOROWSKI

At various times there were three cars of this name. The name, adopted by the Count as a whimsical gesture, was derived from the theme of a lewd World War One song. Originally 'Chitti-Chitti-Bang-Bang', it was later spelt with a 'y'.

Count Louis Vorow Zborowski was born in 1885 of English and American parent, was briefly at King's School and also briefly at Eton. His father was killed in 1903 driving a Mercedes at La Turbie hill climb. He inherited Higham House from his mother when he was just 16, along with an 8 million pound legacy from his father and 3 million from his mother.

With this comfortable financial balance at his disposal, he turned to cars and racing with an enthusiasm which resulted in the first of the amateur-built post-war aero-engined track monsters being built at the Higham workshops.

A Maybach aero engine was fitted into a modified pre-1914 Mercedes chassis and a rudimentary body was built by Blythe Bros. of Canterbury. Chitty I was taken to race at Brooklands where its chief rival was a 350 h.p. Sunbeam. During a practice, Chitty crashed and had to be rebuilt, but it was a winner on several occasions at speeds of up to 115 m.p.h.

During 1921 an improved version was being built with the idea of making Chitty II an exciting road car rather than a racer.

At the Brookland's Autumn meeting both Chittys ran but with too severe a handicap were unsuccessful.

A little later, the Count imported from Germany a 28/95 Mercedes chassis fitted with a Mercedes aero engine, which was then turned into a car 'for continental touring'. Thus, Chitty III (sometimes called 'The White Car') was born. On one occasion both Chitty II and Chitty III as 'baggage waggon' crossed part of the Sahara.

When Chitty III had been remodelled, Chitty II was disposed of.

Chitty III was raced at Brooklands in 1924 where it broke the lap record but was beaten by a mere two yards because it slowed down thinking that a tyre had burst.

This was the last time Zborowski appeared at Brooklands in one of the Chittys.

Sadly, on October 11th 1924 the Count was killed at Lesmo during the Italian Grand Prix. Coincidentally, like his father, whilst driving a Mercedes. So came to an end the era of the racing Chittys.

An interesting interlude whilst the Count was at Higham concerns the local fire brigade. In 1920 its chief had complained that their horse-drawn appliance could not reach fires in outlying districts in time to be effective.

The Count, hearing of this, presented them with a car along the lines of the Chittys. Blythe Bros. adapted the body to accomodate 10 men and a mile of hose. With a rating of 75 h.p. and a speed of 60 m.p.h. this was probably the fastest of its kind in the country at that time. For his generosity the Count was made Honorary Captain of the Brigade.

THE CHITTYS AFTER ZBOROWSKI'S DEATH

CHITTY I

Just before the Count's death this had been bought by Zborowski's neighbour, Capt. J.E.P. Howey, but raced only once. It passed to the Conan-Doyle brothers and ran in one speed trial. In 1934, being towed, and shedding tyres, it was exhibited at Brooklands, then left on the grass at the aerodrome in the hope of attracting a buyer. This didn't happen, the chassis was cut up and Chitty I was soon no more.

CHITTY II

Believed to have been sold to a Mr. Fowler for £825 with spare engine, it was later owned by David Scott-Moncrieff. Later still, a Mr. Hollis of Dover bought it, didn't like the driving of it and left it in a shed at his farm for 20 years. Seen there by Mr. Peter Harris-Mayes of Deal the now dilapidated vehicle was given to him by Mr. Hollis. Mr. Harris-Mayes restored it. It was the subject of Ian Fleming's children's fantasy and film and after a few more years it was sold to an American and now resides in a motor museum in America.

CHITTY III

Thought to have been bought by Noel and Polo, she was raced at Brooklands in 1929. There is no positive proof that this car was Chitty III because the engine was different from that previously described when raced at Brooklands. Probably Capt. Howey had put in another engine when it was owned by him. After a few more races it passed to Lord Carlow but is then believed to have been broken up.