

COLLECTING DINKY TOYS BY FRANK LOMAX

ALMOST everybody has, at one time or another, tried his hand at collecting as a hobby. Cigarette cards, coins, stamps and matchboxes are just a few of the more popular subjects which people choose, but, in fact, virtually anything is "collectable". Railway enthusiasts will travel far and wide in the hope of purchasing discarded porters' lamps or obsolete timetables and many an old schooner's figure-head has ended up decorating a suburban dining room. The book collector dreams of finding a "gem" amongst mounds of cheap periodicals and obscure volumes, while the autograph hunter will wait patiently—for hours in the rain, if necessary—outside the stage-door for the latest manifestation of the pop scene.

I could continue giving examples 'ad infinitum', but I think it is true to say that one of the most popular branches of the collecting hobby is die-cast models. Much is said in our modern age about the dangers of the automobile to the environment—traffic—congested city centres, noise, toxic fumes contaminating the atmosphere, but, valid as this may be, it tends to overshadow the motor car's inestimable practical value and the history surrounding its development. Many books have been written—and

are still being published—on the history of the motor car, and it would undoubtedly take a lifetime of study to read them all. This, of course, is not necessary, but it is wise for the young man interested in model car-collecting to read some volumes on the subject to supplement his hobby, and at the same time, to increase its interest.

The question of what particular brand of models to collect deserves serious contemplation. This can prove a difficult problem as there are several manufacturers involved in the production of model cars. The choice must depend on the type of collection you wish to compile. If, for example, a collector is only interested in Fire Service vehicles, he is presented with a wide range of possibilities from a number of manufacturers. If, on the other hand, he wants to create a collection which reflects the overall history of the motor car, then his natural choice should be Dinky Toys.

Over 1,000 Dinky items have been produced, the majority of the models being based on actual vehicles. Even more important, from the collector's point of view, is that they represent the longest unbroken run of die-cast models still being made.

The age at which one begins to

collect model cars is of no real importance, but it is usually the case that the collector who started when he was a boy is today's connoisseur with an extensive and interesting range of vehicles. Many of the early Dinky Toys are much sought-after by serious enthusiasts who are often prepared to pay quite high prices for them and it is wise when travelling around the local market or junk shop, to keep a keen eye open for these small die-cast models.

I believe that almost every collector has a main interest in a particular type of model. Probably the most popular are the military and commercial vehicles, buses and aeroplanes. There are, however, collectors who specialise in farm vehicles, Police vehicles, sporting models—in fact, the list is almost endless!

Why do people collect Dinky Toys? An authority on the subject has described it as a "pure nostalgia for childhood's toys". I think this is partly true, but there is also something of the dreamer in the collector of models. He may not be able to own an actual pre-war Bentley Coupe or a Lamborghini Marzal, but he can purchase models of them and eventually build up a collection which inspires interest and admiration from his friends and colleagues.

468,592,413,563 ÷ 9076 — IN YOUR HEAD, PLEASE BY F. VANSON

IF, at the age of ten, you had been asked to work out the compound interest on £4444 for 4444 days at $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ per annum, it is possible that you might have produced the answer. But could you have found it in your head in two minutes?

Could you, at eleven, have divided 468,592,413,563 by 9076, and found the correct figure in one minute? These are a couple of representative problems posed to young George Parker Bidder, one of the most extraordinary arithmetical geniuses known to history, a boy who grew up to be a great civil engineer and the brain behind the construction of what was then the world's largest dock.

Bidder was born in 1805 at Moreton Hamstead in Devon, the son of a stonemason. Though he had no formal schooling as a child, he could, by the age of eleven, perform these astonishing feats of calculation quite readily. Even at the age of four he had gained a local fame for his skill and was shown off by his father as an infant prodigy. This was the more remarkable because until he was six he had not learned to count the numerals up to ten!

Most of his time as a young boy was spent in the company of the village smith. One day at the forge he overheard some dispute in reckoning. At once he piped up with the correct answer. At this he was

posed further questions of increasing difficulty, all of which he answered with astounding accuracy and speed. At this time, it is recorded, he could not, on paper, multiply more than two places by two places (up to 99 times 99).

By casual means however he acquired over the next few years a working knowledge of notation up to millions and was able to apply it to a vast range of arithmetical problems, all of which he executed in his head with astonishing speed and infallible correctness. Eventually he could multiply 12 places of figures by 12 places, though he admitted that this was not too easy!

His father, scenting that there was gold in his son's great gift, began to tour the country with him, and the venture proved very profitable. So much so that Bidder Senior firmly resolved that his boy was too good a source of income to be sent to school! Thus at the age of sixteen George Bidder could barely write, and had great trouble putting down his monster sums on paper. But this did not stop him answering some pretty formidable questions. Here is an example:—

How many times will 1728 occur in the cube of 36? Or again:—

A 170 gallon tank is filling at the rate of 54 gallons a minute, and losing its contents at the rate of 30 gallons a minute. How long will it take to fill?

These questions it is true would not baffle the grammar school boy of today, but remember that George Bidder had had no school education at all and was nearly illiterate. Such problems as these he answered correctly in seconds.

Many eminent mathematicians and philosophers saw