

50th Anniversary of Ian Fleming's children's novel *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang* sees launch of special facsimile edition



It may surprise you that the author best known as the creator of James Bond, also wrote the much loved children's book *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*. Just like Ian Fleming's novels aimed at grown ups, this adventure story features heroes, villains and gadgets but here the main protagonist is a magical car.

Ian Fleming wrote the novel for his son Caspar but did not live to see it published before he died in August 1964. Illustrated by award-winning children's book illustrator John Burningham, it was originally issued in three volumes by Jonathan Cape and has been fascinating young boys and girls for fifty years.

In January 2015, on the 50th anniversary of the publication of the final volume, Queen Anne Press will be launching a facsimile of the original *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*. The standard edition of three volumes in a slipcase will be available for £125, while 50 special editions, bound in cloth with gold blocking and accompanied by a portfolio containing two prints signed and numbered by John Burningham, will cost £600 each.

The famous story starts with Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang being bought by Commander Caractacus Pott. It quickly turns into a car full of surprises. When Pott drives his family to the beach and gets stuck in a traffic jam, Chitty instructs its owner to pull a switch and they take to the air. Thus begins an adventure in which it transpires that Chitty can not only fly but swim and, if necessary, will do anything to save the Potts from harm. Their travels take them to France where, with Chitty's help, they smash a ring of gangsters who were unlucky enough to kidnap the two Pott children and then go on to save a famous chocolate shop in Paris from being robbed.

If you thought that the car was simply a figment of Fleming's imagination, you may be interested to hear that he based it on an aero-engined racing car built by Count Louis Zborowski in the early 1920s on his estate near Canterbury. Using machinery from redundant Zeppelins the machine was painted grey, shaped like a torpedo, and scored several record-breaking triumphs before crashing disastrously in 1922.

In 1961 Fleming suffered a heart attack and while recuperating in hospital he used the

time to write up the stories he used to tell his son Caspar. He sent the manuscripts to his publisher and the search for an illustrator began. The process took two years. When Fleming's favourite cartoonist 'Trog' (Wally Faulkes) was unable to take it on the publishers commissioned John Burningham for the project. Burningham had just been awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal (1963) for his book *Borka: The Adventures of a Goose With No Feathers*.

Burningham created some of his most memorable children's illustrations in this novel and says: "I was still in the early stages of my career as an illustrator when I was asked to work on this project, while Fleming had certainly reached fame with the Bond novels by then. It was slightly daunting to work with someone who clearly had a good idea how he wanted the illustrations to look. Sadly, due to his ill-health, we only met once when I showed him my drawings. He was happy with my work, although he asked me to change the logo on a petrol pump and add the sign of a tobacconist in Paris, which I am not entirely sure, I ever added."

Fleming died on the 12th August 1964, his son Caspar's twelfth birthday. The first *Chitty* was published in October 1964 by Jonathan Cape, the second in November and the final volume in January 1965. In 1968 it was adapted as a film using a script written by his friend Roald Dahl.



Ian Fleming at his desk in Mitre Square while working for the *Sunday Times*



John Burningham with his 1934 Austin Seven, before its first M.O.T, which he wasn't hopeful it would pass

Chitty is undoubtedly the most famous and best loved car in English-language fiction. Thanks to the timelessness of both Fleming's imaginative writing and Burningham's witty illustrations their collaboration has lost none of its appeal.

"Never say 'no' to adventures. Always say 'yes', otherwise you'll lead a very dull life."

Thus said Commander Pott, using words that mirrored Fleming's own approach to life.

For more information and images or to interview John Burningham or the publishers, Kate Grimond and Fergus Fleming, please contact Silke Lohmann:

silke@exclamationpr.co.uk or 07932 618754.

Please mention the Queen Anne Press website: www.queenannepress.com

Notes to editors:

Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond, was born in London on 28 May 1908. He was educated at Eton and later spent a formative period in Kitzbuhel, Austria, where he studied languages (and made his first, tentative forays into fiction writing). In the 1930s he embarked on a career as a journalist with Reuters news agency. This was followed by a short and unsuccessful period in the City of London. He served throughout the Second World War as Assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence, where his fertile imagination spawned a variety of covert operations, all of them notable for their daring and ingenuity. The experience informed much of his later writing about James Bond. After the war he worked as foreign manager of the Sunday Times, a job that allowed him to spend two months each year in Jamaica. Here, in 1952, at his home 'Goldeneye', he wrote the first Bond novel *Casino Royale* which was published to immediate acclaim. Every year for the next twelve years, Fleming produced a new adventure featuring agent 007, one of the most famous literary characters of the century. He also found time to write two non-fiction books: *The Diamond Smugglers*, *Thrilling Cities* as well as *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*, a much-loved children's story about a magical car that flies. He lived to see the first two Bond films, *Dr No* and *From Russia with Love*. He died in 1964 aged fifty-six of a heart attack, having lived life fast and to the full. His influence has been profound, leading to the astonishingly successful Bond film franchise – 23 films to date – and giving rise to many imitators in the thriller writing genre, as well as making the names of his characters, not only James Bond but also the villains he contends with, known the world over. For more information on Ian Fleming visit www.ianfleming.com

John Burningham was born in 1936 in Farnham, Surrey. He is an English author and illustrator of children's books, especially picture books for your children. He lives in North London with his wife Helen Oxenbury, who is also an illustrator and they have worked on several books together. Burningham won the Kate Greenaway Medal for British children's book illustrations twice – for *Borka: The Adventures of a Goose With No Feathers* in 1963 and *Mr Gumpy's Outing* in 1970. He graduated from the Central School of Art in 1959 and started working on posters for London and British Transport before he started his career as book illustrator. Burningham has contributed more than sixty other books and has received many awards.

The imprint, Queen Anne Press, was originally owned by Lord Kemsley, proprietor of the Sunday Times. In 1952 he handed control to the paper's Foreign Manager, Ian Fleming, as a wedding present. Its eclectic variety of publications included works by Cyril Connolly, T.S. Eliot, Patrick Leigh Fermor and Evelyn Waugh. Befitting Fleming's status as a bibliophile, it was also the original publisher of the journal, *The Book Collector*. Fleming remained at the helm until his death in 1964. Queen Anne Press was subsequently absorbed by Robert Maxwell's publishing empire and became an imprint specialising in sports books. In 2007 it was acquired by Fleming's literary estate, and is now managed by his niece, Kate Grimond, and his nephew, Fergus Fleming. For more information on Queen Anne Press visit www.queenannepress.com

