



Quite a Crowd!

by Chris Jelley

QUITE A crowd all right! Four new Dinky Toy releases for me to report on this month and those four releases include six models—seven if you count a truck and trailer as two!

Before you begin to wonder if I'm losing the grip on my senses, however, I should explain that one of the releases is a Gift Set, made up of three models, which accounts for the above apparent discrepancy. The item in question is No. 297 Police Vehicles Gift Set and, although the Set itself is new, the models contained in it have already been marketed individually. A glance at the accompanying picture will show you that they are the Police Mini Cooper, No. 250, the Ford Zodiac Police Car, No. 255, and the Police Accident Unit, No. 287.

As all three models were described in these pages last month, there seems little point in repeating the full description here, but some general comments are in order. For example, each model is packed with action features such as 4-wheel suspension, opening doors and bonnet, etc., and all have windows and full interior fittings as well as "Police" identification signs and fixtures. In addition the Accident Unit, based on the Ford Transit Van, comes complete with warning cones and folding notice boards.

When sold as a Set, the three models are mounted, in open order, on a special illustrated display platform inside a normal carton. As a whole, it makes an excellent present, but I am sure many of you will already have discovered this at Christmas!



Moving away, now, from vehicles that are often associated with crowded roads and traffic jams, we go to the opposite extreme, the uncluttered sky, with the Beechcraft C55 Baron, Sales No. 715. The natural sequel to the existing Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft, the twin-engined Baron is in no way inferior to its smaller single-engined relation. Like the Bonanza, it is fitted with windows and seats as well as detailed "engines," removable engine-cowls and revolving propellers. It also has a jewelled nose-light and a tricycle undercarriage which is where it gains the lead over the smaller model. Whereas the Bonanza's undercarriage is fixed in the lowered position, the Baron actually has a fully-retractable system!

Yes, both the nosewheel and the main landing wheels fold neatly away, into the fuselage in the case of the former, and into the wings in the latter's case. This, surely, is yet another example of how Dinky Toys lead the comparable die-cast modelling field in new features. Finish, incidentally, is in an overall white gloss with yellow wingtips, propellers and engine cowls. Running the whole length of the fuselage at each side is a black stripe, flanked by two yellow stripes; the word "Beechcraft" beneath a yellow stripe flanked by two black stripes appears on each side of the fin.

Produced to the same scale as the Bonanza—1:77—the Baron is slightly larger, having a wingspan of 5 4/5 in. and an overall length of 4 3/10 in. Casting detail includes rudder, elevator and ailerons as well as a "non-slip" patch at the root of the starboard wing which, on the real aircraft, allows passengers to enter the cabin with a certain degree of safety. I know from experience how easy it is to slip off a smooth metal wing without a non-slip patch if you happen to be boarding an aircraft where access to the cockpit is via the wing, as in this case! To sum up, however, anyone interested in aircraft cannot help but find this model fascinating.

Next we have one of the biggest Dinky Toys ever made—the Mercedes-Benz Truck and Trailer, Sales No. 917. Actually it is not strictly correct to refer to this new release in the singular as it is really two models in one, as the name implies, consisting of a large Mercedes-Benz Truck and an equally large (as far as capacity is concerned) detachable trailer. I must admit that, when I first saw an artist's rough drawing of the model, before the model itself was available, I was not greatly impressed. It did not seem to have a great deal to recommend it, I thought, but I changed my mind completely as soon as I saw the finished toy. The large size and two-in-one nature of the model is only the beginning of its good points.

The truck itself is built up on an excellent reproduction of the Mercedes-Benz LP 1920 cab and chassis, to which a 6 in. long truck body has been fitted. The

cab, however, is undoubtedly the star of the show, being the most sophisticated commercial vehicle cab ever produced by Meccano or, indeed, by anybody else to my knowledge. Not only is it fitted with windows, seats and steering wheel, but it also has an opening roof ventilator and opening upholstered doors—the very first die-cast on the market with this latter feature! The right-hand passenger seat, incidentally, has proper arm-rests.

Others features present include wing mirrors, big oval jewelled headlamps and German-style number plates, but the thing I personally found most interesting of all is the superb suspension system fitted to all the wheels both of the truck and trailer. The fact that suspension at all is fitted to such a large model is, in itself, fairly unusual, but the actual system used has never before appeared on a Dinky Toy. It consists of a pair of sprung “plungers” acting on each axle, the axles being mounted in slotted bearings to allow vertical movement. The results are excellent.

Both the truck and trailer bodies are identical, being large, detailed castings, equipped with opening tail-gates and carrying detachable moulded canopies, shaped to represent tarpaulins. The swivelling bogey wheels at the front of the trailer are attached to a special tow-bar which slots into a recess in the back of the truck. Chassis finish is in blue with the truck and trailer bodies yellow and the cab roof and tarpaulins white. All in all, a very pleasing sight.

Finally, we come to the smallest and perhaps the most fascinating of all the new releases. To appreciate it fully, however, you need to have seen the current, highly popular television series “The Prisoner,” starring Patrick McGeehan, famous for his role as John Drake of “Danger Man.” All the action in “The Prisoner” takes place on an apparently escape-proof island inhabited by a colony of “prisoners” who, because the island is escape-proof, live a holiday camp-type existence. They are allowed to move about reasonably freely—under the constant surveillance of hidden cameras and various electronic gadgets—and even to organise and run their own village.

Ground transport on the island is limited almost entirely to Mini Mokes, these nippy little vehicles being used for practically everything from ambulance to electioneering wagon. They are most frequently seen in the role of taxi, however, and this is what provided the inspiration for the new Dinky—No. 106, “The Prisoner” Mini Moke. Like the TV. series’ taxis, the model is finished in white with brown running boards and gay red and white candy-striped canopy. “The Prisoner” emblem of a penny-farthing bicycle appears on the opening bonnet, while the identification “taxi” replaces the normal number plates. The canopy is, of course, removable as also is a little red and white striped cover which fits over the spare wheel at the back of the toy. Additional features are windscreen, steering wheel, radio aerial and detailed engine.

In closing, I should like to add that, whether you watch “The Prisoner” or not, I am sure you will find the Dinky Toy a tremendously appealing model.

Right-hand col., top to bottom: Straight from the T.V. Show, “The Prisoner,” Mini Moke. Next, one of the main features of the Dinky Beechcraft C55 Baron is its retractable undercarriage, seen here in the lowered position. The Dinky Police Vehicles Gift Set in the next photo, consists of a Police Mini Cooper, the Ford Zodiac Police Car and Police Accident Unit. The set is sold with the models mounted on a special illustrated display platform. The last two photos show the Dinky Mercedes-Benz Truck and Trailer, sold mounted on an illustrated display platform. Note the many operating features.

