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The History of Dinky Toys	
Prewar production	**1933**

The first Dinky Toys cars came on the market in December of 1933, but they were not called Dinky Toys until April of 1934. Until then they where Modelled Miniatures, sold under the name of their original manufacturers, the Frank Hornby firm best known for its electric trains.
The Modelled Miniatures were, in fact, intended for use as accessories on model railroad platforms, and included figures of people and domestic animals, mailboxes, railroad signals, and even some non-motorized railroad rolling stock, in addition to the first of many motor vehicles.

Production of Dinky Toys vehicles began more or less simultaneously in Liverpool and Bobigny, France. British and French Dinky Toys were more or less closely related throughout their history, occasionally sharing models, but more often (and particularly in the early days) producing different though generically related series of models. More and more Dinky Toys were produced by both branches through the late Thirties; then World War II brought production to a standstill for several years. By this time both branches had produced cars, trucks, buses, military vehicles, aircraft, ships and accessories of various kinds. Among the most popular models were the British branch's 38 series of sport cars and 39 series of American cars. All six of the 39 cars came out before the war, but only three of the 38 series did; one which did not, and in fact was never issued, was the legendary Triumph Dolomite; its place was taken by an Armstrong-Siddeley after the war.

Postwar production	**1945**

It appears that remnants of prewar stocks were put on the market in time for the 1945 Christmas season, but no new production took place until 1946, when the last three 38 series sports cars joined the prewar trio. Numerous prewar models were now reissued, at first completely unchanged. One of the first notable changes occurred later in 1946: both branches had used plain cast wheel hubs and rubber tires then; now British Dinky Toys began to appear with a somewhat more realistic cast hubs with a raised central section, while a shortage of rubber compelled the French branch to produce one-piece all-metal wheels (including tires) for a time. The first entirely new postwar model, appropriately enough, a Jeep, appeared in 1946.
Since prewar dies and supplies hat to be used for a while, there is no really clearcut dividing line between prewar and postwar production, but a number of changes (beginning with the wheel varieties already mentioned) took place during the Forties. In 1947 the first Dinky Supertoys were issued. These models of large vehicles had their own type of diecast wheel hubs, with a partly concave pattern, and treaded rubber tires. Until this point, all Dinky tires had been slick, but in the next few years a variety of treaded rubber tires came into being for cars and commercial vehicles alike.
Both branches expanded their production to include many interesting new models of various types, but they still used the original catalog numbering system of one, two or three digits followed in most cases by a letter. When a series (an excellent example is the 28 series of delivery vans) ran out of letters, it was continued on a three-digit (in this case 280) basis, and the first Dinky Supertoys were given three-digit 500-series numbers, a hint of what was to come in the Fifties: British Dinky Toys were changed to a three-digit numeral system in 1954, with some models not actually renumbered until a year or two later.

French Dinky Toys changed to a similar all-numeral system during 1959. The 500 and 800 numbers were reserved for the French models, and the British system was prepared for this change a few years earlier, when the 500 series of Supertoys was renumbered with new 900 catalog numbers.

The British number change began at the start of 1954, and seems to have been finished by the start of 1956. Most numbers were changed as of January 1954; the 500 series moved to 900 numbers a year later, and some of them were shifted to 400 series numbers by the

beginning of 1956. As is well known, the 1954 British Dinky catalog gave both numbers so everybody would know what was what.

French Dinky Toys, on the other hand, were renumbered during 1959. Thus any French model introduced early in 1959 had an old number briefly before the new system was introduced.

In the British system, one- and two-digit numbers were used for accessories, 100's for cars, 200 to 249 for racing an (later) sports cars, 250 to 299 for public service vehicles (buses, fire trucks, police cards, ambulances, road rollers, garbage trucks, etc.), 300's for agricultural vehicles (and much later for character cars), 400's for light and medium trucks, 600's for military vehicles, 700's for aircraft and accessories, and 900 numbers for Supertoys, including a few large aircraft. The French Dinky 500 numbers were used for car and small trucks, with military vehicles, aircraft, Supertoys and accessories in the 800 series.

This era saw many changes in Dinky Toys. Bright two-tone color schemes for cars proliferated in 1956; a few, of course, had been used previously, including the last American issues of the 38 series. In that same year, Corgi Toys came on the market, equipped from the start with clear plastic windows, which appeared in Dinky Toys starting in 1958. Suspension was introduces in 1959, fingertip steering in 1960, and wealth of moving an detailed parts in the Sixties. And in 1957 the first Dublo Dinky Toys appeared, intended (as the "Dublo" name implies) for use on OO gauge railroad platforms. Though a few small-scale models had been produced since the Thirties, most Dinky Toys had been built more or less to O gauge: 1/43 to 1/48 scale, with larger vehicles generally made to a slightly smaller scale so as not to look excessively big beside models of smaller vehicles. The Dublo series never really caught on and was withdrawn after a few years, leaving that field to Matchbox and others firms for the time being, while Dinky and Corgi competed for dominance in the O-gauge area.

Tri-Ang firm bought the British branch	1963

In 1963 the British branch of Dinky Toys was bought by the Tri-Ang firm, and in the same year the first Dinky antique car, a Model T Ford, were issued. Dinky Toys' horizons were expanding in numerous ways, for in 1965 six models of American cars were made for Dinky in Hong Kong. Another Hong Kong range, the small-scale Mini-Dinky Toys, appeared in 1968, with each model sold in its own plastic garage. Most of the castings were completely of Hong Kong origin, though six pieces of heavy equipment originated with Mercury of Italy, were later produced by the unrelated US-Canadian firm of Mercury Industries, then by Gibbs of Ohio, and subsequently by Universal of Hong Kong. Two racing cars in the series were made by Best Box (sometimes written "Bestbox") of The Netherlands; this firm, now called Efsi, Holland or Oto, is actually a government agency that hires handicapped workers.

During the Sixties both Dinky an Corgi began to make their models to a larger scale, approximately 1/35, instead of 1/43. While they had theirs reasons for doing so, many of us collectors wish they had not, for the newer models just don 't fit in with the old ones - and they take up more shelf space too! Nevertheless, it happened.

Late in 1967 the diecast toy market was strongly influenced by the first Mattel Hot Wheels, making it necessary for numerous others firms, including Dinky Toys, to develop similar wheels. Dinky Speedwheels first appeared in 1969, and this change was paralleled by others that brought more realism, more gimmicks, more play value, and more character cars based on children 's television shows and films. Speedwheels, usually with chromed hub patterns, appeared on a variety of vehicles, replacing to some extent the many realistic cast hubs that had begun to appear a few years before, and models of real cars and trucks were joined in growing numbers not only by motor vehicles for Lady Penelope, Parsley, Candy, Andy and the Bearandas and their ilk, but by a number of outer-space characters and vehicles as well, most notably those of the popular Stark Trek program. This trend, which had begun with Santa Claus and the Dinky Beats, kept growing, to the dismay of those who prefer scale models of real road vehicles.

French production ceased	1972

But all these modes were not enough to keep Dinky Toys solvent. French production ceased a of 1972, though the Spanish firm of Pilen manufactures some French Dinky Toys later in the Seventies and Solido made an effort to do the same in 1981. The British branch struggled on until 1980, farming out some production to Polistil in Italy as well as the Universal firm of Hong Kong.

Since then the name of Dinky Toys has changed hands at least two more times, and now and then Hong Kong Products have appeared with the Dinky Toys name on theirs bubblepacks. In 1987 the Kenner-Parker firm, whose branches include Tonka Toys, sold the Dinky Toys name to Universal International of Hong Kong, already the owner of another time-honored and originally British trade name: Matchbox. Soon afterward, Kenner-Parker took over Polistil and acquired some of the last old Dinky Toys dies. Other dies had previously been sold to a firm in India, which markets them as Nicky Toys, and for a time some models were produces in South America as well.

Late in 1987 Universal brought the Dinky Toys name back to some semblance of life by applying it to new color variations of six Matchbox cars. The firm subsequently announced that the name would be used for a new series of cars in the Fifties, with further details to follow.

So this is where the history of Dinky Toys stands as of the summer of 1988. Dinky Toys have had an eventful history since their introduction more than half a century ago and though that history has had is sad times, we can at least hope for some good news in the near futures. Dinky Toys will probably never again be what they were when many of us oldtimers started to collect them, but neither will their name disappear forever.

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