



In 1953. A company making aircraft electrical equipment called Chelton (Electrostatics) Ltd, outgrew its premises in Chelsea, and moved to Marlow. It took over the vacant 'County' cinema on the corner of Dean St and Spittal St.

A fortuitous visit by a wholesale jeweller to a trade exhibition resulted in the company making plastic 'Poppit' beads in a range of colours and sizes. Their unique feature was that they needed no threading to make up necklaces, but simply plugged into one another. 'Home-workers' collected loose beads from the factory in 5kg cans, and returned with assembled necklaces.

The beads for a time were an enormous success, and in February 1955 a separate company was formed, Chelton (Poppits) Ltd, to manufacture and market them. Also three manufacturing licences were granted, two English and one French. The English manufacturers used the trademarks 'Snapit' and 'Lockit'.

But after 5 years the fall in sales brought an end to the manufacture of plain coloured beads. The popularity of 'pearlised' beads (made with fish scales) lasted another five years.

In 1970, Chelton gave up their cinema site, and moved to Fieldhouse Lane. Since then it has become part of Cobham Antenna Systems, and the Fieldhouse Lane premises has been closed.

*Some of the Poppits on display here have been kindly lent by Mrs K Chamberlain, Mrs M Saint, and Mrs D Sanderson.*