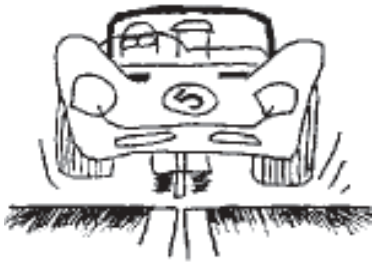


NSCC

The independent club for everyone interested in all aspects of 'scalextric' type cars in all scales.

No.214 **January 2000**

Contents

SHOCK! HORROR! BRIBERY ALLEGATION

Some people will try anything to win the Christmas competition. I have received a crossword entry which has been smeared in fishpaste in an attempt to bribe Archie the editorial cat. Fortunately this dastardly attempt has failed as he doesn't like fish. However he has asked me to point out that he is quite partial to a nice piece of barbecued chicken! There are some very good prizes on offer for the crossword (see page 11) and still time to enter.

Here we are then with the first issue of the new millennium. If you looked at the front cover before turning to these words of wisdom you may have noticed that there is a change of name - it is now the N.S.C.C. Journal. The committee felt that Alan had raised the standard above that of a mere newsletter and the new title would better reflect the nature of the publication. In order to avoid confusion I have kept the existing numbering system.

I find it very strange writing about a new year when I haven't even finished my Christmas shopping yet. Still at least I have completed the January issue before the computer blows up on New year's eve. Will there be a February issue - Who knows? Assuming we all survive I could do with a few more articles. I know that my regular contributors will do the business but I need some fresh talent. Go on - write something - your journal needs you!

See you next month

Brian.

Chairman
Richard Winter
Editor
Brian Rogers

TIME AND TACTICS

BY TONY SECCHI

While assembling a yet to be submitted Article on C1 Class Le Mans Cars, I was reminded of the real distance races that I had attended and the rare but enjoyable long distance Slot Car races I had participated in.

I particularly remember the first one ever, which was in 1964 at my local Club. We usually had Championships of sprint races with 2 x10 lap sessions on each of four lanes with two extra sessions on chosen lanes giving a total race distance of 50 laps (about 5 minutes racing time). By popular consent we decided on a distance race of six hours duration — this came about because Brands Hatch often hosted 6 hr. sports car races, which most of us used to frequent.

We had a four lane Circuit and a 1/24 scale format and for the 6 hr. race we decided on a combined Entry of Sports and GT cars (as the real Le Mans). As only four Teams could take part we had to organise qualifying sessions from about ten or twelve entries. Each Team was allowed two Drivers only. The Category we chose was 'Formulae Libre' giving every entry a chance to build to any configuration they chose within the existing Club regulations.

Some of the 'Hot Shots' went for very fast cars and some for reliability. On the logical assumption that each 'de-slot' was going to cost about a lap, my approach was to go firstly for maximum stability (to stay in the slot) and secondly for speed. I used a 'push- push' E Type Jaguar (bought from Woolworths) and under this I fitted a hand made Chassis constructed from plastic sheet laminated to give stiffness (ahead of my time wasn't I ?) The pick up guide was a circular pin and we had a 35mm long lead car wheel weight at the front to keep the guide in the slot. We could do this because the power unit that I installed was an American 5 pole 'Pitman' sidewinder unit. This was made from brass and steel and had an integral rear axle and two huge rectangular magnets.

It was rear mounted using a home made aluminium bracket. Overall the car weighed in at about 200 grams (or nearly half a pound!) In testing it was very stable and slightly slow out of corners, but once it got going it was fast. Because of it's weight it could be braked late into corners and it's inherent inertia would roll it into the apex where one could progressively apply the power on exiting. It would gently hang out it's tail if pushed but one had to avoid sudden or jerky acceleration otherwise you found yourself out of the slot.

As stated, the teams had two drivers each and practice took place during the 4 weeks prior to the event. We did as much practice as we could to get used the pace that we wanted to drive during the race. After all the practice results we were in third place in the rankings - not a bad result considering everybody who qualified above us were using 'sprint' cars.

In our usual races deslotting meant that you were out, but in this endurance race marshals were on hand to replace the cars. Each driver had a 30 minute stint and servicing was only allowed during driver changeovers (unless one lost a wheel or something).

Our tactics were to ignore the rush of sprinters who (inevitably) would disappear into the distance at the start. We had decided before the race to run at a safe but quick pace and to try to keep deslotting to a minimum. I took the first stint and after 30 minutes we were just in front. By keeping to our tactics we eventually built up a substantial lead and as we got used to the car we got faster, setting the race's fastest lap in the ninth stint. Servicing was minimal, braids, tyres and pick ups just needing cleaning.

We won by a few laps and I still have the trophy at home somewhere. The club had an endurance race every year from then on, but due to complaints about the time and distance the format deteriorated and the race length came down to 2 hrs. The sprinters had won.

I don't know if this format is popular now, but if it is not then I think that some clubs could consider it and give it a try now and again. It makes a refreshing change from set lap flat out racing and is highly enjoyable.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE?

BY DON SIEGEL

Slot Racing in Europe has a long and fascinating history. But before we delve into those European slots, let's take a short trip into the land of European BS!

At last year's Paris swap meet, I was attacked by the slot racing reporter for a new French model car magazine, called *Model Car Magazine* (English is trendy here these days, what can I say?). He was attacking me because I hadn't given enough mention to his magazine in an article in our French newsletter on historical press coverage of slot cars. I explained that I was only talking about slot racing coverage in the general press, but it turns out that it was the whole idea of "le slot racing" that Pierre doesn't like. He is only interested in "les circuits routiers," which can be loosely translated as miniature motor racing, or in plain American, home slot racing. Now, Pierre is a purist: he doesn't even like the modern 1/32 cars with super magnets — and more power to him! But many other people here think these two aspects of slot racing should be kept as separate as possible, and that it is generally the performance-crazed slot fanatics who are poisoning the gentle home racing people.

To explain the thinking behind this current schism, let me quote an ad run last year by Anni-Mini, the leading slot car retailer in France: "Miniature electric car racing is not Slot Racing, the bare-bones, competitive version practiced in clubs, but a simulation that strives to duplicate all forms of real auto racing. The cars are now perfect scale reproductions, ultra-detailed, each with its own handling characteristics. The many different accessories allow you to decorate your track, and replicate the very special atmosphere of motor sport.

In other words, the lines are drawn. Throughout Europe, the distinction has been drawn between "slot racing" on one hand, practiced in clubs and commercial race-ways, and what is variously called "Scalextric" (in England), "Circuits Routiers" or "Circuit-24" (an early brand) in France, god knows what in Italy and Germany, and, believe it or not, "Auto-Rama" in Brazil (A.C. Gilbert got there first, it seems....).

Now, I have always tried to explain to these poor misguided folks, as one would to a child, that "slot racing is slot racing," whether you've got eight lanes or two, a ten foot track on the floor, or a 300 foot track at the local raceway, and whether you race a super-detailed Fly Ferrari 512, a winged doorstop, or a TCR jamcar!

But I'm losing the battle. In fact, I'm even beginning to wonder if these two activities really are linked. Pierre, and others, have patiently explained to me how the whole slot car mentality will inevitably lead to doom and destruction, as in 1967-68. For them, slot racing is a home-based hobby, where boys of all ages buy and collect cars, and race them at home when the fancy strikes, with sons, fathers, or friends. The effort to join and support a club is a whole other story, and anybody who has been involved in a club, or gone to a commercial raceway, in fact, can testify to the problems involved.

I had always figured that slot racing, like the amoeba, was an evolutionary process: you started with a slimy one-celled plastic car at home, then graduated to 1/32 club racing, using cars with rudimentary brains and opposed thumbs, and finally evolved into a macho, evil big-buck 1/24 commercial slot racer, changing your $400 strap motor every segment and whipping your crew to lay down the glue on your lane and to spread peanut butter on the other guys' lanes.

Well, maybe not, but slot racing is about speed and improving the breed, right? Otherwise we'd all be building plastic models. Perhaps the question is whether we want to actually see our cars as they swoosh by, or to enjoy the ultimate thrill of speed.

Of course, what's important in the end is what turns you on. When I was a kid, I enjoyed my fully-landscaped HO track on a board in my basement, and I also liked going down to Joe's Hobby Shop to race my rewinds on his eight-lane high-banked track. These days, I'm in a slot racing club where we race a GTP production class with 516D/Flexi chassis, and open X12,

also with GTP bodies. A few of us old fogies organize vintage races, and I occasionally go to the Squash Montmartre track in Paris for one of their Thursday evening races using Fly/Ninco cars. There is no wing racing in France, but it doesn't especially appeal to me anyway, for reasons of reflexes, cost, and aesthetics. Even the 1/32 Eurosport races I tried in were too much of an "on/off" proposition. Not to mention that setting up these cars takes more time than I have.

But don't let us fool ourselves. Whether you're racing Group 10 production cars, or stock out of the box home slot cars, preparation is still important, and the same people tend to show up in the winner's circle. But these stock classes do encourage wider participation all around, which is an excellent thing.

Let's get back to the evolutionary process, and I must admit this is based strictly on my own experience. You get an Eldon or Strombecker set for Christmas, play with it for a few days, and it breaks. If you like the sport, you keep fixing the cars. Then one day, you discover Revell or Monogram, which are a lot sturdier, and actually have round tires and bearings. Aha! Then you go down to the slot shop, where your 1/32 cars are dwarfed and don't especially like the banked curve. So you sidle up to the counter and buy a DynOCharger Lancia Ferrari, or a Cox Lotus 30. Well, now you're back in it, except those tires still don't like that high bank. So you shell out $3 for a set of silicones. But some guy in a low-slung, brass and piano wire, Mabuchi-powered scratchbuilt blows by you like you re standing still. So you go home, and learn to solder, getting more solder on the floor than your chassis, until you finally get a nice shiny joint, then learn to rewind, ruining a half-dozen arms in the process, but when your first rewind really wails on the track, you're the happiest guy in the world. So now you're back in the thick of it, until somebody invents the anglewinder, and you now need an engineering degree, or a least a good set of calipers.

Anyway, that's about the time I went off to college,so I don't know first-hand how the evolution turned out, and whether we ever learned to walk erect

This, in a nutshell, is why I always considered slot racing was a single hobby-sport, and not a bunch of niches.

And then I thought about the beginnings again. The English clubs started in 1955 or so, going their own way, with multiple systems, racing rules, and body styles. Scalextric and VIP released their sets in 1957 and entered the mass toy market. This was especially true of Scalextric, which was soon acquired by the world's largest toy company, Lines Brothers, who knew what advertising and publicity was all about. Was there any "cross-fertilisation" between these two trends? This is a question for Fred Francis, the inventor of Scalextric, but unfortunately he died before I could ask him. In fact, he passed away before I even realised this might be a key question to ask!

Coming back to the presents our French slot racing federation was offered a free exhibition space at the recent Paris Hobby Show. But since our wooden demonstration track wasn't available, one of the French retailers volunteered to put up a four-lane Ninco track, which was avail-

able to all corners nine hours a day for ten straight days, using Ninco sedans or GTP cars. And so, every four minutes, we would have another four young boys, generally eight to twelve years old, who had been patiently waiting in line, eyes gleaming. Once in a while an adult would be brave enough to take a crack, and then we had no trouble finding other adult volunteers.

Marc, our club president, secretary of the FFSR, and a thoroughly modern high-tech slot racer, was totally disgusted. He volunteered a lot of his time, and figured it was all a total waste, "baby-sitting," as he said with a gallic sneer. "Non, Marc," I said, "you will see, these kids are hooked, and in ten or twenty years, they'll all be members in good standing. Be patient." What Marc answered cannot be printed in a family magazine, even in French. But let's just say he didn't agree with me.

So, give it to me straight: is slot racing slot racing? Or are home, club and commercial racing different species, destined never to meet?

Reference List

None this month. The calm before the storm!

The Collector's Lot

They're all the fashion at the moment, you can normally watch three or four of them each week. TV programmes about collectable things have become quite popular in recent years. Scalextric has often been the subject matter, sometimes looking at the quirkier side of the hobby. In December 1999, a Channel 4 production company contacted me via the factory. They wanted to cover the hobby of collecting Scalextric cars with a particular slant to exploring the interesting aspects of the cars past and present. The accent was also to be on the history, the product landmarks, the unusual cars, interesting track, accessories and catalogues. After I had made a few phone calls I found that several members were up for it. Having a collection covering the above criteria was crucial and eventually I was able to narrow it down to one of our members who was willing to take their fifteen minutes of fame. Following days of rearranging shelves, displays and layouts our fellow enthusiast will have invited the camera crew and presenter in to his home to work on putting the material together for the programme. Who is it? That would spoil the surprise! Check your TV guide for The Collector's Lot on Channel 4 and hosted by Debbie Thrower.

31 Track Plans – 4th Edition

Available in December '99, the updated Track Plans catalogue is a well-presented publication. The front cover shows a black TVR and one of this years new Porsche GT1 liveries. The landscape format catalogue is simply titled Scalextric 4th Edition 31 Track Plans. To remind us of the worldwide economy, the website address is also included on the front cover and, as indicated on the rear page, finally points out to us that this publication, like the main catalogue, is printed outside of the U.K.!

All 23 glossy pages bring the track range to life with ideas that stimulate your mind in to considering what you might do with the loft or garage. As with the previous Track Plans catalogues, the target audience is obviously the newcomer to Scalextric who might be encouraged to extend their circuit. Starting with a basic circuit, or plan, the first ten pages show 25 circuit designs; most circuits do not stick to the use of only the standard radius curve. Neither is the banked curve written out of the equation yet either, it appears in three suggested circuits.

Of the twenty-five suggested circuits only 2 are without flyovers, which are necessary to use space efficiently. There are 6 real-life circuits to choose from; Silverstone, Catalunya, Adelaide, Magny-Cours, Kyalami, and Brands Hatch. The Spanish circuit, Catalunya, is shown as a four-lane configuration stretching over a 20 x 6 ft. 'table' but with a massive 65 ft. lane length.

As you would expect, a list of all the track pieces required to make the layouts are set alongside each diagram. What makes the diagrams spark the imagination further is the three dimensional effect. Each layout is drawn to give a near and far aspect and also give you the impression of elevation as each bend swoops right and left over the page.

Towards the rear of the catalogue there are pages dedicated to trouble shooting tips and advice. A potted history of the guide blades used since the late 1950s up to the current Easy Fit type plus an overview of the electronic lap Counter, Pacer and Power Plus systems now

available (accompanying pictures now show the revised lane number markings – see last months Factory Lines report) are also included.

I was surprised that the colours used throughout did not reflect the new black-yellow-white colour signature now used on the latest packaging. To my mind, the four shades of blue used on most pages water-down the brand's visual image. Having said that, it is all-in-all an attractive catalogue.

Despite the possibility that these catalogues will not appeal to everybody, Hornby Hobbies Ltd. have produced a decent Track Plans catalogue. You may wonder why they produce it! Well, it will give countless kids throughout the land a lot of fun. I remember, as a kid, I would spend hours copying ideas from the Track Plans catalogue or planning how I was going to stack my bedroom furniture one on top of the other to give enough floor space for the last circuit shown in the book. Yes, the one that obviously requires you to knock down every interior wall in the house! But, as a youngster, you dream…..then, twenty years later, you buy your son a set or start collecting the cars you always wished you had when you were younger. Perhaps you'll even start your own slot car club! Anyway, the product image was burnt in to memory partly due to the various catalogues and ephemera, not just racing the cars.

That's just one reason why Hornby Hobbies Ltd. should keep producing the general catalogue and the Track Plans catalogue.

Micro Scalextric

The micro range has stood still over the last year or two. Possibly the only change to the range was the inclusion of a black and silver McLaren car to accompany the yellow Jordan. The factory has told me that the range is under review and that market research suggests directing the product range at a slightly younger audience. If you feel the need to add your viewpoint get writing!

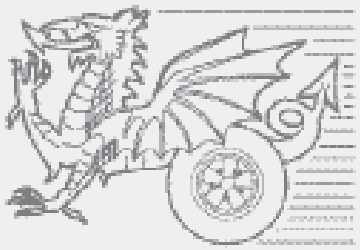
Caterham & Lotus 7 cars

They arrived finally. Now we have eight liveries and I suspect many more will follow. I understand sales have been excellent judging by the amount of Caterham sets which were broken down for the set cars. With Christmas now past Hornby Hobbies Ltd. may get some feedback from the national stores via their sales reps on how well the Caterham sets were received by the public. I can see no reason why it won't be anything short of an excellent boost for sales and product image.

By the way, I understand that the 'K' and 'R' letters on the bonnets of the set cars reflect the racing series the cars were originally introduced to in the recent upsurge in racing real Caterhams. The 'K' indicates the MGF engine powered series for standard cars whilst the 'R' refers to the super-light series that were, I think, Vauxhall powered (don't quote me). The factory used publicity material from Caterham Cars showing the little pocket rockets with, simply, a letter 'K' and 'R' emblazoned across the bonnet.

TOP GUIDE

By Richard Davies



CATERHAM 7

Modern cars are all very similar. There is an increasing emphasis on aerodynamics, and the equations seem to say that all new cars have to look like plastic bubbles on wheels, with the style and panache of a cabbage. That said, the Caterham 7 is a breath of fresh air with it's radically different design. There is a very nice array of dials and switches in the cockpit of the model, but I must confess I'm just a little sceptical about the gadgets extending all the way across the entire car. The driver himself is nicely detailed, with a red seatbelt and dark blue gloves, although he doesn't have the neck of a giraffe needed to see all the controls and seems to have had an unfortunate racing accident resulting in the amputation of both legs at the knee. The exhaust, to be poetic, looks like spray painted spaghetti and is about as firm and unyielding as a plastic bag.

The car has a number of innovations though, not least of which is it's cleverly designed self destruct system. In the case of tampering (i.e. undoing the screws) the car cleverly springs apart into a huge number of bits, most of which are lost before you can figure out how to put it back together. To leave sarcasm for a moment, it is a very good idea as fragile parts of the car can be removed before racing, or presumably replaced if broken, and the guide merely has to be pushed in, making brush replacement simpler. The wheels are good representations of period mini- lights (or so I've been told, they look rather plastic to me), the tyres are nicely patterned and mostly round. The car comes in two colours, yellow and blue, and while I prefer the blue it is obviously a matter of personal preference.

It goes quite well down the straights and around the corners, and while it is not the fastest of cars it makes up for it by being a fine car to drive. But before you all rush out and buy this car, this must be said: "Houston, this car has a problem." The motor is linked to the back wheels by a spring - a very bendy spring. If a more powerful magnet is substituted then it pulls the spring down and renders the car useless. The real problem is that the spring is more than flexible enough to allow the back gear to pop out at every opportunity. Once this has occurred once (and it will) then the back gear will pop out almost every other lap and this is obviously no use at all. I expect the problem could be helped by glueing the bearing into the holder, but this technical flaw undermines an otherwise lovely car.

FERRARI F1

The latest Ferrari F1 model from Ninco is a very smart car. It has tampo printing which is vastly superior to stickers (which often seem to be set on autopeel) and is a striking shade of red, which no Ferrari could call itself a Ferrari without. It steers around the corners, which is all very well and looks very impressive but the main benefit is 'battle damage', which realistically destroys your steering if you come off, not to mention the front spoiler which is obviously perfectly designed to fall off at every crash. This car departs from the designs of most F1 models, however, by actually having round wheels, a revolution in design which I hope the other manufacturers will emulate. The wing mirrors are not fixed in but that's just as well as they have the strength of a piece of paper and will bend at the first sign of a crash.

I also rather like the camera just behind the driver's compartment. Leaving to one side it's eminent smashability, you can just see Murray Walker looking queasy as the view from the camera rolls end over end into the crash barrier.

The car handles well, due to it having an extra strong magnet, a NC-2 engine and very soft tyres as standard, and is worthy of the name Ferrari. It even performs well with the magnet removed, a feature that is becoming rarer as manufacturers concentrate on bigger and better magnets. It can keep pace with a FLY Venturi down the straight and is just about as fast around the corners, a strong endorsement for this car. However, disaster is waiting in the wings like an overzealous F1 inspector with a tape measure. The contrate of the Ferrari is prone to suddenly losing grip on the rear axle, causing many drivers to race far ahead of their competition only to have their cars stop and buzz as the motor spins uselessly. The safest way to deal with it is to replace the back axle and transfer the wheels, saving your car from retiring from 'technical difficulties'. This car is a nice, smart effort by Ninco and is well worth buying.

PROSLOT CHILDREN IN NEED CHALLENGE

BY JEFF DAVIES

Having three children I have always felt deeply about the Children in Need charity as you're never sure which way your life is going to work out. Several years ago my long suffering wife and I travelled from Lands End to John'O Groats in collaboration with Peugeot through the most appalling weather imaginable. It was -10 degrees C in the middle of the day in the north of Scotland at the end of November and my poor wife had to wade through waist deep snow in the fast lane of the motorway to get water to clean the windscreen of the car. We did get to John'O Groats although the weather threw just about everything possible at us and managed to raise money for this very worthwhile cause.

While on the phone to Collette from Monarch Lines I saw an advert on the television for Children in Need. I suggested a sponsored slot car event at the Aberstone track in Abergavenny. This was mid-afternoon. By half past ten the same day the event had been agreed (a three hour race), the date set (Thursday November 18th), the teams drawn up (Wye Valley Racing against Abergavenny Motor Club) and everything was ready to go. Monarch Lines had kindly agreed to send down four Proslot Ferrari F355s and a box full of spare parts just in case anything was needed.

The team for Wye Valley consisted of myself, my son Richard, my daughter Jenny and Phil Barry, who was to be team captain for this event. The team from Abergavenny Motor Club were Dave Higgs, Lee Tervey, Phil Jones, Rhys Jones (what makes you think this was held in Wales?), Neil Austin and Tim Guylas along with numerous supporters. The evening of the event arrived. I took the cars out of the boxes for the first time when we unpacked them to start the event. Phil and I started for Wye Valley Racing. I ran on the blue lane and Phil on the green lane, while Abergavenny Motor Club had the red and yellow. At the end of 25 minutes Phil's car suddenly decided it wouldn't run anymore. At this point I was one lap in front of Phil and the other two were roughly twenty laps behind. After a few more laps we stopped the computer to fix Phil's car, but all that had happened was a lead had pulled out of the guide. At the end of the night Wye Valley ended up 204 laps in front.

The Proslot Ferraris performed brilliantly, and apart from the lead falling out nothing went wrong with the cars. At the end of the evening the winning team were presented with the four Proslot Ferraris.

A good time was had by all and we raised over £200 for the cause. We plan to hold the event annually and hope to gather considerably more backing for next year. I'd like to thank both Monarch Lines and Proslot for their support and Phil Barry for the use of the Aberstone track.

Members letters

Dear Brian,

I just thought I would drop you a line, saying congratulations on how good the magazine is looking, and to tell you a little bit about one of the events I attended recently in Barcelona. The event in question was the Spanish Slot Car Championship, it was the first time I have attended it — and to say I was impressed has got to be one of the understatements of the year!

The whole event is geared to Racing and is not just organised as a means of selling cars or designed to promote any one manufacturer. Every manufacturer was represented and they all donated prizes and trophies — I lost count at about the 150 mark! They even help with the advertising, brochures, stickers, posters etc. and because of this the attendance turn out is fantastic... I am not talking tens, or fifties or even hundreds I am sure there was over a thousand people through the doors on that weekend. The venue was excellent and offered all the facilities needed to host such a large specialist event! As it took place at the Trasmediterranea at the harbour in Barcelona if you wanted to go walk about there was plenty to see both quayside and in the city itself.

The thing that impressed me most was the organisation of it all, as I said before they raced cars from all the major manufacturers and that included Proslot, Scalextic, Ninco, Fly, Carrera, SCX, Plafit, Reprotec, Cartrix, etc and all the cars were bog standard, yes I said bog standard, no arguments — everybody accepted the rules, well nearly everyone! But at the end of the day it was down to the quality of the cars and more importantly the skill of the drivers! Yes, they were intense about the racing, but not obsessively so! — Believe me they were really having fun! And I might add that the manufacturers that attended the event were also having fun — it was not about selling cars — it was about enjoying the racing — and they did! They were also running around just as much if not more than the contestants or the kids (and I won't draw any comparison) and declaring that next year it would be even better.

Also it was not just one track; to my knowledge there was at least seven tracks upstairs, and a practice track down stairs and even then when we left to go back to the hotel at 1:30 in the morning they were loads of people still there racing!

The only down side of the whole event for me was when I was asked how it compared to the events we hold in Britain — well it didn't — it couldn't and that is no disrespect to any other events held here. Because it was very clear to me that without the participation of all the major manufacturers and an awful lot of co-operation on all sides from marshals etc we could not possibly hope to achieve anything nearing its equal. So with that in mind I am proposing to try and organise a similar event in Britain next year — proposed time is early September avoiding Goodwood's timetable! And then perhaps the winners/finalists might like to follow up by going to the Spanish Slot Car Championships in November — the response from the various people I have spoken to so far, including manufactures has been enthusiastic so I wondered how many of the NSCC members would be interested in taking part? Would you like to pose the question to them, because I will need feedback from them — I would also like to point out early on that they will not win vast amounts of prize money.... But they will, I am sure, get lot of satisfaction from thrashing the proverbials off their opponents.. ..and thus go away happy fluffy bunnies!

Yours Sincerely,

Colette

Dear Brian
I am writing in response to Alan Slade's letter in the December newsletter, in which he states "You will also no doubt have already received a letter informing you that the car Jeff Davies was offering for sale in the November edition was a forgery, as Steve DeHavilland has never made any cars. All he has done is commissioned Scalextric manufactured reissues." I am extremely upset about this comment as it is totally inaccurate and untrue. Before he wrote this he should have checked his facts. The Bugattis were not a Scalextric reissue, they were a kit of parts put together by Steve DeHavilland. Apart from the main bodyshell, all other parts were manufactured in white metal; including exhaust, grill, windscreen, etc. Scalextric only made two of the body parts sold in the kit. I wrote an article about their manufacture at the time for a newspaper, as well as purchasing several of these kits for myself. I have never sold anything fake in my entire life. Splitting hairs over what particular name an item is called does not make it a forgery. As regards the event that Riko never did with 132 Racing, this is of no relevance to anything I wrote about the Ninco Challenge as the event never happened. To my mind, an event that did not happen is a failure. The reason that it did not happen is irrelevant.
Yours sincerely,
Jeff Davies

This argument about the correct term for "DeHaviland Bugattis" has been going on since God was a lad. I think that Alan was being a mite pedantic and Jeff is being a little oversensitive. Unless they propose to fight a duel on Hampstead Heath I shall call a halt to the discussion. In future, anybody who attempts to start it again will be be taken outside and shot.

.....

Brian
May I take this opportunity to thank Tony Secchi and David Norton for replying to my request on how to convert static kits to slot cars. Thanks to them, I now have a raceworthy Aston Martin DB5 and have some ideas for further vehicles (an ambulance would be interesting !).
Andrew Stockdale.

.....

Brian
Did you know about Daytona night at Mass in Brixton (a dance club)?
Apparently the theme is motor racing and they have a huge Scalextric track for the punters to race on.Sounds like a great night out to me.I found this in Sky magazine, don't know anymore details.
Peter Morley

My days of visiting dance clubs in Brixton are long gone I'm afraid. Have any of our younger members been there?

.....

Hi Brian,
Just a note to let you know of a thriving new slot racing club in Fife. We are the FIFE SLOT RACING AND COLLECTORS CLUB. Anyone interested in joining our merry band of racers can get details from me on 07931 995 148.
Stephen Young

PROSLOT ROUNDUP

BY JEFF DAVIES

During a visit to last year's Toyfair I saw the first of the Proslot range, an F1 Ferrari. This was a good looking model with Fly like gold and chrome plated wheels and good details. So when Proslot introduced their first sports car, a Porsche GT2, I was extremely interested. So interested, in fact, that I went out and bought a Chereau Porsche GT2, something I very rarely do.

On a Ninco track this car was more than capable of holding its own against a Fly Marcos, being faster down the straight but not as quick around the corners. I really liked its slightly over the top aggressive styling. More recently Nigel Barrow lent me his Proslot Ferrari F355 to which he had fitted an EVO3 motor in place of the standard EVO1 for me to have a drive around Pinewood Raceway track. This car handled extremely well.

I was, therefore, extremely pleased when Monarch Lines sent me down some sample Proslot cars. These were a Porsche GT2 Finacor, a Porsche GT2 Playstation, a Ferrari F355 Vamag and a Porsche GT3 Walker.

Porsche GT2 Finacor

This one is painted in a brilliant shade of Ferrari red which I really like. The wheels and tyres are nicely detailed, being gold plated centres with a red wheel nut and a chrome outer rim. The rear tyres are slightly larger than the fronts and carry the familiar Michelin logo. The car is nicely tampo printed in it's Le Mans 24hour colours and is well detailed even down to the windscreen wiper, vents in the back spoiler and door handles. It also has a white full length driver figure in a red seat The only downside of this model it that the interior is not complete. Looking through the windscreen it is possible to see the motor in the back of the car. This is an EVO2 which gives it brilliant straight line performance, being considerably faster down the straights than a standard Fly car on the Ninco track that I used to test it. This car also has a flexible engine mount which allows the engine to move slightly up and down in relation to the back wheels in a similar system to the chassis on a BSCRA car. Talking to Mark Scale at a swopmeet earlier on this year he suggested I should remove some of the play from this mount. This I did by inserting the end of a folded over HO copper pick-up. This had the effect of stiffening the spring rate and restricting the amount of vertical travel. I also put a small amount of weight in the car just behind the guide. This car is really good fun to race. It hasn't got the world's most powerful magnet so it isn't glued to the corners and when racing it is great fun trying to be the last of the late breakers. The car is also extremely damage resistant as I race outside with a track on a concrete patio which doesn't tend to do the cars any favours at all when they crash. So far nothing has fallen off. A really good effort for their first sports car.

Porsche GT2 Playstation

This car has a slightly different bodyshell to the Finacor and Chereau versions. I took the sample car to the Aberstone track at Abergavenny where Phil Barry remarked that it had a concours paint job.The tampo printing is extremely well done and the model is well detailed. Mechanically it is identical to the earlier Porsche GT2s and is definitely a step in the right direction, with a finish which is easily equal to anything anybody else has produced.

F355 VAMAG

The next model was the Ferrari F355. At Aberstone I was interested in the barmaid's opinion, showing her each of the cars in turn to get a different perspective on it.She loved the Ferrari, preferring it to any of the other models. **Oh, come on! I know I shouldn't interrupt articles with my own comments but this has got to to be a leading contender for the world's worst chat up line:-"Hello dear, would you like to come up and see my slot cars?"**

I have raced this barmaid on numerous occasions and she's not a bad slot car driver. I think she's probably right as well, as I really like the look of this one. I would prefer a brighter yellow finish but it suits the tampo printing on the car which is really done well. I particularly like the chequered flag design right over the engine cover, which is difficult to do accurately, and it even has the drivers name tampo printed in the back window. All the vents, grills, lights, look correct as recently I was lucky enough to study several of these cars at extremely close range in a Ferrari dealership. I can't understand why more manufacturers have not produced this car as it is very attractive. The model comes with white five spoke wheels with Pirelli printed on the tyres and an EVO1 motor. Both Phil and I drove this car extensively. It is beautifully balanced with totally neutral handling which allows you to slide the back of the car slightly without it ripping itself out of the slot. The only downside is the motor, as it is not powerful enough to do the excellent handling of the car justice. I intend to fit an EVO3 and have another go as I would like to make this my new racing car because the handling is so good. Proslot are shortly bringing out a 355 Spider, which I can't wait to try as I really like convertible slot cars.

Porsche GT3 Walker

This is a very pretty car. It's beautifully tampo printed and the paint finish is superb. The paint is finished with a hard lacquer, helping to make it more damage resistant when you roll it. This car is similar to the Ninco model yet it is very slightly wider although almost identical in overall length and wheelbase. It has silver wheels with Pirelli tampo printed on the tyres. The interior is superb, their best one yet, having a full driver figure with red overalls, a white helmet and black gloves. There is a full roll cage including the door bars and a fire extinguisher mounted on the floor, complete with silver brackets. The body is beautifully detailed with a separate windscreen wiper, nicely shaped headlights complete with separate orange indicator lights and a very effective looking spoiler on the rear end of the car. The only thing I have reservations about are the wing mirrors. These look good and come complete with silver coloured insides to represent the glass but are flexibly mounted, I would presume to stop them being broken in the case of an accident, but I am still not totally convinced and would prefer to see them moulded into the body shape as in all the preceding cars. The finish, detail and interior show that with every new car the company is making progress. The standard of finish is very high but the best thing about it is the way it goes. An EVO3 motor is fitted which revs to 26,000 r.p.m. In a straight line it is ballistically fast as it is a comparatively light bodyshell as well as a great motor (this car could reach warp speed faster than the Enterprise). I really like this one and it shows how far the company has come in a comparatively short period of time.

N.S.C.C. AT GOODWOOD REVIVAL

17TH-19TH SEPTEMBER 1999

BY CLIVE PRITCHARD

"Wouldn't it be a good idea ....."

In a newspaper, the local Adult Education Centre advertised for students to create their own course; you know, French, History and Welding at the same time. I found out about this special offer on the 20th September 1999!! If only I had known about this a month before I would have enrolled in a course "How to build and run a Scalextric track at Goodwood". Hindsight is a wonderful thing!!

Why go to Goodwood and run a 6 lane Scalextric race track? You may well ask. The association with Scalextric and Goodwood goes back to when I was a lad, and first started to be interested in cars, real and toy, and a Mr. B. F. Francis started to produce early types of slot cars. With Havant just down the road from Goodwood, the opportunity to reproduce the track buildings was too good to miss.

So with this link, and an idea to promote the NSCC in one of the birthplaces of our hobby, we decided to go ahead with the project. With a tight budget and a short build time the whole event was 'GO-GO' from the start to finish. Would the members of the Viking Slot Car Club be up to the challenge? They have built a very successful track at their headquarters in Ramsgate in Kent, but this new track has to be totally portable, stand alone, in a field, in a tent, (40ft x 40ft marquee) with no electricity and with Goodwood's reputation for inclement weather, was a different matter.

From a 1960s Scalextric 101 circuits plans book the Goodwood track is quite a size, (17ft x 16ft) and that is only 2 lane, ours was to be 6 lane and with the outfield as well a space of over 20ft x 20ft was required.

10, 8x4 sheets of plywood, 200ft of 2x2, 300ft of 2x1, screws, brackets, bolts, nails, paint, the Scalextric Track itself, were all delivered to our workshop facility at a local water company.

After two weeks of late nights by the "Vikings" the track was now complete and ready for an open day at a large company nearby, the weekend before the Goodwood event. The assembly and knock down times of the track and any problems found, would be of benefit to us later. The idea of running the track using a 12v truck battery for all 6 lanes was quickly discounted as the computer programme requires independent power to all lanes, so the trusty Viking Power Pack was pressed into service. Faults were found in all areas, track, woodwork, wiring, cars and with a list of 21 improvements to be made in only 2 days, before the move to Goodwood, Monday and Tuesday were hectic, as Wednesday was to be dedicated to loading the van and travelling to Chichester.

Thursday was WET!! Just right to unload a van in a soggy field into a Marquee that had a 'small' leak (more later). There was much discussion about where to position the track in the Marquee, no matter where we put it the poles got in the way!

My wife says the grass on the local Bowling Green is really flat, but Goodwood grass is made in Sussex, (it must be the Downs), so the offcuts of wood came into use as packing, but we still had a dip in one corner, handy this as it helped with contours of Goodwood, this was also to give us problems later!

The twin 6ft lights worked OK back at the workshop, but the damp had got into them and only one tube would work. We changed the tube, and the other one did not work! It took all day to get every thing to look just right, one of the team even managed to paint his new T-shirt in a nice shade of grass green! But we left Goodwood in good spirits looking forward to a slap up meal at our luxury accommodation.

Guess what, on Friday it RAINED, straight down a tent support pole onto the track this gave us a wonderful 'water splash', just like the real track. More of a problem was the damp in the marquee, we did not expect we would

need heaters and dehumidifiers, so the electronics were causing problems, then the monitor started to smoke and spark so that was the end of that!

With a lot of hard work we got running at 10am and charging £1-50 for 10 laps, with a chance to win a Scalextric Truck set, we soon had the customers queuing (not sure if it was really to get out of the rain).

Regarding the customers, or spectators, they really made the effort to dress in 'period'. The 50s- 60s style has an genteel and innocent feel about it, (maybe it was I who was innocent), and with Scalextric in its infancy in that period the atmosphere at the event was just right, and with a bit more sun it would have even better.

Over the next 3 days the NSCC Goodwood Track Team worked bl**dy hard in promoting our club in any way we could think of, from accosting the spectators with leaflets to offers of a cup of tea to a rather tired grandmother.

The different skill levels between the racers and the 'customers' was evident in the reaction to an 'off', the racers were a lot more vocal with their suggestions to the marshals abilities, nothing changes!!

Rowan Atkinson dropped in to see us, with his children, after racing his Aston Martin DB2 on the other track, but he found our Astons more of a handful. Talking about the cars, we used Toys-R-Us Aston Martins, Power and Glory Vanwalls and BRMs for the feature races, but the bulk of the racing was undertaken by the ultra reliable Porsche GT1s.

We all learned a lot, not only about being at such a high profile event, but handling the customers (non racers) and having to adapt our running programme to suit the needs of the paying public. This is the way we need to proceed to expand our club, by giving the people (collectors and racers) what they want. I am sure you will wish to comment.

This was the first event of this type that the NSCC has undertaken, so it is hard to know how much impact our efforts had on the potential members, but, if we had not been at Goodwood, no-one would have known about us, except for the efforts of people like the Dynamic Duo, Julie and Mark Scale, who always seem to be these sort of events and have often recommended us and handed out membership forms.

I hope all the crew managed to get some real track time, I know it was difficult due to the non attending marshals, but we did our best to give everyone some time each day. We must mention the Slotmaster Race Control System, which throughout the whole event ran smoothly and collated all the results, to give us finalists on each day.

Lastly, we have to sincerely thank ALL Club members who helped in all areas, the building and dismantling of the track, supply of cars, buildings, fences, borders, track, and a special mention to Mr. Kohler at Hornby Hobbies, for all his assistance. No I'm not crawling, just stating facts.

ANDRE D'WHO?
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC!! MUSIC TO MY EARS, THE REACTION WAS BRILLIANT!
WE WANT YOU TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINION.

The idea is to explore ways to promote Our Club in whatever way we can. I appreciate and understand all your feelings about the Sponsorship of a Racing Driver, and I was encouraged by the amount of letters that were sent in, but NOT by the lack of positive suggestions to promote your club. It seems you all suggested, except our Belgian correspondent, that it would be a bad move to go down this avenue. O.K. I get the message, For some, to be negative in your comments is a positive opinion, but I would prefer a positive suggestion!! Your suggestions and opinions to the Journal are ALWAYS wanted and appreciated . We all have ideas, so why keep them all to yourselves?? I hope this gets as much reaction as the previous article!!

Clive

MERCEDES 250SL – CLASSIC INDUSTRIAL SCULPTURE OR JUST A CAR!!!

By Phil Etgart

For my money the Mercedes Sports Coupes and roadsters of the 1950s and 60s were the pinnacle of their design department's output, and certainly it is beyond argument that the Gull Wing 300SL was a design classic years ahead of it's time.

It is hard to capture the sheer beauty of these cars in a scale model as anyone who has compared the Revell 300SL to the real thing, or even the Scalextric 190SL to the sheer awesome beauty that is a 190SL roadster, would know. I have spent many happy moments drooling over an absolutely stunning red 190SL roadster that lives near me. The car seems to appear and disappear in moments frozen in slow motion (a bit like the girl in the 'Impulse' advert, that the guy with the bouquet of flowers could never quite catch up!!).

As the beautiful rounded lines and chrome of the late 1950s began to give way to more angular (not Anglia!) designs of the early 1960s, Mercedes moved on to design a new sports coupe and roadster to replace the classic beauties of the late 50s.

The new car was launched under the model designation 230SL in the early 60s, and in a few short years there was a beautiful Scalextric model of both the coupe and roadster for those of us too young or without adequate funds to buy the real thing .Unfortunately having overcome the one problem I am still affected by the other! The model was tooled and manufactured by the Exin factory in Barcelona and launched under the model designations C32 coupe and C33 roadster in 1967 and 1968 respectively.

C32 Mercedes Benz 250SL Coupe

The early catalogues refer to the car as a 230 SL, although I am not aware of any ever having been found with 230SL on the underpan. An early prototype exists in red with a cream roof (the moulding has minor differences to the finished car), but I believe even this car has 250SL on the underpan.

The car itself was a stunningly beautiful replica of the real thing with great attention to detail in evidence from the accurately moulded wheels (unique to the 250SL) through the delicate mouldings of the chrome rear bumper / lamp surrounds, the chrome trim around the window frames (chromed onto the roof moulding **not** a separate moulding as in the Fiat 850 Abarth) and two chrome stripes on each sill to represent the aluminium strips on the real car.

In common with most Spanish models of the time the car came with the white nylon swivel guide, and the open framed RX (X-04) motor. A large percentage of 250SL come with black sided 'Race Tuned' RX motors, and the appropriate 'Race Tuned' decals on each side. In Spain the car was principally available in five body colours, and three roof colours. Although most body colours have one main roof colour they are found with many odd combinations, which may be genuine factory output or later concoctions (The 'Pagoda' roof is a separate detachable mould from the main body). Colour combinations that are known are as follows **BUT** this is not necessarily a comprehensive list!

Body	*Roof*	*Other Roof Colours*
White	Black	
Beige	White or Maroon	
Green	White	
Maroon	White	Maroon
Black	White	Black

The white, beige, maroon and green cars turn up from Spain on a reasonably regular basis, and should be available from an NSCC swopmeet with a small search.

The C32 in black is an extremely rare car, and I am only aware of three that have surfaced in NSCC UK dealer circles in the last few years.

In common with many of the Spanish cars of the period, the 250SL was imported to and assembled for the UK market. It was available from 1968 (catalogue 9). The car was only available in two colours in the UK. white/black roof and beige/white roof and was sold in the 'Race Tuned' window box. Nice boxed UK examples are fairly hard to find and even as an unboxed item nice original cars are reasonably expensive to obtain. When buying 250SLs the points to look for are missing rear lamp lenses or whole bumper, missing front bumper, broken guide mount and broken body mounting posts (seems to be a common fault).

Since its deletion from the UK range in 1972 (catalogue 13), the coupe has been unavailable. Although since the appearance of spare roofs, glass, driver platforms via Spanish sources, a number of red hardtops have appeared (constructed from the 1993 'Vintage Series' reissue of the C33 Roadster).

The C32 was amongst the vast range of Spanish models that was manufactured by the 'Mexican' factory, and whilst a definitive list of colours manufactured is not available the car certainly exists in the following colours:

Body	*Roof*	*Other Roof Colours*
Blue	White	Blue
Orange	White	Orange
White	Blue	
Red	White	
Green	White	

It is also alleged to exist in silver & yellow as a Mexican issue but this is unsubstantiated. The 250SL is one of the more desirable and difficult to obtain of Mexican models.

C33 Mercedes Benz 250SL Roadster.

Developed from the C32 tooling, the C33 shares the chassis, running gear, lower body and chrome trim of the coupe. The driver platform/ glass/'Pagoda' Roof' were replaced by a new driver platform/Tonneau moulding and a two piece windscreen/chrome surround moulding. The most significant problem these cars used

to have was damaged/missing screen/surround frames, but since the 1993 ' Vintage Series' reissue, replacement parts are available. Therefore if buying a C33, look very carefully if the chrome is too good!

The same reissue also provided the opportunity to convert hard tops into the rarer/ more expensive Roadsters. However, these can be told apart by comparing the tonneau colours because the original is a lighter beige colour than the reissue and the driver detailing is different.

The C33 was marketed in Spain in the same five colours as the hard top (white, beige, green, maroon and black). The green and maroon cars are a little harder to obtain than the white and beige, and once again the black C33 is an incredibly difficult car to obtain.

The tooling for the C33 was also shipped to Mexico and the car was moulded in a variety of colours. It is known to exist in red, white, green, blue and orange 'Hecho en Mexico'! When buying Mexican C33's be aware that the tonneau is moulded in a reversed colour combination to the Spanish one!

In 1992, rumours began to surface of the imminent reissue of the C33 250SL Roadster, as the second model in the Exin 'Vintage Series'. This was rapidly followed by rumours it would not appear as the tooling for both the windscreen and screen frame was missing. Eventually in January 1993 the '93 Exin catalogue surfaced including the "NEW" 'Vintage Series' model 8353, Mercedes 250SL Roadster. The car was available in a very attractive bright red (brighter than the prototype C32 in colour), and came in the 'Vintage Series' custom box as a certificated limited edition of 5000.

Soon after the cars' appearance a small number of 8353 Mercedes 250 SL Roadsters began to appear (from Spanish Scalextric specialists **not** shops) in orange. The story was told that due to operator error (bad light in the factory?) the mix of colour granules within the neutral colour plastic beads was wrong.

The error was spotted after 300 or so had been produced, and these were removed and destroyed. However a quick thinking member of Exin factory staff managed to spirit away approximately 80 of the bodies which then began to appear in collector circles as finished cars. These are now extremely difficult to obtain.

With the demise of Exin and consequently the Spanish Scalextric factory, a number of car bodies and components began to appear. These were allegedly from the factory cupboards/stock room (orange Banco Occidental Tyrrell P34 F1 bodies, white Seat 850 Abarth bodies etc). These items included a handful of Mercedes 250SL bodies in white & black (probably around a dozen black bodies made it to the UK). Although having compared the Mercedes bodies to both original and 'Vintage Series' issues, it would appear that the black & white bodies were in fact 2nd Series (Vintage Series) and therefore manufactured in the 1990s. these are far rarer than the original issue!!

These cars were built as Roadsters and two white and three black bodied Roadsters surfaced at the Milton Keynes swapmeet in September 1993 (although they never made it onto the table!)

Subsequently in 1995 a pair of 250SL Roadsters turned up at the French swapmeet in St., Amand-Des-Eaux moulded in yellow and in silver. However, upon closer inspection it was revealed that these were in fact very high quality resin bodies. Subsequently a small number of additional pairs surfaced but as they retailed for more than genuine green & maroon Roadsters and virtually the same price as a pair of white & beige ones, it could be argued that they were expensive for what they were.

For the time being there have been no further discoveries of rare Mercedes C32 Coupe or C33 Roadsters. However, in the wonderful world of Scalextric anything could be around the corner. Design classic or just a car – WHAT DO YOU THINK ?

A NEW BOOK ON SCALEXTRIC – FROM BELGIUM!

Imagine, back in the early 1960s, a young Belgian boy in love with all things automotive. Along with his good friend across the street and other buddies they organize races on a dirt track in the garden with their Dinky and Solido die-casts. Then one day, the normally calm friend comes to the house in a fever pitch, saying "you've got to see this"! They jump on their bikes and peddle like mad for Mr. Van Campenhout's toy store. And there in the window is the new Scalextric electric car racing circuit...

The year was 1961, and this new book, **Scalextric: History and Passion**, is Alain van den Abeele's tribute to Scalextric. The title describes the book very well. It is a history, not of Scalextric per se, but of a personal passion for these cars, sets and accessories. Van den Abeele starts by recounting his own personal experience with Scalextric and how he and his friends try to duplicate all the circuits and scenery recommended in the wonderful Scalextric catalogues. The following chapters tell the story of Scalextric itself, the early unexpected success, then the quick sale to Lines Brothers, the heady days of the 60s, troubled times and botched products in the 70s and the beginning of a revival in the 80s... This is all pretty familiar territory, but made interesting by van den Abeele's obvious passion for his subject, comments by Richard Lines, and some unusual details like the early profit figures – £1,230,000 in Britain in 1963, back when a million pounds really meant something!

This is in no way a catalogue of Scalextric products, although the cars are listed at the end of the book. Nor is the history very complete, since details on most of periods seem rather sketchy. But the photos (by Eric de Ville) are once again wonderful, just as in van den Abeele's earlier book, "Merveilleux Circuits Miniatures", a history of all types of slot car sets which was published only in French. The cars are systematically photographed in natural race track settings, often with a photo of the real car nearby – a device that only works when done very, very well, as it is here. Unfortunately, Mr. van den Abeele also confirms his general ignorance of any type of non-Scalextric slot racing – from his reference to the "Revell" Blue King, to confusing drop-arms and iso-fulcrum chassis. This is rather surprising, since he and his friend actually bought the higher performance Cox and Monogram cars in the mad 60s.

The rest of the book (more than half) is devoted to various subjects: the "foreign" Scalextric cars and sets from Spain, France and elsewhere, a few chapters on collecting, one on driving and, to finish, a visit to the Margate factory just after the announcement that production has gone offshore! A curious way to end a book about a quintessential British brand, although perhaps inevitable. It is a touching, ultimately very sad chapter, describing the last remaining production workers as they go through the motions in their last month of work, some after 25 years of service....

These final chapters give us a chance to discover some of the lesser known (at least to me!) Scalextric products, like the Spanish SRS 1 range, the Russian "Novo" set, and a "Belga" set made only in Belgium. But the last part of the book also seems to go in circles, with a constant focus on trying to make collectors seem more important in the world of Scalextric than they really are, and a whole chapter on driving slot cars – totally useless, but an idea that seems to have seduced all slot car writers from the very beginning!

I've left the biggest problem for last. I read the book in the original French, but most of you are going to be reading it in English, and the translation is unfortunately not very good. Let me nuance that a bit. The woman who is credited with translating the book is capable of writing good English. But she knows absolutely nothing about slot cars, and obviously has very little experience as a translator. What's more, no English speaker seems to have reread the manuscript or the proofs. The result is a few smooth-flowing sentences mixed in with a lot of awkward ones and some absolutely indecipherable passages, along with at least one major or minor mistake on each page! This is as much the publisher's fault as the translator's – what ever happened to copy editors???. I started keeping a list of all the errors, but gave up because there were too many. Just to take one example, on page 12, describing how the boys realise that too much oil on the motor would burn it out, the book reads: "At that stage we were oblivious to the ill effects of the oil splattered on the driver." In the original French of course, it's oil on the "commutator" which causes all the problems.

I'll spare you the other bloopers, but Derek Cooper is probably still wondering about the section where he is quoted on the history of Scalextric "engines": "... a huge slot racer ahead of the eternal Derek Cooper..." (convention has it that electric motors are always motors, those things in your car are motors or engines, and rockets are powered by either solid propellant motors, or liquid propellant engines; don't ask me why, that's the way it is!)

Despite these major faults, the book is still worth buying, if only for the photos and for the "sympathique" story that we all seem to share, of a child and his lifelong passion for a simple toy!

The Club has acquired a very small number of these books. If you would like one please write to Richard Winter. The price is £20.00. They will be available for collection at the Milton Keynes Swopmeet. Please note that it will not be possible to post them.

AND ANOTHER BOOK REVIEW

BY CHRIS WAKEFIELD

"The God of Scalextric" by Paul Sheen is described as "a classic short story for the year 2000 A.D." The God is, in fact, Tony, a precocious child who has the power to create or destroy the inhabitants of a small scale world.

The hero, and he earns that title by the end of the story, is John, a world weary modelling clay Le Mans racing driver, who makes wry comments on the fragility and unfairness of aspects of "life". He meets the beautiful but deformed Prescilla and by his bravery and selflessness , plus opportune intervention by God, steers us to a happy ending.

The ever popular notion that at special times toys are given the gift of speech and action is one which appeals to all children and when I read it to my class of 7 – 11 year olds they enjoyed that idea. However, words such as "metamorphosis," " indiscriminately" and "indomitable" preclude it from being classed as a children's book.

Which leads to an adult audience and perhaps we are in greater need of a short story with heroes and happy endings to lift our spirits. This is a charming tale in the tradition of "The Nutcracker" and "The Little Tin Soldier" and benefits from a second and third reading.

Unfortunately, at the moment, the presentation is basic with typewritten script. The story would justify a more attractive package and carefully chosen illustrations.

One for next year's stocking perhaps.

NINCO track test

BY ALAN SLADE

Recently I have been testing three new models in the Motorsport range; 50188 McLaren F1 GTR 'ADAYOFF', 50190/1 Sauber Petronas 017. Being in the Motorsport range means they come in bigger boxes and have the NC-2 motor installed directly into the chassis. In common with the other GP cars the Saubers have steering.

It was only a matter of time before Ninco did what most racers have been doing for some time now and fitted the NC-2 motor into the McLaren. Having said that, this was the first time I have driven an F1 GTR fitted with an NC-2 motor, being happy with my RX-4 engined version and thinking that I would not need any more power to win races. I have now changed my mind!

The chassis is a completely new design fitted with the high power magnet, and as it does not have the interchangeable motor adaptor is stiffer than the original version. Some people may think this is a backward step but it means that the problem that has been experienced in the past with engine flex in the chassis has been eliminated, and as a consequence gear life should be increased and axle hop on acceleration now a thing of the past.

On the version I have the red stripes are a bit pale and look as though they could do with a 'double hit' on the printing machine or being printed on top of a white line. But then again the real car may look like this. If anyone can enlighten me please feel free to do so!

On the track the car was totally different to any McLaren I have driven before. I was able to drive it 'flat' most of the way round Knockhill - no mean feat -just lifting off on the approach to Duffers Dip, the chicane and braking hard for the hairpin. My best lap time was 4.34 seconds backed up by 4.39's, 4.44 and 5.38 and the overall time for the150 lap 'race' 755.92 seconds. For comparison my times with my RX-4 version were best lap 4.99 seconds backed up by times ranging from 5.00 to 5.38 with the 150 lap time of 928.72. I hope you can now see why I was impressed.

With all the different gear ratio possibilities available (3:1, 2.7:1, 2.24:1 and 2.2:1) there is potential for improvement in these times and I will have to do some further testing to see what improvements can be made. The only downside of all this is that the car is black and difficult to see on a black track. I shall just have to buy a yellow bodyshell.

The Sauber is the fourth F1 car to come from Ninco and for my money is the best handling version so far, but I have not driven a Stewart Ford so I may be wrong. The Achilles heel of previous F1 cars has been the chicane, just refusing to take it at anything like a racing speed. The Sauber was quite happy to be thrown at it almost flat, a vast improvement over previous cars especially the Jordan. The only inconsistent point on the track was the back 'straight' but this catches out most cars so I was not worried about this. Whatever Ninco have done to the chassis I approve.

The Chassis is the same layout as the previous cars with a 9/22 (2.24:1) gear ratio and the powerful 3500 gauss magnet. The bargeboards are a much better arrangement than previously, but the wing mirrors are still very fragile. I hope that the front wing is available separately as I broke the one on the test car when I went off into the wall. There are only so many times that you can Super Glue a wing back on!

Performancewise the car is magic, and a bit frightening on a short circuit! The high gear ratio, powerful magnet and brilliant engine braking means that you can go very deep into corners (if you dare!) and if you are not too keen with the throttle on the exit proceed round at very realistic speeds. It is a bit tail happy but this is really what you would expect from a light powerful car (again very realistic). Maybe non-ribbed tyres would help a bit or tyres with a slightly softer compound.

During my 150 lap race the best lap time was 3.62 seconds (set on the last lap!) with other

times of 3.63, 3.68, 3.79 and some in the 4 second bracket. Total time was 676.49 seconds. Generally the heat averages were around 4.1 to 4.5 seconds, so you can see that the car is consistent and it is the ability to be consistent that wins races.

Just in case I was at last getting to know how to drive Knockhill I thought I would put the Jordan on the track for a comparison and to see if my earlier comments still stood. They did but I also had quite a surprise. The Jordan is much more tail happy than the Sauber with the car liable to go off at any time if you are not gentle with the throttle, and the chicane still needs to be taken differently. The surprise? I could lap faster with the Jordan than the Sauber! My fastest lap was 3.57 seconds with other times ranging from 3.63 to 3.73. It was not so consistent though with the 150 lap time being 726.84 seconds.

Overall these are two impressive race cars and I hope Santa brought you some. I hope the Motorsport Ferrari F50's, Porsche GT1's and the next F1 cars are not too far away.

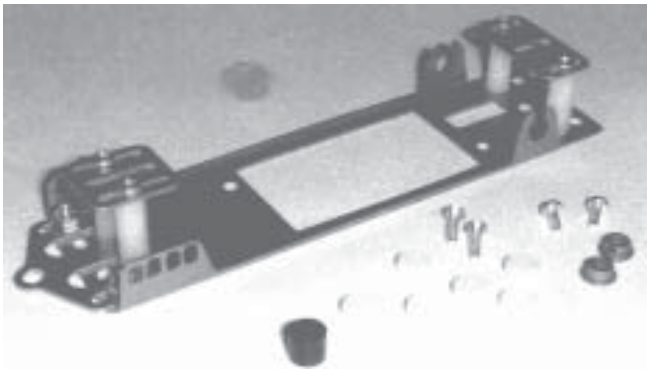
SCD/PARMA CATALOGUE

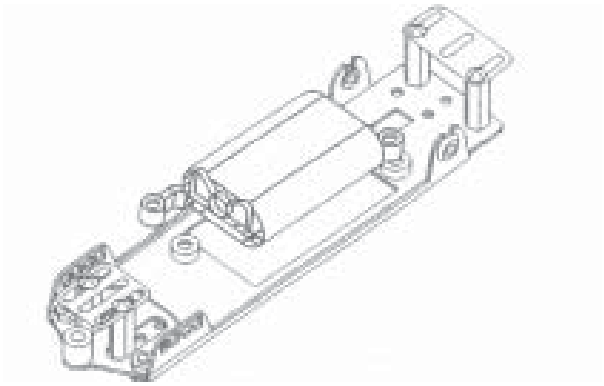
Chas Keeling has sent me a selection of his catalogues which,although primarily aimed at the serious B.S.C.R.A. racer, contains a wealth of goodies for the modified Scalextric brigade.

Foremost among these is the new Excalibur 32 chassis, designed to give improved handling and better performance to Ninco models in particular, but is also suitable for other makes of slotcar.

As may be seen from the pictures it consists of a brass chassis, predrilled to ensure easy fitting of a variety of body shells, complete with all the various screws and washers to finish the job.

There are many other items available, including some useful decals and a lot of specialised tools. Phone Chas and a copy of this very handy catalogue will soon be on its way to you.





RACING BY MAIL!

BY RUSSELL SHELDON

The idea of holding a mail-in proxy race came about as a result of discussions on the Internet "Slots" DL, which currently has about 200 subscribers from all around the world. The majority of subscribers are "basement-dwellers", who enjoy building and racing scale model cars. Most prefer the modelling aspect which the hobby offers, and race their creations - which are very often converted static models - on their Scalextric home layouts.

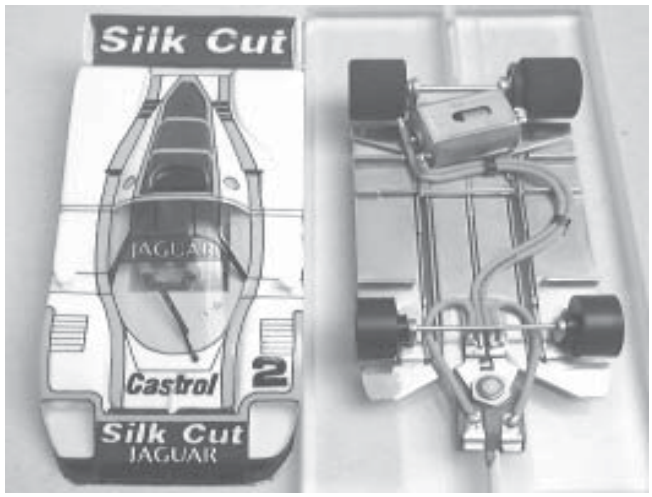
If you are not familiar with the "Slots" discussion list, it is an email based mailing list, with discussions regarding all types of 1/32 and 1/24 scale slot car building, racing, and collecting, as well as discussions on related real race car topics. Although the group is open to discussion on all forms of slot racing, a large number of subscribers are quite knowledgeable and devoted enthusiasts of 1/32 scale home and club racing. For more information about the "Slots" discussion list, as well as subscription information, look up http://valdetaro.com/slotsdl.htm on the Internet.

Bob Ward, an avid 1/32nd scale model racing car enthusiast who lives in Seattle, USA - and who has a four-lane home track called "Daytona West" - and Paul Kassens, editor of the Internet-based slot racing e-zine the "Old Weird Herald", teamed-up and offered to organise and host the event, creating an opportunity for everyone to participate in a race with fellow enthusiasts, without having to travel! The event further presented a chance to compare building skills and ideas with other enthusiasts, while leaving the driving to someone else. A very comprehensive set of rules were drawn-up, and in order to limit cost and create an equal opportunity for everyone, motors were limited to stock Plafit Cheetah's.

The first "Daytona West / Old Weird Herald" Proxy Race, for cars using injection-moulded hard plastic bodies, was held in February. Following the success of this event, it was decided to host another race, one for hard-body production-type cars and another for vacuum-formed sports prototype cars, with a strong emphasis on concours d'elegance, during October. The event attracted entries from Tasmania, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Canada and the USA. The entry list included cars built by ex-US "Pro" slot racers Pete Sardella and Philippe de Lespinay (1973 US National Champion and author of the book Vintage Slot Cars, recently published by Motorbooks International). Prizes were sponsored by Parma, Patto's Bodies and Fantasy World Toy & Hobby, a Scalextric dealer in Tacoma, USA.

After some very close racing, during which all the cars are rotated amongst the six proxy car drivers, Russell Sheldon's "Silk Cut" Jaguar XJR9LM emerged as the overall victor. Mark Gussin of the UK won the concours d'elegance, with a beautifully detailed "Motorola" Lola T98-10.

A full race report can be found on the "Old Weird Herald" website at www.oldweirdherald.com



Russell Sheldon's overall winner: JAGUAR XJR9

HOW TO CONVERT THAT KIT!

BY DAVID NORTON.

Part Three. Modelling "Bits & Bobs"

With a bit of luck you managed to follow my part 1 & 2 ramblings about converting static models into slot cars and you're now the proud owner of something different and unique. However if you intend to have a go in the future, or do another, then the following may help you detail your model and/or add that finishing touch.

Its amazing how the correct looking driver, right exhausts or stickers can really set your model off; after all it is the attention to detail that makes the Fly Classic cars such beautiful models, well that's my opinion anyway!

Here's the "bits & bobs":-

1. For mid 60s open sports car such as the AC Cobra, build the drivers platform from matt black painted card and use the driver figure from a Javelin/Electra as its a perfect period piece with the standard "open face" helmet.

2. For correct sized exhausts on your car (a model is not complete without exhausts, all real cars have them!) your local model shop should sell lengths of aluminium tube in various diameters to suit all models. Its light and looks brilliant without painting.

3. Invest in a couple of draughtsmen micro ink pens (sizes:- 0.25mm and 0.35mm) for fine detailing the moulded body air intakes, colouring wiper blades, picking out the spokes on wheels etc. An absolute must for detailing, with ink in all colours, i.e. orange for those awkward to paint side indicators.

4. Drivers platforms, for saloon kits, can be found in the "scrap bit boxes" at Swopmeets, my favourites are Scalextric Capri/ Escort XR3I, BMW 3.0CSL and for the large American cars (Mustangs etc.), the Ninco C Klass Merc.

5. The above can be a bit heavy if you race your kit so cut out all the surplus plastic, i.e. drivers seat, rear area and replace with paper painted matt black; much lighter and you can't see the difference as the car zips around the track.

6. The Sierra was always a poor model but its wheels are superb and usually cheap! Grab some and highlight the spokes using the said micro pens; the results are brilliant, spoke wheels that take the wider tyres.

7. On 60s cars always use black numbers on white roundels with a black border as they will set off the car perfectly, just look at photos of races from the period.

8. "Real" air intakes or grills (typically the "mouth" of an AC Cobra) can be created from a cheap tea strainer cut to suit. Another option is to use aluminium mesh, used in real car body repairs, bought from Halfords.

9. Small silver areas such as mirrors or window edges can be really difficult to paint so buy a micro pen from an artist shop that's pre loaded with enamel paint. I'll credit the wife with this one as it's her pen I pinched!

10. Overhead projector sheets are thin, easily cut and shaped for windscreens should you be restoring an old kit that has lost its own. In addition these sheets don't go "white" at the edge should you need to make a fold in them.

11. Racing stripes, very common on 60s cars, are a bugger to paint, all that masking and they never end up perfect. Instead use cheap car "pin stripes" from your local Halfords etc. Various colours are available and they are easy to reapply should you damage them when racing.

12. Invest in a scalpel set from an artist shop, a 1001 uses to the kit builder!

13. Finally, I never spray my models (because I am really bad at it!) only brush paint; but to achieve a smooth streak free finish I wash the body in warm soapy water, rinse fully and dry, then apply Humbrol straight from the tin. This works fine but you must use a decent quality brush (I recollect mine was over £10) as there is no way you will get a good finish with a £1 "toy shop special"!

Hopefully some of the above will be of use to you and if you've discovered any tasty modelling tips don't keep them secret, write in and share!

VARIO 16 - THE ANSWER!

BY DEREK MOORE

In the early hours of the morning, surrounded by bits of Vario 16 hand controller and dead brain cells, I eventually fathomed out why so many club racers can't get them to work. (The controllers I mean, not the brain cells).

Although the circuit appears complex it is essentially quite straightforward. A variable resistance, trigger and switch operated, which in the diagram I've reduced to a single box, changes the voltage applied to the input of an integrated circuit.

The chip is either a voltage comparator which compares the input with a known voltage and drives its output up or down accordingly, or it is a 'chopper' which produces slices of output volts: the higher the input the wider the slices and the smaller the gaps in between. I have to guess at what this chip is because the manufacturers have thoughtfully sandpapered off all traces of it's identification so I can't look it up, and I would need a bench full of test gear to work it out for myself. Whatever it is the output of this chip drives a mosfet which controls the voltage to the track.

A whatfet? A mosfet. It is a field effect transistor with a low impedance between its drain and source.

What?.....Alright, you can bung a load of that electric stuff through it without losing a helluva lot on the way. OK? Fine.

There are several components which, although essential to the circuit's operation, I have left out for the sake of clarity.

Basically this is what's in there:-

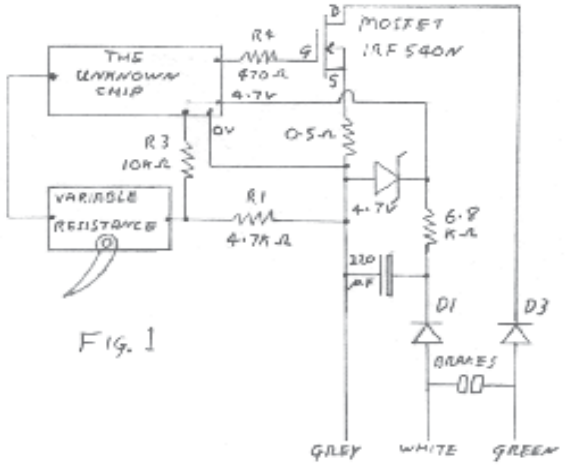


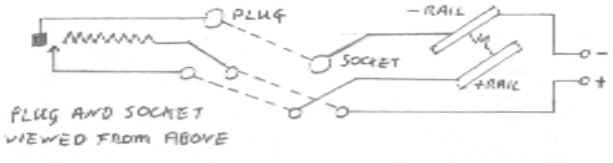
Fig. 1

You will notice that it contains a 220 .F electrolytic capacitor. The purpose of this is to smooth the supply volts applied to the zenner diode (drawn above it). Normally, the full wave rectified power supply drops to zero volts after each half cycle. Smoothing it will make sure that the voltage never falls below the 4.7v rating of the zenner. As the supply rises to its peak of up to 18v the excess voltage (anything above 4.7v) is dumped through the zenner to the supply negative.

This ensures a constant uninterrupted 4.7v supply to power the inner workings of the chip for as long as the controller is plugged in. The smoothing effect of the capacitor will boost the voltage in its immediate vicinity, but this increased voltage will not go 'backwards' through diode Dl and will have no effect on the power available on the track.

Now we turn our attention to the way club tracks are generally wired. Power from the supply positive travels through the resistor to the trigger operated wiper, through the motor, and back to the supply negative. The wiper, when on the brake contact, puts a short circuit across the power rails while isolating the positive side of the supply. See Fig. 2.

Fig. 2

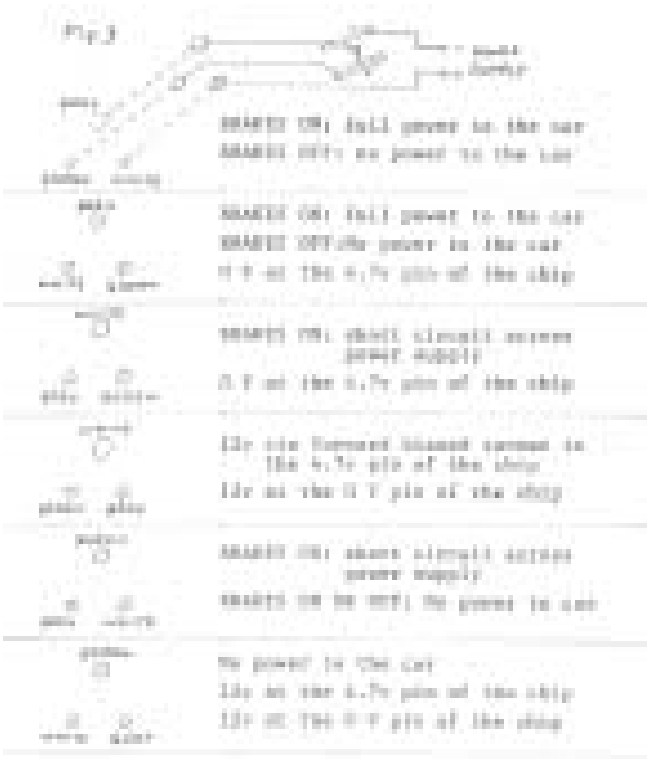


Whichever way you connect the three wires of the Vario 16 to the plug, and there are six permutations, it is not going to work. To be fair to Ninco it was designed to be used with their track and their power units not Scalextric or SCX.

But before they made their own track, whose track did they design their cars to run on?

The six different wiring configurations are shown below. Use these diagrams with Fig. 1. I have shown the controller wired directly to the well known and much loved 2 Amp 3 pin plug. Using the jack-plug that it comes with and wiring a jack-socket to the 3 pin plug will make no difference.

(socket and plugs viewed from above)



At best it will stick two electronic fingers up at you and sulk until you unplug it, or at worst you will be shoving 12v where it would much rather see 0V. All you will get out of it is a cloud of smoke and it's goodbye Mr. Chip.

Also you may experience such delights as the brake contacts connecting full power to the track as soon as you plug in which will spread the car all over the nearest crash barrier, or putting a short circuit directly across the power supply which will quietly smoulder while making plans to 'get you for this' at a later date.

Cars and power units, like all inanimate objects, do have minds of their own, and there's a vicious streak in most of them.

There is nothing that you can plug in or connect between the track side socket and the controller to make it work either. The problem is between the power supply and the socket. In short, you will have to rewire it.

If you reverse the two wires on the power supply the controller will work perfectly, but the cars will run backwards.

The wiring will have to be changed to that shown in Fig. 4. Compare it to Fig. 2. It is worth mentioning at this point that a resistor type controller will still work with the track wired this way.

Fig.4

So before you do all this what are the advantages to justify it? If the chip is a 'chopper' then the transistor it controls will feed slices of 12v to the motor; thin slices of 12v with wide gaps in between at low speed settings, with wider slices and smaller gaps as you increase speed. The advantage of this is that the motor is producing full torque even at low speed. If the chip gives an output of a varying voltage then the transistor will control the voltage applied to, and therefore the speed of, the motor in the same way as a resistor type. Either way you will have the ability to adjust the controller for pick-up and response which is a massive advantage. However, any adjustment will have to be made before you race as operating those hard to get at switches **while** racing will be tricky to say the least.

If adjusted correctly it will knock spots off a resistor controller in terms of low speed to mid range control. Flat-out speed is a different matter. With a resistor controller there is a contact at full travel so that power comes into the controller to the contact and straight out again without even looking at the resistor. Full value of the power supply is applied to the car and none of it is lost in the controller. Look again at the Vario 16 diagram. There are no straight in - straight out contacts for flat out. The current flowing through the motor also flows through diode D3 and the transistor. The transistor, being a mosfet, will not swallow too much, perhaps 0.1 to 0.2v. The diode will drop between 0.2 and O.7v. Optimistically this controller will deprive your car of about a third of a volt; pessimistically nearly a volt. It doesn't sound like much, but on the track when you need every last ounce of speed, hard luck, you're not going to get it. The more courageous of you might consider wiring in a microswitch to connect the green and grey wires together. You would have to invent a way of mounting it such that the trigger operates it at the flat out position. Electrically it would be in parallel with the control circuit and would overcome the problem of internal losses.

How the transistor would react to being switched hard 'on' with little or no current flowing through it I could not say. If you are brave enough to try it - good luck, but don't blame me for a blown up controller.

Perhaps a contact for full squirt would be a good idea for the Mark 2 version, and while we're at it, a potentiometer (rotary variable resistor to you) with an easy to get at knob instead of the switches. How about it Ninco?

When I read Jeff Davies' article about this controller in the November issue it occurred to me that while giving it a whacking great handful up the straight a conventional controller will have no current at all flowing through its resistor so it will begin to cool down. The transistor in the Vario 16 will be carrying full motor current so it will heat up. The only time it stops conducting is when the brakes are on. The transistor will have to dissipate more heat than the resistor ever will. Not that it matters. This tranny is rated at 125 Watts. While this is hot enough to make toast on it is far out of reach of anything that the average club power unit can dish out. Incidentally, Jeff, the moving parts that it hasn't got are on the other end of the trigger. The track which the wiper moves along is the copper of the printed circuit board. This is gold plated to give better contact and to stay cleaner than bare copper. The wiper contact is 6mm diameter and bridges across between a long gold plated track along one edge of its travel to pads along the other edge which are connected to various resistors. This copper measures between 1 and 2 thousandths of an inch thick (.025 - .05 mm), and I'm not convinced that this will stand up to as much wear and tear as a resistor with wire of 11 thou. (.25mm).

Finally, a word of warning. If you rewire your track to accept the Vario 16 it should work perfectly. However, if you travel to another track which is not wired the same way you will be applying full voltage (12 - 16v) to the 0V pin of the chip causing permanent damage to the controller and your wallet.

The controller I've been looking at was bravely lent to me by Graeme Thoburn. Don't worry Graeme, I've found most of the bits already.

My thanks to Derek for this quick response to last month's query. We do have a variety of talents within the club. For those of you who are unwilling or unable to take advantage of this very full explanation I also offer the following solution from Carlo Clayden:-

"Try reversing the wires on the transformer. One of our club members tried this on our circuit and it worked. It seems the current will only flow one way. Unfortunately our circuit's four lanes are wired to a common earth so it was not possible to run on all lanes."

Personally I find that my cardboard battery house and on/off push buttons are much simpler to operate. I also think that the rubber track is easier to assemble.