

NSCC

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

No.223

October 2000

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“BACK TO THE FUTURE”

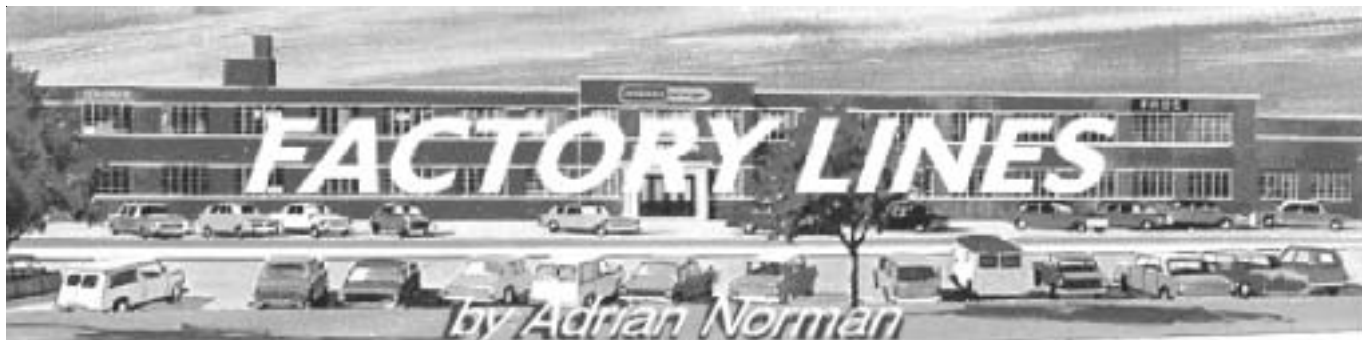
This month I feel as if I have been living in a time warp; first there was the visit to Brooklands for the rail racing event; then I spent a considerable amount of time queuing for petrol (shades of the 1974 fuel crisis); Graham Smith sent me an old newspaper cutting about Dale Tremble (see page 21) and then Dale himself paid me a visit.

To say that the original secretary of the club was impressed with the way the NSCC has developed would be an understatement. We spent a hugely enjoyable couple of hours together and he couldn't believe the way that the club has grown over the years. I am aware that most of you joined the club in the 90s and I am never really sure if you like reading about the early days as I get very little feedback about the actual content of the Journal. I often get appreciative comments about the general standard (for which - many thanks) but few people offer suggestions about particular aspects of it. No news is not necessarily good news so please let me know your likes and dislikes about individual items (not necessarily for publication) so that I can continue to try and improve it.

On, then, to the current issue; I have received so many contributions this month that it has stretched to 48 pages and I still couldn't get everything in. Keep up the good work - everything will be published in due course. My thanks to Santiago Bertra for the first article that I have received from a Spanish member; I would love to get more articles from overseas - please don't worry about your grasp of English because it is invariably much better than my attempts at your own language.

I can also recommend David Lawson's article on pages 10 -11 about the trials and tribulations of a scratch builder who spends many hours creating a unique slot car only to find that a manufacturer immediately releases the very model he has laboured over for months. I hope the photos print alright because his recreation of the Moss/Jenks 300SLR is a small scale masterpiece.

Till next month
Brian



Not much to report this month but I think there are some interesting releases due to fall before the end of the year.

NEW RELEASES.

Due to the rash of special and limited editions over the summertime, two Jaguar XJ220 cars produced for the Gamleys toy store chain have escaped this column until now. They were produced in the same colours, blue and orange (butterscotch), as the Argos Porsche 911 GT1 cars. Livered simply with a racing number and the 'Gamleys' stylised name on the rear wing they were produced in a small quantity of less than a thousand each.

CATALOGUE

The new catalogue is about to hit the shops. Unfortunately, 'just-in-time' planning didn't favour the timing of this month's journal. But, I think it will be worth waiting for!

C2094 RENAULT MEGANE 'TOTAL' OR 'ESSO'

As mentioned last month there are two versions of the dark blue Diac Megane, displaying Total or Esso above the door mounted race numbers. I would like to ascertain whether the two versions were particular to being either a set car or a solo boxed car. It would be most helpful if anyone could phone or e-mail me to confirm.

C NO. UPDATES

C2323 Jaguar XJ220 'Gamleys', No.2, blue

C2324 Jaguar XJ220 'Gamleys', No.1, orange

Full listings are available online at
www.slotcarportal.com.



Phil Etgart wades through the NSCC archives for October 1990

Strange things happen! In the 'Backtrack' article in last month's NSCC newsletter Brian talked with Norman Wheatley who in October 1990 was approaching the end of his tenure as National Scalextric Collectors Club (great to hear that old name again!) newsletter editor. Curiously enough in the October 1990 newsletter there was an appeal from Norman for overseas members to send him crisp mint low denomination notes in exchange for Scalextric items they were seeking. It appeared as though Norman was off on a new collecting mission. Seems like a great marketing ploy to me!

Hi tech. had finally arrived in the NSCC newsletter with an appeal from Dave Picken in Hong Kong for members to include fax numbers in their ads, even if they were only numbers that they had access to at work. Seems like only yesterday this was cutting edge technology and yet already many machines are gathering dust having been largely superseded by e-mail, and yet slot cars roll on largely unaffected by the march of technology. Perhaps a power base unit with a screen is only just around the corner so that you can watch your items on e-bay while you race!

Hot topic ten years ago was that of splitting cogs, now only a distant memory, thanks to Hornby's innovation of including a collar in the revised cog design. However rereading the article now it seems a little churlish to complain about a split cog on "a Dukes of Hazzard Capri bought from a local toyshop". I wonder if the shop has any more with split cogs to sell!

The major feature in the October 1990 newsletter was a look back to the dawn of slot car sets with the republication of an article from Which? Magazine of 1961. The article which had been kindly provided by Tony Frewin (the soon to be NSCC newsletter editor) was a

consumers report upon "Model car racing tracks".

It began by highlighting that "The first type of model car racing track was an electric rail racing track. About five years ago (1956), a refinement appeared, the *slot* racing track, with the cars guided by a slot instead of a rail". The article went on to discuss how enthusiasts often make their own tracks, but around Christmas time "Model racing sets are prominently displayed in toyshops".

The article went on to review the six brands of "racing track" it had been able to find in the shops. These were, MRRC, Tri-ang Scalextric, SRM, VIP, Welkut and Wrenn. The sets were tested by "about 50 schoolboys aged 12-16 and they were given a total running time "of about 20 hours, in the laboratory".

The summary of the article was that "the SRM and Welkut sets received severe criticism, and were unreliable in running as well as having unstable tracks". "The Wrenn was mechanically and electrically sound, and was very popular with the boys who particularly liked its small size and provision for overtaking". "The MRRC was constructionally best and most fun to race because the cars stayed evenly matched". "The two remaining sets, Tri-ang Scalextric and VIP, both have advantages. If it is necessary to move the track about the smaller VIP set with its locking sections is very good. However if you have the space to leave the large Tri-ang Scalextric track permanently assembled it offers a good deal of scope".

Overall the article concluded that the VIP and Tri-ang Scalextric sets were appraised as "Joint best buys" and noted of the Tri-ang Scalextric "the boys preferred it". Obviously had great taste those baby boomers!

Next month in 'Happening Ten Years Time Ago' Scalextric on TV!

B****Y SLOT CAR BOOM!

OR WHY I HATE FLY, CARRERA, NINCO AND PINK-KAR!

BY DAVID LAWSON

Being of a certain age my preference for model making and slot racing tends to focus on the 1950s through to the early 1970s and although I don't consider myself a collector in the true sense of the word, I do seem to gradually accumulate examples of classic cars that find themselves ending up on the display shelves in my hobby room.

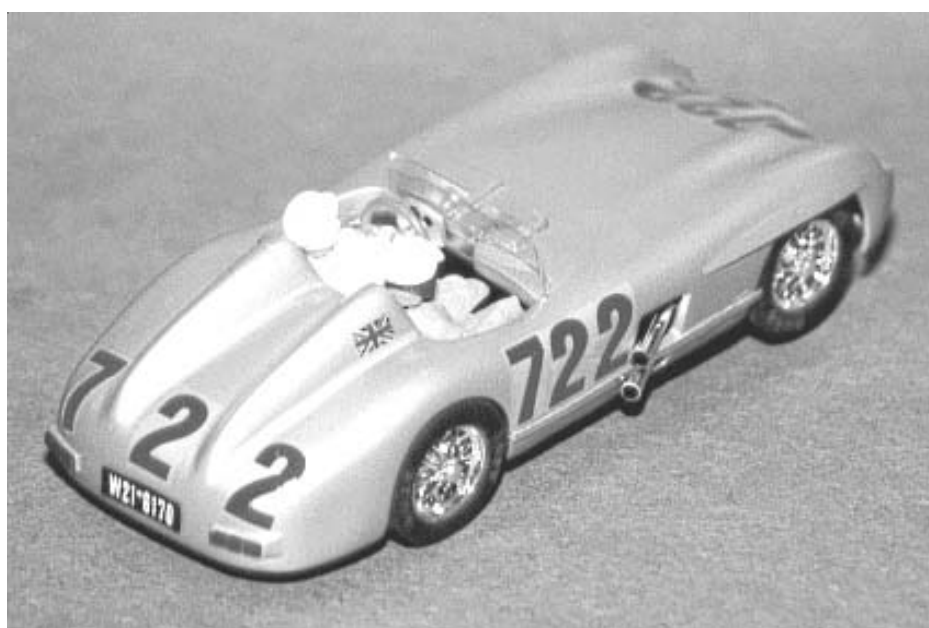


Like anyone who has been around the hobby since the 60s boom, I have, over time, owned some nice slot cars which have disappeared without trace and with not a little regret. As I said I am not a purist collector so not for me the endless search at swapmeets, boot sales and the local newspaper adverts in pursuit of that allusive C68 or C84. I am content to buy a £4 Airfix kit of the Aston and TR4A and fit a scratchbuilt or adapted Classic Ninco chassis with those lovely wire wheels and end up with another car for my 'collection'. One that I'm not afraid to drive due to its high value, that is reliable and handles nicely.

SO WHY MY HATRED OF THOSE SLOT CAR MANUFACTURERS?

In recent years I have built an AC Cobra from the Revell easy-kit bodyshell using Scalextric running gear and my own chassis and a Ferrari 250GTO utilising a frighteningly expensive mint 1960s Revell body shell fitted with a modified Ninco 166 chassis. Lo and behold, cars that I've wanted for years and finally built for myself are then released by Pink-Kar and, in the Cobra's case – the whole world!

Not to worry I thought, they weren't particularly difficult conversions, and I carried on happily converting further personal favourites. Having spent weeks preparing a Porsche 917 bodyshell and painstakingly produced my own intricate and delicate decal striping to represent Richard Attwood's magnificent Le Mans car, I heard that Fly intended to release the Porsche and no doubt in every conceivable colour scheme – one model consigned to the "maybe I'll finish this one day" drawer in disgust.



After waiting weeks for a fibreglass bodyshell of the Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR from Australia and, on opening the box finding it needs, shall we say, some cleaning up I set to work on creating the wonderful Moss/Jenkinson, Mille Miglia winning car from a shape that roughly resembled the Merc. Having cut out and discarded the interior, drilled out and sanded the nose opening, cut out and created the headlights, sanded off the blobs that were the rear lights and scratchbuilt replacements, reprofiled the body sides and reshaped and aligned all four wheel arches, cut out the side panels and made the exhaust pipes, rebuilt the scuttle air scoops and made an accurate windscreen, created Moss and 'Jenks' figures complete with Milliput bushy beard and fitted the correct number plate on the rear of the car – Carrera announce the release of a Mille Miglia set with, you guessed it, a MERCEDES-BENZ 300 SLR !!

To add insult to injury even my recently completed conversion of a Lightweight E-Type Jaguar from the Airfix kit has now been

rendered unnecessary by Top Slot's release of their excellent resin body kit.

What can you say? Well I suppose in my heart of hearts I'm happy that the current boom is driven by enthusiasts like myself whose love is for the great cars from a fabulous racing era and which hopefully will continue to be produced in ever increasing numbers by all the slot car manufacturers. After all it enables all of us to acquire slot cars that we wouldn't have dreamt of owning just a few years ago and the converters and scratchbuilders among us can continue to build for the pleasure of owning their unique model whether or not it is also available as a mass produced item.

Now, if I start building my all time favourite racing car - the Jim Clark Lotus 25 – today, then with a bit of luck some kind manufacturer will announce their release just in time for me to get it in my Christmas stocking.

Never mind the Lotus 25 - start work on a BRM V16 immediately!

SLOT CLASSIC: THE DAWN OF A GREAT MAKE

BY SANTIAGO BARTRA

When we judge any slot car on the market we take into account its mechanics, finish, proportions, handling, its look, in short, down to the finest detail. Sometimes we lose sight of the scale whilst analysing every tiny detail. Surely we wouldn't be so critical with cars of normal size. Most of us, eager to acquire and collect these miniatures, have tried in our imaginations or in real life to get inside the cockpit of Steve McQueen's Fly Porsche or slip inside the cab of M.Schumacher's Ninco Ferrari or cruise in Pink Kar's Testarossa.

What would a psychiatrist say about this desire to possess, exhibit, surround oneself with countless models, often indiscriminately? If we attempt to respond to the question by talking to another fan we find in him or her a different motive, a different undercurrent.

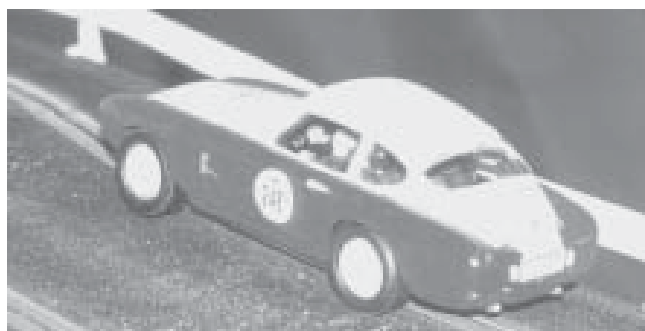


In step with advances towards a greater realism in the models, our criticism also aspires to better and better finishes. At last market forces have created competition between makes. All the makes stand out against all the others. Each one demands more and more of its customer who, faced with a range of cars saturated with reproductions, offer information, comments, and above all suggestions. We have got to the point of categorising ourselves from Sport GT to Sport Prototypes, Routier Classics,

Thousand Mile Classics or Panamerican, Formulas, new models, karts and so on. In the midst of them, there is one make, the reason for this article, specialising in the Classic category which has surprised the world slot market:- Slot Classic.

Originating from the hands of César Jimenez a decade ago, it has made rapid progress with each model brought out on the market. Armed with a stringent knowledge of models, strictly professional and eager to excel, he has achieved real works of art. His exquisite taste inspired by Hispanic tradition, has given rise to such outstanding cars in the world of slot such as the Pegaso range or the Renault 8, the Seat 1430, and not forgetting the English Rolls Royce, one of the most prized.

I will enlarge in future articles on the altogether surprising details: The constant improvements in bodywork, from the Pegaso Z-102's robust cab to the lightness of the Alfa Romeo Monoposto, the profusion of minute details, the realism of the decals, the quaintness of the drivers, the lights and the handsomest wheels ever seen on a slot car: The Aston Martin Zagato's. These wheels, quite something to look at, can now be bought in kit form by all of us who enjoy handling car parts. Making the acquaintance of Slot Classic car reveals craftsmanship with personality, good taste and out of the ordinary aesthetic sense. The creation of new models springs from his special knowledge of the classic and is distanced from commercial interest, Slot Classic is the market leader at the moment.





www.anycollectables.co.uk is a new UK based collectable models specialist directory. The site is divided up into specialist sections, one of which is a comprehensive section on slot cars. Each section has been appointed an editor with specialist knowledge in that area. For site users this should hopefully mean accurate and comprehensive information.

Other features include a find it type service, where users can contact most of the suppliers in a section in one go, via email. This system should take the work out of finding the best deals or specific cars, with the potential to contact hundreds of Scalextric dealers at once. For example ask for a mint boxed white Merc 190SL, you would be very unlucky if not one of the dealers had one, but finding that specific car on or off-line would probably take all morning! The layout is reasonably clear, not overwhelmed with adverts or too many buttons. At present, for an informative site, there seems to be a slight lacking in information, but as the sites founder, Edward Burn, pointed out, the three months before the official launch date should provide ample time for improvements.

AnyCollectables users can view not only direct links to dealers websites but also other information such as phone and fax numbers, allowing dealers without sites to benefit from the system whilst also creating a more comprehensive directory.

The site is currently offering free listings for all dealers or even collectors who wish to sell through AnyCollectables.

Roy's Reviews

By Roy Butchart

PRO SLOT ALFA ROMEO 156

Looking at this car for the first time it looks like any other and, quite truthfully, does not appeal to me; its a nice colour and the decals are good, right down to the Michelin tyres.

Inside, however, its a different story as the chassis is different from any other I have come across. The front axle is split and does not appear to be transferable; there is a magnet at the front which stretches right across just behind the axle. This is 2.5cm long and 7mm wide - roughly about the same size as the Scalextric magnet. Further back is even more interesting; beside the sidewinder motor there is a small black piece of rubber with no apparent use. However when you go to remove the back axle there is another chassis which clips onto the main chassis and the rubber piece holds down the front of the motor section. As for the motor itself this is a RVO2 which has a respectable 21.500 rpm.

Although this car has a magnet it does not stick to the track when you turn the car upside down; in fact it's not a strong magnet at all so what impresses me? Well it has speed and can hold its own against any other make of car on Craigmount park doing a respectable 5.5 seconds. But what really got my attention was that when going around tight corners and the car comes off (you know the type - the car comes off but doesn't look like it has and is usually at the corner that is farthest away from you) well you just try the trigger again and off it goes. In addition, when you go round the corner you can swing the tail out giving you the chance to pull out of that bend a bit faster.

This car may perform better on a Ninco track than a Scalextric one but it is a nice car to drive and could be a good club car. It may also be the car that you have been looking for to win a few races with.

QUORN SLOT CAR CLUB

Jim Pover Memorial Trophy Races

REPORT BY BOB BOTT

On Sunday the thirteenth of August Quorn Slot Car Club opened its doors to the racers visiting us for the annual running of the Jim Pover Memorial Trophy races. The classes were the usual two that have been run since the days when Alan Slade ran the club and Jim managed to convince his employers, Racal Defense Systems, to sponsor the event, namely two wheel drive and four wheel drive using either Saloon or Sports/GT cars. The rules were kept very simple, basic standard cars with the following allowed:- motors and rear axles could be glued to the chassis, quick fit type guides could be wired to the motor in the normal way to aid the guide to centralize in an "off" and independent front wheels could be replaced with a solid front axle. Merc CLK's and Ferrari F50's could have the exhausts cut off and magnets/lights could be removed. The 4wd class had to retain the motor as manufactured but the two wheel drive class could use any 132 type motor in standard form that would fit into the chassis being used without cutting from or adding to the chassis.

Eighteen drivers entered the 4wd class and nineteen the 2wd (one of the Quorn drivers having church commitments in the morning) the drivers coming from London, Devon, Birmingham, Derby, Melton Mowbray, Cambridge and the Welsh borders. After practice racing started at 11.30 hrs with the 4wd class, almost an exclusive SCX class (I should have got Gaugemaster to sponsor it). The only other make was the TopSlot Subaru of Alan Hopcroft from the Melton club, whose son Mark was running a Bugatti EB110.

The Hopcrofts apart the rest of the field consisted of 3 Seat Cordoba's, 5 Peugeot 206's, 6 Ford Focus's and the Toyota Celica of young Chris Darby. Now there's a car with a history, Chris's dad Paul having campaigned it for many years with much success, how old is it Paul eight or ten? and it's still quick!!! Eighteen 10 lap

races later and it was time for a relaxed lunch break having finished the heats earlier than expected. 14.00hrs and time for the two wheel drive class heats these being extended to 15 laps after the earlier heats ran so well. This class had more variety of makes being made up with 6 ProSlot Toyota GT ones, 3 Fly Porsche GT1 '98s, 4 Ninco cars - BMW V12, Porsche 911 GT1 and two McLarens, one with an Evo 3 ProSlot motor; the other driven?? by Paul Darby with a Cartrix 30,000 rpm !!!

The rest of the field consisted of 4 Ferraris, an SCX 333, a Fly 512s and two ProSlot 355s, one with the Evo2 motor the other with an Evo3, an SCX Porsche 911 GT1 and Alan Hopcroft's TopSlot Nissan R390 GT1.

Another good run through the heats saw the Semis getting under way just after 16.15hrs and four 25 lap races later we were ready for the two finals to be run over 50 laps each.

Unusually in both classes the top six from the heats made it through to the finals. Both classes had been dominated throughout the day by Quorn club member Steve White, remaining unbeaten through the heats, semis and the finals. This was a quite unique occurrence I don't think I can remember any race meeting I have been at where one driver has remained unbeaten over 16 races totaling 300 laps!! Certainly it is the first time that the same driver has won both classes at this meeting. Well done Steve but I think for next year we will have to copy the full size car organizers and handicap you with a ton of weight in your cars!!

Throughout the day a battle was fought by Mark Hopcroft and Chris Darby for the Junior honours and was finally resolved when in the second 4WD semi Chris forced his dad's aging Celica to fourth place ahead of Mark who brought his Bugatti home in fifth place. So by 17.15 hrs with trophies to all finalists and junior winner, everyone was making their way home.

JIM POVER MEMORIAL TROPHY RACES

RESULTS

4WD 1 st Semi				2WD 1 st Semi			
LANE	NAME	CAR	POS.	LANE	NAME	CAR	POS.
Green	Dave McPeke	Seat Cordoba	5th	Green	Chris Gregory	McLaren Evo3	6th
Brown	Darren Hampton	Ford Focus	4th	Brown	Bob Bott	Toyota GT1	4th
White	Steve White	Ford Focus	1st	White	Nick Picknell	Porsche GT1	1st
Blue	Paul Darby	Seat Cordoba	3rd	Blue	Don Stanley	Toyota GT1	3rd
Yellow	Nick Picknell	Peugeot 206	2nd	Yellow	Alan McPeke	Toyota GT1	2nd
Red	Alan McPeke	Ford Focus	6th	Red	Dave McPeke	Toyota GT1	5th

2 nd Semi				2 nd Semi			
Green	Chris Gregory	Peugeot 206	6th	Green	Mark Hopcroft	Porsche GT1	5th
Brown	Mark Hopcroft	Bugatti EB110	5th	Brown	Phil Field	BMW V12	4th
White	Bob Bott	Seat Cordoba	2nd	White	Steve White	Toyota GT1	1st
Blue	Don Stanley	Ford Focus	1st	Blue	Tony Sandom	Toyota GT1	2nd
Yellow	Phil Field	Peugeot 206	3rd	Yellow	Darren Hampton	Porsche SCX	3rd
Red	Chris Darby	Toyota Celica	4th	Red	Paul Darby	McLaren	6th

4WD FINAL			2WD FINAL		
Green	Phil Field	Sixth	Green	Alan McPeke	Fifth
Brown	Bob Bott	Fifth	Brown	Don Stanley	Fourth
White	Don Stanley	Second	White	Steve White	First
Blue	Steve White	First	Blue	Nick Picknell	Second
Yellow	Nick Picknell	Third	Yellow	Tony Sandom	Third
Red	Paul Darby	Fourth	Red	Darren Hampton	Sixth



MRRRC NEWS

John Robinson has recently sent me these pictures of the next Cobra to be released. It is pearl white in colour and should be available soon. He also informs me that 'Traffic' will be handling future releases of the Cortina and associated spare parts.

Members letters



Dear Brian

After the August Backtrack article a fellow member of our slotracing club asked me “Do you know Dale Tremble?” I replied, “I know the name from somewhere, but it’s nothing to do with the NSCC.” I went home later that evening trying to think why I knew the name; it couldn’t be anything to do with him being the original secretary/editor as I didn’t join the club until 1991, the Tony Frewin period. It was then I remembered my box file of Scalextric odds and ends, which I originally used to store my catalogues and price lists in, and found an old ‘browning’ newspaper cutting.

A local newspaper, the Evening Echo, had done an article on someone’s loft circuit and car collection and I had cut it out and kept it all these years. The heading read “The Grand Prix Race Track In Dale’s Loft” I looked up Dale’s number in the local phone book and rang him to ask if he remembered when it was. We had a very interesting chat; he also still has the cutting and thinks it dates from a month or two before the NSCC was formed (the clue being that it mentions his age) 1980/81 - 19+ years ago.

I hope you can reproduce the cutting for the Journal as this little bit of brown newspaper started my collecting bug.

Graham Smith

Thanks Graham, I have done my best with it - see opposite. It was, indeed, very brown so I hope it prints o.k.

Dear Brian

I’m a motor sport Philistine. I’m no “anorak”! Peter Novani has certainly “opened a can of worms” in the September issue of our Journal. I think it’s a pity Peter criticised so harshly some reviewers and deters other potential ones from contributing to the Journal despite what he asserts. There’s no doubt that the better equipped and documented a car reviewer, the better and more interesting the review. But and this is a big BUT (as John Cleese once said) can everybody own an important personal motor sport library or have access to the Internet? Isn’t an inaccurate or incomplete article about a car better than no article at all? “La critique est aisée mais l’art est difficile” (ie: it’s easy to criticise) as we would put it in France. Why doesn’t Peter take on the responsibility of a permanent or occasional column as an official car reviewer of the Journal?

I’m a Philistine. I don’t know much about car history or mechanics but I do love “beautiful” (dead subjective here) cars. As a consequence I must be less demanding and hard-to-please than Peter as far as the contents of the Journal are concerned. I’ve got a more aesthetical approach to the models. The look, the colours are as (if not more) important to me as the technical accuracy. I am totally unable to write anything about a (new) car especially following Peter’s standards and I feel I never will except with my own approach, if ever.

On the other hand I absolutely agree with Peter on the fact that Fly have enabled us to reach the “slot car Holy Grail”. I love the Fly models especially the classic range: interesting period, “beautiful” and performing cars, superb detailing... It’s so easy to get used to quality, don’t you think? I only hope that Peter’s wish list proves right eventually.

Pierre Collange

The Grand Prix race track in Dale's loft



EVERY night is Grand Prix night at Lee Lotts at Great Wakering.

The Porsches and Ferraris zoom round Dale Tremble's loft.

On the starting grid alongside 34-year-old steel rep Dale is his son Brett, nine.

Together they have built a model of the Silverstone motor racing track complete with rolling countryside, buildings and trees made of papier-mache.



The 90-foot track is up to race standards complete with electric lap counters and start and finish units. They have 210 racing cars of all kinds and makes which they race against each other.

Dale said: "I had a few friends who collected model cars and I decided to join them. I have always been interested in racing and fan-

Incredible set-up of a father and son

ciated myself as a race driver, but that was out of my reach.

"Instead of just collecting model cars I thought about collecting actual working models of race cars.

"As Brett grew older he became interested and it became a hobby we shared. We built our track in the loft between us and started searching for cars. Some of the models we wanted I built myself."

Dale and Brett have travelled hundreds of miles on a Sunday to collect a model car they want to add to their collection.

Their search has brought them into contact with enthusiasts from Spain, France, Russia and America.

Dale said: "We write to people abroad and swap

notes on our model racing.

They send me cars I cannot get in this country and I help them out when I can.

"I take Brett to Silverstone during the racing season and we thoroughly enjoy ourselves.



"It's good to be involved with your children, at the end of the day you are more like a family. This can help you to understand each other."

Mum Margaret, 34, and daughter Lisa, seven, are determined that the hobby will not drive them around the bend. They often leave them battling it out round their mini-racing track and go off together, too... horse riding.

RACING 60'S STYLE

BY TONY SECCHI

There are probably as many race and championship formats as there are clubs. Unless you are officially affiliated to a national event with set rules, the most common format in my limited experience is based on the most number of laps in a given time (say two minutes) on each lane, sometimes with the winners going into a final 'show down'.

As I mentioned in my last article, I thought it might interest some members if I recounted how our club ran its championships in the middle sixties. Firstly though, a brief run down on the layout.

The track was situated in a narrow oblong room above the workshop of the owner/director. He sat on the far wall and ran the whole show from starts to subs. (As I mentioned last month he never raced). There was a small standing/sitting space about a metre wide on the near wall with bench seating to put your cars onto and do any work.

The racing positions were at the end of the oblong to the right of this space. The track was 4 Lane Scalextric on a contoured plywood base, in a basic 'figure of eight' shape with the cross over running atop of a tunnel. This rose from left to right as viewed from the racing positions. On exiting blind from the tunnel you found yourself entering a very high speed left turn banking at the far end of the track before descending to the finish. If you got it right you could hang your car out from the pick up guide in a huge, sustained and controlled power slide. However, if you got it wrong and entered too fast you could pitch the car over the barriers and even finish half way down the staircase. I had a friend called Nick and he raced a very fast but unstable Ford GT. His friends and I all used to try to get to the club before him, because if he was already on the track and you were coming up the stairs you could finish up with 8oz. of flying Ford in your eye! Believe me, nobody volunteered to marshal that bend in a hurry. The layout was highly landscaped with

pits and a mix of Scalextric and hand made accessories. The start/timing was electric, integral with the circuit and hand made.

We raced 1/24 scale cars, initially using static kits or toy bodyshells, all built from scratch and although in later years some ready made models appeared they were generally too expensive for most club members and were not allowed.

The structure of our championship season was based on three categories of cars; GT, Sports and Saloons. Each category ran for two months and was then repeated giving six individual championships a year. Points were awarded for the winners and places on the then F1 scoring system of 9 for first, 6 for second etc. At the end of the year the member who had the most overall points was club champion and received a huge trophy; each individual championship winner got a small 'egg cup' type trophy.

During the two months of any category you had to complete ten events. These events comprised ten races of five laps each and were organised as follows:- each competitor raced one five lap race on each lane with a scoring system of five points for 1st, four for 2nd etc. This was repeated a second time and the competitor with the highest aggregate score for the first four races chose his lane for a ninth race and the one with the highest aggregate in the second four did the same. Therefore, if you scored a 'maximum' and won every race you could amass 50 points. This score went towards your overall standing in that championship. So if you scored maximum points in all of the ten rounds during a two month period you had 500 points, and naturally won that championship - and that gave you nine points towards becoming club champion.

This format was repeated every two months, sometimes producing a variety of individual champions, depending on cars and skill. This was because we had another very good rule to even things out.

In the second championship event you were not allowed to race the same car as in the first - so that, if during Jan/Feb you raced an 'E' Type Jaguar in the GT Class, when the second GT Class came around during Jul/Aug it was not allowed to compete. This ensured that if a member had a good car and cleaned up, he could not repeat that success with the same car. Conversely, if you had a crap car in the first round you had a chance of building a better one for the second. It sounds unfair, but in practice it worked well. The emphasis being put on members building and driving skills rather than a one off quick car. I raced there for some 4/5 years and the best season I had resulted in second in the club championship and winner in two categories.

That was in 1964 after 3 years of racing. For the first three categories I raced an E-Type Jaguar Coupe in GT; a Ford Zephyr in Saloons and a Lotus 30 in Sportscars. For the second three categories I raced a Ferrari 250 GTO (winner); A Jaguar Mk. 10 (winner) and a Lola T70 respectively. As previously stated, all the bodies were from toys or static kits and the club rules stipulated that all the running gear (except wheels and tyres) had to be Scalextric or equivalent. Pre-race scrutineering was non-existent as nobody ever thought of bending the rules. We trusted each other and it worked. All cars had Scalextric 'pin' guides until blades came in and then the pick-ups were optional (I used pins with no apparent disadvantage).

We had a horizontal rectangular metal gauge into which the cars had to fit, to avoid (theoretically) any side contact. If cars deslotted they were omitted from the race and no points were scored. One point was given, though, for the fastest lap in each two-month period, this going towards the individual championship score. The controller did race result sheets by hand and these were handed to the winners after each race.

Sometimes it was not easy to get ten events into a two-month period - we met only once a week so if you were behind you raced twice a night. But if members were on holiday they could miss races and mar their chance of

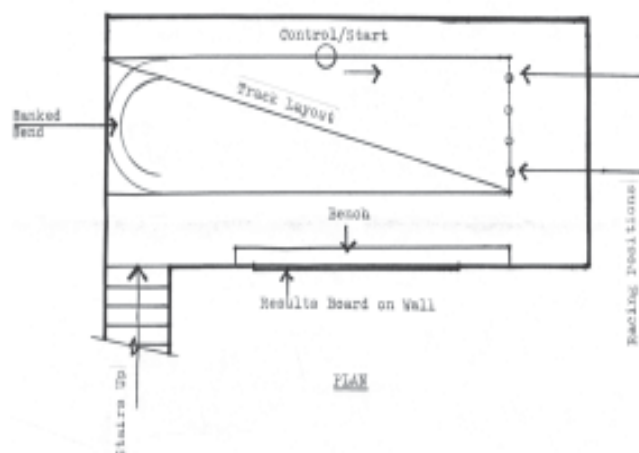
winning. This happened to me in 1965 when I went to America for six weeks when leading the saloon cars event. Despite this we still found time to run a series of 'Formula Libre' races during the year (generally over the weekend). These were usually long distance (six-hour and later two-hour races) and we had free choice of cars and running gear. This meant that many cars outside of our rules could compete and the free format and long time span meant that you could choose to run a fragile 'sprint' car or conserve your engine and pace yourself - a bit like the fuel limitations in the old Group C1 racing. (I wrote an article on this in January).

At present, with my home circuit, on which my friends and I compete, we run four categories - vintage and modern GT and vintage and modern Sports Cars. We run friendly (some chance) races of ten-lap duration and go for fastest times and number of wins.

We are all ex club members and although these days our numbers are depleted, and our structure loose (after all, we are not a club) we have a great and very enjoyable time. Competition is still hot and the demands for spares and the latest cars insatiable - just ask Sean Fothergill of Pendle Slot Racing who supplies most of our many needs.

The main thing that I have found about slot car racing over all these years is that its principles have not changed. The technology and modelling have improved but I still have to do the same to race the car as I did some 35 years ago, and I still get the same thrill and enjoyment out of it as I did then.

There are not too many pastimes you can say that about.



PILE 'EM HIGH, SELL 'EM CHEAP!

BY PETER NOVANI

Support your local model shops. That was the sentiment expressed by a sales executive of a leading slot car distribution company recently. What local model shops? Ironic, that as the slot car industry enters an unprecedented period of growth and interest, a dearth of shops selling slot cars now exists in my area of North London. Hardly a remote part of the country! Yet I cannot think of a single model shop within at least a 7 mile radius or 30 minute drive from my home! Undoubtedly, existing retailers have their work cut out trying to keep up with the plethora of new slot car products being introduced by the profligate slot car manufacturers, and the consequent need to carry vast quantities of expensive stock. An unenviable task indeed, and one not helped by soaring overheads, fierce competition from the computer games industry, and in recent times the Internet.

I broached the subject of shops with leading slot car exponent Phil Egart at a recent swapmeet. He also lives in North London. I like to mingle with the hobby's elite, from time to time, it's good for the image - theirs or mine? We got talking about one particular model shop that I occasionally visit. As ever, Phil is a mine of information, and went on to recount the trading history of this establishment.

Make no mistake, this spacious shop richly deserves the often misused title 'model shop.' It happens to sell a huge and diverse range of modelling products, tools and assorted paraphernalia. Impressive! Yet in many ways it is a microcosm of what I consider to be wrong with the way certain retailers approach the business of selling slot car products.

For example, the slot car department is meagre in comparison to the rest of the shop. They only sell, to a greater or lesser extent, 'mainstream' slot cars. That is to say, Scalextric, Fly, Ninco and SCX products. The cars themselves are displayed within a glass counter cabinet (requiring two members of staff to remove the lid!) or tucked away and out of reach

on shelves. Therefore, asking the diligent staff for a specific car can be quite an ordeal, as they are not always conversant with the cars they are selling. Want a Lola T70 'Bongrip?' Better to ask them for that yellow car over there. And heaven help those enthusiasts who require some technical information - a car has four wheels, a motor and comes in a nice plastic box, so what are you worried about? Admittedly, I do not expect them to understand each and every nuance of a car. However, a broad appreciation of slot cars would be an asset.

Would you be happy with this kind of service from your electrical retailer: "Yes, sir. You wish to purchase a 13 amp plug? Um, sorry sir, could I ask you to describe that for me, so I can locate one for you in our stock room." Not exactly confidence inspiring is it. This is a classic 'chicken and egg' situation. Sales of slot car products will stagnate whilst the shop continues to offer an indifferent service. On the other hand why employ a dedicated and knowledgeable staff if sales do not require such a service. Interestingly, Phil considers that the shop has a massive untapped potential to sell slot car products. And he should know!

The proprietor's melancholy demeanour also gives cause for concern. He is an affable gentleman of mature years, and can probably match Scalextric for longevity in the model and toy business. No doubt, he has seen more trends come and go than Fly have produced Dodge Vipers. His rather poignant comment that, "Today's youngsters are no longer interested in modelling in general or slot cars in particular," is worrying. And, not for the first time have I heard that pessimistic theory being expounded.

Until quite recently, my nearest model shop was a Beatties outlet. I rarely visited it other than to buy modelling paint. The slot car section was, to say the least, minimal. A few Scalextric and Ninco cars and sets was about the extent of it. Fly? Forget it. Want a closer look? No problem. It just meant finding someone with a key to unlock the show cabinet.

Of course, I should have realised that slot cars were precious commodities worthy of such security measures! Asking staff relevant questions regarding the various slot cars on display was more often than not greeted with such uninformed prose as, "Well mate, it's a red car and that one is the blue one with white stripes." When clearly the two cars in question featured numerous mechanical differences. And I wondered why they closed down! This organisation has retained a much larger outlet close to the West End. Fortunately, a greater selection of slot car products can be found there - when they have them in stock that is!

Another recent closure befell a small local model shop which specialised in model trains, although it did offer a token selection of Scalextric cars. Apparently the shop now sells garden pots. I can only think of one other 'independent' local model shop which I occasionally visit. Using the term 'model' in this context would be a misnomer, as it does not offer a selection of modelling products. However, this extremely small shop is run by that rare phenomenon of modern day shop proprietor - a slot car enthusiast. Trouble is, with two or three customers present, the place could accurately be described as crowded. You simply cannot swing a cat in there. Thankfully, this is offset by the fact that the rather laconic owner is both knowledgeable and genuinely interested in the hobby - a rare attribute these days. A facet of his character that I find particularly endearing, is his ability to sell a varied and reasonably accessible array of cars, at rather less than the full recommended retail price (RRP). In my estimation that makes him a top bloke! Possibly, the shop's 'secondary' position affords him the opportunity to cut his profit margins somewhat.

Other retail outlets includes a well known toy department store in Central London. Travelling on the expensive underground system, and then having to pay at least £5 over and above the RRP just for the privilege of buying a slot car, is not my idea of a fun day out. Comments that could just as easily be directed towards another famous department store owned by an Arabic gentleman. Oh!

Almost forgot. My local Toys 'R' Us also sells slot cars, albeit, only the Scalextric variety. Mention the words Ninco or Fly, and the staff will ask you to leave the premises - they assume that you are swearing at them in a foreign language! I consider it nonsensical that a store, which apparently prides itself on low prices, actually charges the full RRP for Scalextric cars. And they also keep them under lock and key.

Now, am I missing something here? Has there been a spate of armed robberies, whereby the perpetrators have targeted slot cars for their ill gotten gains? Admittedly, some Fly cars are becoming extortionately expensive. But, surely this is ridiculous - stealing £22.50 slot cars? You have got to be kidding me, right!

So what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from this brief, but by no means exhaustive sojourn through North London's slot car hot spots? Evidently, the hobby lacks a strong high street presence, even in a supposedly affluent part of London. Without question, model shops still have an important role to play in the growth of the hobby. They should be the nucleus of the slot car industry's sales and promotional activities, and quite literally, their shop window.

Is it any wonder that many enthusiasts choose to eschew traditional retail shops altogether in preference for the (bona fide) specialist slot car mail order companies who have established themselves over the last ten years or so. They offer an informed, prompt and reliable service, plus a vast array of spares and tune up parts, at below the RRP. Convincing enough reasons to buy goods from them! Undoubtedly, a service many existing model shops would be well advised to emulate!

Yet many retailers continue to keep cars under lock and key or out reach, as if they were some sort of expensive jewellery. Implementing a policy that provides for a knowledgeable service plus a comprehensive and accessible selection of products, at lower prices, might be a step in the right direction. As would a rethink of their rather lackadaisical presentation skills. If model shops met that criteria, then enthusiasts would be keener to take up that sales executive's laudable suggestion!

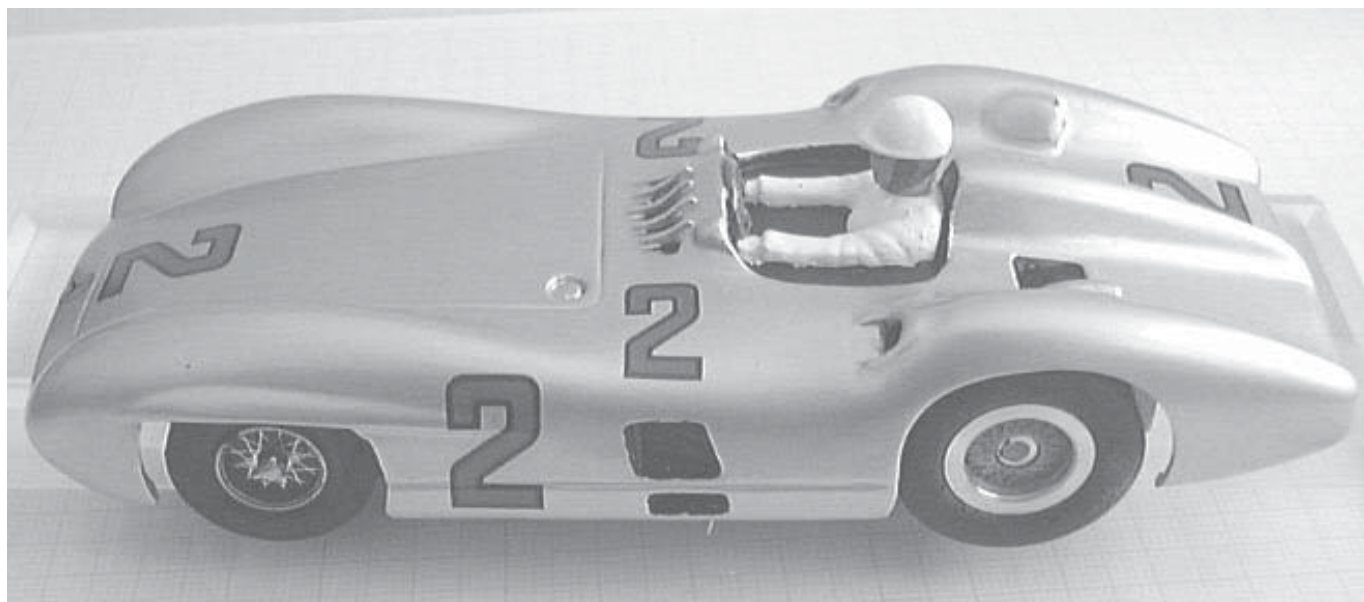
THE ORIGIN OF SLOT CARS... AND THE FIRST PROXY RACE!

The origins of electric model cars can be traced back to the turn of the 20th century but it is generally accepted that slot car racing is a direct descendent of rail racing, which was popular from the mid to late 1950s.

According to Richard Dempewolff, author of the book "Table-Top Car Racing", the first model electric racing cars started to whiz around table-top tracks in England shortly after World War II. D.J. Laidlaw-Dickson, editor of "Model Maker" magazine, credits Geoffery Deason as the founder of rail-racing, which led directly to slot racing as we know it today. Deason wrote an article for "Model Maker", in 1948, suggesting that battery-driven cars could be raced on small indoor tracks guided by wooden rails.

BY RUSSELL SHELDON
devices known as "zonkers". Late in 1954, one reader wrote to "Model Maker" to say he had installed an electric motor in a wind-up toy car that ran on a slightly raised rail, from which it picked up current. A second rail, flush with the track surface, provided the negative current. Brass shim-stock was used for pick-ups beneath the chassis and a rheostat controlled the speed. A single shoe-type guide, attached to the chassis, guided the car along the raised rail but allowed it to slide and even leave the track if driven around corners too quickly.

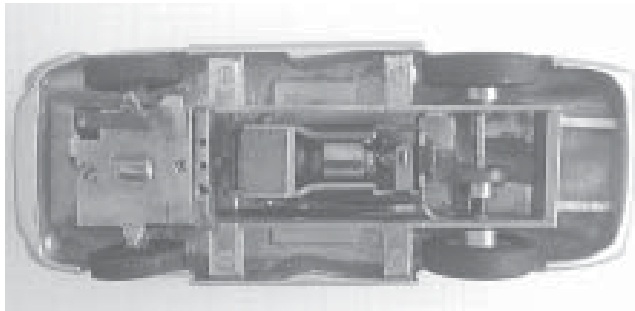
This basic concept was adopted by a highly-organised group of British hobbyists known as the Southport Model Engineering Society. Refining the theme and using electric train motors in their 1/32nd scale model Grand Prix racers and car batteries for track power,



The idea appears to have been an adaptation of the king-size outdoor tracks long used in England and the USA (where they originated) for racing diesel and gasoline engine cars. These big cars, built to a scale of 1/18th to 1/16th, ran largely uncontrolled on sprawling tracks, held on a rail by a pair of spool-shaped

they built a six-lane track with a 60 ft. lap length. The guide-rail was made from HO scale train track. In the same year, the Southport club held it's first Grand Prix with some 30 cars. The six fastest cars and drivers raced in a 200 lap final. This event was reported in detail in "Model Maker" magazine, and table-top racing took off in England in a big way.

Early in 1955, a group in Kalamazoo, Michigan, formed the Model Automobile Racing Association (MARA) and built a track and cars to conform with the "Southport Standards". In 1956 they mailed four cars built by their members to Southport, to be raced by proxy in the Southport Grand Prix. Their cars took second and fourth place in the event, the first officially recorded "proxy race".



On the 20th of August 2000, history was recreated in the Chequered Flag room of the Brooklands motor racing circuit's museum in England, when a series of 1/32nd scale

memorial rail races were held to commemorate the first rail race held at Southport. The event was organised by Jeff Davies, who also constructed the track, a replica of the Southport circuit. I'm honoured that Jeff had asked me to restore an original Walkden Fisher-built chassis for this event, which I'm pleased to say won both the races it competed in. It's quite sobering when you think about the fact that when Mr. Fisher originally built this car, around 1955, the Mercedes W196 was the latest Grand Prix car at the time.

I must say just how impressed I was by the craftsmanship of the original chassis. When one considers the materials and tools available in 1955/56, it puts it into an even more impressive perspective. The guide "shoe" operates an intricately engineered steering system, and the entire steering unit swivels relative to the rest of the chassis.

For a detailed report on the Brooklands Memorial Rail-Racing Event, see: <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/j.davies4/Index.htm>

BROOKLANDS MEMORIAL RACES

BY JEFF DAVIES

The Napier Railton thundered into the corner, sparks flying, at Brooklands. No it wasn't the 1930s, the date was August 20th 2000. It may only have been a model but the passion and enthusiasm generated were as intense as when the real thing had thundered around the banking only a few yards from where we were stood.

History was being made in the Chequered Flag room with the first rail race to be held anywhere for thirty six years. The Napier Railton in question belonged to John Moxon, closely followed by another Napier Railton raced by Don Seigel. The track they were racing on was a replica of the Southport track used for the 1956 international rail race.

The track had been constructed this year at Nevill Hall social club in South Wales by two passionate enthusiasts (Phil Barry and myself) and one conscript (my son Richard). The project had started in January when I had the idea of constructing a rail racing track after reading several interesting articles on the 1950s rail races in old copies of Model Maker. The Southport Model & Engineering Club (SMEC) had constructed the first rail racing track in Walkden Fisher's basement.

Don Seigel very kindly sent me everything he could find about Walkden Fisher and the original Southport track, after Charlie Fitzpatrick had supplied the initial information, including a couple of articles written by Walkden Fisher when he was the assistant editor of Model Cars. Charlie Fitzpatrick had also kindly provided me with the original chassis which had won the 56 sports car international. I rang Charlie and he told me how they constructed the original track by fixing screws into sheets of hardboard (we used Beech faced ply) and soldering the rail to them. Brass tacks were then hammered in and single core earth cable soldered to them. It sounded so simple. How wrong I was...

The first person I mentioned this project

to was Phil Barry. Without him this track simply could not have been built as he was the mainstay behind an awful lot of the building and a lot of the ideas. My original idea had been to construct a 4' by 8' demonstration track with a simple loop, just so that I could run a car around to show how they worked. Phil immediately said that this wasn't really a good idea, and if we were going to do it at all we should build a full size circuit.

Looking at the drawings of the original circuit I realised I really liked the design and it was decided we'd build a replica of the original circuit, even though the size wasn't the same, ours being about a 3/4 scale reproduction. The original circuit had a lap length of 58 feet, whereas ours had a lap length of around 45 feet. As it turned out in practice, the speeds we were achieving were just about identical to those achieved on the original track.

Charlie had been kind enough to send me down a piece of the original rail and Phil managed to match this fairly closely with a piece of Peco O gauge rail. We duly ordered a considerable amount of it, which turned out to be extremely expensive and was one of the major costs of building the track. When the first sections arrived we had an interesting evening with a screwdriver and soldering iron. It was really exciting but, if I'd have known just how many hours we would have to spend soldering I would have pulled the plug there and then!

The next three or four months went by in a blur as we tried to spend every available hour building the track. Several days we would arrive at 10am in the morning and leave at 1 am. It didn't help that I lived a considerable distance away from where we built the track as this involved at least an hour of travel every time. Once we had a considerable amount of rail laid out thoughts turned to the wire to carry the positive current. First we obtained a roll of steel wire of exactly the right diameter after trying to buy a roll of the right size copper wire and

failing miserably, only to find that we couldn't solder it. In the end we bought cooker cable and stripped the insulation off. This in itself took a considerable amount of time, as well as the fact that it had to be run through a vice to straighten it before we could solder it down.

Right at the start we had decided we would build the track using exactly what they would have built it with in 1956. We laid it out using a nail, a piece of string and a pen when we could have easily done it on a computer. It took a whole evening to get the curves right on the hairpin using the nail and string so that all the corners lined up as we wanted them to. We fixed every screw by hand, even though we had a power screwdriver, so that the track was built exactly as theirs was using the same tools and materials.

(Who had a visit from Daft Idea Animal then?)

Another thing that added considerably to the amount of time it took to build the track was that it had to be portable, whereas all the original rail racing tracks were permanent fixtures. This doubled the amount of work involved as each section had to be wired separately. We used steel dowels and brass sockets to fit each section together, as well as steel plates to keep the sections level. The track took hundreds of man hours to build, and there were times when I could quite happily have set fire to the whole thing.

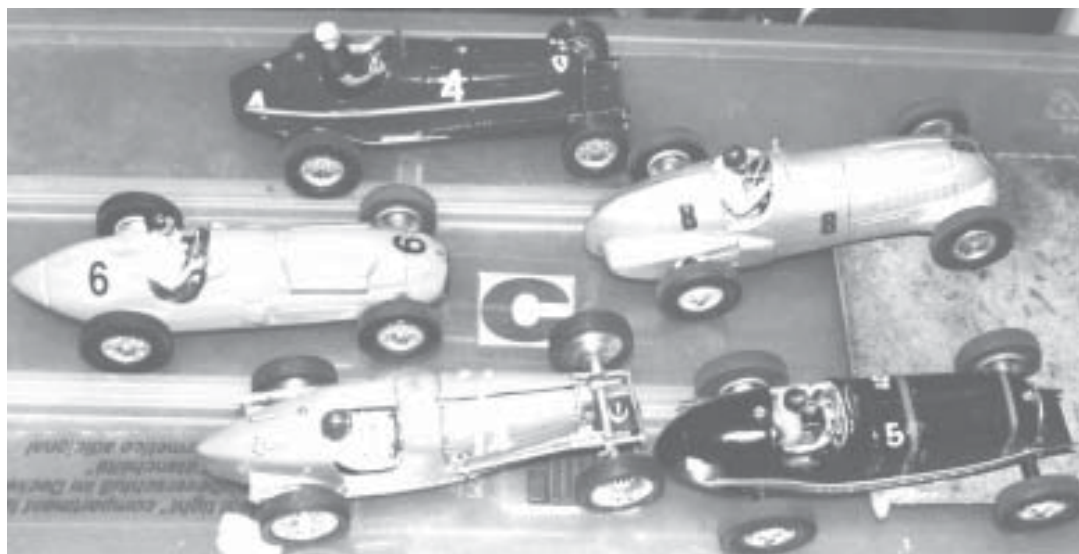
Eventually we finished constructing the track and tested it. After minor modifications it worked perfectly and it was extremely satisfying to complete a lap. This took a little while as we had to rebuild the pick-ups on the car to suit the track. Andy Meredith then came down and painted it. I couldn't believe the amazing transformation in front of my eyes as it turned from several pieces of metal soldered to a wooden board into a race track.

We added the buildings to the track and the people, built a lake complete with a lifeboat, added trees. We finally finished the scenic stuff the day before the event.

The great day finally arrived and we - that is to say Phil Barry, Andy Meredith, my son Richard, my daughter Jenny and myself - left at 6am for Brooklands. Hornby had produced 100 special clear Lamborghini Diablos for the event, some of which we took with us for people who had preordered them. As I got nearer Brooklands I got quite emotional as I saw the signs for the museum. We passed part of the original banking, now just outside Tesco's carpark, lying there all forlorn and grass covered with a road being driven through the banking. I couldn't help thinking what a sad end for such a magnificent track.

We arrived at Brooklands Museum and for the first time I saw the Chequered Flag room, which was absolutely magnificent. The whole

place had an incredible atmosphere to it. Looking out from the balcony you could see the original test hill and behind that lay the banking.



*A rather nice line up of old cars
photo by Don Siegel*

We quickly unloaded the van and set up the rail racing track while Sean Fothergill and Adrian Norman set up the Ninco four lane track. Ian Rivett set up the Stox racing circuit.

After practice where just about everybody got their car to run around the track it was time for the first race. It was really hard to believe it had been 36 years since the last rail race had taken place. I took the inside lane, Don Seigel had the middle lane with his Napier Railton and Charlie Fitzpatrick had the outside line with my Alfa Romeo 12C (which Charlie had specially built for me after I supplied the running gear).

Steve Cropley of Autocar started the first race and Nick Sismey counted the laps as we were using manual counting. It was a really exciting race with Charlie running home a worthy winner. Steve Cropley presented him with the first trophy and he retired to his stall a happy man. The rest of the day went in an extremely enjoyable blur with Nick Hirst winning both a rail race and the Ninco go-kart race. I won two rail races with Walkden Fisher's restored car as I had probably spent more time racing around this track than anyone else on the planet. Chas Keeling won the Stox race and just about everybody had a good day.

When we had finished I had a walk up the banking and was totally overawed by the immense scale this magnificent track had been built on. I couldn't believe the sort of courage it must have taken to thunder around the top of the banking on skinny tyres in massively powerful cars. I also wandered around the aeroplane hangers and saw the Wellington that had been fished out of Loch Ness, along with several WWI fighter planes. If you've never been to Brooklands it's somewhere you absolutely must visit.

I was really pleased by the wonderful turnout of cars and the standard that they were built to, and would like to thank everybody who went to the trouble to build a rail car for the event. As with all events we've learned a considerable amount from the first one and next years event will incorporate all the lessons we have learned.

I would like to thank the following people, without their help this event could not have taken place:- Phil, Richard and Andy for helping me do the track, Sean Fothergill, Charlie Fitzpatrick and Chas Keeling for supplying me with equipment, morally supporting the whole venture and offering encouragement and advice; Adrian Norman and Nick Sismey for helping; Brian Rogers, Don Siegel, Russell Sheldon, Mark Gussin, Dave Yerbury and all of the following sponsors:

AA Bodies,
Australian Slot Car Review,
Betta & Classic,
Derek Cooper,
Electric Dreams,
Ian Rivett,
Parma SCD,
Pendle Slot Racing,
Riverside Raceway,
Slot Car Racing News,
Slot Car Bulletin,
T.S. Edwards & Son.
And finally, the Brooklands Museum.

ONE MYTH DESERVES ANOTHER

Brooklands – 20 August 2000

BY DON SIEGEL

On Sunday, 20th August 2000, Brooklands, the birthplace of closed-circuit auto racing in England, hosted a meeting in honour of rail racing, the ancestor of slot racing which was also born in England. In fact, the day turned out to be a homage to all forms of slot racing, with a small 4-lane Ninco slot track and a portable “slot stox” routed wooden oval also joining the festivities.

I won't go into the details, because organizer Jeff Davies has already done that. But I would like to thank Jeff and everybody else on his team who worked like crazy to get this event up and running; especially his children Richard and Jenny, who seemed to do all the work while Jeff was busy supervising. Now that's talent!



The day was, in a word, magic. I grew up in the early 60s reading about the development of rail and slot racing in England. Here it was in front of me, not just a reconstructed track and some of the real cars, but some of the real people! Charlie Fitzpatrick, owner of Betta & Classic, of course, along with his charming wife Margaret. Charlie was there “at the beginning” and was able to give Jeff invaluable aid on actually building the track, not to mention carving bodies and supplying parts. (I also sent

all the documentation I could find on early rail track construction, including the American guys who obviously showed the Brits how to do it the right way!) I also had the honour of meeting Mac Pinches, another original rail racer, whose eyes nearly misted over as he recalled what it was like in the early days: everybody helping everybody else to get the bits and pieces you needed, because, at the beginning, if your car was able to make it a full lap around the track, you were overjoyed. A network developed to help people get parts, and a lot of international reply coupons wafted their way over the Atlantic from the first U.S. rail racers. In short, as Mac remembered with feeling, there was a real feeling of camaraderie among all the people in this new hobby!

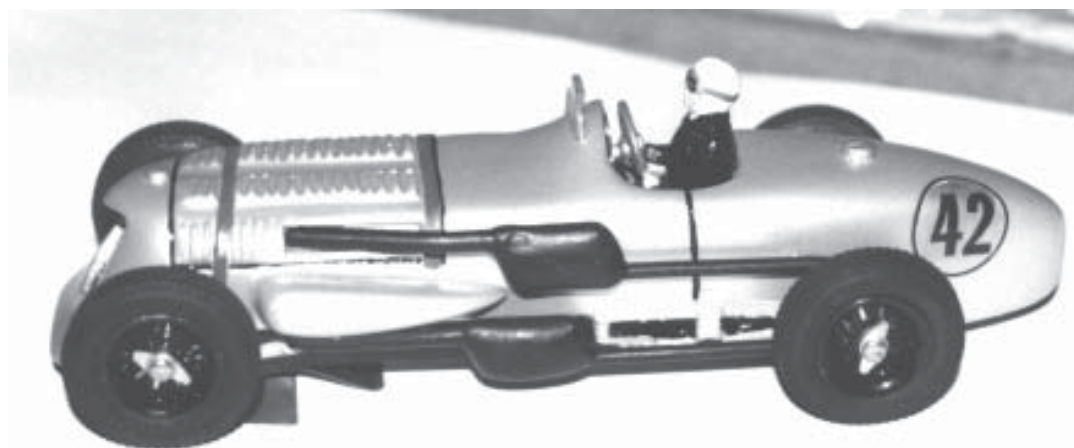
Nothing was cut and dried; you had to make do with what you could find, adapt to the different tracks, figure out what pick-up system would work, steal motors from toy trains and gears from old clocks, figure out how to make model wire wheels and drivers, etc. The rail track set up in the Chequered Flag room was also a good reminder of this: not too many of our cars worked well the first time around the track! It was no accident that the

Bugatti Atlantic that Jeff had tuned won more than its share of races – the pick-ups are perhaps even more delicate on a rail racer than on a slot racer, and you had to spend a lot of time tinkering with them. My Napier-Railton, among other cars, refused to make it around the inner lane on the hairpin turn, except with a lot of hand-assisted power.... For those of you interested in building your own rail racer for next year's event, a reminder if you plan to use one of the old open frame motors: many of these

35-40 year old electric motors still work amazingly well, but they need a lot of running in! For the first half-hour my Pittman-powered Napier was going around the track at full throttle without falling off, but at the very end it was actually capable of enough speed to jump the rail. Hallelujah!

If you are thinking of building your own rail racer, ask the experts (not me!). The standard of craftsmanship that I saw at Brooklands just absolutely bowled me over. The quality of work done on many of these cars was more than impressive – I hope this comes through in the photos that are published. I'm talking about machined chassis, carved balsa wood bodies, home-made ackermann steering, home-brewed motors, etc.

Although it was fun to run on the rail track, from every standpoint there's no comparison, slot tracks are better! Which makes it all the more incredible that they managed to survive for nearly ten years in Britain, until 1964, and that people seriously debated their merits in the letters column of Model Cars magazine. It just goes to prove that once something is established, it's much harder to dislodge it. Witness the United States, where rail racing never got that established, and had pretty much disappeared by the early 60s.



A beautiful Napier Railton built for the event by John Moxon

One last word on the day at Brooklands, and this is a favourite subject of mine: coexistence! Without making a big deal out of it, Jeff managed to group a rail track, a modern

Ninco plastic track, and a high-speed routed Slot Stox track in the same venue, and attract people who like slot racing in its infinite variety. I had expected to meet my fellow “nostalgia buffs”, but I was very pleasantly surprised to see a contingent of “hot shoes” from the North London slot racing club who seemed to be just as fascinated by the older mechanically complex and realistic cars as the current semi-scale bullets. Actually, I was only half surprised, because I think that if you dig into any regular slot racing club (especially with members over 40), you'll find that a lot of them just like slot racing in any and all forms.

A word of congratulations to Ian Rivett and the other Slot Stox people, by the way. The races were very well run, the track was mounted quickly and worked well, and the racing was great fun!

In closing, I'd like to nominate one invention as the greatest advance in the last 45 odd years: the electronic lap counter! Counting the rail race laps by hand was amusing for a half-day, but I wouldn't want to make a habit of it!

Just an added thought: in talking to Charlie Fitzpatrick, I thought about the Peaceful Coexistence article and all the "merde" I got here from the French journalist who thinks

Scalex type racing is so pure and has nothing to do with slot racing etc. I had said it was too late to ask Fred Francis, but thought I would try Charlie, who said, in effect, that Fred Francis had asked them to send a few samples of rail

racing cars to him before he came out with Scalextric. I don't think there's any real influence that's obvious in the first Scalextric cars, but this does seem to indicate that the two activities developed in synergy (as we say these days), and not on parallel paths, never to meet....

BROOKLANDS

(AN OPPORTUNITY MISSED)

BY MAC PINCHES

The weekend started for me on Saturday, taking a room in the Blue Anchor Inn in Byfleet (it sounds like the opening lines of a sequel to treasure island).

The event, the Walkden Fisher memorial trophy, the venue Brooklands, W.F's Mercedes being rebuilt to run on a reproduction of the original Southport track the recipe for a great nostalgic race meeting was in place.

Just when the meeting got under way no one knows, as there was no formal welcome to guests, sponsors, personalities or drivers. I became aware that practice was taking place but a clear run could not be gained as people were using files and other tools to remove some of the larger lumps of solder from the rail joints.

The next hurdle to overcome was to try to get the cars to run on the flat topped rail and the problem of gaps between the base-boards was something we had to live with.

The Southport Standards were drawn up to ensure interchangeability of cars from one track to another and eliminate the need to modify them to suit each circuit. I produced a car and gauges to these Standards to help in the setting up of the circuit only to be informed that the car had been modified to suit the existing track!!

Racing started without a formal race order, people were invited to race 5 verbally counted laps, with a ready, steady, go start, who finished where I will never know.

As the racing petered out one or two people were able to modify their cars and some quicker times were achieved. Competitors were asked to bring vintage slot cars as there would be events for these, I either missed them or they did not take place.

The only island of calm amongst this sea of storms were the Southern Stox, with numbered heats, semis, and a final, with a P.A. system for information. The whole thing ran very well, congratulations boys and girls.

My overall view was of disappointment and embarrassment; I feel a great disservice has been done to rail racing which in its heyday was fast, slick and very well organised.

The meeting was set to start at 11.30, but by 1.30 people were beginning to drift off home, this alone sums up some people's feelings for what could have been the jewel in the crown of racing in 2000.

It would be a tragedy if this meeting was not repeated but to entice competitors to take part again it would take much reorganisation.

The flat topped rail would have to be replaced with a piano wire rail or drawn copper, "00" rail could be used if the other two were not suitable.

If it is felt the circuit should not be changed exact dimensions of the flat top rail must be published i.e. height and width of the top rail, cars could then be built to run on this format.

Soldered joints of the rail should be undercut to allow it free passage of the guide-shoe, base-board joints to be smoothed out.

To give a formal welcome to competitors and guests and to set out the days running agenda, a P.A. toting master of ceremonies would be of great importance to a smooth running meeting and a formal race sequence would benefit everyone.

I have stated the facts as I honestly saw them and have tried to balance these with some constructive suggestions, some of which I hope will be adopted, thereby helping next years event to be more enjoyable.