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Contents

Club Stuff.....	2
Sandown Event.....	7
Factory Focus.....	8
Message From Bob.....	10
Day In The Life.....	11
Web Browsing.....	13
RS500 Mods.....	14
Members Letters.....	16
Phoenix Club Outing.....	19
Wood Green Club.....	20
Westwood Models.....	24
Nasty Fates.....	25
HO Scene.....	26
Twenty Years Ago.....	27
Rubber Track.....	29
De-slotting The Sequel.....	33
Bits And Pieces.....	34
Motor Wiring.....	35
Abergavenny Rail Race.....	37
Members Adverts.....	40

EDITOR

Brian Rogers
 27 Paige Close
 Watlington
 King's Lynn
 Norfolk
 PE33 0TQ
 Tel/Fax:- 01553 813090
 e-mail:- editor@nsccl.co.uk

TRADE ADVERTISING AND WEBSITE

Alan Slade
 The Old Schoolhouse
 Bridgefoot
 Strathmartine
 Angus
 Scotland
 DD3 0PH
 Tel/Fax:- 01382 828670
 e-mail:- sales@nsccl.co.uk
 webmaster@nsccl.co.uk

NSCC

The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts



It was twenty years ago today....ish

Sergeant Pepper may well have been teaching the band to play but a few of you were probably reading the very first Newsletter of the fledgling National Scalextric Collectors Club which was sent out to members in January 1981.

Julie Scale has a rummage through the first two issues on page 27 but it is worth reflecting on the progress of the Club since those times. The first issue consisted of two typed and photocopied A4 sheets and the first membership list (March 1981) contains thirty seven names. Amazingly, eight of the people on that list are still members.

The Club has had its ups and downs over the intervening years but, at the end of last year we had in excess of twelve hundred members and the Journal regularly runs to forty four or more pages. The finances are in good health thanks to the hard work of our longstanding treasurer, Bob Bott, and I see no reason why the NSCC should not be around in another twenty years. I believe that the various people who have been involved in the running of the Club since 1981 can be justly proud of their achievements.

Mind you it is just as well I have a Birthday to write about or this column would have consisted of another rant about unreliable computers. Yes, the editorial machine has thrown another wobbly! Trevor May seems to have been suffering similar problems as you will discover in his web browsing article on page 13; believe me Trevor I know how it feels! Unfortunately I lost about a week's e-mails as a result, so, if your advert or article was sent to me between the 5th and 12th of January it has probably disappeared into cyberspace and you will need to send it again.

And Finally - the new releases from Scalextric in 1981 were Banger Minis - Hornby Hobbies have come a long way in twenty years as well. No doubt all the manufacturers have some superb cars lined up for us this year; we are probably experiencing the second Golden Age of slot-racing.

Till next month
Brian

A day at the races!

BY PETER NOVANI

A forthcoming event which will undoubtedly interest slot-car collectors and racers alike is the Sandown Park Toy Fair to be held at the Sandown Exhibition Centre, Sandown Park, Surrey on Saturday, 3rd March 2001, between 10.30am – 4.00pm. Organised by pre-eminent toy fair specialists, Barry Potter Fairs, this is one of Europe's biggest collector toy fairs.

In conjunction with the organisers, I am delighted to be providing a slot-car attraction at this prestigious event for the first time. Visitors can enjoy all the thrills and spills of slot-car racing (free of charge) throughout the day on a four lane 12ft x 6ft Scalextric track layout situated in the main foyer. Although, racing will be purely for the fun of it, participants with a rather more competitive attitude may want to demonstrate their slot-car prowess during the 'Super Sandown Slot-Car Challenge.' This is scheduled to take place during the afternoon. Besides the fame and glory that will be bestowed upon the winner, (plus of course a mention in the NSCC Journal), there is a special 'Fastest Time of the Day' slot-car prize up for grabs, courtesy of Barry Potter Fairs. The prize will be presented immediately after the challenge, so the lucky winner can take the coveted prize home with them. Remember, if you don't enter you won't win!

If the racing does not interest you, then perusing the stalls within the main hall will undoubtedly occupy much of your time. Amongst the 500 stalls offering a bewildering and diverse array of collectable merchandising, are many well known slot-car dealers who regularly attend the event. A visit to their well stocked tables to check out the latest releases, or seek out that hard to find or obsolete item is recommended. And if that was not reason enough to attend, then there is also the opportunity to purchase a commemorative car.

To celebrate this inaugural slot-car event, a specially commissioned Scalextric Crystal Classics Jaguar XJ220 has been produced by Hornby PLC as a limited edition of 100 cars worldwide. Cars in this range are distinguished by the fact that they are moulded in transparent plastic, as is the plinth that each car is mounted on. Moreover, the Jaguars are officially endorsed by Barry Potter Fairs and feature their 'plaque' logo on the roof and distinctive 'Giant' logo on the bonnet, both factory tampos printed in black



ink – see photo. Each car is individually hand numbered by Hornby and supplied with an A4 size numbered certificate of authenticity signed by Simon Kohler, Hornby's Marketing Manager. For that added personal touch, Barry Potter has also agreed to sign and number a separate postcard size certificate which will include a brief history on the Jaguar XJ220.

The cost of acquiring such an unusual collectable? A cool £125. However, quality and exclusivity does not come cheaply! With interest in the cars attracting publicity in model/motoring publications, it is expected that demand will exceed supply. It should also be stressed that the cars will not be available until the actual day of the event – cash payments only. However, NSCC members can guarantee a car by making an advance payment – cheque or postal/money order. A car will then be reserved for collection on the day. So, all in all it should be a trip well worth making. See you there! ■



The new catalogue for 2001, Edition 42, has been released. As with last year, this one should see two catalogue releases. Let's have a look at the 1st Issue. There are three new body shells including the Cadillac which, although it was in last year's catalogue, didn't quite meet its Christmas release. They are the Porsche 911 GT3R, Opel Astra V8 coupe DTM and the Cadillac Northstar Le Mans cars.

Out go the Caterham, Hockenheim and Rally sets. In come two new sets, GT Super Cup and Opel Motorsport. There are four new Micro Scalextric sets featuring futuristic racers. Interestingly, there is an interactive CD for Scalextric enthusiasts who also have a PC through which they will be able to download data from Hornby's Scalextric website.

Let's take a look at the new arrivals. The two Cadillacs have been reviewed in the last few months. The liveries are unchanged with C2258 GM Racing and C2259 DAMS. The next new arrival will, hopefully, be available in the first quarter of the year. It is the Porsche 911 GT3R. There are two liveries. C2274 is the Paragon livery. The Paragon team were part sponsored by Scalextric two years ago.



The second livery, C2275, is Red Bull. Peculiarly, they both have the same racing number of 77! A GT3R set is introduced to the range in the shape of C1064 GT Super Cup with two more liveries, Hewlett Packard and UPS.



This is only the first issue catalogue which covers the first and second production quarters of the year! So, there could be more to come from July onwards. Overall, there are more than 30 changes to the range of sets and cars. Specifically, there are 8 reliveries and 8 new cars to collect (including Cadillacs).



The TVR stable has a Scania Works 2000 liveried Speed 12. We say goodbye to one of Scalextric's best sports racers. The Porsche 911 GT1 is no longer in the range which makes it quite a short production run for any Scalextric car.

Touring cars have been reduced to a minimum by halving the range. There are only two makes left from the previous year; two Rapid Fit Mondeos and 3 Vectras. Audi and Renault being the two makes retired from the grid.

Not quite a touring car, more of a monster, is the Opel V8 which takes part in the DTM series. This is the next new arrival from Scalextric. The Opel Astra coupe has been given an unhealthy diet of steroids for the DTM series and in 1/32nd scale looks to be a promising little racer. The two liveries are C2297 Opel Service in traditional Opel white and yellow and C2298 Sport Bild in red. These are due to be available in the second quarter. Set C1069 Opel Motorsport also includes these two little monsters.

Other 'Hard Driving Hard Tops' new to



the range are two new liveries of Beetle. C2336 Adac 11 and C2337 Adac 12, in blue and green respectively, join the diminishing beetle range. Surprisingly, only one new Ford Focus livery in the Finnish livery of Laukkanen (C2343) is added to the Rally range.

Two new liveries for the Caterham range and, pleasingly, actual liveries or cars that competed in one of the premier Caterham series. C2344 Peter Ritchie Racing and C2345 Team Taran liveries are particularly striking.



Formula 1 loses the No.10 Jordan hornet and both red Williams cars. According to the catalogue the C2264/5 blue and white Williams BMW cars now have 'Allianz' on a blue background around the engine cover air intake.



This means the same C reference number has been used for the 2001 catalogue Allianz livery. Neither have 'Veltins' on the side - this was only done for a short production run for Germany last year.

Nascar loses C2284 Lycos, C2218 McDonalds, C2208 Rusty and gains C2286 Tide. As expected, there is limited availability on much of the Nascar range.



In summary, it can be seen that the range has been rationalised. The cheap end of the range has all but disappeared with only three (Agip/Minolta/GQ) cars left and only one Police car. There are no trucks or Minis. In fact, the F1 McLaren, Ferrari 643 and Benetton B193 are the only cars left from the pre China production. All other cars are of the new breed where underpan and livery tampon-printing are far better than those of five years ago.

This year's Scalextric slogan is 'Looks good; drives better.' It's a bold statement to make. The livery quality is excellent. Can the driving be better? Having just tried a Cadillac I would agree that the race potential of this car is amongst their best so far. I'm looking forward to racing the Porsche 911 GT3R and the Opel V8 cars and who knows what else awaits us later in the year! ■

New Year whinge

FROM THE CLUB TREASURER - BOB BOTT

When it was decided that the committee members should all provide Brian with an article for the February Journal I decided that it would be an ideal opportunity for me to highlight some of the things that are annoying when trying to do the job of Membership Secretary. No please don't stop reading this because although it will probably bore the pants off you, it could save you some time and money and make contacting your committee a lot easier.

First are the phone calls that end as soon as the caller hears the answer-phone cut in. Please note guys that both Brian's and my answer/fax machines only ring a maximum of six times before the message starts, so unless we are sitting beside the machine it is unlikely that we are going to get to it in time to answer the call. Now I know that a lot of people do not like talking to machines, but if you can bring yourselves to leaving your name and number we will get back to you. If you have withheld your number or if you are phoning from overseas we cannot track calls on the 1471 ringback so please just say something like "Hi this is Joe Bloggs please ring me back on 00000 9999999" and again we will get back to you. Also something you should know is that our machines only have 60 seconds for you to record your message so if you have a long or involved topic to discuss or are in any doubt, then just leave your name and number.

Secondly are the renewal forms. It is important that if you are paying by credit card that you fill in the bottom part of the form with your name and membership number as well as your signature, the reason for this is because some signatures are not recognizable and if you cannot remember your membership number correctly then I have one hell of a job trying to track you down. As a lot of you will know if you

do not give a computer the precise information it requires then it does not want to play!

Finally cheques. Please make your cheque payable to the NSCC and NOT to me personally because the bank gets a bit brassed of if they realise that I have been adding anything to what you have written. Also please remember to SIGN your cheque because no way am I going to get charged with forgery!!

Would our overseas members also note that the UK has recently withdrawn from the Eurocheque scheme so I can no longer accept them for membership renewals.

OK, so if you have managed to force yourself to read this far I guess you are thoroughly depressed and would agree with my mate Mark's favourite description of me "You moaning old git"! but if you could bear the above items in mind it would certainly help me and hopefully allow me to provide you the membership with a better service.

On a lighter note, we know quite a lot of what will be coming along next year (I'm writing this on Christmas Eve - SAD or what?) because although announced this year various models didn't appear and are now scheduled for 2001. The manufacturers will though I'm sure, have some exciting developments up their sleeves for our delight in 2001.

Right the next job is to e-mail Santa to ask him to bring you all everything you desire for next Christmas, so if you didn't quite get it all it's not my fault, I tried!!, but I guess he could have a problem finding enough original Bugattis to go round!! So until we bump into each other at a swapmeet or communicate by phone/fax or e-mail, thanks for reading my drivel I hope you were not too bored by it.

Happy collecting/racing. ■

A 'Day In The Life'

Part 2 - Product design and tooling

BY ADRIAN NORMAN

He blew his mind out in a car

Decisions, decisions! Enough to drive you crazy, and maybe, just maybe, a Scalextric car will rise out of the chaos.

Making a model to the constraints of European law, licensing laws, business strategies and marketing trends, the fortunes of the real

car on the track and the public perception of that car, driver and team, is a nightmare of compromise. Even after the boardroom and financial decisions have been hammered out, further development may show that there are constraints which would not make the car look good or race well. Or, even if the car managed to reach the distribution warehouse, there may be a last minute change in licensing and/or livery, as happened to the McLaren MP4 that was withdrawn from sale whilst it was in transit to the retailers. All these plans and random factors are thrown in to the melting pot. It's a wonder anything gets made at all, and

all the more remarkable when Hornby Hobbies plays by the rules by diligently adhering to EEC regulations and licensing laws.

Many other models have fallen by the wayside, some of which you will have seen in Scalextric catalogues and wondered why they never reached the shops. You may remember a Lancia Delta and the Metro 6R4 Group B rally car from the catalogues. You may not know about the articulated lorry that allowed a car to be driven into its box-van trailer and driven out again imitating the Knight Rider TV. series. How about a giant tipper truck or a Vauxhall

Cavalier? Countless more reached various stages of production before falling by the wayside due to one or more of the aspects mentioned above!

Generally, all design work is carried out by the company's own staff using information from the real car manufacturers supplemented by detailed photographs from all views. Some adjustments to true scale have to be made for a number of reasons. Firstly they must run on all types of existing Scalextric track. Secondly, there is a need to try to make cars that may race together equally, i.e. so that no particular one will always win a race. There are exceptions, for example the Mini, where they need to be raced against each other due to their particular wheelbase and centre of gravity. Fortunately, one-make series in the real world have helped out with the introduction of Caterham and Beetle series.

Thirdly, the cars will be likely to receive impact punishment when racing, flying off the track at full speed onto the floor being commonplace. Therefore, some parts may need thickening up at critical points. But even with these minor adjustments the Computer Aided Design (CAD) equipment used will ensure the model car entirely captures the character of its prototype.

The timescale from a decision to go ahead with a car project until production is around 18 months. Apart from the considerations discussed above, there are manufacturing problems to be taken into account. These are sometimes related to the colour scheme. The first Benetton F1 car (C461) had to have its body split into parts in order to be able to reproduce the multi-colour scheme, at that time, economically. Other areas for discussion with the factory people include use of standard components and preferred assembly sequence using automatic equipment where practicable. ■



Web browsing

WITH TREVOR MAY

I seem to be going through one of those irritating periods at the moment, where the most simple things get complicated on me. Inanimate objects are conspiring against me, it's amazing that I'm not suffering from paranoia. Problems with the washing machine, my new computer and the MR2's gearbox, seem to have got horribly complicated. I can't even throw money at them to make them go away (a last resort believe me!!), my life is full of "out of stock sir" and "software conflicts".

It is at times like this that I usually retreat from the harsh realities of real life to the Scalextric room to get my sanity back for a couple of hours, but this time it has led to more anguish! My faithful electronic lap timer has decided to join the general malaise afflicting me. Now ordinarily I would have been quite sanguine about it; after all, it has worked faultlessly for many hard worked years and the problem was likely to be of a minor nature, but I was in no mood for such tribulation and regrettably it was not designed to survive being bounced off the wall (surely a design fault?). After adding "new lap timer" to my mental list of things that never get done, I started to get a little luckier.

Miraculously my new computer has spontaneously decided all is right with the world and is working perfectly (I have explained to my wife in great detail how I managed to "sort it all out"). Having a working computer again got me thinking about the old one sitting in the corner and my lack of a lap timer (yes, I have explained to my wife how I "dropped" it and it just fell apart) and I thought I'd have a trawl through the web for some suitable programmes, the washing machine can wait! As with most of these kinds of things, it seems the cost you have to pay is inversely proportional to the amount of time and skill you have to expend to get it working, and there are all sorts of systems from 8 lanes professional to 2 lane home track so I've picked

out a selection that caught my eye as a starting point.

<http://web.inter.nl.net/users/dekloet/slot.htm>

Mr DeKloet's site is obviously frequented by knowledgeable people who are happy to share their skill for free, well worth a look, if you know what a diode is, or want to learn.

<http://www.i2mnet.com>

Virtual Race Systems site, nice easy site to navigate around and it explains things with diagrams (a definite advantage for me!). There is a small price to pay here, but the more you do yourself, the less it costs.

<http://www.infoserve.net/oss/slotcar>

The Trakmate system, another user friendly site, with a very flexible system, even including Drag Race timing!

<http://members.kingston.net/ebyarker/bryan.htm>

SMI system, looks good and links to the Scuderia Mc Ewan free software page which I was going to mention, but now don't need to. I didn't get too deeply into the system itself as I was distracted by the article called "how to make more automated flaggers" which shows you how to make your trackside marshals wave their flags and even tie them into your lap timer so that they wave the chequered flag as the winner crosses the line! Now that just has to go on my mental list of things that never get done!!

<http://www.slotmaster.com>

This one is moving more towards the professional end of things, You don't even need to know which end of a soldering iron to hold, very nice! ➡

**[http://members.aol.com/
clewington/timer.htm](http://members.aol.com/clewington/timer.htm)**

This URL brings up the Racetimer system which looks very good but I couldn't get past the first page, can anyone help me with this? If it turns out to be embarrassingly simple, my modem must have been playing up.

<http://www.racecontrol.com>

Made in Germany, looks high quality, price to match (maybe I can persuade the wife to get a cheaper washing machine?)

These are just some of the sites that came up from a quick search, I'm sure there are loads more and of course, some of them are well into the price range of the excellent retail systems advertised in this publication, which don't require you to have a spare redundant computer lying around. I'm not decided yet, I'm still looking for one that has been designed to withstand being bounced off the wall. ■

RS500 - A suitable case for treatment?

BY BILL GRIGG

I read Peter Novani's article about improving the roadholding of the Scalextric BTCC cars with interest as he's absolutely right, if you let someone with only a passing interest in slot racing loose with a car that's not more or less glued to the track, he or she soon loses interest altogether.

However, as I'm sure many will agree, when you get into the swing of things, there's a lot of fun to be had in coaxing a car that will hang its tail out round a track as fast as you can. There's skill in driving both types, but the good thing about no magnets is that when you do overcook it the car doesn't usually barrel roll into the boondocks at supersonic speed. In fact, it's a great tribute to FLY et al that their superbly detailed bodyshells can stand the strain.

Anyway, what really prompted me to write was Peter's comment about the RS500's pathetic roadholding. The big problem with the RS500 is its high front end and floppy front stub axles, which I assume were designed in to enable the car to cope with those horrible banked curves. If you file down the guide-locating hole so that the car sits level on the track and substitute a solid front axle, restrained so as to allow only a few millimetres of vertical movement, the car is transformed into a pretty reasonable performer. You'll need spacers to keep the wheels located

laterally. If you were then to substitute a 'painted to the track' magnet as well, lookout FLY, here I come! Just the magnet without the front-end mods would, I fear, result only in more frequent spectacular barrel rolls.

While on the subject of roadholding/handling, it's always intrigued me how the English Scalextric versions of Spanish cars (from the days when such international cross fertilisation was common) seem inferior in that department to the Spanish originals. For example, I've got a 'British' Ferrari F1 /87 and BMW M3 and replacing the motor with the original Spanish type has improved them no end, at least on my circuit. The difference seems to be that the British motor is faster at the top end but has less braking effect, which makes going round bends successfully that much more difficult to achieve. Evidently, the Spaniards designed their models to perform properly around their own running gear and fitting a different motor upsets the balance.

Last point - whilst mucking about with RS500s and the BMW M3 I noticed that the floorpan of the BMW fits the Sierra bodyshell almost perfectly, except it's a bit short at the front. Hence I have a BMW floorpanned, Spanish motored (definitely non-magnet!) RS500 and it's great fun to drive and race against the Spanish motored M3. ■



Hi Brian

A little while ago at the London International Toy Fair one of my customers, Andy Wakeford, asked me if I had seen the original Bugatti that was coming up for auction at Bonhams & Brooks the following week. I hadn't, but when I got home I checked out their web site. They had the Bugatti listed with a price guide of £1000 to £1500, as he had said, but something didn't seem quite right. It was listed as a C70 with a repro C95 box and instructions. Knowing that this was how the 'Perris' bugs were done I thought that perhaps this may be one of them. Looking at the picture it did seem a little shiny, like it had been painted, but it was not a very good picture. So I e-mailed Andy to warn him that he should check it out carefully! He said that if he thought it was a repro car he would let Bonhams know and advise them to withdraw it from the sale.

There was some other items in the catalogue that were interesting and I made a couple of bids on these. On the day of the auction I checked out their site; the Bugatti had sold for £1250 so I thought it must have been ok and wished I had made a bid!

I was the high bidder on one of my items. A few days later, at the N.E.C., another of my customers Neil Dunham said that he had been the high bidder on the Bugatti. I told him my thoughts on it and what to look for when he went to pick it up. He called me that evening and said he had not paid for it because he was sure it was a Perris car! He knew I was going to pick up my lot the next day and asked me if I could look at it and give a second opinion. As soon as I saw the car in the flesh I knew it was not a real one. You could see straight away that it was painted and with permission I scraped some paint away on the inside to reveal resin!!

The guy in charge of toys at Bonhams admitted to me that he had had some misgivings about the car and had asked a NSCC member he knew, of his opinion. The member (who he did not want to name) said yes, it was ok. I think that they were lucky that the car did not sell for a lot more money and go to someone abroad who would not have had the opportunity to inspect the car before paying. Also, maybe a warning in the Journal would not go amiss!! Needless to say Neil is very pleased he came to the NEC on Sunday!

Regards
Phil Smith

Dear Brian

Some news that may interest readers. The first part of a four (or five) part article on the history of Victory Industries should be starting in the March issue of "Model Collector" magazine which should be on the shelves any day now. This is the first time a history of this company has appeared in print and the first part deals with the very early days of the company from the mid 1940s up to 1949. The last part in the series will cover the VIP slot car range.

I've a very good idea of everything that was produced by Victory and all the main colour variations, but if anyone has anything that they think is unusual I'd be very interested to hear from them. I'd particularly like to hear from anyone who has any of the following that I might be able to photograph for the article:-

MR505 Complete Shell petrol station - in any condition, built or unbuilt.

The industrial Micro Motor and a boxed Pathfinda set - in any condition.

I'm also very keen to find a copy of a 1959 price list for the large scale vehicles and a photograph of the Barfax works in Worplesdon Road, Guildford if one exists.

I'd also like to get any comments about the information I have on the following VIP items:-

Has anyone ever come across the K2 Ferrari Dino kit - this is listed in the 1968 catalogue and was advertised by Hobby Supplies as "ready at the end of March" in the April 68 issue of Model Cars, but so far as I can establish this kit version of VIP's Ferrari Dino never actually went into production. The car used the standard VIP Dino body but with a different set of mounting posts which are cut off on the R69 and R69S versions - I believe only a bare handful of examples were put together in the factory for trade displays and for salesmen and I don't believe any packaging for the kit was ever produced. In theory, the Dino body was available as a spare part with the kit car body mountings intact so I'd be interested to hear from anyone who's found one.

FR2000 Indianapolis set - Again, although this is shown in the 1968 catalogue, I don't believe this 4-lane set with four Lotus Indy cars was ever produced - but I'd love to hear from someone who has one! I can be contacted on 01256 357759 or e-mail:- malcp@madmalc.screaming.net

The March issue of Model Collector should also include an extensive article on Minic Motorways.

Regards

Malcolm Parker

.....

Dear Members

I am starting a new slot racing club, Scalextric, Ninco, FLY, SCX, etc. on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of every month based at ; 10, Progress Road,
Leigh on Sea,
Essex.

This is just off the A127, which is the main London to Southend road.

The track is a permanently set up Ninco 6 lane, so it's just turn up and race.

It has a computer controlled timing/lap counting system and you will need a controller connected to a 2 amp, 3 pin plug.

The initial meetings will use supplied Ninco karts and Proslot GTIs so you won't even need a car!
Come and give it a try, you won't be disappointed!

For further details, contact Graeme Thoburn:- 01702 551225/07899 960689.



Dear Brian,

Firstly, may I congratulate all those who contributed new covers and headings to the 2001 Journal. In particular I thought the new front cover especially good in that it has successfully represented slot car evolution over several decades; nice one Kevin!

Secondly, in the letters page a couple of issues ago, I expressed a 'gripe' about Peter Novani's comments regarding other contributors and attention/accuracy to detail. All I can say is that Peter, you have totally redeemed yourself in my eyes. Your recent articles about the Steve McQueen collection and last month's piece about the 908/3s have made great reading. More please.

Whilst on the subject of Fly Classics, the series just gets better all the time. What can we expect next I wonder? Perhaps a boxed set of 2 Classics; the 1969 Le Mans winning GT40 of Jacky Ickx & Jackie Oliver together with the 2nd placed Porsche 908 of Hans Herrmann & Gerrard Larrousse. This particular race is legendary due to the epic battle between Ickx & Herrmann, when in the final hour of the race, they passed and repassed each other many times until Ickx finally took the chequered flag a mere hundred yards ahead at the finish. It would make a fine set, perhaps it's just a matter of time.....

Regards,
David Wisdom

Dear Brian,

I'm just contacting you to say many thanks for selecting my design as the front cover, for the 2001 editions of the NSCC Journal. I have been lucky enough to have had a design used for two covers - the first one was used for the green 1998 Newsletters, so I wasn't expecting a design of mine to be chosen this time round; it was a big and very pleasant surprise.

It was a great deal of fun to do, and a challenge, as the club encompasses a great deal of slot car brands and personal preferences - the objective was to produce a design that displayed both old and new slot car collecting and racing, and the wide variety of makes available - not easy!

I used Adobe Photoshop 5.0 for all image work, and Adobe Pagemaker 6.5 to produce the final layout and printer artwork. The Porsche 917K is on there, simply because it is, in my opinion, the greatest racing car ever built - both real-life and slotcar-wise. The Cadillac Northstar is there to reflect the up to date state of home slot car racing.

Can I say many thanks to the NSCC Committee for choosing my design, and for their advice and a very special thank you to Steve and Elaine de Havilland for their long friendship, and their invaluable help and assistance in many matters; particularly in getting my computer systems together, without which I would not be able to do work like the cover.

Very best wishes to you, and to all NSCC members for 2001.
Kevin Myler

Phoenix four go forth

BY JON SWORD

I love Christmas, but by the end of Boxing Day, I usually start to suffer from 'Lack of Slot Racing blues'. The Phoenix club closes down for a couple of weeks and, to be honest, I do miss our regular Thursday race night.

This year, however, I had something to look forward to on December 28th. Mark Scale had invited me up to the Hazel Grove club. I have visited once before when delivering my S.R.A products and had spent a very enjoyable evening racing on their superb six-lane track. They are a great bunch up there, very friendly, competitive and sportsman-like.

So, with five of the Phoenix crew due to travel up I was looking forward to the meeting. During the night of the 27th the snow fell heavily making driving hazardous. I soon got a call from 'R.S' our 'duty driver' who sensibly decided that it was not on. I have no sense at all, looked at the sky, looked at the wife and phoned Daz who was also willing to give it a try.

We arrived safely to a warm greeting. A lot of effort had been made and there was plenty to eat and drink. Mark Scale kept on producing cars as prizes as we raced in three separate events.

The first race was a 20 lapper, first three to qualify. We used Porsche 911 GT3 cars, which had been provided by Mark and prepared prior to the racing. Each car was colour coded per lane so it was lucky dip time. In the first race I thought that I was chasing Mark, but at the finish I noticed a six-foot wide smile on my eldest son which said it all. Rob and I made the final, Sam, my other son didn't and Daz had a mechanical failure which put him out. Pro-Slot are great cars but perhaps a little weak as far as some of the components go.

In the final John of Hazel Grove won, I managed a second and Rob a third. John sportingly handed me the prize as I had pressed him hard and I was a visitor. I reluctantly accepted, appreciating the sportsmanship, and then handed it on to Rob who I thought had done really well.

Daz won the next competition which was based on a 'knockout' theme. If you came off nobody put you back on and that was it. It was very tense, exciting and enjoyable. Daz is one of the best at Phoenix and I really do enjoy watching him race. The same can be said of John at Hazel Grove.

The final race was a real challenge. A 30 minute endurance F1 race in teams of two. Each team could field 2 cars, utilising them through a pit system. You could only marshal your own team-mate and any damage had to be repaired. We had a hectic period of preparation fitting Pro-Slot 6001 magnets to a Scalextric Benetton and then a Jordan. At Phoenix we race without magnets so we were going to enjoy this event.

I drew up alongside Mark and Lex and off we went. Basically I just stayed on, never coming off. Mark and Lex came off a couple of times and each time they seemed to lose a part of their car. It seemed as though my fifteen minutes would last forever and then disaster, my car began to stutter and then stopped. The standard motor had just packed in with two minutes left to run. The others soon caught up. Daz carried on in the second session, same story; he never came off amidst some frantic racing and marshalling/fitness training! Daz was ten laps in front, a minute to go and then disaster again. Same problem, motor had burnt out. Both of the cars were brand new and I guess that they just couldn't cope with the stronger magnet. (anybody else got any ideas?). We still managed to finish second whilst the Hazel Grove lads showed their skill and won.

Overall it was a brilliant day, we were looked after very well. Special thanks to Mark, Andy, John and the Hazel Grove club. I think that we will look at inter club racing more positively especially if other clubs are as sporting and make attending such a pleasure. Mark has talked about a 24-hour race in the near future. Now where is my old army sleeping bag?!! ■

Boys will be boys!

BY PETER NOVANI

For some reason my teenage son has taken a sudden interest in wanting to race again at our local Scalextric club. It appears that WWF wrestling and computer games no longer have such a control over his attention span. His interest was rekindled by a social visit to the London Scalextric Club in Wood Green, last summer.

We both raced at the club during the early Nineties, albeit on a very occasional basis. However, the atmosphere was too intense for my liking. Looking back further still, I have the haziest recollection of visiting the club in 1981/82, when a small basic layout was in use. I fondly recall super-soft Scalextric Formula One (F1) Wolf rear tyres being the ‘must have’ demon tweak of the day, and matchsticks the favoured means of counting laps, although I am reliably informed that it was actually a hand-held counting device. Either way, it was still rather primitive. I share Don Siegel’s sentiments (NSCC Journal, October 2000), that the electronic lap counter has to be one of the great slot-car advances of recent times. As to how the club originally came to my attention, that remains something of a mystery. Maybe the work of some sort of celestial force.

Talking of work. Throughout the Eighties I owned a business in Central London which included a huge unused first floor area. Having installed a table-tennis table for the odd recreational knockabout, it eventually fell into disuse (too tiring). As an alternative, one of the male employees had the bright idea of setting up a Scalextric layout. He brought in an assortment of track so that a makeshift two lane layout could be constructed, supported by the table and some old cardboard boxes. We even treated ourselves to a pair of the latest Scalextric Metros – great fun! Again that must have been around 1981/82. Anyway, the female staff had the audacity to ridicule us, even suggesting that “as we played with toy cars,” then they would “bring their dollies to

work.” Women! Yet one particularly attractive young lady was impressed enough to want to “play” on the layout. Naturally it was never a problem arranging track time for her. Of course she always won – chivalry rules OK! And there’s an interesting concept, slot-car racing as a ‘babe magnet,’ surely not! At the time the layout seemed a rather off the wall idea. Yet according to the London Evening Standard, high-profile 1997 Ad Agency of the Year, St. Lukes, race Scalextric in their staff lounge. Apparently, great minds think alike.

I digress. With it’s imposing 100ft six lane configuration, the Wood Green track can be a daunting prospect on first acquaintance. Myopic slot-car racers might find a powerful pair of binoculars beneficial, as the cars are barely discernable when on the far side of this expansive layout. A certain amount of hassle has to be endured getting the track panels (Scalextric track nailed to boards) assembled and dismantled each race night. Nonetheless it incorporates all the very latest lap timing equipment. Proceedings throughout the evening are run in an efficient manner by the designated race controller. He employs a P.A. sound system to inform members when to race, how races are progressing, and if necessary, to chastise (quite often) those who fail to marshal at the appropriate times.

Nowadays, even with 20 competitive racers in attendance, race nights are still conducted in a relaxed and friendly manner. Such bonhomie gives like minded enthusiasts the opportunity to compete against each other, swap technical tips and when required, to impart useful information to inquisitive visitors. Inevitably, the roll-call of members has changed down the years. However, a number of slot-car luminaries continue to ply their racing skills there, including club chairman, Steve Carter. He has been actively involved almost since its inception, and is the author of the NSCC Journal’s informative Track Talk

articles. Indeed, I owe him a debt of gratitude for introducing me to the NSCC in the first place, back in 1991. You may well have seen his intriguing cameo on the 1997 Channel 4 TV programme, *Movers & Shakers*, which focused on various aspects of the hobby, including some rather dubious racing antics involving former members of the Wood Green club.

Championships are held throughout the year catering for a variety of classes, including F1, Sports, Saloon, Rally, Historics, and Thundersports. In addition to which there is a class for Club-Cars. These cars have their own distinct appeal, as members race identical slot-cars built and prepared by club stalwart Derek Moore, who also had a cameo on the *Movers & Shakers* programme. Achieving good results with that type of slot-car relies purely on an individual's racing skill, rather than any fettling or tuning expertise – a great leveller. With the exception of F1, club rules require the removal of magnets when racing. Therefore, subtle modifications are necessary, not only to counteract the tricky non magnetic handling, but also to meet the demands of this especially large and fast layout. To some extent, members have to be engineers as well as racers.

As a precursor to racing our own slot-cars, my son and I took advantage of a selection of sports cars thoughtfully provided by the club. So, even if you turn up without any cars, you still get to race. They're hardly state-of-the-art, but more than adequate for us to re-acquaint ourselves with the layout and reassess our skill levels. After an enjoyable evening's racing, we returned home in good spirits, and consoled ourselves with the old adage that, it is the taking part that counts and not the winning! We elected to attend again for another race evening, this time opting for some fast and furious magnetic F1 racing action, equipped for the occasion with our own cars and controllers. Ninco manufactured F1 cars are *dé rigueur* if you aspire to becoming a race winner at the club. In truth, they possess excellent handling characteristics and extremely powerful motors – although stripped contrate gears can be a frequent occurrence. Moreover, they suit our

style of racing admirably. Yet their undoubted speed can make them a handful around a very short and twisty layout. Paradoxically, they reveal themselves to be agile performers on the club layout where hitherto undreamt of top speeds can be attained – a most gratifying experience!

In my case, F1 practice was particularly fraught. Having supposedly crashed my car under the bridge at the start of the 30ft straight, I went to retrieve it only to find nothing there. A club member confronted me with my car at the other end of the straight. It transpired that, for one brief moment, I had lost sight of the car as it passed under the bridge, only for it to continue at full speed down the long straight, with catastrophic consequences. It was found on the floor several feet away under some tables and chairs! Incredibly, only a new chassis was required. Once I'd got that out my system I vowed to concentrate rather more earnestly next time out. Much to our surprise, another evening of frantic F1 action netted race wins for both members of 'Scuderia' Novani. Were the other racers having an off day? No chance! More likely, it could be attributed to some surreptitious tyre truing enhancements plus a couple of tuning parts bought from Chas Keeling's renowned slot-car emporium, and what every racer needs – a great deal of luck.

Drawbacks to competitive racing at the club? Well, if you don't like losing, then it can seriously damage your ego. And given that a large stable of modified slot-cars will be required for week-in-week-out racing, it may also damage your wealth, especially if you dump them on the floor like I did! However, for a modest race fee of £3 for adults and £1.50 for juniors, consider it a value for money racing activity, and one that merits a cursory visit. Race nights are held every Tuesday at St. Mark's Church Hall, Lymington Avenue, Wood Green, North London. As a footnote to my preamble, it is worth mentioning that this long established London club played a pivotal role in the formation of the NSCC. So, how about someone recounting the definitive history of the club in the *Journal*? ■

Meet the advertisers - Westwood Models

I am sure that most of you have purchased some items from the firms who advertise in the Journal, but I thought that you may be interested in some information on the actual people who run the businesses. Our trader members are often maligned but they are enthusiasts just like us all and without their services the acquisition of those rarer items would be a lot harder. Their prices may reflect the basic commercial need to make a profit but there is nothing wrong with that; one could spend just as much in petrol, visiting car boot sales and the like, in the never ending search for collectable items. Also, remember that the price of new items advertised in the Journal are usually considerably lower than shop prices. So here is the first of a new series taking a look at their activities - it may be short-lived as Robert Learmouth of Westwood Models is the only one to have responded to my request for information so far. If any other advertisers would like to be featured I suggest they put fingers to keyboard and send me their story.

Westwood, Margate is the home of Scalextric. And Swindon is the home of Westwood Models named in subtle recognition of the famous old range. The business is run by Robert Learmouth and his partner Karen from their home in the West Country and specialises in obsolete and collectable items.

For Robert, his introduction to the world of Scalextric came early on, "I got my first set as a six year old - it was a Scalleti Arrows figure of eight set. I played with it so much the guide blades got worn down to pins and later it became an enduring search to find replacements, a 15 year search to be precise!". It was probably that early quest, which led Robert to slip off at Swapmeets (when looking for Model Railway items with his Dad) to search out Scalextric. "That was the early 80s as a young teenager and even at that time I was aware that Scalextric had a history that was worth collecting. I picked up the occasional older items and my best find was a #1 catalogue amongst a box of track that I paid 40p for!" Following a short break from Scalextric activity in his late teens, the interest was rekindled when the Batman sets were released in 1990. "That set caught my imagination and I've never looked back from there. From that day on I made it my mission to build a collection of every car made to date." And that's where Westwood Models had its origins, "I decided that the most

economical way of doing things was to buy every collection I could, take one of everything I needed and sell the rest on for a small profit. It continued like that for most of the 90s until towards the end of the decade when I had built up the collection more or less where I wanted to get it to and the activities become profit making". Westwood Models was now set up as a formal business and significantly the decision was made to focus on selling mail order through the Internet. "We're only talking three years ago now but at that time myself and Scale Models were the only traders with a web site". The new selling medium has worked well for Westwood Models and a substantial customer base has been established across the globe. Sales are split roughly 50/50 between the UK and Mainland Europe with a small number of customers elsewhere in the world. Robert continues, "most members would guess that Spain and Holland are the main hotspots for enthusiasts but the Scandinavian countries contain a surprisingly high number of diehards too." English Scalextric has long been the mainstay of stock but things are changing, "FLY has a very significant following now and various other manufacturers produce equally desirable models so it seems wrong not to reflect this in what we sell. Scalextric will remain the core offering but our stock now runs to over 500 different models and about a quarter of that is FLY and other

makes". As well as cars, the stock also runs to a wide variety of spares including an interesting selection of hard to find 60s parts. The web site gets regular updates and Robert feels that's important, "Out of date material is frustrating for customers. So our lists change every few days as the stock changes". Despite the impersonal nature of e-mail Robert and Karen do their best to make it more friendly, "We answer all of our e-mails - usually the same day. And if someone wants to talk about their interest or ask questions about collecting then we're happy to do that". So

REP1966 AC COBRA WHITE £24.95
REF1967 SEAT 600 SPECIAL £25.99

what for the future? "The Internet has been good for us but I wouldn't mind betting many members couldn't put a face to our name. So we want to get better known at the NSCC and larger toy swapmeets and generally reach those who aren't in a position to reach us on the Internet". And Robert and Karen's daughter Jasmine, who is nearly 2 now might join the outfit at some stage too, "We've given her cars to handle from a very early age and she's always been kind to them. Who knows, perhaps you'll see her serving behind the stall or answering the e-mails sooner rather than later!" ■

It shouldn't happen to a slot-car

A really sad one this month - only the golf clubs on the back seat to remind us that this is in fact a James Bond Aston Martin!

Liam Armstrong has also written to me with a tale of woe - "I once purchased six cars locally for £20 - three Minis, a C54 Lotus, a C50 Lotus (all in very good condition) and a James Bond Mercedes. The latter was a barely recognisable piece of mangled plastic whose wheel arches had been attacked by a large saw. I can't send you a photo as I was so upset I stripped it for spares and threw the body in the dustbin!"



Photo by Robert Learmouth

More contributions for this spot welcome.

Midland HO and Hobby Supplies

Barry Johnson in conversation with Jeff Davies

At the recent Le Mans 24 Hour race meeting Nick Sismey introduced me to Midland HO owner Barry Johnson. I remarked to him I had recently walked into a Beatties store and there had not been a single HO car on sale. With Tomy withdrawn from the UK market and Tyco only being available advertised as Mattel and in complete sets from places such as Argos and Toys'r'us.

Where did this leave people who needed HO slot cars to be repaired or to be replaced to run on existing Tomy/Tyco slot sets? Barry explained to me he had purchased all of Riko's remaining Tomy stock and was in discussions with Life-Like, another HO maker, to be their importer. I asked Barry how he got started. Below is his story in his own words.

"Like most men I had been into Scalextric as a child and loved every moment of it. As I grew up and had my own family, slot cars just became a memory. But 7 years ago, a friend I worked with, asked if I would like to go to a local slot car racing club in Derby, that raced HO scale slot cars. At first I must admit I was a little put off by the size of these small cars, but once I had mastered the art of keeping the little rockets on the track, I was hooked. I joined the club and have been an active member ever since. While searching the local hobby & toy shops for HO slot cars and accessories, it soon became apparent that there wasn't a lot to be had. After making enquiries with other racers at the club, I was told that most of the good stuff was only available in the USA. Here in the UK it seems to be classed as a child's toy, in the USA it's a hobby and growing bigger year by year. Well that was it for me, if the Americans have got it, I was going to have it too. I started to import cars, spares, track and tuning parts for myself and when these were seen by the other club members the question was asked, can you get me some? That was the start of Midland HO

and Hobby Supplies. For the past 6 years I have been importing cars from manufacturers like Tyco, Tomy, Life-Like & Aurora; I also stock cars from Mattel and Scalextric here in the UK.

Recently I purchased all the Tomy AFX stock that Riko International had remaining and after discussions with Tomy UK I made a similar purchase from them and this has now made Midland HO the largest stockist of Tomy AFX this side of the Atlantic. I keep a full range of Lexan Racing Bodies, hand made resin bodies, decals, tune up parts, silicone tyres etc.. I also import a range of pull back cars from Playing Mantis, because the bodies fitted to these cars snap straight onto a Tomy chassis, giving people an even greater choice in body styles. At only £4.99 a body it is a very cheap way to increase the range in your collection or the type of car you can race. I advertise on the Internet at www.midland-ho-slot.freeserve.co.uk and in the usual magazines like Hobby & Collectors Mart, Collectors Gazette but as many will know, these don't really cater for Slot Cars. In the UK there are only two manufacturers that have HO scale track sets & cars, this being Mattel with their Hot Wheel Electric range and Scalextric with their micro range. Both manufacturers aim the sets at children and don't seem to offer much back up to go with them. This is where Midland HO scores points, we offer every individual spare for your Tomy & Mattel car from a bare chassis to a rolling chassis, we keep the lot. Midland HO are now having discussions with Life-Like of America with the intention of bringing in their fantastic range of Nascar and road cars, sets and track. I am hoping to have the range available for early 2001 and we are seeking stockists at this very moment in time. The HO scene is very neglected here in the UK and this I cannot understand. If nobody wants them here in the UK why is my telephone always ringing; why do I get 50 plus e-mails a day from people who

cannot get the cars and spares they need so desperately to keep their sets up and running. Are the manufacturers all stupid, you cannot sell a car set and hope it will last forever. You have to offer support with spares, extra cars and track, new releases. Remember it's adults that buy these things and if they get fed up with the service, you won't get them to purchase again. Midland HO knows this and gives as much help as possible whether it be a 20p pinion gear or a £100 race set."

There are thousands of different items out there for HO cars, dare I say more than what is available for the 1/32nd slot car and half the price. Once you have experienced racing these cars you have to ask yourself why aren't there more clubs or why doesn't my 1/32nd club run a HO track too. The only answer to this is that people just won't give them a go. If you get the chance to race at one of the club tracks like Derby's, do it, you won't be disappointed. ■

Happening Twenty Years Ago!

Julie Scale wades through the NSCC archives

Memories of 20 years ago! Ronald Reagan became president of the USA; we were still having to choose a song for Europe - 'Bucks Fizz' I seem to recall; Mark and I were already an item! Yes I have put up with him for that long! My kid sister put in an appearance, and:- The NSCC was born.

In January 1981 issue #1 of the National Scalextric Collectors Club Newsletter, was issued - the aim was: - 'To co-ordinate all collectors of Scalextric throughout the country with the hope that everybody's collection grows because of the club' They wanted to hear from all members every month to instigate a wants and swaps section - to start the ball rolling the 'editor' Dale wanted to swap a yellow Alfa for a blue one with driver! Sounds too good to be true to me.

There were to be four swapmeets a year; the first was organised for the 15th March 1981 in Romford, Essex, starting at 10.30 until 12, when there was a break for lunch, (very civilized) followed by an Auction at 1pm.

There was only one article in the first newsletter; a very informative introduction to collecting Scalextric written by Roger Gillham. interesting points raised included - "The whole range to date, ignoring colours and different guide types etc. is about 125; add in the French and Spanish models and different colours and guide types and the total is over 500. The scope

for collectors is enormous".

The good news was that Spanish Scalextric was going to be imported in to the UK for the first time, and could be purchased from Victoria Model Railways, Essex. Cars available included Lotus 79, Ford Fiesta, Renault 2000 Turbo, Ferrari B3, Porsche Carrera, Corvette Dragster, Mustang, Tyrrell, Ford Sigma, 917, Brabham BT46, Stratos and the 6 wheel Tyrrell - we know many members must have taken up this lead by the number of cars that have been through our hands with the Victoria Models price labels still on the boxes.

As always at this time of year talk was of new releases, which were to include C290 and C291 Banger Racer Minis.

Our copy of the February 1981 Newsletter is a little hard to read but I gather the first member from overseas joined - Lee Stokley from the States, and we had a suggestion from one member for a 'Scalextric widows' club for wives and girlfriends! Now why did that never take off?

The club has certainly come a long way in 20 years and all the officers over that period have to be congratulated. I am sure Brian won't mind if you all take up the original idea, and contact him with articles/interesting information every month! ■

The allure of rubber!

Peter Boita discusses his addiction to the original Scalextric track

My Scalextric story starts in the late fifties. After Sunday lunch at an Uncle and Aunt's, who lived in East Croydon, they casually mentioned that the boy in the upstairs flat had this rather good electric model car set.

He was invited down and soon set about slotting rubber track sections together to form an impressive (well it looked impressive to me at the time!) oval circuit on which, he assured us, we were all going to actually control and drive the electrically powered tin cars he now proudly produced. I was already very excited as it seemed that this was going to be far more interesting than my Tri-ang train set which just seemed to go round and round by itself with no chance of actually racing anything or anyone. I was not to be disappointed! After what seemed an eternity waiting for the adults to go first I finally got to take the controls. I was hooked immediately! Unfortunately my turn was all too short. After about 5 minutes the battery was exhausted. My Uncle gently heated the battery by placing it on top of the paraffin heater for about half an hour(!) and after hooking it up again the now depleted battery gave me about another 3 minutes (slow!) running time before finally giving up the ghost. This being a Sunday in the Fifties going out to buy a new battery was out of the question as all the shops were shut and either way large batteries could not be bought too regularly as pocket money didn't extend to that sort of thing and something as expensive as a transformer would have to be a birthday and Christmas present combined. How times have changed!

Needless to say I vowed one day to have my very own Scalextric set. A few years later the 3rd Edition Scalextric Catalogue was launched and that coincided with my 11 plus exam. My parents were keen to have me pass with flying colours as it meant a large reduction in fees to the Grammar School they had me lined up for. So a bribe was offered. If I passed with the

requisite number of marks I would receive a brand new bicycle complete with gears. I immediately saw a window of opportunity to do some serious bargaining! I told my Mum and Dad that what I had really been after since we first saw the set at my Uncle's was my very own SCALEXTRIC.

Nothing else would do. They couldn't believe that I was turning down a bicycle (with 5 gears!) in favour of (just) a model car set. Some quick research revealed that the Scalextric set CM3 would be marginally cheaper than the proposed bicycle so after more reassurance from myself that I did positively and absolutely want a Scalextric set for attaining the required 11 plus pass all parties were satisfied that we had by now negotiated and concluded a wholly acceptable deal. I worked like crazy and with extra home tuition passed with flying colours. Sure enough my Mum and Dad came up trumps. As far as Dad was concerned there was only one place to buy it and that was Hamleys in Regent Street London. The very next Saturday we all set off up to London and Hamleys. The salesman showed us the set and asked how we would be powering it. No problem - in the intervening time I had persuaded Mum and Dad to get me a grey hammered finish Tri-ang transformer (which I still have in mint and full working condition!) for my afore mentioned train set knowing full well it would be perfect for powering my (hopefully) forthcoming Scalextric circuit. No more flat batteries for me! The salesman then asked if I liked the cars included in the set or would I like to swop any. In the end I chose a blue Lister Jaguar MM/C56 and a green Aston Martin MMC/57. The way I figured it, there would be more variety in the racing and, depending on which lane each car was run on, the outcome of any given race would usually prove more interesting than having two identical cars. And so it proved. Immediately on arriving home in Streatham, South London, I was given special permission⇒

to set up the circuit on the new cream carpet in the Lounge - a rare honour I can tell you! I slotted all the rubber track pieces together to form the CM3 "figure of eight circuit" with a flyover spanning the chicane below. Everything worked perfectly straight out of the box with the only problem being my bad habit of putting the cars on the carpet and then wondering why they wouldn't run properly due to the carpet fluff clinging mercilessly to the pick up braids! Many happy hours were spent over the next couple of years racing against my friends and buying a few accessories. I bought most of the buildings, made a baseboard to give a better running surface and a couple more cars. I only ever wanted to collect items from the 3rd Edition Catalogue, as, for me, that catalogue seemed to sum up all that was good about Scalextric at the time. I only collected what appealed and that continues to this day. I didn't care for the Bentleys or Alfa Romeos - nice models but too old fashioned. I didn't care for the motor cycles - why bother with motor cycles when you can race cars?! I didn't want a four lane circuit, Hump Back or Grande Bridge but the appeal of banking units, buildings and scenic accessories has never left me. And of course the cars. The cars on pages 8 and 9 of that Catalogue seemed to epitomise what Scalextric and the Sixties were all about for me whilst the centre pages were a constant source of inspiration and fascination as to what could be aspired to and ultimately achieved. I used to drool over all of the cars on pages 8 and 9 and dream about the day when I could own just one example of each! I only ever bought the items that really appealed and whilst I have always had a passion for Scalextric it has never turned into an obsession. For me it is all about balancing a hobby with everyday life and commitments. I personally feel that "less is more". I would rather have a few choice items than go all out for sheer volume. I think Phil Egart summed the position of enjoyment versus obsession up extremely well in his retirement statement.

As the years rolled by, the track became increasingly and frustratingly more unreliable and the cars became erratic in their running so

the set was packed away in a couple of large cardboard boxes and stored in my parents' spare room. From time to time as my outmoded possessions were sold or given away I always asked that my Scalextric be kept and stored inside so that the damp would not get to it. How wise that proved to be!

Fast forward now to 1997 and the Dulwich College Toy Fair. By now I had become a successful businessman and my son was attending Dulwich College. Walking round I spied a small table with, yes you've guessed it, Scalextric! I immediately got chatting to the very amiable and knowledgeable chap running it who enthused along with myself on all things early Scalextric.

I left that day with a few items, a couple of cars and an early hand controller as I had remembered that one of my originals had burnt out, been disposed of (!) and replaced by a green Airfix type. The "knowledgeable chap" running the table was Paul Strange who subsequently sold me a nice Grandstand and generally helped me get back into the swing of things and brushed up my rusty memory on a few finer points - especially on current prices! Thanks for all your help Paul. After joining the NSCC on his recommendation I attended the Milton Keynes swapmeet with him, where I picked up lots of small items I needed like mint track clips and bagged hand controller spares. I now felt I was ready to see exactly what I had from the old days and what I still needed to find to fit in with my philosophy of a) only collecting items from the 3rd Edition Catalogue b) only collecting the items I really wanted and c) getting all the colours made in the U.K. (only) of the cars on pages 8 and 9 of the 3rd Edition Catalogue. Phil Egart, Phil Smith and Derek Cooper were, and continue to be, simply marvellous and patient in helping me with my quest so that I only needed a few more bits to achieve my goal. A couple of cars and spares were obtained through the pages of the NSCC newsletter so by then I was raring to go! I restored a couple of buildings and my original green Ferrari MM/C62 as desktop projects - I will do some articles to share with you all on some of the techniques I used at a later

date. My only mistake so far was polishing up my original blue Lister Jaguar body to perfection then leaving it on my desktop to be admired. After 4 days, due to it also being sometimes in the glare of my high intensity 12 volt desk light, the dreaded brown marks appeared! I couldn't believe it after having had the model for so long. Luckily Phil Smith came up with a perfect top that matched my underpan - thanks Phil! But the message is clear. Always thoroughly clean and store the cars in a dark place when not in use and if storing them for some time I feel it is a good idea to remove the tyres as well and also any rubber harnesses, if it is a lit model, to be absolutely sure the model will not suffer. By now I felt that I would really like to use and enjoy my cars and circuit so I turned my attention to the track. It was suffering from the usual problems I guess. Slightly sunk in places, some rails distorted from the odd foot having landed on them over the years. Chipped paint on the road markings and general grime on the rails and road surface. Mercifully there was no rust on the rails having been dutifully stored in nice warm rooms over the years so on closer inspection things did not seem as bad as they could be.

I felt that with a lot of attention to detail the track could be satisfactorily restored in virtually all respects. One aspect, however, was clear almost immediately. The slight sinking of the track in between the rigid rubber support "beams" on the underside of the track could not really easily be remedied. Even if something approaching the original shape could be coaxed into life, gravity would inevitably take over quickly once again and I would be back where I started! I resolved that as long as the track could be made perfect in all other areas I would not worry about the slight sinking. The way I reasoned it was that from new the sinking had happened relatively quickly and that, either way, it all contributed to the "60's Scalextric vintage running feel!" When I mentioned to Paul Strange about running on original rubber track he recoiled in horror as he was just about to go the Ninco track route (see his subsequent fine article and report). We agreed that for Paul it was the obvious choice due to the variety of cars he

wanted to use and the fact that he was obviously going to do some serious racing! For my part, however, I felt that as a form of a relaxing hobby it wouldn't really matter if all I did was to take pleasure in restoring the set over the coming years piece by piece and end up with a mint static display. Happily that will not now be the case as I have formulated a method, which I will share with you all, of restoring the early rubber track to as new "concours" condition in full running order and perhaps even better in certain areas than when it came "out of the box" all those years ago.

Nowadays, for the complete nostalgia trip, all one has to do is start restoring a piece of Scalextric on a Saturday morning with Brian Matthew's Radio 2 programme "Sounds Of The Sixties" playing in the background and the illusion is complete! ■

(continued next month)

In or out...

Some further thoughts on de-slotting from our Australian correspondent Wayne Bermingham (Editor - Club Lines)

The article "In or out..." by Tony Secchi on page 35 of the January edition really caught my interest. As a racer myself I have experienced, on numerous occasions, exactly the same things that concern Tony. In response to your request for alternatives I'd like to provide some information which you may like to consider.

Let me start by saying I'm no expert racer, nor do I claim to have a perfect solution or even all the answers. I just enjoy playing with slot cars. So here goes...

Over the past four years I have raced at a variety of circuits, some large and well spread out, others small and compact. Anything from 2 lanes to 10, of Scalextric, Ninco, SCX, craft-wood construction and even combinations of all four. I've encountered a wide range of events and methods of manual, mechanical and electronic systems to control race meetings. Without doubt, the biggest difference I have come across is in the rules used by race groups and track owners. Among all this, the one and only aspect that remains constant, in my view, is the desire by every participant to have a good time.

Crash and burn

I will never forget my first experience at an organised race meet. My intention was to simply watch the events to see if this was something I wanted to do. All the guys in attendance quickly dismissed this approach and I was strongly encouraged to join in the fun. Poorly prepared, lacking experience and controlling a borrowed car, I lined up for the first race. To my complete astonishment I arrived at the first corner in the lead, unfortunately I never made it round that corner. My car de-slotted, rolled and came to rest on its roof. Everyone laughed but no effort was made to replace the car, I had had a 'crash and burn' - race over. This situation continued through the course of the evening and by the

time event number six had arrived, I was still to complete a single lap. It's worth noting at this point that we were racing on a 2 lane Scalextric circuit and I was receiving advice from everyone on how to improve my driving style; it just wasn't helping at the time. The point I'm trying to make here, albeit rather poorly, is, how can a race group or track owner expect to encourage new drivers to take part in organised race meetings if they don't get to complete a single lap. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine what it would be like if you had spent two hours driving to an event which was to last for most of the night, only to find you spent just a few minutes actually racing.

If I had my way I would outlaw the one de-slot and you're out rule, even on multi-lane tracks. Drivers all want the same things; honest close racing, good company and enjoying a night out playing with slot cars. Standing around watching someone else race is nowhere near as much fun.

The answer?

After running off at the mouth so much I guess by now you're wondering if I have any suggestions to keep new drivers interested while still letting the old hands compete for the full race distance. Well it just so happens I do and it has worked very well for the last two years. On my track, which is a 2 lane Scalextric circuit like Tony's, we race a limited number of de-slots based on driver ability and experience. Top drivers get 3 de-slots per race while new inexperienced racers are allocated up to 6 in each event. All my races are timed events, usually of 4 minutes duration, the clock is stopped whenever a car de-slots and the chief marshal records the number of de-slots for each driver. We also have a penalty system, 'black flags', for drivers who are deemed to have deliberately knocked another racer off the track. When the allocated time elapses, the race is ⇒⇒

over as the lead driver crosses the finish line. This eliminates the need to determine finishing placings based on track position. It also means if the race lasts 4 minutes, every driver gets to spend the whole 4 minutes racing. There has been an unexpected added bonus to this format of racing; track marshals do more than count laps or re-slot cars. They are often just as interested in the event as the drivers, watching for 'black flag' incidents, stopping the race when a de-slot occurs and judging close finishes.

Generally speaking, rarely do any of the drivers use their allocated number of de-slots and the number of times racing is stopped for an accident is becoming less as we all gain more experience.

I'm not suggesting this form of racing will suit everyone, but I am suggesting you give it a fair go to see if it works for you. After all is said and done the only thing that really matters is that everyone who enjoys playing with slot cars and taking part in race meetings has fun doing it. ■

HITS AND PIECES

SRM straight

Further to last month's article on the SRM 'blow-out' straight, Malcolm Parker has sent in a photocopied page from the Miniature Auto magazine of May 1968. In the 'brief review' section there is a photo of the very item to which Rod Moore was referring.

"SRM track owners will be interested in the new 'knock off' track section which, at the price of 11s 2d, should provide a lot of fun. In operation, when one car is just leading another, the leading car operates a tongue in its slot that diverts the pursuing model off the track. Another tongue a few inches further on restores the status quo for the next circuit."

Unsurprisingly, not the world's greatest seller; the price wasn't bad though - 56p!

Snalextric racing

I am indebted to Dave Yerbury and Chris McGinn who have sent in cuttings from their local papers concerning the new sport of Scalextric snail racing.

"At a time of year when business is at a snail's pace, an Irish pub has enlisted the help of two molluscs to bring the punters in.

Dougal and Ted the Scalextric snails are proving to be a hit with customers at O'Neill's, on Wood Street, in central Liverpool.

The plastic snails, named after characters in the television series Father Ted, are tearing around the pub as part of a nationwide challenge to find Britain's fastest snail racers.

The snails have been produced by Hornby in conjunction with Guinness which promotes its beer with an advert featuring two racing snails"

Liverpool Echo 13/1/2001

Perhaps I had better ask Adrian whether they have a C number!

Ninco challenge for Le Mans winner

Allan McNish, took a break from sports car racing recently and invited the public to beat him at slot-car racing.

The event was held at Grand Prix Racewear in Chiswick as part of their retail launch of Ninco slot racing equipment. A 4 lane track was installed in the store and customers were invited to race against him using the cars from the Ninco range.

A Kart racing set was on offer for those able to beat the racing driver in a series of heats and McNish himself was rather hoping someone would buy him a set for Christmas. ■

All wired up

BY TONY SECCHI

Take one Ninco or SCX engine and one Scalextric Mabuchi 'S'. Compare the motor lead wires and you will find that the diameter of the Ninco/SCX wiring is bigger than that of the Mabuchi S; the insulation is minutely thicker but that alone does not account for the difference.

Both sets of motor leads are plastic covered and stranded (they have a multi-core of fine wires) to give flexibility. The diameter of the wire core is selected to suit the electrical current that the wire has to carry. When both types of motor lead are stripped and carefully examined, you will notice that the Ninco/SCX multi-core has more strands and that each strand is thicker. Additionally, the Ninco/SCX leads are shorter.

Obviously each manufacturer has his reasons for this disparity, but in my own modest view, it must boil down to resistance.

All substances offer some resistance to the passage of electrical current and how voltage (or electrical pressure) is required to move the current against this resistance. Some of the voltage is always lost when it causes a current to

flow. Electric motor lead wires will lose some voltage in pushing the current through them.

Take a hypothetical case. If the length of the wires is progressively increased the motor will run slower until finally the current flowing in the circuit will be too small to power up the motor at all. If we want it to run at its former pace using these increased lengths we must either use thicker wires or increase the voltage.

Copper wire is slightly better at carrying electricity because of its lower resistance and it follows that the resistance of an electrical current is proportional to its length. Double the length and you double the resistance, halve the length and you halve the resistance. If you double the diameter of the wire, you reduce its resistance to one quarter. This means that the resistance of any given wire varies inversely as the square of its diameter. If you want to carry a lot of current you need a thick wire - unless you have a huge voltage.

When electricity overcomes a resistance as it passes through anything, heat is provided. The heat of an electric fire is provided by the volts \Rightarrow

forcing the current through wire that is specially selected because of its very high resistance. Although in a small electric motor the resistance may be small, it depends upon the usage. On a small, bendy circuit with short straights like mine, changing/shortening the motor lead wires on a Mabuchi 'S' to lower the resistance would make little difference, but utilising the same changes on a long, fast circuit may give you a slight edge in top speed. Whilst on the subject of wiring, integrally it can have a marked effect on standard engine performance.

In December 1999 I wrote an article for the journal called 'tachs and revs' in which I showed that Mabuchi 'S' engines varied in performance from 25 to 30,000 revs unloaded and from 8 to 10,000 revs loaded (losing approximately two thirds of the power to the drive train). In mass production engines variable laminations can occur in the armature and the thickness of the armature wire itself can vary. It is no wonder that engine performance can be so different.

You can, if you so wish, 'tune' standard

engines by increasing the number of turns in the armature windings, increasing the wire thickness or reducing both. This will in turn increase braking and/or engine speed but at the detriment of extra heat. You can also modify the 'timing' of the engine; by turning the commutator anticlockwise in tiny increments you can increase engine revs. (This probably explains why the mass produced products vary so much). However, be prudent when doing this as the engine may have little fine control and only be responsive on very fast layouts.

All racers are looking for some legitimate advantages, and by including these 'tweaks' you may add to your overall package and help to consolidate that advantage. However, depending upon your track, you could probably gain just as much if not more by producing a car with better traction, pick ups and tyres giving you a more flexible package on which to practice, hone and improve your driving.

All things being equal, it is the last value that counts in the end isn't it? ■

Abergavenny rail race 2001

BY JEFF DAVIES

On Sunday January 21st at Nevill Hall Hospital Social Club the world's first computer controlled rail race took place.

The day dawned with a thick blanket of snow covering South Wales making driving tricky to say the least. After a wonderful journey through the snow covered countryside Richard and I arrived at Abergavenny to find Mac Pinches asking a back packer where Nevill Hall was. Collecting Mac we proceeded to the race venue where Andy Meredith, Phil Barry and Phil Field were organising the event. Phil Barry in particular had spent virtually all the previous weekend removing every slight imperfection out of the track as well as helping to install the computer timing equipment supplied by Paul Knight, who had built a custom made system for the rail track. Several people who were due to attend the event were obliged to pull out due to unforeseen circumstances, including the sponsor of the rally stage Sean Fothersgill of Pendle Slot Racing, who had generously supplied the prize for the winner of the rally stage. Hornby Hobbies had very generously agreed to donate a Formula One set as the prize for the main event.

The rail track had never looked better, complete with new timing bridge which Phil Barry had built. In total eleven people took part in the rail racing competition. Chas Keeling and Ralph Parker turned up with two ballistically fast rail cars. These cars were both lower and wider than anything else there. Immediately I saw them running on the track it was obvious they were visibly faster than anything else present. At 11.30 qualifying began with Andy Meredith doing an incredibly good job in race control, starting with John Moxon and ending with myself. It wasn't much of a surprise that the two guided missile rail cars qualified first and second, both cars being the only ones to break the five second barrier.

They looked stunningly fast and I quickly looked for a way to ban both these cars but as there were no rules for the event I couldn't think of one (only joking).

Were any of the narrower more scale looking rail cars going to beat either of these cars? The racing started with the slowest group in qualifying, Group D, with John Moxon's magnificent Napier Railton narrowly beating Peter Zivanovic to win the first race. Group C was won by Richard Davies, using the restored Walkden Fisher Mercedes with which he won all six of his group races, the only person to do so. I won Group B and Group A was won by Ralph Parker.

The overall winner of the rail race event was the person who covered the most laps in the six two minute races. The overall pattern was established in the first round when I covered a greater distance in winning Group B than Ralph Parker did in Group A. In qualifying Ralph and Chas' cars had proven faster but considerably less stable than the Alfa Romeo I was using so that at the end of the first round when the reseeding took place I was seeded first.

The first race of round 2 in Group A was the most exciting of the day, with both Chas Keeling and myself covering 23.3 laps in the two minutes, with both cars side by side the entire length of the race. This was thrilling rail racing and was certainly one of the most exciting rail races I have ever taken part in. This was a very fast race with an average lap time of 5.15 seconds, almost half a second faster than my qualifying time and both Chas and I put in sub five second laps. I was on the outermost lane and Chas was on the inside lane.

The rally stage of the competition was contested by thirteen racers and was very exciting, with everybody having a really great time. Phil Field won the rally stage from Andy Meredith. We will be using this track at this year's Brooklands. I presented Phil Field with ➤➤

a Scalextric Mercedes CLK LM, kindly donated by Sean Fothersgill and Andy Meredith was presented with a Scalextric Porsche GT1 as the runner up. Andy Meredith then presented me with a trophy for winning the rail race. The day had been a tremendous success which everybody enjoyed.

I'd like to thank Phil Barry for all his hard work, the rail track is now very fast, Andy Meredith, Sean Fothersgill of Pendle Slot Racing, Simon Kohler of Hornby Hobbies for donating such a magnificent main prize and Paul Knight who designed the timing system, and can be contacted at:-

www.wessexraceway.freemove.co.uk ■

Results

Name	Qualifying Time	Qualifying Points	Round 1 Points	Round 2 Points	Total Points	Position
John Moxon	7.73	-	8	9	17	9
Stephen Moxon	5.88	4	13	16	33	4
Peter Zivanovic	6.80	-	10	8	18	8
Andy Meredith	6.09	1	9	12	22	7
Phil Barry	5.93	3	15	15	33	4
Mac Pinches	5.93	3	11	11	25	6
Chas Keeling	4.95	7	16	18	41	2
Ralph Parker	4.89	8	18	10	36	3
Richard Davies	6.30	-	12	14	26	5
Phil Field	5.20	6	14	13	33	4
Jeff Davies	5.59	5	20	20	45	1