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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Government wealth warning

Scalextric collecting can seriously damage your wallet; a familiar phrase to most of us I suspect. Fortunately my position as editor gives me the ultimate get-out when I have overspent a teensy weensy bit - "Look dear another freebie review car"!

However, following the NSCC/Hornby weekend at Ramsgate I fear the usual excuses may not work. The event was hugely enjoyable as ever and I would like to thank Simon Kohler and his staff for their continued support of the event. As you can read elsewhere, the cars used this year were the new Ford GT40s - surely the best models Scalextric have produced to date.

In fact I was so impressed with them that I decided to buy one of the Sport versions on my return home; for someone who is normally only interested in single seaters that is praise indeed! However, they are already becoming quite hard to find and I was not prepared to pay over the odds in an eBay auction where they are fetching more than £50.

My local shop in King's Lynn had sold out but, fortunately, a phone call to another one in Hunstanton struck lucky - they had a car left which they would hold for me. Off I went and purchased it for the normal retail price of £28 - a bargain I thought, even if I had spent another three quid on petrol to get there!

Unfortunately I had to pass the local Suzuki dealer on the way back and, as I had been thinking about changing my car for the last year, I popped in. Thus it was that a harmless weekend playing with toy cars left me with a ten grand hole in my bank account! The new Vitara is very pretty but I can't really tell my good lady that those nice people at Ninco sent it to me to track test can I?

And Finally - many apologies for the late arrival of the October issue which was due to a combination of circumstances beyond my control. Rest assured that the people responsible have been taken outside and shot. Hopefully you will receive this issue on time.

Till next month
Brian



And now for something completely different -

Mutterings From Margate
By Rob Smith

You will have read last month that Adrian Norman has joined Hornby Hobbies Ltd. Their gain is our loss and I want to thank Adrian for his contribution to the club in the form of Hornby Factory Liaison Officer and his Factory Focus articles.

So goodbye to Factory Focus and hello to Mutterings from Margate as I am now your new Factory Liaison Officer. First of all let me introduce myself. First and foremost I'm a Scalextric collector - let me stress the word Scalextric - not Slot-car. My CV appeared in the July 2002 issue of the Journal so I won't repeat it here. I joined the club in 1990 and collecting Scalextric is my main passion together with playing with full sized classic cars too. I've been an associate committee member for a couple of years, helping out wherever necessary and waiting for my chance for promotion - and now it's arrived!

As a fanatic collector I want to know about anything and everything that is happening at Hornby - not just about cars, but about track, accessories, publications, point-of-sale materials, etc., I will try my best to discover what Hornby are doing and report this to you each month. However, what do you want to know? If you have any questions or requests for Hornby please let me know and I will put your points to them - and they **are** interested in the thoughts of NSCC members so don't be shy. In the past

Hornby have been very good at answering questions but not very good at volunteering information. So please let me know of any rumours, hearsay or just plain gossip and I will try to ascertain the whole story.

This column only reports on activities at Scalextric. As a club we would love someone to develop a relationship with some of the other slot-car manufacturers and report on their activities too. Perhaps one of our Spanish members would like to volunteer. Help can be provided in creating Journal content in English if that is putting off potential reporters.

Enough introduction - what is happening at Scalextric at the moment? At the recent NSCC/Hornby weekend down in Ramsgate Simon Kohler entertained us with a hugely informative Q&A session (with questions predominantly from Henk Pijpers, who came well prepared) and I will summarise Simon's main points from my hastily scribbled notes - in no particular order.

* Hornby Hobbies as a company and the slot-car market as a whole has not been this economically strong for many years and intense competition is driving product development. Next year's plans are exciting and 2004 will be even better. The US remains a market with huge opportunities. Continue to expect products with a US appeal.

* The latest cars only have front lights. Rear lights are being considered and may well be reintroduced in the future. (What features would you like to see added to the cars? - please let me know)

* A tie-up with Fly will see sets containing Fly trucks and Scalextric Sport track. Marketed as Fly these sets will only be available in the US next year.

* There are several new track pieces in the pipeline and new borders too. The interest in pit-stop track has been noted. (What would you like to see added to the range? - please let me know).

* The M&Ms NASCAR is in doubt due to technical difficulties but will hopefully be released before too long.

* There are no plans to update the Pontiac Grand Prix NASCAR at present - unless the real car is substantially revised.

* The Australian V8's are out. Their distribution is entirely in the hands of the Australian distributor and Hornby will not be releasing them elsewhere in the world.

* The promised Renault F1 will not be seen until next year at the earliest due to problems getting the appropriate information from Renault.

* There were hints of another F1 car for next year. It will NOT be a Ferrari - due to

licensing restrictions and it will not be a Jaguar either. Any guesses?

* Both the MG Lola and the Toyota F1 cars should be in the shops before Christmas.

* Drivers' helmet liveries usually need licensing directly from the drivers themselves and separately from the rest of the car. The cost of this makes it uneconomic to include them although it is technically possible. Future deals with the manufacturers will attempt to include this in a single agreement and therefore we may see even more accurate models introduced.

* The Scalextric website will see much improvement in the coming months - keep it bookmarked. This is one of Adrian Norman's new priorities.

* Hornby have considered producing static models but the cost of the motor is so low relative to the other production costs that it is not worth creating special versions. The choice of whether or not to race the car lies entirely with the customer.

...and finally, hot off the press is a first sighting (on eBay - where else!) of the car produced for Hamleys this year - a bright red Porsche GT3R with a bold white chequered pattern on the sides. The reference number is C2469. I understand that as usual you have to purchase one of the top of the range sets to get this car. ■

Westcountry Rambles

BY VINE FENNEL

Model Maker - February 1958.

1/40 scale car racing.

“A pretty certain development in any new modelling sphere is that someone will attempt to “miniaturise” the subject further and further. There is a fascination in miniaturising for its own sake, but when the end product is practical and easy for anyone to make, a further field for development is opened and a challenge to go still smaller is thrown down.

Electric car racing is now a firmly established sport, and 1/32 scale is a good and sensible size to use; however, a lot of modellers have a hankering to go down to a smaller scale, mainly to see if it can be done, and a primary cause of this urge is the attractive and comprehensive range of Crescent Toy Co. cars. These little miniatures are non-working representations of popular racing and sports cars - BRM, Maserati, Ferrari, Connaught, Cooper-Bristol, Gordini, Mercedes-Benz, Aston Martin, Jaguar, and, by the time these words appear, Vanwall - and are beautiful zinc-alloy castings giving an excellent impression of the full size cars. Scale is approximately 1/40th, ie. the average length is under 4in. Standard rubber-tired wheels of standard track are fitted (dimensions are different for the envelope-body prototypes), but this measure, which economises on production and helps the cars to retail for only 2s. 9d. each, does not detract from scale appearance.

With such attractive ready-made bodies and so forth the question of electrifying for racing was bound to crop up, and that a practical means of doing so has only now been found is due to two factors which previous experimenters regarded as fundamental, (a) a chassis was required; and (b) rail racing was envisaged. Both of these concepts produced ground clearance difficulties and this was the main stumbling block which stopped experiments. A secondary snag was motor size.

We came into the field with slight experience of both rail and slot racing, and plump firmly for the latter, which is, we think, much more fun and calls for more driving skill. Example - a car can be brought round a bend in a controlled drift. Too much drift loses speed, no drift at all loses overall speed, so that judging the permissible drift requires nicety. Of course, if an opponent is close to your outside quarter, a little additional drift stops him coming by - but that's another story. The only difficulty with a slot track is that there is a little more work in making the initial track, but once this is accepted clearance problems disappear.

For our first experiment we picked the BRM, since this has possibly the largest cross-section of the conventional GP cars and is, of course, rather squarish in section. All the Crescent cars have two vertical pillars cast inside the body; these extend through the base and are riveted over to retain the base in position. Drilling away the riveted portion separates base and body, allowing the wheels to drop out. To obtain sufficient space inside it is necessary to remove the pillars, and this is best done by drilling them away - a little tedious, but not a long job. Hold the body in a vice, between two pieces of wood, and slip a packing block inside to prevent squeezing the body out of shape.

With this carried out, we found that the Triang Mk IV motor could just be squeezed in with two slight modifications, (a) reducing the thickness of the nut and head of the bolt which clamps the motor sides to the magnet; and (b) cutting a sliver off the side of the endplate which holds the commutator end of the motor together. The brush arms also needed the existing bends closing slightly at the outside and the motor than just dropped in. A 10 BA bolt through its lug end and through the hole provided in one side-piece secured it firmly in place, the body being drilled for these with some care to ensure accurate alignment. By using round-head bolts, the heads are barely visible ⇒

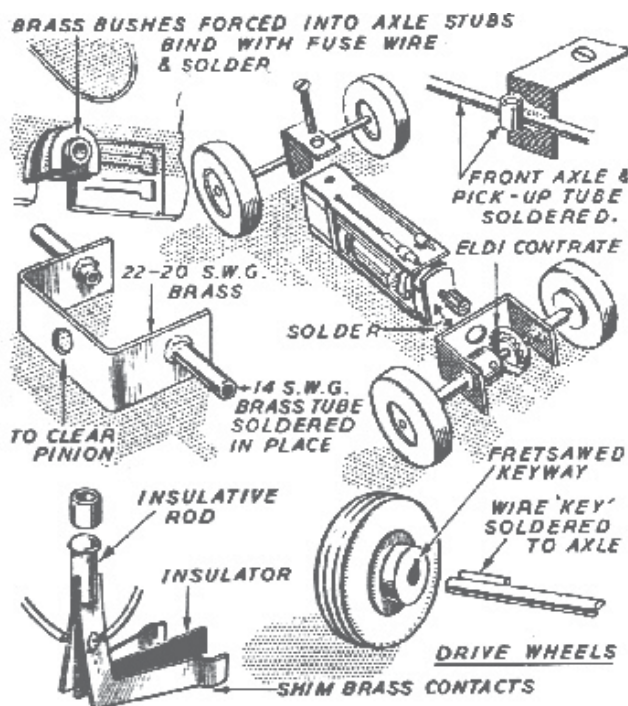
(the front one is hidden by the wheel anyway) though there is sufficient metal to countersink a suitable bolt in if preferred.

The peened end of each axle was cut and a length of 14 swg brass tube slipped over the front axle between the wheels. A soldered curl of fuse wire replaced the cut-off end. The tube is just a tight fit in the stubs moulded on the body, and we secured it with a touch of Evo-Stik. A better job would be to secure a small tin or brass U-plate inside the body at each side, using domestic pins for rivets, and solder the tube in place.

The rear axle was first tinned at one end and the wheel forced on to a "jam fit". A better method is to cut a keyway as sketched. A stub of tube then followed, then the contrate gear and the second tube stub, and the other end tinned and the other wheel forced on. So far both rear wheels driving seems the best method; we tried one-wheel drive but with rubber tyres the cars tend to crab too much on starting.

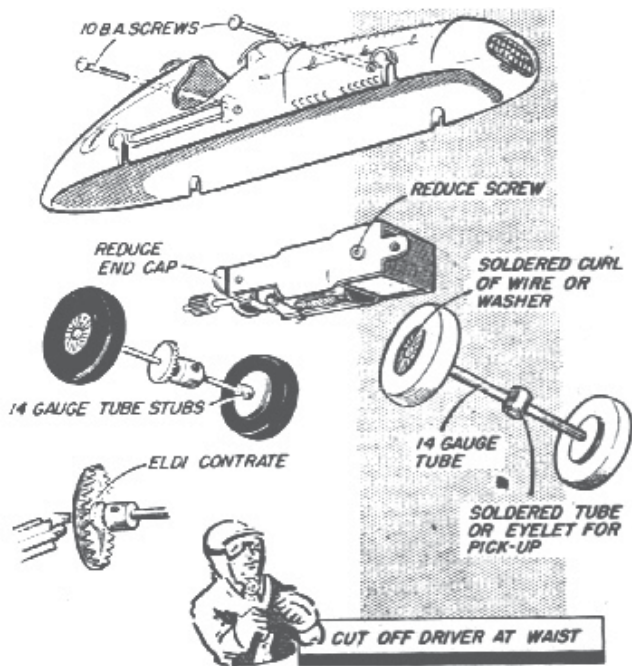
Eldi gears proved ideal for the transmission, and although primarily intended for 1/32 scale they are most suitable in this size.

Before discussing track and pick-up, further findings on cars will be of interest. In the first place, the Triang motor will only fit the BRM, the envelope-body cars, and the Connaught, and the last-named only if front wheel drive is used with a split rear axle. We therefore sought the smallest motor available, and found the



answer in the little Romford Terrier TT motor. This cost 22/6d from Walker & Holtzapffel, 23 Paddington Street, Baker Street, London, W1 (or presumably any good railway dealer) against 13/2d for the Triang, but it will fit any of the cars, even the Gordini, which is the tiniest. The difference in power is inevitable, and would probably mean that the Terrier would have to be laid down as a standard power plant to ensure fair competition. In passing, we might mention that any locomotive motor used in a car is in effect being subjected to misuse, presumably relieving the manufacturer of any obligation in the matter; however, they are usually so rugged as to cause no heartburn in this direction.

With the Terrier we found that it was possible to make the entire motor and wheel assembly as an independent unit, enabling simple interchange from one body to another, if the wheelbases coincide. To do this a 22 swg brass U-piece is soldered to the rear end motor cap - best achieved by tinning the joint area, then heating the U-piece in a gas jet and dropping it quickly in place. This ensures minimum heat transfer to the motor itself. A simple L-bracket of the same material is fitted over the front motor clamping bolt and the surplus cut off. Bushes are then soldered to the U and L pieces as per sketches and the unit, retained in position



by turns of fusewire round each body stub, touched with solder. Once again Eldi gears are ideal, especially as the pinion is an excellent fit on the Terrier shaft, and the wheels are retained in the same way as in the BRM.

Although the bodies are nicely cast and finished, they repay a little individual attention. Clean off any trace of flash with a magneto file and wet-or-dry paper and clean out the existing paint from details such as louvres, etc. to prevent choking them with more paint. One coat of a good enamel will produce a lustrous finish, and a touch of silver here and there on parts which might be expected to be chrome (bonnet clips, spokes etc) will add interest. Use full-size pictures to help in this. Cut the driver off at the waist and secure him in place with Evo-stik or Araldite; touches of detail painting will make a surprising difference to him. Mirrors, steering wheel, etc. can all be painted and, when the transfers are reapplied the result is quite striking.

Pick-up

Our first efforts in this direction consisted of a rivet tapped in a hole drilled beneath the radiator to which was soldered a wiper wire. Contact to one brush is thus made through the car body and motor frame. The second brush, already insulated from the motor frame, must not touch the body at any point. An insulated wire leading from it was bound to the rivet and bent to make the second wiper wire. We abandoned this in favour of swivelling contact since contact was not maintained when the car was anything but straight relative to the track.

After several attempts we came up with two workable systems. Peter Holland produced a design with a vertical piano wire stub pivoting in a short length of tube soldered conveniently in the car; the front axle bush is the obvious place, since the body itself will not take solder. A thin brass shim wiper is soldered to the wire, and a thin coiled wire runs to the brush from the top of the wiper. To the side of the wiper is cemented a paper insulator which must run around the wire at least halfway, and to this is cemented a second brass shim wiper with lead to brush. Evo-stik secures the assembly quite

happily. The piano wire takes side loads on corners and the whole unit swings round to remain in position no matter what angle is adopted by the car.

A second method is to solder a tubular rivet or stub of large gauge tube to the axle bush and pivot in this a piece of non-conductive rod - Tufnol would be first class, but Perspex or similar will do - and in a sawcut in the end wedge and bind two shim contacts and an insulating sheet which can be mica or acetate or even paper. Solder the brush leads to the contacts before assembly. The contacts should be L-shaped and sprung out to engage the track conductors lightly; Length will be determined by the particular track used.

Well, there it is - simple, workable, and attractive by its very size. We now sit back and wait to hear of the first Crescent with working steering (practical) or the first Dinky toy circuit (possible). By the way, if you know of anyone who can make a suitable motor for the Lesney Matchbox series, let us know, will you?" ■

Scalextric Ford GT40

BY JOHN DILWORTH

This is interesting. Scalextric are really taking the game to Fly here; aimed squarely and accurately at a mammoth hole in the historic collectables market, here comes their state-of-the-art Ford GT40.

Various race-specific liveries, with not merely different liveries and decals, but appropriately different body mouldings. They look the business. Will Fly finally be swatted? Will they be forced to abort their own long awaited and inevitably more expensive GT40 programme? Well, let's get it out of the box first. I have this strange relationship with Scalextric. Doomed to disappointment, like Charlie Brown trying to punt the football from Lucy. I always hope for the best, then get let down. After the Cadillac, I thought they'd really broken through-produced a truly magnificent and imaginative car. But then came the new F1s, and the return of the Doh! factor. Yes- they're good, Scalextric's best F1 efforts by far. But I'm still left with the feeling that the designers knocked off for the weekend just a trifle early. "Hey- let's give it some real cool wheels; we could even give a choice of wet and dry tyres". "Yeah great- oh look it's ten to five. I've done the hubs. I'm off home, the lad on work experience can do the tyres. Nice little project for him". Monday morning comes around and the car's got out-of-scale liquorice allsorts for tyres. "Anyone want to hang around after work and redo the tyres?" "Er...Not really...I'd like to catch Big Brother this evening. Anyone vote for Jade this week?" "Who's doing the Driver?" " Oh, I'll have a crack at that. Have we got room for a full length one? Cool. Never got a full length pilot in an F1 before. Blimey. Is that the time? Here, new lad...Finish the helmets for me, I've got to collect the kids from school." And not to labour the point, who was it who got to do the rear end detail? I think even the work experience lad must have been down the pub by then.

Which brings me to the GT40. It's fantastic. I wouldn't have dreamed Scalextric would be capable of anything like this not so long ago.

You have to hand it to those poor Chinese factory workers. It drives beautifully. Good solid laps straight out of the box, and impressively quick ones shortly after. Yes. Lucy's still holding the ball, and I'm on my run up. But the more the car whistles past me, the more critical I get. The Doh! factor is making itself felt. Why on earth did they.....? Well, for a start, why on earth did they put that horrible join line round the nose? The front view of that gorgeous Gulf blue and orange paint (I got the no.9 double LeMans winning car. Is it the Pedro Rodriguez\Lucien Bianchi '68 car or the '69 Ickx/Oliver one? can anybody tell me?) is wrecked by something that looks like a hair-lip. I guess you could fill it, rub it down, retouch it, etc., but the risk of ruining the rest of the beautiful finish of the car puts me off. Then running back through the front wheelarch, there is a strange discontinuity. The smooth lines of the underside of that distinctively brutal GT40 nose don't flow through into the lower sills, which seem too deep and give the car an odd stance on the track. Then the wheels again. Strange blocky treaded tyres, for a car that ran right at the dawn of the lovely doughnut slick era. The hubs are pretty neat, but the knock-off spinners are moulded in and cheap looking (I know, I know, Scalextric have to meet stringent toy safety laws...) but the heavy chrome is only stroked with orange on the spokes, whereas the whole hub should be painted. Easy enough to put right, though. Hmm. Nice. Full depth cabin. Wot no rear-view mirror? And who's the hydrocephalic monster within? Is this a nostalgic reference to the Scalextric 'big head driver' era? I know Pedro Rodriguez was a little fella. Big hero of mine, but tiny. So that must be Lucien Bianchi then. Poor guy. G forces must have been a trial with a bonce that big. Or is it Oliver or Ickx? What about a bit of the car's history on the box? I learned a lot from reading the back of Airfix packets as a boy. And the inside of gatefold prog-rock LP sleeves later on, but that's a different story. Older collectors who buy this model will know a lot

about it, but a brief race history would add depth to the whole thing. It would also make it more interesting to younger buyers for whom the GT40 might seem closer historically to a Model T than the BTCC Mondeo or WRC Focus they might have actually seen. It just gives me the impression that no-one really cares that much.

I don't know. I guess I'm just spoilt. Lucy's pulled the ball away and I'm sitting on the back

of my pants again. The GT40 is a lovely model, full of fine detail and up-to-the-minute techniques, but... It's as if Beethoven got bored and finished off the ninth symphony with a kazoo solo. As if Leonardo gave Mona Lisa Raybans because he couldn't be bothered with doing eyes. It's easy for me to say, but if only the designers had gone that extra mile...yard...inch, even. But then, I was going to give it a fully timed track test myself, but I see it's time to warm up my lunch-time pastie. ■

Reproduction car and pit numbers

Peter Boita has produced some authentic car and pit number sheets for the early Scalextric cars in the smaller and larger sizes. The paper is the correct "gauge" and they look absolutely spot on.

He has also solved the problem of cutting them out perfectly, with no hint of a "black circle" around them, as used to happen with the original numbers, by producing cutters that will "pop out" the numbers perfectly every time. The sheets are numbered from 1 to 20 so 20 cars can be done for just £6.00.

The cutters, however, are rather more expensive owing to the hardening and grinding processes they have had to undergo. They cost £8.99 each regardless of size, but people could always buy just one and share it around as required. They should, however, last the proverbial lifetime.

Peter has sent me some samples to try and I can report that they do "exactly what it says on the tin". Not much else to say really - a first class product. See Peter's advert on page 41 for more details. ■



Dear Brian,

I am compelled to write to you following my first experience of using the new track cleaning jollup from Plebys Hardware, as featured in issue 246. Over the last few decades I have tried all sorts of things to clean the rails of my track. Brasso wadding and liquid, meths., chrome polish, emery cloth, sandpaper etc. Obviously the results have varied from useless through okay but messy to good but messy and time consuming.

Finally we have a product here that does the business. Not only is it efficient but with a little care the mess is almost non-existent and the stains from previous less successful efforts can also be eradicated. I have a large permanent layout in my loft and have cleaned the track in situ. Whilst I acknowledge the connections have therefore not been cleaned the resultant improvement in conductivity is more than enough for me. I have assumed the general dulling which happens to the exposed surface of the rails is not so evident to the concealed connections anyway.

Being a traditionalist I am not currently that interested in the new Sports Track, albeit I'm sure a good step forward for Scalextric and not before time and to this end am now confident I can keep my layout going nicely for a few more decades yet. Like you suggest in your article, I have found the track a little more slippery even though I did use a damp cloth to wipe down afterwards. However, I am hoping another buffing of the plastic with a dry hand towel and a thorough drying out period (I only did it yesterday) will do the trick.

This is a fine product ideally suited to the job and gets a 10/10 from me.

Regards

Mike Sparks

.....

Dear Brian,

May I say how sad I was to hear in the October issue of the Journal that the venerable Alan Slade was stepping down from the Committee.

As we all know, Alan was your predecessor as Editor and he held that position when I joined the NSCC in 1998. It was due to his written and verbal encouragement that I started to write for our Magazine. Whatever meagre success I have managed to engender in that field is, in the first instance, due to his encouragement.

I wish him well in his "retirement" and hope that he enjoys many happy days of racing at his beloved Knockhill, whether at the real circuit or his excellent model track. I would like to endorse Richard Winter's comments and thank Alan for all the pleasure that I now gain from reading and writing for the Journal. Keep it on the track Alan.

Sincerely

Tony Secchi

Dear Brian,

I would like to say a big thank you to Colette Clark at Monarch Lines, Simon Kohler at Scalextric and Nic Picot at Slot32 for their donation of cars as prizes for the Lifeboat Events held throughout the year in the Isle of Man.

The last two events held at Port St.Mary and Port Erin in August went very well with over 100 visitors at each venue having a go on the layout provided by Manx Slot Cars. A raffle was held at both events for cars donated by the above. In total £276.00 was raised for the Lifeboats in 2002.

The layout was popular with all ages, and event organisers across the Island have expressed their interest in having a layout provided at their various events held throughout next year.

Roll on 2003!

Tigger

.....

Dear Brian,

Many thanks for awarding me the prize for my October article.

As is probably always the case, since writing I have come across several other variations and additional models and I believe (through info on classicslot.co.uk) that a new company called 'World Classics' are producing an MG MGB along with a Sunbeam Tiger; I have asked them for details, but nothing to date. I will write an update when I have more info and/or photos.

I note your comments ref. Metro Collecting! Caused great amusement at the club last night (Farnham), but I did explain that I collect MG's not just Metros! - Last week at the other club (Home Farm near Liphook) we raced the Maestros and even I have to say they are awful on the track, but isn't that part of their charm!?

Anyway the Maestros can't be that bad - you chose them as an NSCC Special (before my time I must say!) Keep up the great work with the magazine.

All the best

Gareth Jex

I didn't choose them! Perhaps the fact that they are the only NSCC cars which haven't significantly increased in value says it all!

.....

Dear Brian,

Regarding your questions about Pink-Kar in the October issue - SCX are making new RX motors as in the Vintage Sigma, and other SCX cars so if you put one in a Pink-Kar Healey it would be as close to an original car as makes no difference.

In the Article by Vine Fennel on rail racing - a subject very close to my heart, it is good to know a lot of Walkden Fisher's cars are still around including two of the three rail cars in the picture. Along with quite a few of his slot-cars including the Scalextric Bentley and Alfa; I am lucky enough to own these cars.

Sincerely

Jeff Davies

The Jim Pover memorial races

Held at Quorn Slot Car Club 20/10/02

BY BOB BOTT

This annual get-together of racers convened on the Saturday and Sunday 19th/20th of October, a little later than usual this year, with practice on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning prior to the racing.

For those new members of the NSCC who may be reading this race report for the first time, the two classes competed for at this meeting are two wheel drive and four wheel drive, the cars being saloon or sports/GT.

The main models being SCX and Ninco in the 4x4 class, ProSlot and Slot.It in the 2 wheel drive class. Yes drivers were thrashing and crashing the lovely new Slot.It Audi, in fact I was moved to try one myself after the one I borrowed lapped at under nine seconds and I only did three laps!! I eventually decided to run the trusty old Toyota GT1 though, thinking that if I had the misfortune to do any serious damage to anything then it would be better the Toyota suffer than a new Audi.

There are a number of racers who will not miss this meeting, Don Stanley (London), Paul Darby (Birmingham), Dave and Nick Picknell (Devon) being the hard core, it was nice to have the company of Paul's wife Lisa on Saturday, Don deciding that Mary should stay "indoors" for this weekend.

A total of seventeen drivers made up the entry for each of the two classes and the heats started at 10.30 Sunday morning. The first class to run was the 4x4 over fifteen laps and the seventeen races were reeled off by 12.15, and with chicken and chips ordered from the pub at 13.00, the drivers were treated to another practice session. The racing recommenced around 13.45 with the 2WD class heats.

Only one Junior entered this year, NSCC and Quorn SCC member Simon Wallis.

He made it through to the semi-finals of both classes, just missing out on a final race by finishing fourth in both of his semi's, so no prizes

for guessing who won the junior trophy!

The four semis were run over 25 laps and went according to form with no problems for the front runners. The two finals were run over 40 laps and both were "crackers".

In the 4x4 final I fancied my chances of a top three finish on yellow lane but problems with the track meant that I failed to get round one particular corner eight times out of the first ten laps. With the problem rectified I tried but failed to catch up, two laps is a hard target when everyone is lapping within half a second of each other, so I had to be content with sixth place and the fastest lap of the race 8.900.

In the 2WD final Paul managed to get away into a commanding lead that he would carry to the end, whilst Don also had problems with yellow lane he overcame them far better than I had in the previous final.



Left to right are:

Paul Darby - 1st 2wd, 2nd 4wd.

Nick Picknell - 3rd 2wd,

Don Stanley - 2nd 2wd, 3rd 4wd,

Steve White - 1st 4wd

Simon Wallis 1st junior

So ended another enjoyable day's racing and with the trophies presented everyone made their way home. ■

N.S.C.C. Weekend 2002

A new member's view

BY RICHARD DAVIS

Well, where do I start? I have never written an article before but Richard Winter and Brian Rogers mugged me at the NSCC weekend at Pegwell Bay this weekend. They both said that the journal needs more articles from members and as I can't bear to see grown men crying and begging on their knees I agreed to write this article from a new member's point of view.

It all started back in July when "Mad" Mike Ronald rang me and said "Have you seen the advert for the NSCC Weekend in this month's Journal?" "I'll look right now", I said.

There it was in black and white: Hornby Hobbies and NSCC invite members to the annual Special Weekend 2002 from Friday 11th October 7pm to 4pm Sunday 13th October. At Sandwich in Kent. (Which is only about 3 hours from home in Southend.) Entrance fee £85 to include Bed & Breakfast Hotel accommodation and evening meal Friday and Saturday. Also a commemorative car.

Anyway 20 minutes later my cheque had been posted at the corner shop, not as if I was keen or anything!! Next came the really crucial part: "Nicky, darling (how I address the Boss when I want anything), are we doing anything the weekend of 11th - 13th October?" "Why?" replied she who must be obeyed. "Oh, nothing much, I just want to bugger off for the weekend and play with toy cars with Mad Mike & Co", I respond.

Much haggling later it is agreed that I can go. It is after all my Birthday at the end of October! In the following 3 months furtive calls were made between me and Mad Mike and Neil Lucas (Mike's mate from Manchester) to arrange who was driving etc.

On 22nd September comes the email I was hoping for: You have been successful in your application. Also Mike and Neil as well. Great stuff.

At last Friday 11th October comes. I wanted

to leave at about 7am (See not that keen really!) Mike calls to say Neil has driven down from Manchester overnight and won't be ready until 2:30. Oh Bugger!

Neil made up for this by getting us there faster than I have travelled anywhere before except by plane. Not wanting to get him into trouble let's just say the speed was more than 60 m.p.h. and less than 140 m.p.h.. Just pick a number yourself! The journey only took about two hours including a fag stop - no smoking in Neil's car. Oh Bugger again!

We got to the hotel about 7pm. Just in time for dinner I thought, but it turned out dinner was to be at 8. Mike and Neil were sharing a room and I got a family room to myself. "Great, I don't have to share with an anorak", I thought, as this had been my only worry that the weekend would be full of anoraks or "I just shaved 0.00001 off my best time," types.

The room was very large and neat and tidy, so first plus point for the weekend. Nice hotel! It is also joined to the pub by an underground tunnel so you don't have to get wet going to get pissed!

I wandered out into reception to find the others but they were still in their room. I then met Adrian Norman. "Are you with us?" he asked. "If you still play with toy cars at your age, then yes I am," I replied. Adrian informed me there would be about 28 of us altogether.

Went down to dinner next and saw Mike and Neil. Sat with them and noticed everyone had been given a piece of converter track and a free Scalextric Brochure. My quick maths worked out that I would need two pieces of converter track so I "borrowed" the one from the empty seat next to me.

Dinner was very pleasant and the staff were friendly. Adrian welcomed everyone to the weekend and said that racing would take place on Saturday with a quiz, raffle and auction in the evening. Sunday would be fun racing with a =>

talk from Simon Kohler from Hornby Hobbies to include a question and answer session and presentation of prizes and commemorative cars.

Later we looked through the windows of the room where the track was set up; unfortunately the doors were locked so no extra practice sessions for us. We decided to spend the rest of the evening in the pub where the Guinness was ice cold and excellent.

Saturday morning

The alarm goes off at 7:30 and I get to breakfast nice and early. Gradually everyone else turns up, some looking like they have only just left the pub (or do they always look like that?)

We all troop into the room set aside for us. Adrian informs us that we will be split into 4 teams of 7. The idea for this weekend is for us to comment on the new Sport Track, RMS Software race programme and GT40 cars.

The layout was very good, approximately 30 feet long in a figure of eight. We were left to ourselves to work out the best way of racing. To get into the semis and finals only your single best lap time would count. I felt this gave everyone a chance of progressing. Each team was supposed to have 30 minutes to race and qualify.

Mike was in team A. Neil and myself were both in Team B. Fortunately Noel Taylor was in Team B too so we had a good organiser type to run things for us. We know Noel from Graeme Thoburn's great club, GT Raceway, near us in Southend.

While Team A were using their 30 minutes (Actually about 55 minutes) we were to be given a new Sport Set to try out in another corner of the room. We spotted the deliberate mistake straight away "Err, this is all Classic track Adrian?" Anyway, we were then given the right set.

During the weekend so far I had formed the opinion that most people were happier with the old track but this gradually changed until everyone seemed very positive about the new track.

We were second team on. The cars supplied were the new Ford GT 40s Race Number 6. I was very impressed with the quality of these. As

a collector of mainly 60s type cars this is actually a car I would go and buy in the shops. It is a stunning model and runs extremely well. The cars were used straight out of the box with the magnets still on.

One of my worries before the weekend was that I would be embarrassingly last in all the heats but this was not to be the case. I came 4th out of 7 in my group with a respectable 4.45 lap in yellow lane. green lane was a nightmare as a lot of racers kept hitting the bridge. Best time was Neil with 4.30 set in the green Lane!

After the racing we all discussed the track, cars and RMS. We felt the cars were great, the new track to be very good and the RMS to work quite well.

While the other groups were racing I went to the pub and played pool with some of the others. All nice friendly people. One thing I noticed all weekend NO ONE shouted at a Marshall, not even once!

With racing over at about 12.30, myself, Noel and Tim had lunch in the pub and discussed our own attractions to the hobby.

Went back about 2pm to be informed we would now race again without magnets and your best time would be averaged over magnet and non magnet times. Great. I had thought my racing was over for today. I didn't do so well in the afternoon session but still came 5th out of 7.

Overall I finished joint 18th out of 28. Adrian Norman was also 18th and as I have only been into this hobby for about 18 months I considered this to be a great result. Mike just missed out on the last eight but Neil was into the semis.

This was when the RMS decided that red lane didn't exist any more!! Semis were on the same basis as the other races but only counting blue, yellow and green lanes. Neil managed to get into the final!

In the final Neil and Derek Cooper ended up with the same times, so they had a race off, once each in yellow and blue lanes.

Derek managed to lap Neil in the first go but Neil set the fastest lap on second go, so Neil was declared the winner, proving that it's not just real cars that he can drive fast!

After the racing Clive quickly got out five cardboard boxes of second hand cars and was soon taking handfuls of fivers and tenners off most people. The large Dutch contingent bought quite a few with their inexhaustible supply of brand new five pound notes.

I managed to buy a good condition Police Car with bumpers and working light for a tenner. Mike bought a Lamborghini Muira (English one) and a motorbike for twenty quid.

Henk Pijpers talked me through a few of the cars, which I found fascinating. His knowledge of Scalextric is immense.

After a break for dinner it was back into the race room for the evening's entertainment. First off was a talk by Brian Rogers about how he edits the NSCC Journal. I didn't realise how much hard work was involved in his job. I am surprised he doesn't have a nervous breakdown every month!! (Do I get a prize for best brown-nosing Brian?)

Next came the auction. Richard Winter auctioned off quite a lot of Scalextric advertising material, which went well. I managed to buy five long stickers (about 5ft each) which will fit on the front of my MDF shelves, where I display my cars etc. when I am not using them.

After the auction Richard announced we were to have a quiz which was in the style of Catchphrase with pictures projected on to a very expensive screen brought in specially for the occasion (actually an old white sheet taped up to the curtains on the stage!) On the opening screen it said a prize MAY be available for the winner!

There were 24 questions and I actually managed to get the most right, 13. Derek Cooper also got the same amount. When asked about the prize Richard mumbled something about "we will see what we can sort out later."

Shortly after this Adrian announced that because we were residents of the Hotel, the pub was going to do a late lock-in. After about five pints of Guinness I manage to stumble back to my room.

Sunday morning

The alarm on my mobile goes off at 7:30 again, manage to find snooze button, eventually get up

at 9:15!! Meet Mike and Neil again at breakfast. Also Tim again who I vaguely remember talking to in the pub!

The morning starts off with fun racing with the cars that Mad Mike has prepared for us. He had found five different coloured Hot Rod bodies and planted them onto Metro chassis. They looked stunning and actually went very well. Mike had also brought along some of his older cars which all performed very well. It was nice to see them all being played with instead of stuck on a shelf somewhere!

On a table in front of the stage were displayed some pre-production models of the Lola and Toyota F1. It was interesting to see these. The Lola was plain black but had a sheet showing pictures of the colours it will come in. The Toyota F1s were all printed up as if ready to go. Nice looking cars. Henk spent some time videoing these from all angles for his own notes.

At about 11am Simon Kohler from Hornby Hobbies arrived to give his talk. This was very interesting and well received. A question and answer session followed which took about an hour and a half. NSCC members obviously care about their hobby and I didn't hear any stupid questions, Simon answered everything to the best of his knowledge and didn't duck out if he didn't know the answer. Obviously Hornby are in good hands and should go from strength to strength. Henk asked quite a few questions and once again showed his immense knowledge.

Prize giving

Neil won a really nice GT Sport set for winning the racing. Derek Cooper got another set for finishing second but I can't remember which one it was (Saloons I think?)

STILL NO PRIZES FOR WINNING THE QUIZ! (Anyone got Richard Winter's address, as I might have to pop round and have a word?)

Then Adrian announced a special prize for 'Best Contribution to the Weekend' and this went to "Mad" Mike for his time in preparing ten 1960s cars and four custom cars and his trust in letting NSCC enthusiasts race them! This seemed to be a popular choice. Well-done⇒⇒

Mike. He got a limited edition Sport Ford GT 40 and a nice certificate.

Next came the raffle

Three things about me:

1. I never write articles.
2. I never win quizzes.
3. I never, ever win raffle prizes.

So I was very pleased to win a copy of the RMS Race Programme. Then I won 8 pieces of Converter Track (Needn't have "borrowed" that other one then!) Steve then won the RMS Extension Pack and said, "Do you want to buy it?" I gave him a tenner, which he kindly donated to the charity!

Mike and Neil had joined forces and won another boxed GT 40, which went to Neil as he had done the driving all weekend.

On to another auction. Richard sold off five of the GT 40s we had been using all weekend. three were complete, two had bits missing and one had double magnets, which I think Derek had put in, and a modified guide blade that increased the rotation angle. This car was taken back to Hornby Hobbies for evaluation.

I managed to buy one of the complete cars for £23. Yes I know I could buy a brand new one for £26 but this has sentimental value as it was actually used at the weekend! In fact I might even go out and buy Race No 9, as I really like these cars. Altogether more than £300 was raised for the charity through the various raffles and auctions.

Next we were given our Commemorative Car, which was a really nice red TVR Speed 12 C2468. Apparently it is the same as the Argos set car but with TVR on the bonnet instead of the roof. This is limited to 50 only. It also comes with a certificate to show this. On the box the sticker

states C2468 TVR Speed 12 "N.S.C.C." This will take pride of place on the shelf. I might even run it occasionally too!

We sadly left to go home about 2:30. Neil showed he hadn't lost his touch by getting us home in about an hour and a quarter.

I would like to thank everyone who helped organise this weekend, as it must have taken a lot of hard work. Also best wishes to Adrian Norman who has now joined Hornby as a member of staff.

All in all it was a really enjoyable weekend. I made several new friends and had a great time. I would recommend it to any NSCC member.

Would I go again? Where do I send my cheque?!

Adrian informs me that the quiz prizes are on the way Richard so there is no need to send the boys round!

For those of you who like to follow the editor's abysmal efforts at slot-racing I would like to put on record that I was not last in the timed heats - in fact I won three with fastest lap times! Overall I was only 4th slowest beating both fellow committee member Rob Smith and Steve Westby, who is normally my keenest competition for that coveted final position!

However when it came to the wooden spoon race I was somehow allocated the worst lane, despite posting faster times than the other three contestants, and duly finished last, thus keeping up my proud tradition in these events.

After the racing had finished Derek Cooper put a heavily modified GT40 round the track in 2.9 seconds and I was initially quite pleased with my own effort of 3.4 seconds with the same car. Then someone pointed out that this was the equivalent of being half a minute off the pace in a full size lap. Ah well! Stick to the editing Brian!

N.S.C.C. Weekend 2002 - 2

BY TIM AINSLIE

Sitting in a stationary car on the M25 at 6 o'clock on a Friday evening is something I try to avoid as a rule. Bassetts Liquorice Allsorts and a good selection of CDs usually helps to while away the time.

However I had downed the last Allsort at the Heathrow junction and the CD player had started jumping, despite the car barely moving and the anti skate switch being on.

So I was left with wondering what the weekend would be like. How many people would be there? What car would be given to participants? What products would Hornby have supplied for us to race to destruction? What would the track be like?

I decided that the weekend car would be a Subaru, we would have a selection of cars including Nascars, Mustang and Camaro to race and the track would be an eight lane circuit made from the new Sport Track.

Dinner at the hotel revealed that the number of participants would be about thirty five, less than last year but more than enough for the weekend. Dinner was placed before us on a piece of Sport converter track, this acting as a place mat. I can confirm that it is smoother than classic track and has a greater resistance to warping from the direct application of heat!

Following dinner the track was found and indeed was Sport Track, but four lanes not eight, set in a figure of eight about forty feet in length. It was however connected to the new RMS system which was to act as a lap timer and counter over the weekend.

Adrian Norman, the person responsible for the organisation of the weekend, had recently been employed by Hornby and this was evident by the low level market research that was conducted during the weekend with us as the guinea pigs. Following a few pints and a chat in the bar it was off to bed.

On the Saturday it was a pleasant surprise to find that we would be racing brand new Ford GT40s during the day.

We were divided into groups of seven and given thirty minutes to complete as many laps as we could in order to try and achieve a fastest lap time. My group decided that we would each complete twenty five laps on each track lane for the morning session. We also had to use the RMS system to count the laps and the times without instructions or help!

The GT40 is a superb Hornby product, it runs as beautifully as it looks and they have managed to release it before the competition as well.

The RMS seemed to be running faultlessly although the Highland accent of the announcer became rather irritating after the first hour and the process for setting the system for each race is something that is either pleasing or tiresome depending on how quickly you wish to restart a race.

Unfortunately, towards the end of the morning's racing, the system started playing up with laps being missed and lap times being recorded that were physically impossible.

The afternoon session was more of the same racing, with the magnets having been removed from the cars. The GT40 is a joy to drive even without the aid of the magnet and the times were not down as significantly as would have been expected, although this may have had something to do with the magic lotion that Derek Cooper periodically used to clean the rear tyres. The cars seemed to be fairly robust apart from the little rear wing, rear windscreen and the protruding exhaust. There were no breakdowns and they appeared to get faster with use. Considering that they had each been pushed hard for fourteen hundred laps it was amazing that they looked almost as good as when they had been taken from their boxes at the start of the day.

We were also given a new sport set to play with and comment on. The track clicks together very easily but is a bit fiddly to undo. It does not have the ability to flex in the same way as the →

classic track if your circuit design does not exactly match up when you connect the last two pieces of track together. The Sport Track tended to unclick if subjected to this type of abuse. There were comments about Hornby's failure to move the slots further apart in order to reduce the risk of deslotting an opponents car during a race. This is not something that I have ever noticed as being a problem (maybe I am responsible for deslotting my opponents before they get me!)

The races were concluded with the eight fastest racers from the combined day's races contesting a semi final and final before dinner. This was when the RMS decided to go awol. Trying to organise marshalls to count individual drivers' laps shows how quickly man has become dependent on modern technology, but somehow we managed to end up with two finalists, the seasoned veteran, Derek Cooper and the young pretender Neil Lucas. Following a hard fought final Neil was given the win adjudged to have run the faster time although how accurate this was only the RMS will know.

Steve Baker and Richard Winter ran some entertaining quizzes in the evening, Clive Pritchard's answer to "An insect that is an International sport" raised a laugh - "Beetle racing"!

Somehow, in the midst of all this, we managed to return to the planet to witness England ploughing a field in Slovakia and Michael Schumacher making motor racing history.

Sunday wouldn't be the same without the prospect of a car boot sale to attend and Clive conjured up several large trays of cars that generated considerable interest and cash flow.

We were treated to a spell of racing some 60s cars, expertly prepared, by Mike Ronald. There is something truly blissful about cajoling a Vanwall, Ferrari sharknose or Cooper around a track with the accompanying smell of hot engines that is characteristic of cars of this era.

Hornby were represented throughout the weekend and Simon Kohler ran a question and answer session that generated some interesting discussions (did he completely rule out the

possibility of a Harry Potter Ford Anglia?)

Hornby not only supported this event with staff but they provided prizes for a raffle, cars and track for racing and auction with several hundred pounds being raised for charity as a result.

Ah yes, finally the car was handed out, a red TVR, and then the weekend was over.

Listening to Derek Cooper talking about 1/32 differentials, discussing how the front suspension unit fits together on a C36 Honda GP or just piloting a car around the track, the weekend provided something for the collector and the racer. As one of the Dutch contingent said to me it is good to spend time in the presence of people with the same hobby and be able to escape for a couple of days.

I would also like to thank Adrian for the organisation of a very enjoyable weekend and for all the work he has done as factory liaison over the past years. ■

Slot-tech Porsche Open Challenge - Round 4 (Pendle)

BY JOHN STEWART

The 4th round of the Porsche Open was held at Pendle Scalextric Club on the 7th & 8th of September 2002, and attracted a record entry of 59 drivers, from 6 different clubs throughout the UK, at both junior and senior level.

Race commentary

Early morning sun in Middleham, North Yorkshire, as I relish the cruise through the dales towards Nelson for my first ever Porsche open challenge. But would my untested and unraced car, a Proslot GT3 Spyder and brand new prototype (and experimental) switched controller be, in combination, an absolute rave-or a recipe for disaster? Gridlock parking was the order of the day when I arrived, top prize going to the silver Audi TT coupe. Inside the club, it was shoulder-to-shoulder, reflecting the 58-strong entry, and the main topic of conversation among the Lancastrians was about the one who was missing, multi-champion, Steve Swann. Then with just minutes to spare before the off, Swanny signed in as the 59th entry, with the only other Proslot GT3 Spyder in the place. Fifty-nine 25-lap heats meant that everyone had a turn on all 5 lanes, with best 4 out of 5 to count. In F1 speak; this was a qualifying race for the stated 20 available places in the semi-finals. (Junior and Senior) Reliability and consistency-not to mention luck-were a major concern.

The Pendle circuit is an enigma, with its minor variations in corner radius; centre white lane is easily the best one to whang it in my view. The outer lanes (black and red) should be a similar challenge of extreme radii on the corners, but how about this? Red lane is never, ever chosen for a semi or a final, but black lane is quite often a first choice. Personally I hate red lane with a passion, for several reasons, and I think it should be filled in-but then I witness someone like Swanny, time and again, post red

times/laps just as good as he did on black, yellow white and blue! Quite frankly, I find that disturbing. It's certainly unsettling.

As the heats got underway Pendle club's most intense driver, Steve Swann, was the first to make an impact when Sean Fothersgill - our own Murray Walker got a bit excited as he kept us up to speed on Steve's lap record breaking exploits. Neil Hirst (age 16) had set the ball rolling in this department with 8.04 secs, and now some knowing looks were to be exchanged as Swanny (no spring chicken) began to tumble it by degrees down to 7.94 secs. How many of us wish, even when were testing? And then all hell broke loose, setting some hearts racing, when Molesey clubs tall and gaunt Julian Edwards ripped his wonderfully neat little yellow GT1 98 around in 7.83 secs! Of the rest, big Jim McKie impressed with his consistency and speed, and I remember watching young Ross in one of his heats and describing him to those around me as "hot stuff".

By the time we had reached heat 30 (the half way point) there was a break for lunch, the Pendle kitchen was operating at full throttle, with Bernadette and Carole keeping up with the racers' appetites. Tea and coffee was free, as was paracetamol! (Can't think why?)

With lunch over the heats continued, and my attention turned to the juniors, (20 in all) some of them are so small these days, they could be excused for thinking that their cars are 1:12 scale. Perversely, James Johnson is as big and deadly as they come; enough to frighten any of the top seniors in fact. But he has yet to reach the ripe old age of 16. As the heats thundered on it became apparent what this event was all about, (having fun) there was no shouting at marshals or animosity towards anyone, this was slot-car racing at its very best. Try to fault the organisation of this event and you'd be hard-pressed. At any point you simply observed the ⇒

girls in the Pendle kitchen (Bernadette & Carole) or the boys on race control (Jim & Sean) and you wondered why trophies weren't deemed to be in order for them. However, there were trophies and some nice prizes up for grabs, and lots of them, if only you could manage to drive your socks off and do the business-or indeed, it must be said, simply build the most interesting and innovative car. At the end of heat 59 the computer calculated the results based on the fastest cumulative time for the best 4 out of 5 heats.

The top 10 drivers (junior and senior) were then offered free choice of lane for the semi-finals based in order of position in which they qualified.

Junior semis and final (25-laps)

Oliver Corrigan qualified 20th overall in the heats but he was the second fastest junior - fifteen places behind the elder Johnson with a best heat time of 3m 53.35secs (to James 3m 29.85secs). Even so, Oliver managed to go faster still in his semi, just enough to beat James and claim first lane choice for the final. In the final itself, however, James made it stick by just over a lap (no shame there for Corrigan then), with Paul Boocock rounding out a Pendle clean-sweep of the silverware.

The senior semi-finals (25-laps)

As I was the last qualifier to reach the semis I had no lane choice, and yes you've guessed it I was on red! But, to be honest, this worked out fairly well for me because I always treat red with respect and drive it with suitable caution. So as the Hirsts disappeared over the horizon, all hell broke loose around my car when Windle and Murphy made a cock's ear of it, tripping up over each other. For most of the way, then, all I had to do was go through the motions, clear in 3rd place, giving Nick and Neil a cheery wave as they thundered by to lap me. Then I noticed the red blob which was Murphy's GT2 catching up fast, but with him on white and me on red, I just

couldn't make a race of it. So I lost my place to him and he was able to put a good 5secs between us on his way to the final. Amazing but true. For in the other semi, Rigg, big Jim and Edwards had all tangled immediately after the start, allowing Swanny to disappear, untroubled by the mayhem, with Ross McKie trying his hardest to keep in touch.

Senior final (25-laps)

Pete Murphy had just managed to scrape into the final as 5th qualifier. With no lane choice at all, he was stuck with red now, but what the hell, he'd made it. A little bit spawny, perhaps? You ain't seen nothing yet....

The start was as clean as they come, with Swann stamping his authority on this one immediately. But what was this? Neil the younger Hirst, who'd managed to keep such a low profile throughout the event, wasn't losing much ground, if any, to Swanny at all.

If this was all shockingly good, Nick, the elder Hirst, was dismayed to find that he'd suddenly become the tail-end Charlie and that something was badly wrong. He fell away to such a degree it was now a four horse race.

Swann was still out front, but Neil had him pegged at about 4 metres-and then, inexorably, he began to close in. This was riveting stuff. You could here a pin drop.

In 3rd having a clear and clean run, was that man, Murphy. But our only visiting finalist, Ross McKie, was on the case and catching up fast. In the end, Murphy, the people's hero, just held on by a second to give that 3rd place trophy the shock of its life.

So what could Neil do about that little black rag-top just ahead of him? Well, even with an evo2-powered car (Swann had a slot-it V12), the gap was now half of what it was, with just a few laps remaining. The pressure was all on Swann, but then Neil asked just slightly too much of his GT3, it got into a big drift, he caught it okay but he was back to 4 metres behind.

Time was running out for him now, and Swann was able to cruise the last 10 metres or so, with Neil keeping him honest all the way, a fabulous show from the youngster, but an

amazingly rock solid one from the much older man.

Scrutineering

As soon as each final was over the cars were left on the track and opened up, then the other racers were all invited to inspect them, this is out in the open public scrutineering. No protests were made, in fact quite the opposite, they were amazed at just how simple it was to build a winning car!

Prize giving

There were trophies awarded for 1st 2nd & 3rd place in each class (a clean sweep for the home drivers) plus an array of gleaming Proslot Porsches generously donated by Colette of Monarch Lines. And last but not least the Slot-Tech prize for the most innovative car.

First up to receive their prize was Julian Edwards for the fastest lap of the day, he was offered a choice of the Proslot Porsches, and had

no hesitation in selecting the beautiful yellow GT3 Spyder. (I wonder what he will do with that?) Next up were the two Hamilton drivers, Ross McKie and Derrick Whitelaw, also receiving Proslot Porsches for best visiting drivers, (junior and senior) both finished in 4th place in their finals. The Slot-Tech award went to John Cook from the Wolverhampton club, for his Carrera GT1 that had been converted from its original “friction drive” with a set of Slot-it gears and a Scalextric Protec motor. He finished 46th out of 59 but at least had the conviction to run what he had built. The raffle was also drawn and the winners of the framed Scalextric photos were, Andy Green, Jon Sword and Mark Probert.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the racers and sponsors for their support and announce that the final round will take place on 23rd & 24th November 2002 at the Phoenix Track-Studley. If you would like to enter please contact Jon Sword. Tel: (01527) 545101 mobile: (07949) 656577. ■

Word by association

BY ROBIN CLARK

In April this year, my next door neighbour, Tim, informed me that there was a very special event rumoured to be taking place in France this year – not only the Le Mans 24 Hour race in June, but a 24 Hour Le Mans Classic event! We checked all the relevant sites via the Internet, but very little information was available.

The months rolled by with no more mention of the meeting. Then in August, my neighbour reminded me of the event, which by now was well documented on a Le Mans Website. I took a deep breath and approached my good lady to see if we were planning anything for the 21-22 September 2002; it seemed we weren't, so after suitable grovelling and promises to do all sorts of household chores, I received my official pass-out to look into it some more.

Tim, who had been to many Le Mans events in the past, was happy to make all the necessary arrangements to book the ferry and accommodation, plus order the tickets. It's worth mentioning that if you plan to stay in France and don't mind slumming it a bit, then the *Formele 1* chain of Accor Hotels offer excellent value for money. Three of us ended up making the journey in the end and the accommodation, including breakfast, worked out at about £8 each per night!

Tim, Dave and I travelled from Portsmouth to Caen early Friday morning and arrived at Le Mans about dinner time. We couldn't get into the paddocks until the following day, but you could grab a glimpse through some of the fencing at some of the cars and my heart started pounding at the sight of Ferraris, Porsches, Lolas, Bentleys, Alfa Romeos, Maseratis and Fords, to mention but a few. With that we took ourselves off to bed for a good night's sleep.

The next day we got to the circuit early morning partly to see some of the practice, but mainly to visit the paddock areas, of which there were five, containing in all just over 300 cars,

dating from 1923 to 1975. Dress code was strictly jacket and tie, which added to the atmosphere.

Now this is where I really started coming into my own, because with all these cars on display, it's very easy to start mistaking a Ferrari for a Maserati or a Cobra – oh, you don't think so, eh? Well then you're a better man than I am. But consider this, I'm in the company of two, shall I say, more mature gentlemen, who have seen many more classic cars than I've had hot dinners and I say "what's that then" and more often than not, they'd know.

However, it suddenly became apparent that they'd not encountered quite as many cars as I thought, for, before I knew it, I was rattling off types and model numbers like no-one's business. And do you know how I knew? Well they were all cars made by Scalextric or one of their competitors, at some point or another. For example – "oh look, there goes a Ferrari" says Tim. "Yes" I say, "it's a 250LM". "Really", says Dave, "Oh, I'm no good with numbers". Or – "That's a fast Porsche" says Dave. "Mmm, a Porsche Carrera 6" says I, in the knowledge that both cars were released by MRRC. In fact, it also saved me asking, "What's that" on many occasions, thanks to Scalextric, Fly, Carrera and other manufacturers' extensive range of classic sports cars.

Now don't get me wrong. I really am not trying to be big-headed here and indeed admitted to my colleagues that the only reason I recognised so many of the cars was because I either had a slot-car model, or had seen the picture in a slot magazine or catalogue.

Yet again, Scalextric, if I may use the term generically, has proved to be more than just a toy, but a fantastic way to learn about and appreciate the real thing.

Oh and as for the event as a whole, I think the Le Mans organisers did a very good job. There were basically five grids of 60+ cars, which raced on a rotational basis for a full 24 →

hours, with short breaks in between to get one grid off the circuit, before letting the next on to continue the race. The first three grids even lined-up for a classic 'Le Mans start'. Quite a sight let me tell you and as for the noise – truly astounding, which makes me realise why so many people hark back to the 'good old days'; there is nothing that looks and sounds quite like some of the machinery racing that weekend. Plus, with the night-time racing element, it really added a sense of romance to the whole proceedings...blimey, I'm almost getting a lump in my throat as I speak!

As for who actually won the event, well I'm really not sure. Trophies were handed out at the end, but the announcer couldn't be heard for the sound of what looked like another 300+ cars from the various 'Éspace' car clubs attending over the weekend, who had been given the opportunity to do some pace laps at the same time. But quite honestly, for me, it really didn't matter. The memory of this event will remain with me for many years and in particular, the sight of '20s and '30s cars racing through Tertre

Rouge and onto the Mulsanne in the dead of night, lights ablaze, totally committed to lapping as fast as they could!

I have heard that the ACO have announced that they plan to run another Le Mans Classic in 2004. I would strongly recommend it as an excellent weekend away – but don't forget your earplugs! Meanwhile, it has to be an excellent opportunity to adopt the same rules and grid classifications for another class of slot-car racing at your clubs, namely:

- class 1: cars raced at Le Mans between 1923-1939
- class 2: cars raced between 1946-1956
- class 3: cars raced between 1957-1961
- class 4: cars raced between 1962-1965
- class 5: cars raced between 1966-1975, etc.

Finally, I must apologise to a couple of NSCC faces that I'm sure I recognised from swap meets, one at the Mondeville *Formele 1* hotel on Sunday morning and another in the Le Mans grandstands at the end of the event. You know how it is, "I'm sure I recognise him, but better not say anything in case it isn't".

Bon Voyage. ■

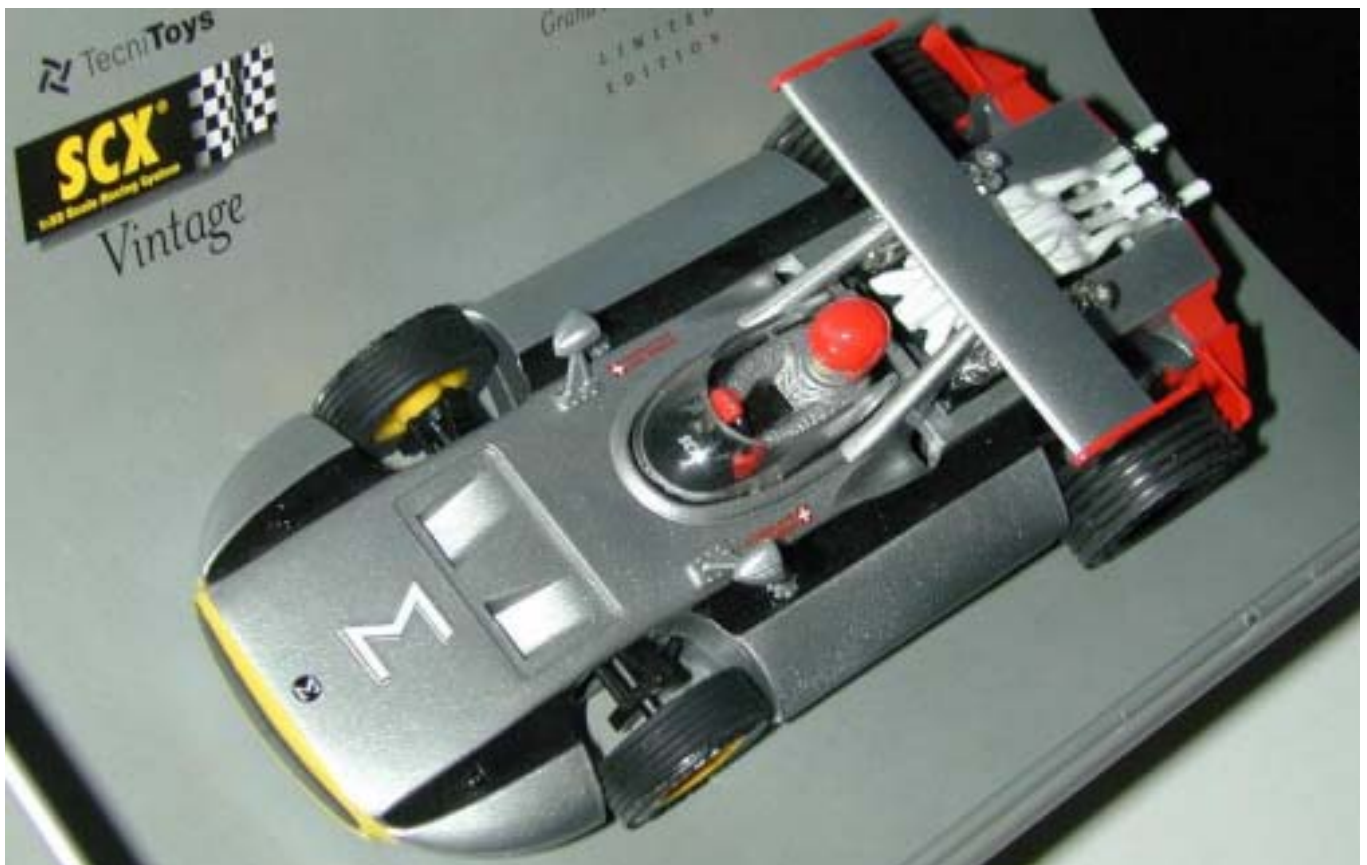
Super Sigma

BY JEFF DAVIES

Bachmann Industries were kind enough recently to send me a sample of the SCX Sigma Vintage Model. This is the latest in a long line of reissues of earlier SCX models. I have a large collection of SCX cars including my all time favourite slot-car the Corvette dragster. I have this model in six different colours - the four Spanish ones plus two of the Mexican ones, along with a similar number of different coloured Mustangs as I really like these models.

I also have in my collection a mint original Sigma in orange so I was very interested to see which I liked the best. The Sigma is the first of the reissued cars to be a definite improvement on the original as it is a far more attractive model with its beautifully finished silver and black paint work and, most importantly, it uses the original open frame motor - the first of the vintage cars to do so. The SCX model is the only slot-car built of this most interesting prototype, first shown at the 1969 Geneva motor show. The Sigma (Sigma being one of the Greek letters) is based on a 1968 Ferrari F-1 312 and was built

in co-operation between the Swiss Revue Automobile, Ferrari, Pininfarina and the French ex-driver and journalist Paul Frere as a design study to make a safer F1 car. Formula 1 had a particularly bad year in 1968 for accidents with the engines putting out around 450 BHP; this in a lot of cases being more than the cars and the narrow harder compound tyres then used, could handle. This shows how much progress has been made, as today's F1 cars with around twice the amount of BHP have no problem. Many of the passive safety features first shown on the Sigma are used in F1 today such as non-rigid structures designed to collapse progressively on impact, (this feature is also used on all road cars) roll bars, driver safety cells and safety fuel cells. The Sigma used highly innovative tanks housed in the non-rigid side section and were puncture-proof, covered in layers of neoprene and containing a fire-resistant substance, and were made by Pirelli. What a shame this was not introduced to F1 much sooner, to stop some of the horrific accidents in the 1970s. →→



The first thing I noticed was that the model came in a beautifully decorated tin box which is even lined - I love this box. (OK you can take me away now) I would have bought this car just for the tin box, so full marks for style. Along with the car in the magnificent box came a really interesting booklet all about the real car and giving details of the original SCX model Sigma and a picture showing how it looked. Removing the car from the box I was struck with what a very attractive model this is; it may not be to everyone's taste but I really like the shape of this car. The car is beautifully painted as are nearly all new slot-cars now, and the detail is brilliant, it has great engine detail showing the carburettor inlets and the correct shade of matt white on the exhaust, an open faced helmeted driver with silver overalls and red gloves. the car carries the correct logos for the Swiss Revue Automobile and has yellow wheels with soft tyres with Firestone printed on them.

Now for the most important thing; the car has the original 1950s style RX motor (please



sell these as spares as they are desperately needed to build rail cars among other things) the early kind of guide, and is identical to the original car mechanically. This is not the fastest slot-car around a track but it is beautifully balanced with most of the weight very low down and very a enjoyable car to drive and race against other similarly powered cars. If I could only purchase one slot-car from now until Christmas this would be it. A really great effort by Tecni Toys. Now really make my Christmas and reissue the Corvette and Mustang in a Drag racing set with the original motors. ■

BITS AND PIECES

Prizes!

As the Hornby/NSCC Ramsgate weekend was slightly undersubscribed this year I have some extra commemorative cars available for prizes. Some will be included in the Christmas competition but I shall also be giving them away as article prizes starting this month. Once again the contributions bank is getting a little low so start writing now if you want to win one next month.

Overseas members prize

As usual I have a Ramsgate weekend car available for overseas members only. Just send me a postcard with your name and membership number on it if you wish to enter the draw. Closing date - January 16th next year.

Check this out

For those of you who like to play silly games on the web try <http://rally.jowood.com/rally.html> - Gareth Jex found this one so blame it on him if you waste a few hours playing on screen Scalextric!

Exoto slot-cars

Exoto who are best known for their precision diecast cars are listing slot-cars in their latest catalogue. Offerings will be in both 1/24 and 1/32 and include:

1974 Porsche 917/30 KL (#6 with Sunoco racing graphics),

1967 Ford GT 40 MKIV Lemans winner # 1 (Dan Gurney and A.J. Foyt),

1976 Tyrrell-Ford P-34.

Russell Sheldon

Baby, I can drive your car

BY BILL GRIGG

Many years ago, at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th Century, my friend Ian arrived for a slot-car racing session and said he'd brought me a present. After recovering from the shock of this uncharacteristic act (not entirely true, but good for dramatic effect) I was further taken aback when the present turned out to be a toy car. Not that I don't like or didn't already have a lot of toy cars, but this was a **toy** toy car, a small green caricature, fifties style grand Prix car with big yellow wheels, even bigger white tyres and a driver's head that made Scalextric 'big heads' look like they belonged on the end of pins. It was a Boots Baby Racer. "Something for you to have a go at motorising", said Ian.

Initially, though on immature reflection I found it an appealing little thing, I wasn't too keen on the motorising idea. Then, when my inquisitiveness got the better of me and I'd unscrewed the two halves of the Racer, my first thoughts seemed spot on as the space between axles seemed rather too short to fit in all the necessary works. However, after thinking about it for a while I calculated that a Mabuchi 'small can' from one of those lovely 70s F1 cars, with the shaft cut off level with the bearing at the front and a bit trimmed off the pinion end, would just fit. (Hooray, a use for 70s F1 cars!)

Despite its tiny wheelbase the Baby racer is as wide as your average slot-racer so only the widest of Scalextric axles from my spares box (70s F1s again) would suffice if there was to be enough sticking out of the sides to afford purchase for the wheels. Standard Scalextric nylon bearings were used at the rear as there was enough 'meat' around the original axle holes to allow filing out to fit. The front axle fitted neatly into the ex-baby axle holes. At the time there were plenty of Power and Glory spares around and Vanwall wheels and tyres were ideal. All that then remained was to make two plasticard 'bulkheads' to hold the motor, cut a hole for the guide and install a plasticard mounting plate for

it. Oh, and cut a rectangular hole in the floor pan under the motor which, I told myself, would help with cooling. The hole for the guide meant that the rear fixing screw had to go but the front one is quite man enough to hold the whole thing together. (After all, this car was made to be played with by babies!)



It was, I recall, with trembling hand that I positioned the Baby Racer prototype on the track for a test. With a 4cm wheelbase and a 5cm track, skinny tyres and a quite tall, big headed driver I wasn't too confident that it would do anything but suffer wheelspin and spin off at the mere hint of a curve. But, my fears were groundless. It might not be the quickest thing around but it's such fun. You can chuck it fast into a corner and the back will slide out but can be held in a controlled fashion all the way round until it wags its tail on the exit and sets off again, flat chat, for the next twiddly bit. It doesn't deslot and throw itself into the scenery unless really abused and, despite Mr. B. Head, is reluctant to roll as it would far rather slide.

So, despite the time consuming job of cutting out those holes and modifying the body shell and, worse, making those ***** fiddly motor bulkheads fit, I've ended up with four of the little devils, made one for someone else, ⇨⇨



and converted a Baby Sports Car - which Boots only sold with a Baby Car Transporter so I just had to buy the lot. I didn't want to throw the transporter away (and perish the thought that I should give it to a baby) but the tractor part is so small inside that I've chickened out from

attempting motorisation for the foreseeable future, so it lurks in the projects file. Subsequently I've been unable to resist a further single seater at 50p in Oxfam and a single seater and sports racer for 50p the pair in Milton Keynes Market but, as the supply of appropriate spares seems to have dried up a bit and my bulkhead fabricating enthusiasm has waned, they're so far still only fit for babies.

Lastly, when Boots stopped selling the Racers, the single seaters later turned up at Early Learning Centres with 'ELC Racing' tampoed on the cockpit sides and Mr. Big Head with a helmet and goggles instead of the rather nicer peaked helmet of Mr. B. H. Boots. So, when all those children have grown up there should be plenty of spare body shells around...



Sheer lunacy always appeals to me and this is the daftest idea I have seen in a long time! A Ramsgate car is yours Bill - perhaps you could convert it to a McLaren baby buggy.



New Scalextric Sport Track

Home user report

BY DAVE WISDOM

The track

Two years ago I dismantled my permanent layout of 'Classic' Scalextric track located in the loft area of our old house. At the time we were in the process of moving so it was also an opportunity to have a clear out of all sorts of stuff. I realised building a new circuit was a long way off. The house we were about to move into required extensive renovation to say the least and although it pains me to say, constructing a new Scalextric layout, albeit on the agenda, seemed a very far and distant dream at the time.

So it was all packed away in boxes and stored until further notice. Everything apart from the track that is. I decided it was probably about time it was replaced. Some parts of the track were almost 30 years old and had certainly seen worthwhile service. So off it went to the Leeds swapmeet and was dutifully passed onto a deserving new home. The question about what to replace it with was put on hold until I was ready to seriously think about building a new layout which more or less brings us up to date.

After 2 years of solid DIY, no life and (what feels like) shares in B&Q, I was finally ready to begin planning a new circuit. Although tempted by the Ninco products and just tired of waiting to see if and when Fly were going to produce any track I decided to stick with Scalextric and gamble on the new Sport range. The prospect of new additions to the range of track swayed me a little as I feel time is ripe for the re-introduction of pit lanes, chicane sections and such like. It also made some sense in that I have a substantial amount of accessories that can be used with the new track.

Using a plan from the 101 Circuits 2nd edition (SCX. 1236) I have constructed a 4-lane track incorporating the C8203 racing curve crossovers and C8246 sideswipe straights. The circuit is a combination of a Le Mans set, GT Interactive set and a variety of extra track pieces (mainly outer curves) required to complete the layout.

The new track doesn't visually look that much different to the old although it's very smooth in appearance and has different metal and plastic connections. Scalextric handouts describe it as 'moulded from linear low-density polyethylene'. Basically, this seems to mean that it's very flat with no nasty undulations. The surface is described as 'semi smooth that allows for the maximum amount of tyre to touch the track surface thus ensuring maximum grip and the reduction in sudden breakaway'. More about this later.

All pieces are made to the same dimensions as the old 'classic' track apart from the new racing curve crossovers, although these are easily incorporated into any basic plan as they are the same dimensions as 2 standard 45 degree curves linked together.

One frequent criticism amongst fellow enthusiasts is that 'Sport Track' remains narrow in width compared to Ninco. Personally, I don't mind this. It means quite literally the racing continues to be wheel to wheel stuff with absolutely no room for error. Much more fun I think. Having said that, I do appreciate the advantages the Ninco track offers, but I've made my choice, paid my money, so I have to live with that.

Putting it all together

One thing is certain; the connecting procedure is significantly easier than the old. Assembly time is far quicker and the whole process much more enjoyable. Pieces literally push together with remarkable ease. Whilst constructing my circuit one or two track pieces needed a firm push to achieve the final reassuring 'click'; otherwise it was all very satisfactory. Once laid out the track is indeed very flat; not a single trace of any bumps. How long this will last remains to be seen of course, but for the moment it looks very good. Electrical contact has, so far, remained ⇒

excellent with no breaks to speak of. A group of friends raced recently for several hours and apart from one hand throttle failure, everything passed without any problems, we just had a great time!

The GT Interactive set comes complete with race management software. As my budget does not stretch far enough to purchase another computer (the house computer is several floors away) we shall be saving the race management delights until a later date. In the meantime I'm using 2 Scalextric electronic lap counters. One of these is included in the Le Mans set and an extra one was purchased for the 3rd and 4th lanes.

Positioning the lap counters proved a little frustrating in that the extra lap counter came with old/new connections and an adapter track. This is obviously extremely useful if you're combining the new Sport track with Classic track, but when you have all new stuff it means juggling things about a bit.

This, combined with adding the lane extension, (for 4 lane racing) which needed to be located next to power source sections and lap counters, proved mildly challenging, but the puzzle was solved relatively easily and with minimal use of bad language.

Does it all work?

Of course the most exciting part of building a new track is when you test a car on it for the first time. I'm pleased to say I was not disappointed. First impressions were how smooth and quiet the track is. The new generation of Scalextric cars run exceptionally well. Ninco and Fly ran smoothly also but it's plain to see this track was certainly developed for and with Scalextric cars in mind. I've encountered no problems with grip so far. Given how smooth the surface is I am quite surprised at how well cars have handled. It will be interesting to see if grip deteriorates after prolonged use.

Pin guide cars

The racing curve crossover works very well, although the older generation of cars has experienced a little difficulty in negotiating them. Anything with pin guides is going to have

a problem I fear. My old D Type, Porsche Spyder and Lotus 61 refused to go through them unless approached in aggressive opposite lock formation; if you're that way inclined. The older cars also encountered problems with rear end grip. New rubber or scrubbed tyres may rectify this. Otherwise, it looks like the older cars may be restricted to racing on historic classic tracks only.

The Sideswipe sections are a welcome addition although I cannot understand why they have not been designed so the slot follows the racing line into a corner; in fact they follow the opposite route. When Scalextric have evolved so much in the last couple of years producing gems like the GT4Os and American Classica, it's just a little disappointing when they fall at the post with such obvious flaws when it comes to new track sections. Let's hope they will put this right by introducing new realistic sections that will match the imagination and quality of all their new cars.

Lap counters

As I mentioned earlier, I shall be incorporating the RMS accessory at a later date. For the meantime it's electronic lap counters. I've placed these just on the exit of a bend, which leads towards the finish line. Now if you're racing with Scalextric or Fly things seem to work well enough. However, once you start hurtling around with a Ninco or Pink-Kar for example, particularly non magnetised cars, there is a tendency for them to 'jump' the slot as they pass over the counter. A little ballast will cure this but it can be somewhat irritating when the counter refuses to register laps. Apart from adding magnets or ballast the jury is out on deciding how best to cure this problem. Any ideas?

Conclusions

Apart from the one or two niggles mentioned above, I'm generally very pleased with Sport Track so far and would have no hesitation in recommending it. I had my reasons for choosing it and am happy with that, but the competition is strong so I understand why fellow enthusiasts buy alternatives. I am hoping Scalextric will

introduce new and exciting track sections on a regular basis. I believe they need to do this to stay ahead of other manufacturers. I imagine if Ninco were to begin introducing new track sections and accessories Scalextric may well have a problem and we have yet to witness Fly's new contribution, but it's sure to impress.

Sport Track is very good, but they need to keep on top of it. They can't just leave it for another 40 years and hope it'll just keep selling. The market is not that forgiving these days and with all the current developments in the slot-car world, punters will be demanding much more in the way of innovative ideas not just with new cars, but perhaps more so with the shape and surface they race them on. ■