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BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

250 Not Out

A figure the England cricket team can only dream about! Yes the NSCC publication has reached another milestone. Actually, there have been 256 issues altogether but let's not be picky!

Apart from myself there have been 7 other editors during the 22 years of the club's existence, Dale Tremble - 1981, Rob Brittain - 82/83, Mike Pack - 83/85, Norman Wheatley - 85/90, Tony Frewin - 91/92, Malcolm Parker - 93/94 and Alan Slade - 95/99. Amazingly, apart from Dale and Norman, they all remain members of the club to this day.

We owe them, and the other people who have contributed to the running of the club over the years, a big debt of gratitude. I know how much time it takes to produce this thing with all the modern computer aids at my disposal; how Norman Wheatley produced 28 page issues on a typewriter doesn't bear thinking about! Thanks lads - I am proud to follow in your footsteps.

Anyway, on to this month's issue; as promised in December I have tried to make it a bit special by including eight pages of colour - hope you like it. Please don't ask me to do it on a regular basis; it has taken six months to put together and I am not anxious to repeat the experience in the near future!

And Finally - some predictions for 2003:-
Michael Schumacher breaks down in ten GPs in succession.
Rubens Barrichello becomes World Champion and is sacked for overtaking Michael's stationary car.
David Coulthard outqualifies Kimi Raikkonen in every race.
Jenson Button scores BAR's first GP win.
Fly cars stop producing pointless, overpriced limited editions.
Scalextric produce a car which the NSCC members find to be absolutely perfect.
I fail to upset the Hornby management for an entire year.
Colette Clark sends her advert in on time every month.
A herd of Gloucester Old Spots is reported flying at 20,000 feet over Norfolk.

Till next month
Brian

Messages From Margate

BY ROB SMITH

2003 promises to be another good year for the Scalextric collector and racer alike with several new cars and some interesting technology due to hit the shops as the year progresses. Back in the middle of December I was allowed a sneak preview of catalogue 44 to see what is coming.

Let's look at the cars first. Reliveries are two Porsche GT3R Cup cars - Yankees and DeWalt, a very pretty Caterham 7 in the Gulf Racing colours of pale blue & orange and a bright red Ford GT40. More exciting are the new cars and we have three to enjoy. The Opel Astra V8 Coupé has been extensively reworked to represent the 2002 DTM series cars. Brand new is the Mercedes CLK that also runs in the DTM Series. The CLK is beautifully detailed and I am assured goes as well as it looks. I'm sure those of you who have seen the real thing on the track will testify that the CLK is a very potent racing car. For many people the star Scalextric car of 2003 will be the new BMW Mini Cooper available as a pair of set cars and also as two single cars. Again, the detailing is superb and it will be interesting to compare its on track performance with others available.

There are no new track sections in catalogue 44 - apparently we will have to wait until later in the year to see some new pieces - but the borders will be available for all radius curves.

New Technology

An interesting piece of technology is the new Challenger system. This is the next generation of the Pacer principle but works in a radically different way. A special Mercedes CLK is fitted with some clever electronics relating to the guide blade to help the car determine if it is on a straight or on a curve. An infra-red signal is then beamed back to a receiver that controls the throttle. I haven't had chance to try it but I'm told it works so well that the CLK is very difficult to beat. The success of this first release will determine if other cars become available with the necessary Challenger System gizmos.

Obviously Hornby may change these plans as market forces dictate so keep an eye on their web site http://www.scalextric.co.uk . In response to demand from NSCC members the company will try to announce all new items as they become available through the year in the Announcements section so keep the pages bookmarked.

GT40

I also had the opportunity to discuss with the designers the issues raised in John Dilworth's GT40 review in the November issue:

● Drivers heads are high on the list of items Hornby wish to improve both to get a fully decorated, better detailed and scaled item. As Simon Kohler told those of us at the Hornby/NSCC weekend last year, the driver helmet liveries require separate licensing from the rest of the car and are a significant expense.

● The 1966 Le Mans race was a wet affair so treaded tyres on the GT40 are entirely appropriate. No doubt they ran on slicks at other events. *(I refer to Motorsport Magazine July 1966 page 596 for this information and would recommend getting hold of a copy if only for the picture of the black no2 McLaren/Amon car in the centre spread. By the way, no rear view mirror is visible in those pictures.)*

● The joint between the body and the chassis is a difficult problem as a compromise must be made somewhere. The nose of the GT40 could have been moulded in one piece but this would give rise to two other problems. Firstly the chassis would be much weaker without the bottom half of the nose attached to the front of it and would therefore have a detrimental effect on the dynamic performance of the car. Secondly it has to be possible to get the part out of the mould. Parts that require a re-entrant surface can be made with a mould that splits into segments. However this always leaves slight witness lines between the segments and at

this scale these would have been very noticeable. Alternatively the nose could have been made in one piece with the joint at the back but this would have been very obvious especially on the sides of the car. So the resulting model provides the best solution within the manufacturing limitations.

● Higher detailed hubs would cause a similar problem. The ones on the car are created with a two piece mould and the witness line can be seen if you remove the tyre. To give the spinner a full 3D appearance it would have to be moulded as a separate part and then attached in a separate process. Worth the extra cost? It's debatable.

Round and round

However, the Scalextric product continues to evolve and improve. I wonder what we will find to comment on in a few years time! Whilst walking through the test room in Margate I remarked on a Mitsubishi Lancer racing round and round a small oval all on its own with the throttle trigger firmly taped down. "It's been running 09.00 to 17.30 every day for around three months now - we are trying to wear it out", was the response. Apart from a few braid changes it is still going strong. This is not only enabling Hornby to review wear on certain components such as the motor and wheel bearings & tyres, but also the stainless finish to the new Sport track. I wonder how long it will last and what lessons will be learnt for future improvements ?

For those of you using the RMS software there are several additions available on the Scalextric web site and more are due in the coming months. Check the FAQ section for information on how to correct the size of the Goodwood Chicane and Pit Stop track sections, how to store your own track inventory and some new car image downloads. Further scheduled improvements include some changes to the championship heats and scoring.

Just a few reference number announcements this month.

● The C1093G Speed Challenge Renault Méganes from the Safeway set are C2476W Blue No6 and C2477W Yellow No9.

● The BMW 318is from Index in 2001 should be C2267WRD for the red one and C2267WBK for the black one. This is not how they were originally described.

● C2417 & C2418 Williams F1 2002 say Veltins on the side for the versions released in Germany and have no logo on the side for the UK released versions (not Visions as announced last month)

Finally for this month. Thanks to member Ray Chambers for his letter on what he would like to see added to the Scalextric range in the future. I have passed this onto Hornby for their consideration and the initial feedback is that the Mark I & II Ford Escort rally cars are a popular request together with a Pit Stop. Keep your requests coming in and I will lobby Hornby with them. They are interested in our comments and we should have an influence on future product development. ■

Ferrari with a Differen(tial)ce

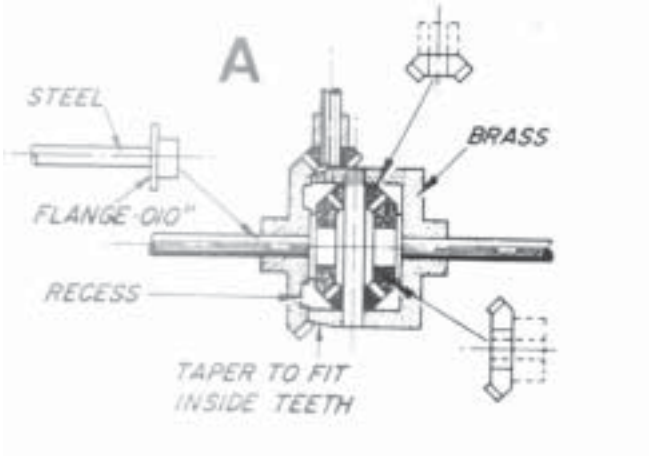
From an original article in the September 1967 edition of Model Cars. Written by J.E. Harris and submitted by Alan Slade.

The idea of building a car with a differential drive rear axle arose out of a desire for better road holding. I came to the conclusion that skidding on corners occurred mainly with a solid rear axle because one of the wheels is forced to slip thus overloading the grip on the other. Consequently sliding occurs somewhat prematurely and sometimes uncontrollably.

When a suggestion was made to some friends to put a differential in a 1/32 scale car the cry was "impractical" and "not competitive on this scale," but not being put off by this apparent lack of enterprise I decided to try.

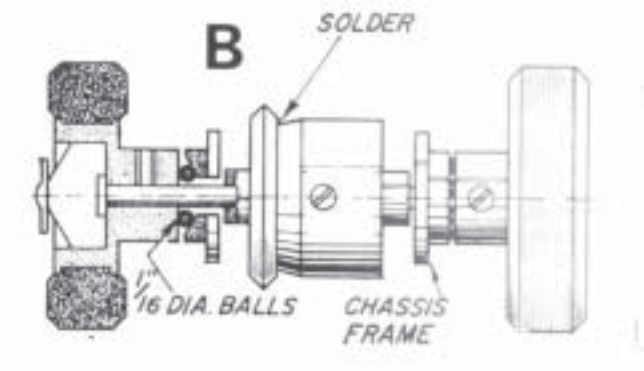
As by now I was a faithful user of M.R.R.C. bevel gears 1 toddled off to my local model shop armed with a ruler. On examining the range available I found that by using a 4:1 ratio for the crown wheel I could, with a certain amount of modifying, use two 2.5:1 gears and pinions for the sun wheels and planet wheels.

Sketch (A) shows the modifications to the gears plus one or two new parts. The 4:1 crown wheel had the inner face skimmed and recessed very slightly.



The two 2.5:1 sun wheels had the boss removed. This was achieved by turning off the peened over portion and pressing out the bush which is a push fit in the gear. In its place were press fitted the half shafts.

The two pinions from 2.5 : 1 ratio gears had their bosses removed so that they could be squeezed into the casing which is a new part. The face of the 4 :1 pinion was flattened so that it would engage with the crown wheel and clear the casing. The planet wheels are mounted on a 3/32" diameter shaft pushed through the casing. For this I used part of an 'Airfix" rear axle so that the splines on it would hold it in place.



Since the object of the exercise was to either prove or disprove the usefulness of a differential a great deal of attention was not paid to building a proper chassis but merely a simple and functional one.

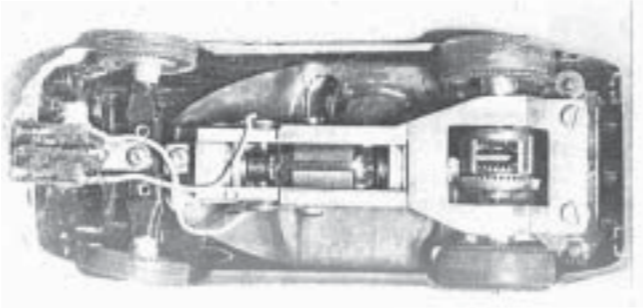
It was obvious from the outset that to maintain drive from the rear wheels they must both be in contact with the track all the time. To ensure that this occurred I installed a swinging front axle assembly. This comprised an "Airfix" steering unit mounted in a yoke. The pick-up unit was also part of this assembly. Having maintained track contact the next and important factor is easy operation of the action, this was achieved by mounting the whole differential assembly between bearings. The rear wheels and bearing bosses are all in one piece and turned to suit M.R.R.C. air tyres, a type which I have decided to try out. The insides are bored to take the inserts supplied with the body kit. The front

wheels are copied from the rear wheels only with no bosses, the tyres are small circumferential tread tyres.

The pick-up is a "V.I.P." minibrush unit which supplies a K's Mk. I super motor. The chassis is made from I section brass rail and brass shim 0.010" thick. The shell is a REVELL 275P Ferrari G.T. which is a rather neat shape with some interesting detail in the moulding.

When I tried the car on the track I was pleased with the result. The improvement in road holding was very noticeable indeed. I feel that if developed to be smaller, something which depends largely on the availability of gears, it could be used to great advantage in Formula1 racing. An interesting outcome of this exercise was the extra flexibility and acceleration from the Ks motor when used with a 4:1 gear ratio.

The colour scheme I used is as follows: the body is finished in the well known red of the Ferrari stables with a matt black bonnet hood.



The wide band over the roof and tail is my own addition having been pinched from a Cox Cheetah kit. The hubs are chromed and were supplied with the body kit. There is a scattering of miscellaneous stick-on transfers which jazz it up a little. Just lately it seems there is a great accent on performance and little or none on appearance. This is a shame really when only a little extra effort is required to make a model worth looking at as well as worth racing. ■

BITS AND PIECES

Hornby's poor track record

Red faces all round at Hornby, which recently organised a Scalextric challenge, featuring such F1 wannabes as investment bank R W Baird, corporate financiers Bridgewell and hacks from the Financial Times, Investor's Chronicle and the Daily Telegraph City office. After a 100 lap grand final, the Scalextric makers came fifth out of six. Carrying off the trophy, you won't be surprised to learn, was a tremendously tactical Team Telegraph.

"If only the Formula one delegation looking at reforming the sport had been here tonight," rued Hornby chief exec Frank Martin, "they'd have picked up a trick or two."

Daily Telegraph business news 1/10/02
submitted by Richard Winter

See, I told you Mr. Martin had something on the city editor!

World's largest train set

Also from the Telegraph, after more good news for Hornby shareholders (profits doubled to £1.7 million and dividend tripled), it was announced that the firm had plans to build a Hornby Heritage Centre at Margate. This would include the world's largest train set; presumably Scalextric might get a look in as well!

Christmas Competition update

It would appear that there is a small error in question 18 of the Scalextric section - for Ferrari GTO read Ferrari GTB Berlinetta! Looking at the entries so far, everyone seems to have worked that out for themselves though.

Prize update

The mystery prize for the non-Scalextric section has now revealed itself as a "World Classics" BMW 2002 Clubman. It is in bright orange 'Jagermeister' livery and is a limited edition of one car.

Prize car

The winner of this month's Ramsgate car is Max Winter for being the first person in over three years to actually provide an article geared to colour. I am also awarding him the prize for his endless patience - he sent me the article six months ago and it has taken me this long to transfer it to print!

2003 Ferrari sensation

In a shock move the F.I.A. have announced a radical plan to slow down Herr Schumacher next year. NSCC member David Bates took this picture at a secret testing location.

The Ferrari team have firmly denied reports that Rubens Barrichello will be obliged to tow the McLaren motorhome!

Dear NSCC

Dear all,

As part of my new role at Scalextric, the gathering of feedback from the enthusiasts at the club and collecting level as well as home racing is paramount. My past years as Hornby Liaison, now passed on to the capable hands of Rob Smith, had given me many opportunities to pass information from NSCC members direct to the Development team. Many of the requests you had raised regarding improvements and faults with the Scalextric range, and specifically with cars, were listened to by the Development Manager and his team and were weighed with the feedback from all other areas and decisions were made as to how these issues could be resolved.

Guide blade positioning, sidewinder motors, interior detail, livery detail, body detail, painted helmets, brass bearings and hardened steel axles have been improved on the cars. The track has been changed and new track pieces developed. RMS was also launched at the beginning of the year. Sure, there is still a mountain of things that the development team is working on with still more waiting in the wings. Track pieces, tyre grip, guide blades, new car bodies, and accessories are always key areas but there are many more areas that enthusiasts would like upgraded. We would like to ask you to let us know what your preferences are!

The value of this process has, as I'm sure you'll agree, resulted in the continual improvement of Scalextric. However, no racing driver can sit on his laurels (although, I suspect the 'Red Baron' can!) and the Hornby Hobbies Ltd. corporate mission is to produce the best home/club total slot car system in the World. I, along with Rob, will endeavour to gain as much information from NSCC members as possible. We are here to help you achieve what you'd like to see in the slot car world. Ensure you let us know. Use the written letter, phone, text messages, emails, the Chat Room on the Scalextric website, a pigeon or even a belated note up the chimney to Santa!

I would also like to thank all of the good friends I've made over the past years as a result of my role as Scalextric Liaison in the NSCC. I would like to thank them for sharing their passion for the hobby and for the information passed along the way. This helped me with my liaison role and proved immensely useful in feeding information between Hornby and the NSCC in BOTH directions. The daily feedback, the NSCC Special Weekends and other events have been invaluable to the development team at Scalextric. The cataloguing of new 'C' numbers and verification of unusual or rare cars has been fruitful with your help. I know I will continue to see and speak with many of you in the years to come. Additionally, I'd like to thank Rob Smith for taking on the role of Hornby Liaison and I look forward to meeting Rob on a monthly basis. I hope you'll be as forthcoming with Rob as you have been with me. The experience has been wholly rewarding and I wish to thank you all for that.

Happy New Year,
Adrian Norman
Consumer Promotions Manager
Hornby Hobbies Ltd.

Dear Brian,
Regarding the Bugatti article in the December issue, the members may be interested in some extra information. The reason for limited production was mainly due to a design fault - after prolonged use the small body overheated and warped due to its proximity to the motor. Also, the steering is very fragile and assembly time was longer than most cars so it wasn't a very profitable model.

Consequently most Bugattis were only made to order (initially some were released to the biggest shops - but as they warped they were returned and withdrawn from sale). If a customer wanted a Bugatti they had to write to Scalextric and agree not to complain if it went wrong (this is what the chairman of the Dutch Bugatti owner's club did - the letter was printed in an old newsletter). When they had enough orders (possibly only a dozen or so) they set up a small assembly line for them - so each batch would have different details (C70s tend to have chrome parts, whereas race-tuned cars tend to have silver painted details).

My C70 came in what was possibly the only original Bugatti box - a Formula Junior box with C70 end label - the box had "Do Not Sell" written in large letters; it was the rep's sample and he had been told to only use it for promotional purposes - i.e. don't take orders for them! By the way, those who have seen an original chassis might have noticed the rectangular blank on the chassis - this is where they initially had the wrong number in the tooling. When I started collecting (in the late 80s) around 60 Bugattis were known; since then several others have turned up putting the number in captivity at around 100. Less than 10 race-tuned examples were known; a few have turned up since but the total number must still be well under 20.

During power-sledge days several employees built up racers (for use at their local club) using some of the bodies that were still lying around - the power sledge chassis fitted very nicely, the mounts being the same width as the Bugatti body. The one I had was in the darker blue as it was based on a race-tuned body. As for pre-production cars Roger Gillham found a red one (in the factory archives?) - as with Bentleys, Alfa Romeos, Mercedes 190 SLs, red was used as the test colour in those days - they would have made about a dozen red Bugattis (and the other cars) but most were scrapped (as with the other red test cars - but some are more 'common' than others).

Many years ago Bill Bradley bought 2 Bugattis from an ex-employee and one of these was pre-production with hand made steering unit and I believe the incorrect number on the chassis. Another detail - with the Graham Perris resin copies is that someone found a mock up of a Bugatti maintenance sheet in the archives and Graham was allowed to copy this to supply with his resin cars. It is very unlikely that he made the 200 he was going to make, and he certainly did take his time making them!

That's probably enough on that subject so on to the Connaught article; as a B-type Connaught (part) owner I can add a bit to the original car's history. The B-type was an interim design - originally they were going to build the J type, a rear-engined monocoque car using a 5 speed pre-selector gearbox and the Climax Godiva V8 engine. The gearboxes were made and the chassis started but Climax cancelled the engine project, since they (wrongly) believed the power figures given by the Italians and thought their engine would not be competitive - I have one of these engines for the Shannon, that ran it in 3 litre form in the 1966 British GP, and despite being a 10 year old design then it still had more power than the Repco-Brabham engine! The rear engined car was shelved and a simple interim front engined car was built up around the 4 cylinder Alta engine - again it should have used the Godiva V8. Tony Brooks' win in Syracuse was not only the first post-war British GP win, but also the first for a car with disc brakes. What was amazing (apart from beating the works Maserati team) was that Tony was studying for his final exams and spent all the trip revising, since he was only expected to be a 'makeweight' and get the start money!

Cheers
Peter Morley

Dear NSCC

Dear Brian,
'Scalexstrip' or, Double Decker Bus syndrome. Just when you think there's no Scalextric racing on the telly, along come two series about it, firstly Short Circuits, already well documented via articles written by some contestants appearing in this Journal. But quite how Adrian Norman's new employers will feel about this next sort of 'promotion' of their product I am not sure.

Have others seen 'Racing Strip', shown late on a Friday evening on Motors TV, channel 416 on Sky digital?

Given that this is a 'family' Journal I won't divulge too many lurid details, suffice to say though, that the flameproof overalls worn by the (all-girl) racers, do cover non-flameproof undergarments, but not for very long.

I felt compelled, as TV critics would do, to watch one programme, but the Audi TT, and Mercedes cars, were crashed, thrashed and abused on a sport track, about 15m lap length, in a manner which was quite uncalled for. The standard of corner marshalling was appalling, and the hand-held camera operator had an understandable bad case of the shakes.

I did not feel the need to call the £1 per minute phone lines to win an appearance as the next Team Captain. But there was a cash prize of £100 for the 'lucky' (male) team captain, who got to take home some of the extraneous garments, but not the Scalextric set, surely some mistake here?

Yours
Patrick "Square eyes" Beane

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Hello Brian,
Just wondering if you can pass a message on to the members of the NSCC.

Apparently some members there have had trouble dealing with people who claim to be members of the Australian Scalextric club here or worse, members of the ASRCC committee. For your members' own convenience and protection, I would like to remind all of them of the need to make contact with the appropriate Australian Committee person and it would be the greatest pleasure for us to offer your members our assistance with any matter.

The address is: ASRCC
PO Box 14
Mt Gravatt,
Q4122
Australia.
email: clublines@scalextricaustralia.com.au

Thankyou
Dave Hannaway

Dear Brian,
Something in the air tells me that 2003 could well be the year where there will be debate and revised strategy concerning NSCC club swapmeets. The catalyst for this may well have been the controversy surrounding Newark and Bishops Stortford but I feel the need for 'moving forward' has existed for some time.

The Newark/Bishops Stortford debacle had a positive outcome! Although just one week apart, both of the events were well attended by both traders and members alike. The anticipated 'cancelling out' effect did not happen. Now I'm not saying that we should encourage quite such close timing but my punt would be that one swapmeet a month during the main season (ie Sep to May) could be sustainable. This year we will have had 7 swapmeets including Bishops Stortford so would another 2 be overkill? By making adjoining events geographically disparate this could help manage such a frequency. Speaking purely for my own business I would support this frequency by attending all events and happily pull out of the various general toy fairs which we currently attend where there was a clash.

Perhaps if we had 2 new swapmeets we could consider locations carefully. Would a swapmeet in Slough not be an excellent location for much of the south of the country? And Bristol for the west? My geography doesn't extend much past Birmingham so I'm not sure what would fit in up north - perhaps Leeds just needs more support from stall-holders and members?

Planning dates well in advance is important for both traders and members. A period of 1 year notice by the organiser may be required for successful organisation of the full calendar. A rolling 6-months or longer calendar could then be displayed in the newsletter.

Swapmeets need livening up! Steve Cannon and Roger Barker came up with some excellent ideas for Newark, eg discounted spares only tables, Bargain Hunt and longest distance travelled prizes. I'm sure more surprises will follow next year and this event will grow further in stature.

Overseas swapmeets sometimes clash. Would it be possible to co-ordinate these with the organising clubs in other countries? I don't claim to have all the answers myself (by any stretch of the imagination) and regrettably I don't have the time to perform a formal role of co-ordination. But if we do end up with more formal co-ordination of our swapmeets (and I believe this has already been suggested by the Chairman) perhaps we could conduct a member survey. I'll volunteer to help out by collating survey results, analysing them and producing a report if people agree that's a good way forward.

Can I finish off by expressing my respect and thanks for those who give their time and efforts to organise the club swapmeets. This letter is not a suggestion that our existing crop of events deserve anything other than our full support.

Regards,
Robert Learmouth (Westwood Models)

Interesting points Robert - perhaps other members would like to contribute their ideas on the subject.

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Dear Brian,
Just a line to say how great it was to see Steve Carter back in print in the Dec. 2002 issue.

I heartily endorse your end of article comments. Truly the best review of a slot car that I have ever read (and I have even written a couple myself). It put my recent feeble efforts in proper perspective and has made me think deeper about re-structuring my process in that field.

An exceptional piece of intelligent, accurate, truthful and interesting writing from an unassuming, knowledgeable and experienced racer - a class act. On behalf of myself and many, many members Steve, please find the time to do some more - the Journal needs you.

Well done!
Tony Secchi

A lap of the Tingewick track

BY MAX WINTER

Welcome to the Tingewick track they said, home circuit and test facility for one of car racing's smallest specialist constructors. My guide for this high speed tour of the circuit is one of my host's resident test drivers, Bruce. I am going to get a chance to experience the thrills of this track as a passenger in one of this constructor's latest prototypes. Hopefully from this report you will get a flavour of some of the dramatic features of this unique circuit set in the rural Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire border area, a stone's throw from its somewhat more famous neighbour Silverstone. But you'll have to excuse me if this report is somewhat garbled as I'm still trying to get my thoughts back together after one of the wildest rides ever.

I meet my "chauffeur" in the paddock in the middle of the circuit by the entrance to the main control tower, which has seen a lot of restoration work to transform it from its former dilapidated state. In the background I can hear the sounds of the marching band, tuning up behind the building, even over the drone of the "Big Banger" cars already circulating the track. Having checked-in with the timekeepers in their Grade 2 listed building, as are much of the structures here, we venture over to our means of circuit circumnavigation, a prototype M6 Can-Am race car, and get strapped in.

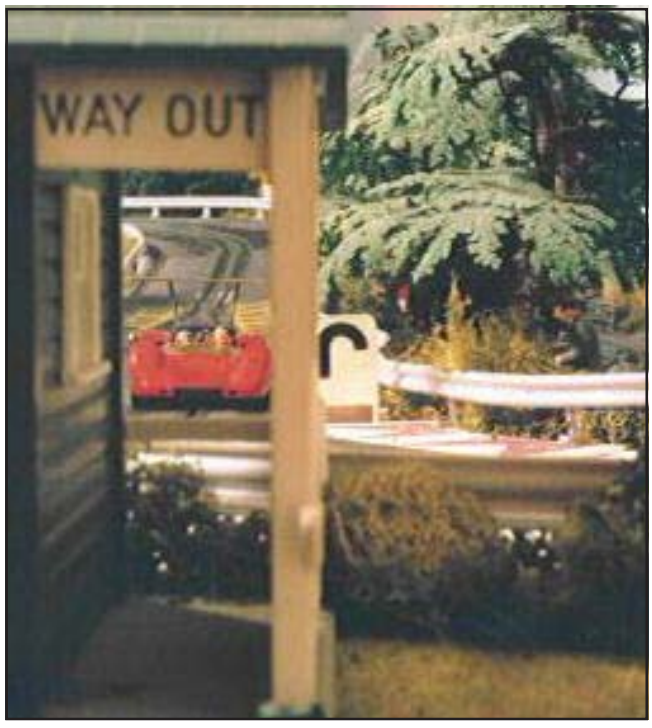
Pits

Bruce fires up the car at the start line and we set off as soon as the official flags us off from his rostrum under the start/finish banner. We gently motor past the eager pit signallers in front of the historic pits complex with its row of race cars awaiting their turn for track time. As we pass I can just make out one of the waiting cars, a replica of the Camoradi team's Maserati "Birdcage" that has been lovingly recreated from scratch by the French constructor Ani-Mini. The row of pits buildings is a hive of activity with busy mechanics, the cars' owners looking on from their vantage points in stands erected above the pits. Attached to each pit is a sign proudly denoting the identity of the marque of car standing in front of it. On the counter of one an owner proudly shows off their haul of trophies. Once past the pits complex Bruce floors the throttle and the M6 prototype surges forward under the "Auto Start" gantry and past the on-circuit race control tower and the only modern building, the scrutineering bay, on this part of the circuit as we power towards the steep "Ramp" turn. The scrutineering bay was constructed by the circuit's owners and designed to sympathetically blend in with the other structures here that were born of a more classic era. This building was even fitted out with a working rolling road to allow race entrants to carry out static tests on their motors.

Bridge

We continue swiftly up a steep climb and the seemingly never ending "Ramp" turn as Bruce plots a perfectly controlled course towards the "Grand Bridge", which crosses the return leg of the track below it. On our way I can spy in the distance to our left the cable car station that serves this track with one of its cabins departing. As the track levels out and crosses the bridge Bruce takes care to continue to steer a central course to stay well clear of the imposing and unyielding bridge parapets. I can still see the tops of the large trees looming above, even at this level, growing up beside the bridge from the ground far below. Most of the trees around this circuit are native species to the region but some are imported varieties that the owners have had specially brought in from central Europe.

As we exit the seemingly narrow confines of the "Grand Bridge" we are confronted by a wide vista depicting rural idyll. We now drift our way through a fast sweep that leads us down a rapid descent through a thickly wooded copse and on towards the "Garden Hairpin. As Bruce slams on the brakes for the imminent turn I can't help but notice the imposing old building directly ahead of us that marks the spectators' entrance to this scenic circuit. Bruce now applies a deft bit of opposite lock as we enter the turn, that has an ever decreasing radius, to bring the car's tail out and ensure that it is properly set up on the exit for the track's long "West Well" main straight.



West Well straight

Bruce again floors the experimental M6's throttle and the car leaps forward. The M6's powerful "Hot Rod Pro" motor rapidly peaks and holds its maximum 26,000 revs as we howl down the full length of the "West Well" straight. My vision has become blurred as the car's chassis is violently jarred by the bumps on this now well worn and uneven part of the track. We speed past an open stand and rows of spectators viewing our car's progress, from behind the safety of the now double row Armco barriers, in yet another wooded copse. We are now heading inexorably towards the fearsome "North Tower" banking, named after the modern yellow tiled structure that dominates and straddles this more recently developed part of the track.

North Tower banking

Bruce makes just a small confidence lift off the throttle as he enters the 180 degree banked turn, that has an awesome 33 degree incline, and steers the car onto his preferred high line. I can now feel the, potentially blackout inducing, vertical "G" loads as the car, now back on full power, squats down onto the track and travels like a shot from a rifle barrel around the circumference of the banking. A recent near tragedy on this part of the track had prompted the circuit's owners to install a revolutionary safety feature to arrest the trajectory of those who exceeded the limits of theirs and their cars' capabilities and "went over the top". A field of Dunlopillo now surrounds the top of this banked turn! Over my right shoulder now, the outline of the nearby cable car station just registers but I am concentrating too hard to really notice. A TV camera operator is tracking our car and has us firmly framed on his monitor. He's trying very hard to block out the inane and banal instructions being shouted at him through his earpiece by the director from his position below him on the TV tower. The director was supplied by a local TV station, to the camera operator's chagrin, and through inexperience is in the habit of missing all the vital action and misdirecting the cameraman. Much to many viewers displeasure.

Goodwood chicane

Just as your senses are pleading to be given some relief, the reality of what you thought was now going to be a short straight run, to provide a little time to reorientate yourself, manifests itself. As we pass some renovated grandstands, their occupants guarded by regulation height debris fencing, one becomes aware that Bruce has thrown out the anchors. We're into the "Goodwood" chicane. Bruce furiously takes the car from lock to lock as the car flies through this vicious right/left flick, narrowly avoiding giving an unyielding wall a glancing blow. It's at times like these that this M6's only concession to modernity, an advanced traction assistance system, comes into its own and ensures that the normally applied laws of physics don't take over. A startled mechanic delivering fuel on his quadbike nearly drives into a pit signaller as we flash past the recently built combined covered stand and pits complex and under the Dunlop footbridge.

Esses

It's now a short run to the "Esses" that takes us back under the imposing buttresses and span of the "Grand Bridge" and back onto the old circuit. I can't help but notice a medical helicopter stationed beside the track to our left, ready to whisk away any poor unfortunate who dares to stray across that thin line that separates them from oblivion. Up to now we seem to have avoided crossing that line. On the right is a rarely occupied building housing one of the electronic timing systems at the track which intermittently announces lap times. In our car we can't hear it but I'm told the voice coming from its loudspeakers has the vaguely familiar tone of a well known TV presenter and race car driver.

Near mishap

Bruce now has the tail out in a well controlled and deliberate slide as he clips the apex at the first part of the esses. We pass a marshal in his lofty post (one of 5 at this track) waving a caution flag and head under the bridge at unabated pace. Bruce suddenly flicks the car hard left on the exit of the last part of this complex , he's just seen the reason for the caution flag. One of a team of mechanics tending to a brace of Lotus 16s in the paddock turn out lanes has strayed too far out onto the track. Bruce holds the valuable M6 prototype on full opposite lock, the tyres scrabbling for grip on the thankfully extended run-off area here, for what seems like an eternity. He just avoids dispatching the hapless mechanic on an unscheduled journey to the first aid hut nearby. The crowd of people in the old covered grandstand opposite let out a gasp of relief. An ice-cream vendor has to make a return trip to the refreshment kiosk to replace the stock he's just dropped in horror at what appeared to be a tragedy about to happen.

Parabolica entrance

We are now on our way to the final monumental corner at the Tingewick circuit, again under the watchful eye of a TV crew, a big corner in all the meanings of the expression. Like its grand old namesake this circuit's "Parabolica" turn really sorts the men from the boys. The corner is entered at near full speed with the car driven and balanced the old way, on the throttle alone, for its full duration. We head tail out under the enormous box girder pedestrian bridge, which was reclaimed from a redundant railway line, past the open grandstands on the outside of the turn. Suddenly mid-corner, heart stoppingly, the M6's tail steps wildly out of line. In a split second Bruce has got it all back in the right direction and we avoid careering off into some old style paling fencing that lines the track at this point. I decide perhaps a trip to the public lavatory we have just blasted past might be in order when the run is over. But the Parabolica hasn't finished with us yet. As we reach the end of this long sweeping turn I suddenly realise it is now ⇨

rapidly tightening as we pass the redundant lap scoring board in the infield area at the back of the restored control tower. No problem, Bruce with a final flourish buries the loud pedal and gets the back end of the car at right angles, "rally style", to the apex of the corner. He then rapidly lifts, provoking wild understeer, the car shoots nose first across the track.. Bruce, with another quick jab at the throttle gets the car straightened out and ready for another blast past the pits, now in the adjacent lane. In the business this is known as the "Rogers" manoeuvre. We are off on another mind bending, 65 ft, 6.4 second lap. ■

T-Marts Chevy

BY ADRIAN NORMAN

Bob Jane is celebrating 40 years in the tyre business and 31 years in franchising. Since it began franchising in 1972, Bob Jane T Marts has grown to become Australia's largest independent retailer of passenger car tyres, wheels and batteries, with serious plans for further international expansion. There are not too many names greater than Bob Jane when it comes to Australian motorsport or business.

In 2002 the famous Bathurst V8 Supercar 1000 race was heavily sponsored by Bob Jane and his T-Marts, 40 years after he won the first endurance event at Mount Panorama. Jane hails from Brunswick in Melbourne and made a name for himself on the racing circuits of Australia in the 1960s. In 1961 Jane won the Armstrong 500 at Phillip Island with Harry Firth in a Mercedes Benz 220SE and the pair repeated their performance again the following year in a Falcon XL. In 1963 the Armstrong 500 moved to Bathurst's Mount Panorama and Jane and Firth won the race in a Ford Cortina GT. Little did they know that this inaugural race would grow into one of the world's great endurance classics. Jane joined forces with George Reynolds in 1964 to again win the race in another Ford Cortina GT. At that time he was not aware how big the Bathurst race would become, or that one day he would be sponsoring it.

Jane won his first of four national titles in a Jaguar MK II in 1962 and repeated the feat again the following year. Almost 10 years later he cemented his name as one of the country's great champions when he won the 1971 and 72 National Touring Car Championships in a Chevrolet Camaro. Jane actively retired from racing in 1984, but has continued to play a major role in Australian motorsport at many levels ever since.

Scalextric have issued many cars reflecting Australian motor sport including a Mini, Rover 3500, Ford Escort XR3i, Ford Sierra Cosworth and Ford Mondeo cars and also two cars to reflect the success of Bob Jane. The first was the C295 Pontiac Firebird 'Bob Jane T Marts' which was available in the Thunderdome set back in the 1980s. The set was only made for the Australian market. Last year Hornby issued another T Mart car, C2413 Chevrolet Camaro which, like the Firebird, was only produced for the Australian market. For more information check out http://www.v8supercar.com.au ■

Time before the catalogue

BY RICHARD WINTER

I am sure that many of you will have a Number 1 catalogue or even a photocopy of one if you have been unable to find an original. I am fortunate to have an original but thought that some of you may not know of the precursors to the annual catalogue that is always so eagerly awaited by us all.

When you bought a Scalextric set in the late 1950s you were invited to join the Scalextric Owners Club and, as a result, the new member was sent the Scalextric Bulletin.

The first of the quarterly Bulletins was sent out in the Winter of 1957 and contained the following items:

* Ferraris on the way - news that the Ferrari was on the production lines to be a fitting rival for the Maseratis (how times have changed!)

* News from New York - How the Polk brothers became the main distributors for the USA.

* Aintree at Home? - Details of the track pieces to build the Aintree Grand Prix Course.

* Skilful Button Pushing - How to win races!

* Personalities of the Month - Peter and Robin Davison from Hambrook in Hampshire (are they still keen on Scalextric and does any member know them now?)

Bulletin No. 2 came out in Spring 1958 with the news that rate of incoming signups to the Club had "stepped up phenomenally" and also details of the new Mark II motor that was now in production. The personality of the month was William Boddy, the then Editor of "Motor Sport". There was also an update on "Those Ferraris!" with the news that the need to concentrate on set production had meant that the single cars were not yet in production so would be in the shops later than originally planned. (Some things never seem to change although latterly the planned production dates are being met!)

Bulletin No. 3 is dated Summer 1958 and was, for the first time, an eight page production with the editorial opening with information on the National Scalextric Model Motor Racing Contest held at Goodwood on Easter Monday. This was also covered in some depth in the centre spread where the greatest concern was that a Mrs. R. Jameson almost beat J. P. Hackett in the final! The front page also had an article on the four lane racing now possible because of the introduction of the new inner track.

The need to design a four lane crossover was described as "not worth our while enduring!" so a bridge was necessary. By the way the so called inner curve had a reference of IC/2. Other articles covered the introduction of TV suppressers so "Auntie could keep watching TV", how long batteries should last, trackside decorations and news that Scalextric were working on kits for stands and pits.

There was a personal report from the inventor of Scalextric, Fred Francis, on his visit to the New York International Toy Fair and includes his view of American roads. There was also, for the first time, some letters from Scalextric enthusiasts covering amongst other topics, production of a paddock, lighted cars and floodlighting the track. The touch of glamour was a picture of a French star, Noelle Adams, playing with her Scalextric set on her hotel room floor!

Bulletin No. 4 was released in the Autumn of 1958 with the news that Round two of the National Drivers Championship had been held in Gamages and that a Northern round would be welcomed. The response to the Scalextric Owners Club badge announced in Bulletin 3 was described as "phenomenal". The cost for the red, blue and silver badges was 2/6d; for those of you too young to know that is 12½p!

Scalextric racers were informed of the Smoothflow transformer that could replace those large batteries but the good news was that this transformer would fit into the battery box ⇨

available in sets. Inside this four page issue was details of a suggested four lane layout. Some letters from members also appeared; including one who was pleading for someone to come and race on his track because he was fed up being beaten by his wife! There were full details of the aforementioned Drivers Championship held at Gamages with Mrs. Jameson again picking up points.

Bulletin No.5 released in the Spring of 1959 was again an eight page publication with the editorial informing the nearly five figure membership of the Owners Club about the take-over by Lines Bros. Ltd. owners of the Tri-ang range of goods. After the announcement of plastic pits, grandstands, events boards etc. was a "Good bye and good luck" to Freddy Francis, the inventor of Scalextric.

Also on the cover was a picture of Stirling Moss and his wife playing with a set and mention was made of what must be the rarest of Scalextric cars; it would appear that a special one off green Vanwall was made and presented to Stirling Moss to "keep him happy".

Inside this eight page publication there was an increased number of Scalextric owners writing to the editor from as far afield as South Africa and British Forces serving overseas in Germany. The central double-page spread had many pictures from the Tri-ang Trade Fair in Park Lane showing the proposed new buildings but not yet as they were finally produced as the grandstand can clearly be seen to be a mock-up and both the Event Board and Control Tower are shown with the elusive round loudspeakers.

Further on in the bulletin there are articles about a track in Maidenhead and one from a track from Small Heath in Birmingham. The track shown in this one was a Miniature Monza and the edition closed with suggestions as to repaint jobs in national colours. I wonder how many readers knew that the racing colour for Belgium was yellow (I didn't).

Bulletin No. 6 which came a full year after No. 5 contained the sad news on the front cover that this was to be the last one. The reason given was that the number of Scalextric owners had grown to such an extent that Minimodels were no longer able to circulate the bulletin to all the owners. It was however intended to replace this with a magazine which would cover all the Tri-ang products including Scalextric and the introduction of the Spot-On cars with their complete highway system.

Details were given of the new 1960 cars, including the Lotus, which was described as a beautiful 1/30th true to scale model fitted with the three pole motor previously used in the railways. As this car accelerated so well a new hand controller was to be introduced in place of the old type press button controller.

Inside this four page publication were details of the new additions to the Scalextric range including the Aston Martin, Lister Jaguar, the start and finish banner, the new outer curves, track signs and of course the new buildings. There were some interesting comments ranging from "if you remove dirt from the guide the whole assembly would work much better" to an apology for the cover of the Scalextric manual in the 1960s sets which showed two cars on the same track and also from America concerning Scalextric's development over there.

The back cover of the final bulletin gave details of the national championships held throughout the country with the finals in Gamages in August 1959. It was noted that the Lines brothers had paid full hotel expenses to each of the heat winners to attend the national finals. The winner of the national finals was an Eric Choral who won his heat in Lewis's in Manchester.

The bulletins gave a good insight into the early days of our hobby and showed how quickly the system evolved from that which was envisaged and developed by Fred Francis.

If you have managed to reach the end of this article without falling asleep, well done. If any of you have an original Bulletin No. 3 that needs a good home please contact me as I have only a copy of this one; I really want to complete the set. ■

Tyres 'R' Us

BY COLIN SPARK

I'd like to tell you about a new slot racing business that has been born out of our enthusiasm for the hobby. R/S Racing is a small concern run by myself and another NSCC member, Bob Rackham. Many of you will know Bob as he has been a member for many years and is well known amongst the more collector biased dealers. His collection contains some fantastic examples of Cox 1/24th and 1/32nd along with a huge selection of collectable Scalextric, MRRC, Ninco, Carrera and of course Fly. His knowledge of chassis, motors and assorted running gear is endless, particularly if it comes to converting static kits into realistic racers or restoring slot-cars from the 60s.

As we both run our own full time businesses, R/S Racing is not intended to be another Pendle or Scale Models. However, as Bob has been friends with Michael Ortmann for over 20 years it seemed logical to take on the sole U.K. distribution rights for Ortmann Tyres. Some of you may have heard of, or even know Michael, as he is a key supplier in the huge slot-car world in Germany.

Ortmann Tyres are all hand made by Michael using a rubber resin compound. I must stress the word *rubber*. These tyres are not silicone, a mistake often made by customers. For racing purposes they offer superb levels of grip without the need for any goop. They also stay clean, therefore maintaining their grip, so do not need cleaning off with sticky tape.

As for race preparation, well I just whack them on the rim and race. They can be glued to the rim using Bostik, making them removable without damage. Sanding couldn't be easier. We have all experienced the difficulty in sanding standard rubber tyres and seen how the rubber rolls off the tyre in little messy balls, clogging up the sandpaper. Ortmann Tyres however, are totally the opposite. When you sand them they sand easily, evenly and leave a grey powder deposit which is simply brushed away.

We have initially been selling tyres to our club members and, like anything new, there were only a few takers and mostly in the lower group. Then when members started to see the grip they could achieve, interest rose. One of our top group drivers fitted a pair of tyres to his Ninco CLK and then won that weekend's round of the Southern League. Since then many of our club members use Ortmann Tyres and at the start of each new series we are always asked if we have the appropriate fitting tyre. Most of the time we can say yes. We can cover every Fly car, most Scalextric and the majority of Ninco.

With over eighty types of tyre available there is an enormous choice for the restorer as well. Tyres from the 60s. and onwards are available, covering Scalextric, Cox, Monogram, Russkit and others. There is nothing better to finish off a restoration than a fresh set of shiny new tyres, especially if they are prototypical. As an example of the diversity available we could supply tyres for a Cox 1/24th Chaparral or a Scalextric Racing Rig (the original ribbed type).

The only problem I've come across is that occasionally a tyre doesn't quite sit flat on the rim. This is due to a small blob of resin on the inside, which when fitted, causes a bump. It is easily remedied by turning the tyre inside out (don't worry it won't split) and trimming off the moulding blob with a scalpel.

The range is continually increasing. We have just received three types of superb alloy rear rims to fit Fly Modern, Classic and Capri/Lancia. These come with a small black grub screw to make fitting simple without having to glue them to the axle.

Tyre prices are £2.50 a pair but some of the more specialist ones (i.e. Cox 1/24th) are more expensive and prices can be quoted on request. Alloy rims are £6.00 a pair including screws. As a special offer to NSCC members we will supply a pair of Fly rims fitted with appropriate Ortmann Tyres for £7.50. P&P is extra, but minimal as there is little weight to post.

We are planning to attend swapmeets in 2003 making our debut at Milton Keynes in February. See you there. ■

The Mobius Track

BYJOHN DILWORTH

I still don't know if it's safe to talk now, but a few years ago we had a techno whizz at the club, chap called Rowan, who put up all sorts of bizarre things, before he disappeared off to reconfigure the computer banking system in Argentina. We've not been able to trace him since the collapse of the economy there, but there are a few things we'd like to ask him about back here....

The last thing he talked us into before he left was this freaky track layout that he figured out on his AppleMac. He said it couldn't be drawn out on paper. We trusted him. Over the course of the weekend before he went to South America he laid it out himself. When we came back into the clubhouse, on a Tuesday it must have been, there was Plexytrack covering the whole place. It was so complicated it was kind of hard to see if it actually linked up into a circuit; no-one could trace a lane directly from start to finish by eye. The really confusing thing was a banked double 360° turn in the middle that incorporated a flyover. It looked more like a reef knot than a circuit. After much discussion as to whether the layout would actually work, Eric made the brilliant suggestion that we should simply launch a car onto a troubleshooting lap and see what happened. He fished an old Ninco McLaren out of a box, threw a few switches, and skimmed it off along the start/finish straight. Everything went well for the first few turns; quite a challenging track, a mix of fast and slows, a longish straight with a very slow kink, before the 360° overpass complex. Round the banking went the McLaren, fishtailing a little, before dropping under the bridge; where it promptly disappeared. It took a while for anyone to notice, we all assumed it had conked out. Eric's cars always do conk out and usually at the most inaccessible part of the track. Justin was just fishing around there to try and recover it, when the thing appeared out of nowhere down the main straight and cracked into the back of his head.

"What happened then?", asked Chloe, rubbing Justin's cranium gently. "I, er, well, search me. Sorry", said Eric lamely, as he realised his thumb was still hard down on the throttle. Justin sat down trackside with a Coke, and Chloe sent off her new Carrera D type, telling us she'd sort it out. Everyone watched breathlessly as the car ran down through the kink and round the bank. The high pitched whizz of the neatly bedded in gear train was the only sound in the place until it stopped abruptly, under the bridge. "Don't look at me!", wailed Justin. "Someone else can go and get it!" No-one did. Chloe watched anxiously for her precious new car, pressing hopefully on the throttle as if something might happen by itself. Which it did. After a minute or so, the whine of the D type reasserted itself in the silent club room, and the car zipped down the main straight again, Chloe just able to brake before the esses to save some more expensive damage. "How the heck did that happen?", asked Cyril, voicing precisely everyone else's thoughts. "I don't want to risk the D type again. Can we use Eric's McLaren until we get this sorted out?", suggested Chloe. "Huh, why my car?", chuffed Eric. "Well, we all know it's ready for the knackers- you've run the thing into the ground, mate. We'll treat you to a new one if it goes west", said Macintyre, the club treasurer. "This time, half of us can watch the bridge, the rest can watch the straight - marshalling positions everyone", said Cyril, while Eric plugged in again, and sent the little Ninco off on its voyage of discovery. Sure enough, as it snicked out of sight under the bridge, it disappeared again, properly. Everyone peered over at the straight and I kept one eye on the lap counter ticking over the seconds. At exactly sixty seconds after it had vanished, there was a collective gasp as a slight twinkling haze coalesced in the air above the end of the straight, just like Captain Kirk materialising in the transporter room, and the McLaren hurtled out of it at full chat. ⇨

"This is weird", said Cyril, again voicing many unspoken thoughts. But Eric kept thumbing the car round the track, and this time everyone peered under the bridge ahead of the car, and most asserted that the same twinkly haze was there as well, just before the car drove into it and vanished. We turned our attention to the straight, and I counted down from the digital display on the lap counter. Past sixty seconds I counted, nearly onto two minutes, when it occured to me to look at Eric's hand. His thumb was off the throttle. "Drive the thing, Eric, or it'll never come round!", I yelled rather abruptly. He immediately hit the trigger, and simultaneously the haze appeared, and the McLaren drove out of it, down the straight and back to the driver's podium. "Well", said Bruno, previously silent, "I don't know what's going on, but why don't we race? It's a good gimmick." So race we did. Gradually the hot cars came out, as everyone realised that this weird phenomena did not seem to have any deleterious effects. Each lap, battling cars would vanish under the bridge, and sixty seconds later, storm out of the special effects onto the main straight. It took a bit of nerve to hang onto the throttle during the disappearing time, and still concentrate well enough to keep speed and control through the esses.

Then the strangest thing happened. Eric's McLaren never came back. Well, not for a long time. There was a smell of roasted armature well before that last lap, the car getting slower and slower, and to be frank it only just made it round the banking. Eric was not good with cars. He waited patiently, then anxiously. The racing stopped as everyone realised what had happened. "Keep your thumb down Eric, you never..." someone was calling out fifteen minutes later, when a healthy scream announced the return of the wounded McLaren. It was going at a phenomenal speed. Eric couldn't collect himself in time and the car rolled over the barriers and into Chloe's hands, upside down. "Where did you get this motor Eric?" she asked, as she handed it back to the driver. "It's the one that came with it" he shrugged. "Well I've never seen a gold Ninco can before", said Chloe. Eric flipped the car off the track, and everyone hunkered round. Sure enough, it had a brand new looking motor, just like a standard looking NC-2, only the can was gold. "Never seen it before in my life", said Eric. Bruno put it on the club dyno. "Well, it's a cool tool", he said. "36,000 revs." The McLaren was unbeatable through the next session of races.

"I want one of those", muttered Bruno, as he put an old Ninco Jordan on the track. "This thing's about to cough too." He drove it under the bridge and sat back for fifteen minutes. After leafing casually through some old NSCC mags, he picked up his throttle again and squeezed. Out of the shining haze came the Jordan, this time at a cracking pace. Bruno eased off the gas, picked up the car, flipped it and gave a smug grin. All racing stopped abruptly. "This is all getting too strange. We should go for a beer and sort it out", said Macintyre. "That's the first thing anyone's said tonight that I understand" said Eric, and we all tottered off to the Fly and Firkin next door.

"I know what's going on" said Bruno darkly, as we all sat down with our pints of Old Pendle's XXX. After three long sips, he carried on. "It's a mobius track." "A what?", chorused everyone, amidst various splutterings and sprayings of XXX. "You know what a mobius strip is", continued Bruno, taking some Rizlas out of his pocket. "You take a strip of paper, like so", he said, ripping a Rizla into a narrow strip. "Then you give it a twist and glue the ends together" doing exactly this with the paper as he spoke. "What you get is a ring of paper with only one side and one edge. It's a mathematical phenomenon. If you try and trace one edge- here- lend me a pencil- like this, you'll find that the top edge is the same as the bottom edge, and the inside is the same as the outside. They all run into each other. What Rowan did with that circuit was make a mobius track. That 360 degree turn with the flyover is the same as this twist in the paper. There is no edge to our track. When the cars hit that turn, they flip into another dimension." He picked up his glass and took a long draught. We all blinked at each other. "Sci-fi Rubbish" said Macintyre. "No it's not", responded Bruno, "Steven Hawkings

postulates about the existence of an infinity of dimensions and parallel universes. We've discovered one. Look." He picked the Jordan out of his pocket, and pointed out a small post-it note stuck to the shining gold motor, covered with illegible script. "Their universe is a mirror reflection of ours, so the writing's reversed" he said. Reflecting the note in the polished blade of his Swiss Army knife, he read out; "These motors aren't cheap, you know. What have you got for us?"

We hurried back to the club. I taped a set of new imported U.S. silicone slicks to the roof of my Proslot Toyota, and drove it slowly under the bridge. Ten minutes later it reappeared on the straight with a backwards post-it which read simply "Thanks". Then Chloe took her D type, and carefully wrote on it backwards "Please keep this as a token of our new friendship across the universe. It's a lovely car". We all tried to dissuade her, but she's a generous soul, and sent her favourite model straight under the bridge. Strangely enough it came back a minute later with a reply, "We couldn't possibly".

Well, it turns out Bruno was right. Our slot club is in regular contact with a parallel dimension. We run pan-dimensional race meetings, exchange gear and news; everything is very similar and generally compatible but always with a slight but significant twist, not forgetting reversed polarity. For instance, we now follow two F1 seasons; over there Schumacher is known as the Saint. After winning the championship at Ferrari he offered himself free to Minardi in order to help them up the grid too. He's now with Arrows. Jaguar are running away with the para-universe championship having lured the ruthless Damon 'Nerfer' Hill out of retirement. Macintyre still reckons we should let the world know about our discovery; he thinks we could make some money, but Chloe says it would all end in tears, with inter-dimensional wars and everything once the politicians get in on it. She's probably right, so don't tell anyone else about this, will you? ■

Maserati 250F (1954)

BY DAVE YERBURY

1952 saw the demise of the 4½ litre unsupercharged or 1½ litre supercharged F1 category. So the 2 litre unblown Formula 2 category emerged to which all Grand Prix were run.

Main contenders for championship honours were the Italian Maserati and Ferrari concerns. Ferrari seemed favourite as they had a choice of two engines, one a 2 litre 12 cylinder giving a high power output but a bit lacking in bottom end torque and the other being a strong 2 litre 4 cylinder engine with loads of torque but lower in peak power output.

Maserati had produced a new engine of 6 cylinders giving a capacity total of 1.99 litres. Each cylinder having an individual carburettor choke with ram pipe, the exhausts feeding into twin pipes which resulted in a very useful power output and torque characteristic.

The 1954 season however allowed for engine capacity of 2.5 litres unblown or 750 c.c. supercharged, all major manufacturers concentrating on the larger unblown engine. Maserati found that their F2 engine could be easily increased to 2.4 litres by increasing the stroke from 72 to 75 mm and boring out the cylinders to 84mm from a previous 76.2mm. And by using 2 spark plugs per cylinder, twin overhead camshafts and three double choke Weber carburettors this engine would develop between 220 and 230 bhp at the start of the season compared to the 260bhp of the D50 Lancia's V8 and the Mercedes Benz straight 8s.

Maserati were so convinced that their new 250F was a sound Colombo inspired design that they fielded a full works team of cars at all Grand Prix; they even offered to build 250F models for private entrants, who having bought them could either maintain themselves or have the cars maintained at the Maserati works permanently.

It was the latter type of Maserati which ⇨

was bought for Stirling Moss in 1954 and with it he put up some stirring performances against the strong factory team which led to the offer of a works drive in the all conquering Mercedes Benz team as Fangio's team-mate the following year. The chassis of the 250F was a complete space frame of small diameter tubing. The front engine drove a 4 or 5 speed gearbox built in unit with the differential and final drive. The De Dion rear suspension used a transverse leaf spring, the front suspension differed by being fully independent by means of unequal length wishbones with coil springs. Two leading shoe drum brakes were used at all 4 corners and to aid cooling aluminium drums were fitted featuring transverse fins on the outside.

The 250F was steadily developed during 1955/56 and by 1957 it ran successfully on fuel injection. The system adopted was not the common rail type but injected directly into the cylinder head; the same system was used by Mercedes. By now the bodywork of the car had been cleaned up although most purists prefer the original 1954 model on which I have based this latest glass fibre body for the AA Bodies nostalgia range.

The 57 model had a lower driving position and only the driver's head and shoulders were visible. To achieve this the engine had to be tilted and twisted to allow the drive shaft to pass to the left-hand side of the driver. Fangio returned to Maserati in 57 and with this car he clinched his 5th world title in an epic season which included his dramatic win at the Nuremberg Ring against Hawthorn and Collins.

After the successful 57 season Maserati were struggling financially and were forced to withdraw their cars from official participation in Grand Prix racing. Due to the 250F's success, a lot of cars had been sold privately and some found a ready market in the Tasman formula in Australia and New Zealand where some of them carried on racing into the 1960s. Some of these cars have now been repatriated and are regular competitors in the historic racing scene bringing back memories of Moss and Fangio racing these wonderful cars.

Number 4 in the A.A Bodies Nostalgia range the Maserati 250F is again one of my all time favourites. There are many of these magnificent cars still racing today. I chose this early 250F as I prefer the shape to the later high tailed version modelled by Airfix. Although the funny thing is the car I chose was converted to a high tailed version, to test the forthcoming V12 engine, and is still in this configuration today.

The chassis was made simply as before (as the Lancia Ferrari) but at the front I shortened the brass strip and screwed an MRRC steering unit onto a wooden block glued into the body shell. The exhaust is just thin plastic tube painted but for realism, you could use aluminium. Wheels and tyres are from SRM of Harrow who are still in business offering items from long ago including their vac bodies and plastic bodied sports and F1 cars. ■

NINCO track test

50273 McLaren F1 GTR "Fina"

50277 New Mini

50277 New Mini

reviewed by Graeme Thoburn

When the real "New Mini" was released, I, like many others, wasn't quiet sure whether or not I liked the look of it. I have always had a soft spot for the original but, eventually, "New Mini" grew on me.

Consequently, when Ninco decided to make a 1/32nd scale version I was eager to get my hands on one to play with. I am not interested in whether Ninco have made an exact scale replica of the 1.1 car; they probably haven't but they have made an excellent likeness.

The moulding is very well defined and although detailing is fairly basic, it is very crisp and the tampo printing is superb. The underpan is the most unusual aspect of the car as the front and rear axles push in from underneath, I suppose to make replacement easier and less time consuming but be warned, the rear axle is a tight fit. This means that the wheel arches are part of the underpan and not the body and this feature will give the racers amongst you a problem. The body fits to the underpan with six small locating lugs, one on the body above each front wheel arch and two either side below the door which stops the car body curling in above the sill. This prevents any body roll and means the car has to be raced rigid. This isn't a problem when run with the NC2 motor and the strong cylindrical magnet, but, why make a slot-car Mini with the same motor as a Mercedes CLK? Has anyone ever seen a full scale race between these two? I think not!

The Mini, in my opinion, should be raced in the same class as Méganes, Clios and Séats, cars which came equipped with NC1s. At the Essex/GT Raceway Club we race Ninco Rally with NC1 and the small bar magnet and therefore I decided to alter the Mini.

I had to remove the excess plastic where the locating pin locks the car onto the display base so that the magnet fits in a position similar to the Mégane etc. I then fitted the NC1 with adaptor brackets.

With the original configuration (NC2) the Mini sped round the Ninco track as if on rails and only sheer carelessness could cause a de-slot. This seemed pretty boring and almost like the car had a guide at the rear as well.

Initially the altered car (NC1) was very unforgiving on bends, tending to roll off and this was solved by using harder rear tyres from another car. Now the Mini is much better to race and it is possible to slide the car on bends rather than roll off. I don't think that it will race quite as well as a Mégane but time will tell.

To sum up, a great looking car which, as an out of the box racer, will please the majority of buyers and maybe some of you racers out there. I do think that it would be better with a normal type chassis but as I said earlier, run standard and you won't notice the difference.

Dear Hobby Company,

Please ask Ninco to produce an updated NC1 etc.

50273 McLaren F1 GTR "FINA"

reviewed by Tony Secchi

The basis of the original Le Mans GTR was the incredible Fl road car, McLaren's ultimate statement in the Supercar lexicon, retaining the carbon fibre monocoque chassis, mid-mounted 6.1 litre BMW V12 engine, transverse six speed gearbox and the unique central driving position.

Regulations in bodywork, aerodynamics and engine management were made according to the race rules but, by fine tuning, the BMW unit increased its power from 627 to 636 bhp and boosted torque from 479 lb/ft. to 518 lb/ft. Updates to chassis, transmission, clutch, brakes gearbox, driveshafts and suspension were also made.

In this configuration, six of the GTRs were entered for the 1995 Le Mans, two of them run by Ray Bellm's GTC Motorsport. In 1994 Ray had ordered a McLaren road car and, being a personal friend of Ron Dennis, was largely responsible as the motivating force behind turning the car into a racer - he was actually the first customer for the car.

These models were what became known as series 1 "short tailed" versions and in due course the 'Ueno Clinic' sponsored F1 GTR driven by Dalmas/Lehto/Seikiya won the 1995 race.

Ninco do nine exclusively different versions of this car as follows -
50129 'Ueno Clinic' dark grey and silver
50130 'Harrods' yellow
50140 'Gulf 'blue/orange
50142 'road car' orange
50153 'Art Sports' red/white
50171 'Tag Heuer' silver
50188 'A day off' black
50232 'Frank Miller' orange/black
plus the subject of this review 50273 'Fina'

The model - race #38

This is the latest liveried version of the GTR which ran at Le Mans in 1996 driven by Jacques Laffite, Michel Duez and our own Steve Soper. It was mainly sponsored by the "Fina" petrol company with subsidiary "Radio Le Mans" British/French backing, but it also had semi-BMW factory input and carried the characteristic "checkerboard" motif in red, dark blue and light blue on a white base.

The layout of the Ninco chassis is well known and well documented so I will not repeat it here. However, there are a few major changes from the very first Ninco models of this make that were produced in the late nineties that I will dwell on.

Firstly, the more powerful NC2 (70128) motor replaces the NC1 (70109) present in the original models. The NC1 weighs 17g, revs at 16000 rpm and produces 230 mA - in contrast the NC2 weighs 32g, revs at 18100 rpm and produces 360 mA. It is longer, at 35mm to the 25mm of the NC1.

Secondly, the original models had the 900 gauss rectangular magnet and in the present model, this has been replaced by the 3500 gauss circular magnet to compliment the more powerful motor.

The basic specification is as follows -
o/a height-35 mm
o/a width-60 mm
o/a length-132 mm
o/a rear track-64 mm
wheelbase-84 mm
all up weight-90 grammes
body weight-27 grammes

Chassis and body are the same length with the pick up centre pivot at 15 mm from the front and the solid rod front axle a further 17 mm back. The magnet sits just in front of the engine in a plastic collar and is central within the chassis, 35 mm from the front axle - 49 mm from the rear one which has a 27 toothed plastic crown wheel mated to a 9 toothed brass pinion mounted on the in line motor. The rear tyres are 20 mm dia. x 10 mm wide slicks. The body has a full-length interior from the front of the dashboard to the rear of the engine bay with a centrally mounted bust of the driver.

The test

I would have liked to have tested this updated GTR on a like for like basis against the original, but as you can see from the specification this

would not have produced a fair comparison. Just for the record, I have an "Art Sport" version of this model that has a best of 44.52 secs. for a 10-lap sprint around my circuit which puts it in the slower echelon of the cars in its class.

So I looked around for a more truthful comparative test and decided to run it against my own Ninco BMW V12 LMR which has a similar specification, albeit with a lowered magnet and several races under its belt. It has a best of 42.52 secs. for the ten laps.

As usual, I ran the GTR using the chassis only for 100 laps and with the body on for a further 25. This gives the tyres, gears, pick up braids etc. time to bed in and shows up any faults in the handling.

The car, as to be expected, was extremely quick in a straight line, the gear meshing sounding smooth and the transfer of power very quick. However, on my short track too much speed into the corners can mean too slow traverse around the curves as you have to lift off the throttle much earlier. (Just to remind readers: 55'.0" track length, 45 ohm Parma controller, and no brakes). After some (many!) de-slots I managed a best of 43.42 secs. for the 10 lap run. With a bit more practice and learning, I felt that I could improve on that.

Summary

The car is basically a dated format with an engine update and, as such, is quite effective. Like all my NC2 Ninco models it is not really suited to my track with its longest straight of only 2.7 M. It would be much better suited to club circuits with much longer straights, for which I presume, it was designed. Nevertheless, with a bit of "tuning" it will make a welcome addition to my racing stable as well as holding its own in regulated competition. It is a nice looking car with good detailing and if any members haven't got this ubiquitous model or want to update then this basic but sound version can be thoroughly recommended. ■

Walkden Fisher profile

BY JEFF DAVIES

Much to my regret I never met Walkden Fisher, but even so he has proved a major influence on my life though his work and his love of rail racing. Walkden was a artist in all senses of the word in everything that he did (he died in 1985). He was a commercial artist, a writer and illustrator for Model Maker and for countless other publications, leaving behind him a body of work that will be enjoyed by an immeasurable number of people for millennia to come.

Most of all he was a passionate enthusiast about modelling. He built an unbelievable model train layout that even nearly sixty years later people are still telling me how wonderful it was, even down to the most incredible level of detail such as scale models of cycles for the cycle shop. He was a leading light of the Southport Model & Engineering Club, which had within its membership a wide range of model enthusiasts from diesel rail cars, aeromodelling, model trains etc. that covered just about any modelling activity practised at that time. He lived in Southport, drove a Morgan and smoked a pipe, and in the 1930s became friendly with the Mercedes racing team. The most important thing he did as far as we are concerned is that he built the first rail racing track in the basement of his house (removing the train layout to do so) in 1955 and was at the very forefront of the rail racing movement.

Walkden was a believer in scale accuracy, and this was reflected in all his work. He was a founding member of the ARRA rail racing club and their track was built by Walkden in his basement in Princess street in Southport in 1955. He created the detailed scenery for this track and it was magnificent; the track was landscaped and the walls were painted with suitable backgrounds to complete the effect. Pictures of it were used in numerous publications, including Model Maker, where an article described the building of the track.

Using his tremendous artistic ability he built beautifully engineered rail cars that were incredibly successful. In the 1956 Southport Grand Prix Walkden achieved a clean sweep, winning both the Sport Car 100 and the International Grand Prix, using his Mercedes 300 SLR and his Mercedes W196 respectively. Both races were won in record times. Walkden proxy entered his 'C' type Auto Union in the Kalamazoo clubs Grand Prix where, driven by Tom Cook, it won the semi-final race. His cars held lap records everywhere.

When rail racing returned the restored 300 SLR rebodied as a 1955 Mercedes Streamliner Grand Prix car won eight rail races in a row. This was the chassis so painstakingly built by Walkden that inspired me to reintroduce rail racing. For the last twenty years I have had a group of favourite slot-cars which I had bought in 1982 when a friend and I had put an advert in Motor Sport "wanted old slot-cars". My friend received a reply and bought someone's collection of cars, and I chose several of them for my own collection. My friend had the rest. That person who sold his collection turned out to be Walkden Fisher. I had always admired the care with which these cars had been built, and have raced the AC Cobra many times. So even before I was given the two Walkden Fisher Mercedes rail car chassis in 2000, I had some of his models. I had really liked the way he built his cars and I have also seen his paintings which I admired. A man with so many talents and abilities, who could truly be said, to be one of the founding fathers of rail and slot racing. ■