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BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

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The NSCC

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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Slot-car driver aids banned - exclusive!

In a surprise move last week the leading slot-car manufacturers were summoned to a meeting in a Heathrow hotel by Max Mosley, F.I.A. president. Following his successful restructuring of F1, Max announced that model motor racing could not remain immune from the winds of change that were blowing through the top echelons of the sport.

It was announced that the following changes would take place with immediate effect:

- 1) Any form of magnetic adhesion would be banned from the British GP onwards.
- 2) All motors would be limited to 10,000 rpm and would have to last for at least two years without replacement.
- 3) Any form of electronic control, such as the Hornby "Challenger" system, to be banned immediately.
- 4) In order to save costs, exotic metal cast parts must be replaced with moulded plastic.
- 5) A reward of £10,000 to be offered to any manufacturer who can prove that a rival is using launch or traction control.

Simon Kohler of Hornby Hobbies reacted strongly to the news; in an exclusive interview he stated, "Scalextric is at the leading edge of model motor racing technology and we cannot tolerate this attempt to force the sport back into the dark ages of the RX motor and lack of rear end grip. We shall be joining forces with Ninco and challenging these changes in the courts."

A spokesman for Vanquish cars agreed, "we have spent vast sums of money developing our differential traction control system; it is up to the others to raise their game to our level."

And Finally - fanciful? - possibly - but there are signs that the backlash has begun. NSCC members are increasingly beginning to question where the hobby is heading; the modern slot-car is a true work of art but manufacturers would do well to heed the current F1 crisis. Toy plastic cars generally follow the trends set by their full size counterparts.

Till next month

Brian





Do it yourself

One of Hornby's more intriguing releases for this year is a range of plastic kits. These are branded *Hornby* and NOT *Scalextric* but it doesn't take a huge amount of brain to see that these are based on several of the current Scalextric range.

Each kit contains a plain white bodyshell and all of the body parts to build the kit – some are chromed as appropriate. A set of transfers is provided for decoration. Where the kit differs from the Scalextric car is in the chassis. Each kit has a plain chassis with some chassis detail moulded into it. There are no provisions for motors, guides, lights etc.

However, a small amount of investigation shows that the body shell is identical to that on the Scalextric cars – so here is a source of bodies for repair or decoration in your own racing liveries. In fact with the spares now detailed on the Scalextric web site you can build your own complete car.

What's more the kits have a very reasonable recommended retail price too. Each is available in two versions. One has a couple of pots of paint and some glue and the other is just the plain kit. RRP is £7.99 for the versions with paint and £6.99 for those without (these are the "A" versions). Expect to see them in the Spring.

The kits available are:

- K2000/K2000A Chevrolet Camaro
- K2001/K2001A Ford Focus
- K2002/K2002A Ford Mustang
- K2003/K2003A Mitsubishi Lancer
- K2004/K2004A Porsche 911
- K2005/K2005A Subaru Impreza

Spares

The Scalextric web site now contains a new spares section with service sheets for many of the new cars. Under the products section of the web site, choose product catalogue and then use a product code of SS to see them. Spares MUST be ordered through your normal retailer and cannot be ordered directly from Hornby. At least you can now ensure your retailer orders the right parts.

New cars

The new cars so far in 2003 have been the following, all non-Sport versions.

- C2366 MG Lola Le Mans 2001 "No33"
- C2367 MG Lola Knighthawk "No30"
- C2463 Ford GT MkII No2 Le Mans 1966
- C2464 Ford GT MkII 1966 Le Mans "No1"

The Scalextric Enthusiasts Club car has also been arriving with members whose subscriptions are due at the beginning of the year. This is in bright red with white sills.

- C2424 Ford GT40 MKII "Collector's Club 2003"



The spreadsheet contained in the February issue is, of course, out of date now. It was compiled in mid-December and lots of new cars were released right at the end of the year. The plan is to update the list regularly as new cars are released and to maintain it as an accurate list of cars actually produced. If there are any mistakes or you would like to see different information - please let me know.

RMS on the web

RMS V1.12 is available as a download from the Scalextric website www.scalextric.co.uk. This fixes several issues with the first version and is much more robust. Several more car images are available for RMS too. I'm sure you know these are downloaded from within the RMS software itself.

In the press

You may have seen several press releases from Hornby in your daily paper. The Challenger system is certainly making good PR for them.

The astonishing growth in their share price has undoubtedly influenced their nomination in the PLC Awards 2002 sponsored by Price WaterhouseCoopers in association with the

London Stock Exchange and the Financial Times. They are nominated in the Company of the Year category. The public could vote during February and the results will be announced on March 13th. See <http://www.plc-awards.co.uk/> for more details. Good luck Hornby!

Coming soon

Development of this year's new cars continues quickly. Hornby have kindly supplied pictures of the new Mini and IRL cars in prototype form. Both promise a high degree of detail and track performance to match. ■



Milton Keynes Swapmeet

BY NIGEL COPCUTT

With the recent spell of snow and ice I had some worries about this year's event, but fortunately that cleared during the previous week, and we were left with a day that started very wet, but ended with the sun shining - a rare event in MK in February!

Recently I have noticed a resurgence of interest in slot-cars after what seemed to me like a lull in the hobby, and this was borne out by the 78 tables being fully booked earlier than usual, and another record attendance. Stallholders came from all over Great Britain, plus Spain, Germany, Belgium, France and of course South Africa. I don't know where all the members came from, but there were certainly plenty of different accents; and Scottish and Irish paper money, and Euros, in circulation.

At this point I should tell you about all the rare and expensive models for sale but, frankly, that is just not possible. In my 20 years as a club member I have never seen so many superb items, in such good condition, dating as far back as the early 60s. The choice was simply stunning. Where people like Phil Smith, Derek Cooper, Brian Walters and Roger Barker turn it up from, I don't know, but they must put in a lot of time seeking it out for you.

But it wasn't just the obsolete models attracting the crowds, the vast quantity of new releases were just as popular, and probably suited more people's wallets. Certainly Pete Roberts, Pendle, Mark Scale, Slots and Models and Jim Parsons seemed very busy all day. I didn't see one person leave the hall without at least one carrier bag bulging with purchases.

And in amongst the tables already described were those offering things that little bit different, like BTS and all their spares; Steve DeHavilland and his resin slot-cars from the 50s and 60s; Naseem with his array of models from all over the world and Max Winter with his hand built slot-cars. If you wanted it, it was there!

2003 is the 17th year of NSCC swapmeets in Milton Keynes, and the 22nd event held there. Having organised every one of those, I think it

is time to thank the stallholders who have attended just about every time, people like Barry and Josefine Smith, Steve and Elaine De Havilland, John Jude, Geoff Spencer, Pete and Jackie Roberts and Brian Walters. Such devotion is admirable.

And while I am in the 'thanking' mood, I much appreciated the fact that about a dozen members went out of their way to thank me, as they left the hall, for organising the show. But that is all I do, it is the stallholders who collect the stock and drive the many miles to be there.

While Milton Keynes is the longest running NSCC show, and has more tables and more people through the door than the other NSCC events, I strongly urge those of you still to visit a club event, to get out there to any of the others. Certainly if you live in England there is one in your area, and although you might be happy buying from web sites or the journal adverts, you can meet the people you have only previously spoken to, taste the flavour of thousands of models displayed before you, and actually see those models you have only heard about. It's worth going for the adrenaline rush alone!

In conclusion I would like to say to the (few) members who persist in sneaking in through the fire exit doors to avoid paying their £1.50, I hope you spent the money you saved on something really good. Particularly the tall guy with the grey hair and beard who is getting really good at it, he should be the number of times he has done it! Also, thanks to Bob Bott to whom I send a steady stream of people who have come to join the club. How do you cope with that, and run a stall, Bob? I trust the other committee members pull their weight? The refreshments were lovingly (?) prepared and served by my wife Jackie, who, for some reason, didn't want to cook my dinner when we got home, so any complaints better come to me!

Now, if we could only get that area out the back concreted over so that the stallholders didn't have to park on the grass, EVERYONE would be happy..... ■

Electric rail racer with steering

Model Maker - July 1958

FROM VINE FENNEL

With improvements in tracks the lighter car is coming into its own, but even on very smooth tracks some form of steering seems essential where sharp bends exist. In order to expand our stable to take in a wide variety of tracks we have recently constructed a car using as many commercial parts as possible, in order to see just what remains to be carried out by the individual. We could, of course, have used one of the MRRC die-cast chassis units, but in aiming for really light weight we decided that we would test for operation and durability a Formica chassis.

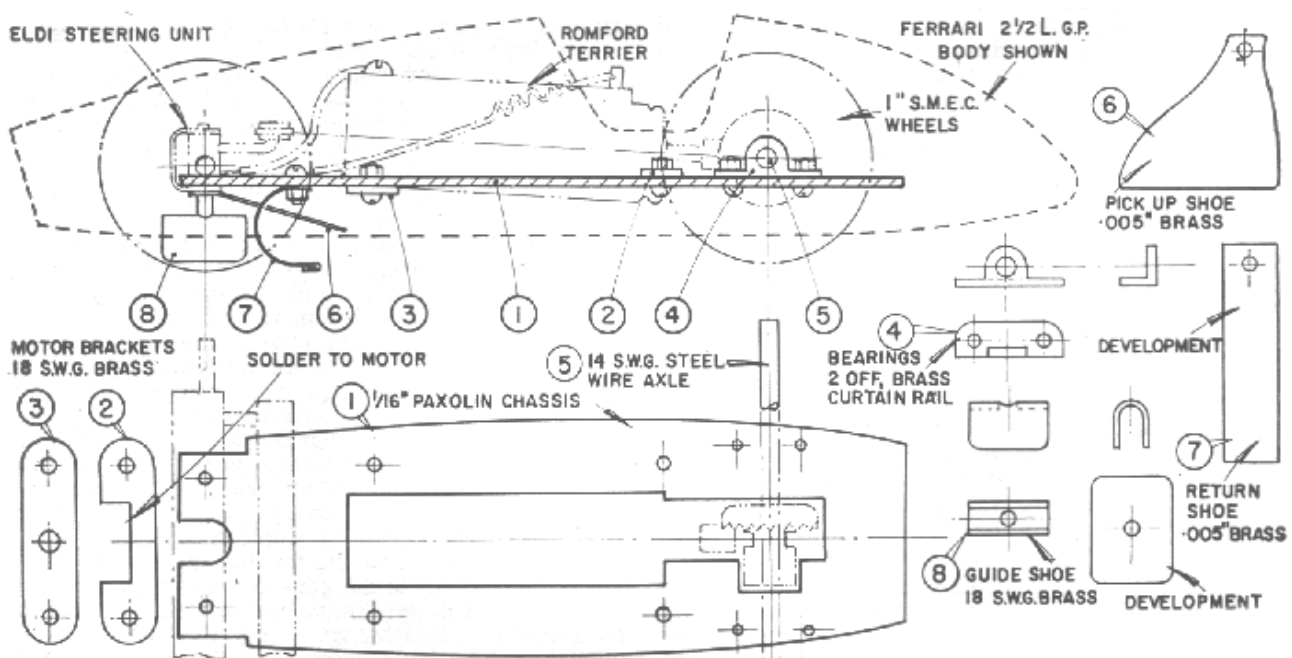
Off-cuts of Formica are usually available from dealers supplying cut-to-size panels, but in the event of difficulty Paxolin or a similar material can be used. If metal (Dural sheet, etc.) is used it will be necessary to insulate the positive wiper from the chassis.

Lay out a plan view of the required car, marking axle positions, etc., directly on to the material. Pencil usually suffices. Cut out the chassis (1); any fine-toothed saw can be used on Formica, and most of ours was cut with a fret-saw.

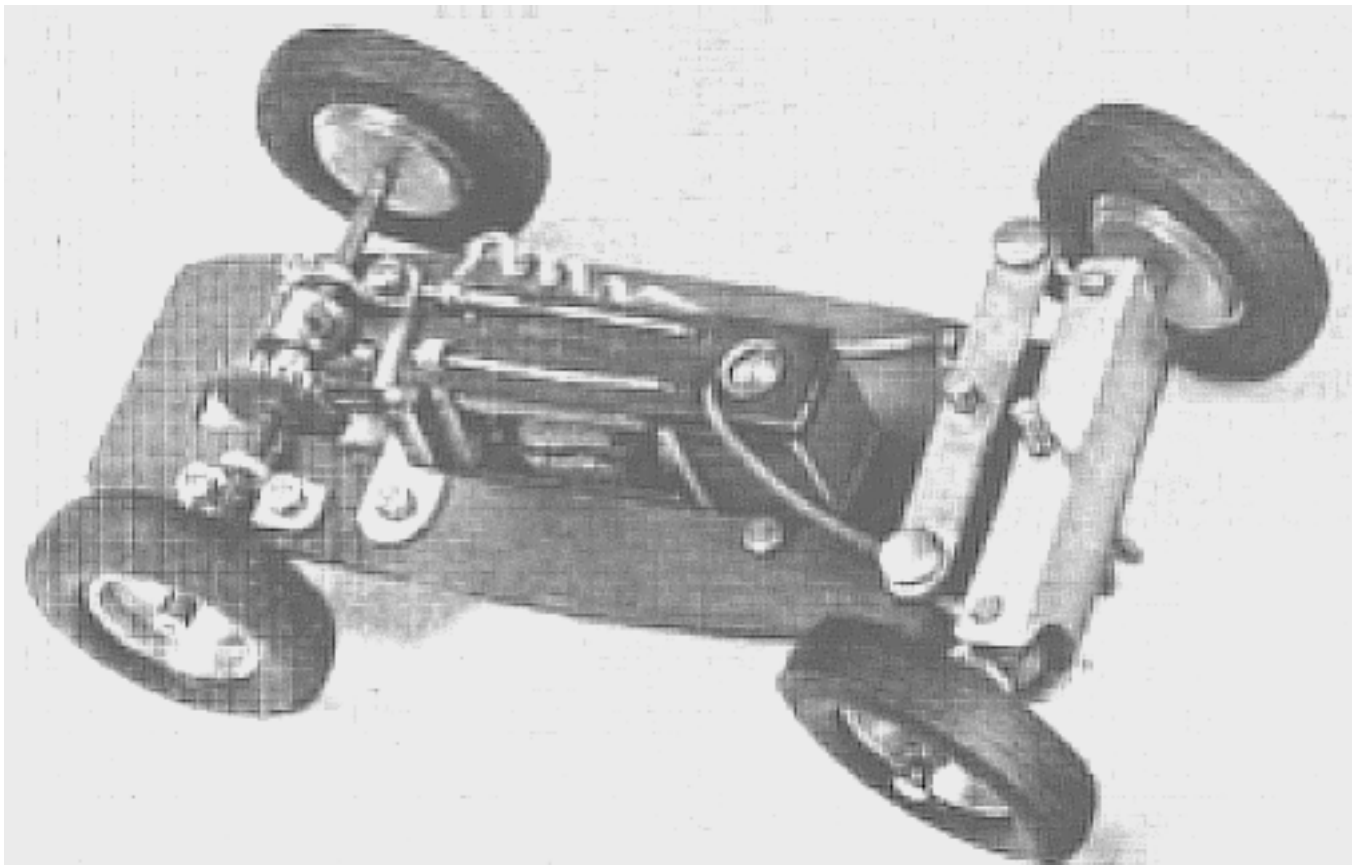
We were anxious to try a Romford Terrier in competition in 1/32 scale, and decided to install this motor "on edge". In order to obtain sufficient head clearance and avoid excessive angling of the motor to line up the gears, the motor was dropped through the chassis. The required hole for this and gear clearance was marked in pencil and fretted out.

Two brackets were made (2 & 3) from 18 swg brass, the front one clamping to the motor assembly bolt and being bolted beneath the chassis with two 10ba bolts. The rear one is soldered to the motor end cap and bolts on top of the chassis, again with two 10ba bolts. Slight adjustment of the motor position can be made with paper or shim packing, and the mounting is extremely rigid, providing some stiffening for the chassis itself.

The rear axle (5) is fitted to the chassis by means of two small brackets (4) filed from brass curtain rail, drilled and reamed for a good running fit on the axle. Two 10ba bolts retain each of these bearings, the chassis holes being spotted through with the gears in mesh to ensure correct positioning. The customary Eldi contrate gears are fitted.



Plan not to scale



Simple layout of Vic Smeed's latest car, utilising Romford Terrier, and commercially available parts, plus oddments of Formica, curtain rail, etc.

At the front end the chassis is shaped to fit inside the Eldi steering unit, which again is bolted to the Formica with 10ba bolts. One of these bolts requires a lead soldered to it before dropping into position, the negative wiper (6) being fitted beneath the chassis to this bolt. The positive wiper (7) is bolted independently to the chassis clear of any other structure. Both wipers are kept near the front axle line in order to maintain contact despite any sliding of the car's rear end.

SEC wheels are fitted to our model, but any of the several types of wheels now on the market should be suitable. Once the wheels are in position a check can be made for the required height for the guide shoe (8). This is simply bent from brass and soldered to the centre pivot pin of the steering unit, the pin being cut or filed to correct length.

Checks must always be made for true alignment - all four wheels touching the ground, axles square to the chassis from ahead and above, and so on.

Bodywork from such a chassis offers no problem, our preference still being for hollow block balsa which can be screwed to the chassis plate. If the plate is made to the full car width, the underbody can be glued in place and only the top made detachable. Free clearance for the steering unit must be provided.

With an embryo body our car weighed just 2 1/2 ounces and proved fast, particularly in acceleration. Wiper pressure is, however, fairly critical and half-an-ounce of ballast over the front end is being added. To prevent wheel spin at the drive end this ballast is being arranged over or slightly behind the front axle; the exact position will depend on the track on which the car is running. ■

Faster than a speeding bullet

BY DOUG GRAVER
(a legend in his own mind)

After seeing Fly cars and others get progressively faster as each model is released, I found it very interesting to read the article by Rob Smith in the January issue.

Does the “Challenger” system threaten the actual point of being at a race event? In the article it said that; “the CLK is very difficult to beat”. How long will it be before we see this system adapted and used at race events? Armed with an on/off switch, a 50,000rpm NC6, a magnet so strong it wipes all data from the race computer hard drive every time it passes, bending light in its wake. It’s now only a matter of time before we can send our cars in to race events and text message the results on our phones. What fun. Why turn up? If your car now has the technology to “know” the track, it will no longer need the idiot on the other end. (I speak for myself).

Yes, I know I moaned about speed in the past and people are correct in saying, “that’s what racing is all about”. We all like to win, that’s what sets us apart from the people who play with train sets but some of the new motors and magnets are fast making 1/32 scale races like HO sets.

Graeme Thoburn of GT Raceway said how silly it is to see a Mini go the same speed as a Mercedes CLK. When will our racing become more realistic?

Your wife/girlfriend will tell you that quicker may not be better. For those who haven’t had this pleasure with a female, it’s advisable not to proceed at the speed of a NC3 on your first occasion with the female gender. Also, don’t ask for a marshal at every bend and cheer when you’ve finished.

I said years ago I would never be one of those old gits who says; “it was better in my day” but, alas, I now have to say it’s becoming just that. I have turned into an old git. I don’t see the fun in cars becoming a blur as they hit the main straight. When cars can take bends at the

equivalent of 500 MPH, my watch being forced from my arm as it follows the cars magnet down the track, has resulted in me saying the very thing I said I wouldn’t say. I don’t mean racing old BRMs, Bentleys, TR7s or any other of those oldie world cars; that would be even sillier, just something you can see and control.

One of the best races I ever saw and took part in was at Southend Slot Racing club. The sight of 4 SCX lorries rattling down the straight to the first bend will remain one of the funniest sights and enjoyable races ever.

Thankfully SCX still have the RX range in their cars so my favourite type of racing can still be achieved, just remove the magnet and race. Old gits like me can still race controllable cars.

One thing which has improved is the quality of the cars. No one can say Scalextric haven’t done wonders with their cars in the last few years, marred only by their persistence in selling crap figures. Their cars are getting better all the time and I can only wonder if the release of Fly and Ninco had them worried. Things have improved, remember the Scalextric Lister Jaguars? I’ve heard people say they remind them of their childhood. It does me; remember what you filled your nappy with? Let’s hope those aren’t re-released as a “cars to match our figures” range.

The members of Brands Hatch kindly gave me SCX pit crews for Christmas so a big thanks to them. Now I can dump those Scalextric figures in their world war 2 outfits for more year 2000 pit stops.

I find cars I just have to have constantly on the net. If having to put up with cars travelling at warp speeds means that cars will get better in their looks, then so be it. They look great in my cabinet rather than travelling at warp speeds round tracks and I’m getting an even older git all the time so my eyes can’t take those speeds. Seeing that my chances of appearing in members moments are about as slim as one of my uncensored letters appearing in the ⇒

Journal, may I just say that Carrera have produced, in my eyes, the most beautiful slot-car ever; the Pontiac GTO Custom or "Re-entry" as its number plate says. The Carrera T'Bird follows a close second. They really have made some great Yank cars lately.

Let's hope someone else has a point of view on lightning speeds and creates some lively debate rather than pages on the advantages of the red transformer over the blue transformer.

What has happened to the legend that is Graham Smith? A few more cage rattling letters from him might spark some debate.

So summing up: things to ask your women folk.

- 1 Is the quicker you finish the better? (My wife says yes in my case).
- 2 Does size matter?

Things to ask yourself.

- 1 What part of Doug Graver does he talk out of?
- 2 What am I doing at my local slot club this week? (Clue; same as last week but with a different car.)
- 3 What is the point of going so fast I can't see what car I've put on? Oh my God! I've just remembered; it's only a kid's toy.

The real reason for this piece, apart from winding someone up, is to once again plug the best club in the universe, Brands Hutch where every race needs strategy and not just fingers down till the end.

One of the new exciting features for Brands Hutch this year will be the renaming of the lanes. Instead of the boring red and blue lanes, red now becomes "Lily of the Valley which is an attractive hint of white" and blue becomes "Turquoise leaning more to the green side of the spectrum rather than the blue". These must be stated in full before your car can be put back on the track. What fun, can't wait for both cars to come off.

The all new 2003 site will be up and running in the near future. It has the ever popular competition page with a chance to win the MiniAutos Corvette and the all new Scratch

built page with top painting tips from Dave (paint job) Pearman. Photos of the new extended track section and explanations of the new tyre choice, weather change and longer pit stops computer program. Also the new feature; rain at Brands Hutch which will make for the most varied racing at any club, so check it out at; www.brands.hutch.btinternet.co.uk. It's more than just round and around racing on a plank of wood. See why over 7500 people have browsed this amazing site. Do I win £5?

OK Doug, I give in - a prize car is yours, for sheer persistence if nothing else!

However, as you maintain on your website that people only go to the Ramsgate weekend so that they can make a nice fat profit selling the commemorative car I trust that you will either keep it in the cabinet or thrash it to death on your circuit.

Should anybody see a Ramsgate 2002 car on ebay bearing certificate number 40 with a Leigh-on-Sea seller perhaps they could let me know! ■

High quality parts required?

BY JOHN CARMICHAEL

A friend in Australia has a way of making repro parts in plastic to a very high standard. The clear parts are especially impressive - excellent clear glass, not too brittle and definitely no yellowing. They are almost indistinguishable from the original.

The process is labour-intensive - parts are made by hand and to order - so will only be available in very small numbers. The focus is on high quality - not volume! Prices will be approximately £2 - £6 per piece depending on volume made.

If any members would like to email me with parts required and approximate quantity, I will pass this on. Also, if there are other parts people require, please let me know - if there is enough interest (and an original example to take a mould from) he could be persuaded to make them! Chroming is not yet available though!

A list of parts is given below - I know I have a dozen C8s needing screens!

B1 Typhoon Screen
B2 Hurricane Screen
C2 Matra Djet Screen/roof unpainted
C6 Panther Screen
C8 Lotus Indy Screen
C9 Ferrari Sledge Screen
C56 Lister Tail light moulded in clear red plastic
C68 Aston Tail Light moulded in clear red plastic
C69 Ferrari 250 Tail Light moulded in clear red plastic
C74 Healey 3000 Screen
C75 Mercedes 190 Screen
C76 Mini Gearbox Cover moulded in black plastic
C83 Sunbeam Tiger Headlight
C83 Sunbeam Tiger Screen
C83 Triumph TR4 Screen
Renault 5 Front sidelights
Various Drivers heads moulded in blue or red, face painted.
C5/6/8/9 Driver/mirrors moulded in white

FJ all Screens
Guide - Mercedes 190/ Healey
TV tower - Operator
TV tower - Ladder ready painted
TV tower - TV monitor
TV tower - Technician ready painted

It occurred to me a little while ago that there is now quite a large number of people making repro parts for slot-cars. I started to do some research so that a complete list could be published in the Journal; as usual though, the project ground to a halt due to lack of time.

Would anybody like to finish the job? I can provide you with the information I have already gathered.

Please get in touch if you can offer any help. ■

BITS AND PIECES

World's most expensive slot-car set?

Did you see the Auto Express magazine's Christmas slot-car double page spread featuring various UK race/rally drivers, including 2002 BTCC champion, James Thompson, who took part in the Pegasus Slot Car Challenge? *Writes Peter Novani*

Racing was held on a massive 40 metre eight lane Ninco layout. Apparently it cost the Ford Park Raceway club the princely sum of "£25,000" to construct. I assume that the sum was either a printing error or that the slot rails must have been cast in Stirling Silver!

Scalextric on Teletext

With the development and improvements that Scalextric have made to their products to add to the "realism" of the sport, it now appears that they have reached their goal... A recent BBC Teletext article about the Swedish Rally quoted Toni Gardemeister (Skoda) as saying "...the fastest technique is to lean the car against the snow banks. It helps you get around the corners. It is a bit like a Scalextric game."

Spotted by Peter Solari

Scalextric on TV - again

"Hyperformance Car Insurance" adverts feature Scalextric trackside figures.

Submitted by Martin Webb - another member who ought to get out more!

Shop at Safeway

Martin also informs me of a variation in the Safeway Christmas set. Apparently it is available with two DTM Astras instead of the usual Méganes. Martin reckons it is the now deleted 'Opel Motorsport' set using the Safeway box lid to get rid of some old stock. A bargain at £39.99!

It's official: Toys r bust

Officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs revealed that they had swooped on a home in the Norfolk market town of Diss yesterday after being tipped off that a number of yellow plastic ducks were being kept without the appropriate licence.

"People think these types of duck are just a funny toy to make bathtime less boring, but they have been largely responsible for the spread of Taiwanese Plastic Beak Rot on mainland Europe," said a spokesman.

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the case, he added, was that the ducks were being kept close to several My Little Ponies and a Kermit the Frog. "For now the whole lot are in quarantine. In the worst-case scenario, we might have to dispose of them humanely at an upcoming jumble sale in the village hall."

It has also been reported that a Lego house in London is to be demolished after complaints from neighbours that it was unstable.

Meanwhile, immigration officials swooped on a house in Kent last Tuesday, after reports that a family of Russian dolls, who had entered the country illegally, was living there. "They may well have got to the UK by clinging to the undercarriage of a Hornby train set" said an official at the Home Office.

In the first occurrence of its kind, traffic police in Manchester announced that they clamped and towed away a Scalextric car that had been abandoned near a door to the living room in a home near Bolton at the weekend. "We were called in after an adult almost stepped on the car. This kind of thing is at its worst just after the Christmas period when vehicles are abandoned by irresponsible and ungrateful children," a traffic warden told us.

Part of an article in the Times 8/01/03 following reports that the owners of a Wendy House were informed they needed planning permission. Sent in by David Barraclough

Sport v Classic - The Sequel

BY CHRIS 'TIGGER' ANGOLD

I read Tony Secchi's test of the new Sport track in the February issue with interest as I have recently been conducting a similar set of trials. I can't write as well as Tony but members may be interested in the results obtained with a wider selection of cars.

I chose an Indy circuit of Brands Hatch for the test with a total length of 36 ft. on the inside lane; it was powered by a Scalextric Sport Powerbase and Sport 60ohm controller with a standard wall plug transformer. Timing was courtesy of a DS200 lap timer/counter. Testing was carried out over 2 days.

The layout (starting at the first turn) was two standard curves right (Paddock); three full straights; four standard curves right (Druids); two full straights then two standard curves left (Graham Hill Bend); three full straights followed by three outer curves left (Surtees); one full

straight into seven outer curves right (Stirlings); one full straight and four outer curves right (Clearways) and finally onto seven full straights including the startline/timer halfway down.

The cars

- Scalextric Sport Ford GT40 (Gom tyres front, Slot.it® P2 tyres rear.)
- Scalextric Sport MG Lola (standard, New unused)
- Scalextric Subaru (chocolate bar magnet and Slot.it® Silicon tyres on rear, standard front.)
- Scalextric Astra (standard, new unused)
- Ninco Mini (standard new unused)
- Ninco Mercedes DTM Safety Car, (standard, new unused)
- Vanquish MG Lola (standard, new unused)
- Slot.it® Audi R8 (standard, new unused)



The test group

ProSlot Alfa Romeo 156 (prepared by Slot-Tech)
non magnet, ProSlot tyres front and back.
Fly Porsche 911 GT1 (standard, but well run in.)
Fly Viper GTS-R (standard, new unused)
Scalextric C68 Aston DB4. Very standard.
Found its way out of the cabinet!

Preparation

I decided to run the cars over 3 sessions of 50 laps apiece on each track and take the fastest time from the second two, using the first one as a running in/getting to know the cars period.

All the cars were prepared by cleaning braids and tyres and lightly greasing the contrate before every session. The track was wiped with Methylated spirits before running for optimum performance. Cars were chosen at random for each session. Guides were trimmed on some cars for Classic track at the beginning of testing on either track.

Scalextric Sport Track

The brand new Sport track assembled very easily, but you do not get that positive feel with the connection like you do with the Classic track. It did have a tendency to separate at the joins but once sorted they stayed together okay.

The track surface looks smooth compared to the Classic track and does not look grippy, and on first impressions *felt* less grippy than Classic track. The track is much stiffer/firmer than the Classic so should stay flatter, longer.

The test

As this was supposed to be a comparison of grip level between track surfaces I won't ramble on too much about each car but try and keep it to a minimum with just comments on the lap times.

Session 1: All cars completed their 50 laps running in/familiarity without hiccup.

Session 2: I was assuming it would be between the GT40 and the Fly GT1 as the GT1 was my fastest car ever until the GT40 came along and equalled it. However, the Scalextric Sport MG Lola took the honours with a time of 2.994! I had never driven the MG before so was amazed at its handling/grip level and consistency.

Second was the GT40 with 3.033. Third was the Viper with a time of 3.050. Again, new out of the box. I have never raced a Viper before but was surprised how good it was.

The Slot.it® Audi R8 was tenth with a disappointing 4.418; I really had high hopes of this, maybe it was a duffer. Similarly, the ProSlot Alfa 156, prepared by Jim of Slot-Tech was very smooth, very quiet, but no match for the other cars, not having a magnet.

Session 3: The Fly Viper took the honours, just, this time around; a bit more practice and running in obviously helped. All the cars were quicker in this session.

Classic track

OK, I admit this is not a brand new track like the Sport, but it was cleaned by the excellent Plebys products and came up a treat. It is very flat, being my lifeboat fund raising event track, so it is stored weighted down in a nice cosy warm cupboard to keep its shape. No bumps etc.

The two timed sessions produced some mixed results with the MG Lola fastest in the first one. In the second run the GT1 really wanted to show the new kids on the block how to do it and blitzed the MG Lola into second place! Well not quite blitzed but good to see there is life in the old dog yet. The top 4 cars remained the same which is no surprise really, just jostling for position. Overall the times were significantly slower on Classic track.

Car performance

Viper - Excellent grip, bloody fast motor!

Scalextric Sport MG Lola - Excellent all round ability, should bring a few more kids into our hobby! And both lights still work!

Scalextric Sport Ford GT 40 - My favourite beaten, even with a previous set up that took half a day!

Fly Porsche GT1 - My old 2nd place in "B" group at the MRRC championship now had its day!

Scalextric Opel Astra - Surprisingly consistent performer.

Slot.It® Audi R8 - It never felt right throughout testing, it may be a duffer but looks superb ⇒

anyway. Quite tail happy, may suit longer track. Ninco Mercedes CLK Safety Car - Well, it was there wanting to have a go and at the end of the day was OK. Lights still flashing away.....

Fly Ford Capri - Expected more, but not to be. Very tail happy.

Vanquish MG Lola - This was slow but *fun*. You could hear the differential whining away on the exit of corners, will be great to race against another Vanquish!

Ninco Mini Cooper - Strong magnet enabled very late braking but a bit top heavy; fun anyway.

ProSlot Alfa 156 - a superb car, excellently set up, but just goes to show that up against magnet cars it is no competition on plastic track.

Scalextric Subaru - I did not expect much with a chocolate bar magnet, so no surprise really.

Scalextric Aston Martin DB4 - Well, my hat comes off to anyone out there who used to race them, you must have nerves of steel and excellently honed skills!

There was an F1 on test which died in the first Classic track session and was deleted from the listings, but it did fly around in 2.570 on the Sport track!

The final verdict

Well, to be honest, I cannot see what all the fuss is about. I was expecting the Classic track to be a lot quicker than the new Sport track as it has a proven record and looks grippier, but the Sport track was excellent, I cannot fault it. As the fastest lap times show the Sport track was generally the quickest. Only three of the thirteen cars on test managed slightly faster times on the Classic track.

All the cars handled similarly to each other on both tracks, and grip wise it did not seem to matter what tyres were used, seeing as the quickest on Sport track was the Fly Viper and the quickest on Classic track was the Scalextric Sport MG Lola. Had time allowed and the correct size of tyres been available swapping tyres around might have thrown up a different story.

I will keep my Classic track though as I have loads of it and I need it when I set up my 4 lane Brands Hatch GP circuit. The expense of a new track in that design would be too great, so is not worth it to me. But, looking at the overall results below, Sport track has got to be the way to go.

Car	Sport Track	Classic Track	Fastest	Rear Tyres Used
Viper	2.807	2.995	S	Standard Fly
MG Lola	2.852	2.887	S	Standard Scalextric
Ford GT 40	2.882	3.030	S	Slot.it. P2
Porsche GT1	3.023	2.915	C	Standard Fly (run-in)
Opel Astra	3.350	3.401	S	Standard Scalextric
Audi R8	3.533	3.608	S	Standard Slot.it.
CLK Safety Car	3.562	3.614	S	Standard Ninco
Ford Capri	3.725	3.740	S	Standard Fly
Vanquish MG Lola	3.763	3.460	C	Standard Vanquish
Mini Cooper	3.799	3.946	S	Standard Ninco
Alfa 156	4.270	4.527	S	ProSlot Slicks
Subaru	4.637	4.561	C	Slot.it. Silicon
Aston DB4	6.693	6.870	S	Standard Scalextric

My thanks to Tigger and Tony Secchi for taking up my request for facts and figures on Sport track, rather than vague opinions and derogatory comments. I trust the argument about lack of grip is now finally laid to rest. One last question though - does anyone know why a very small number of cars are quicker on Classic track? ■

MRRC Porsche 904

BY JOHN DILWORTH

MRRC have been going as long as I have (check the logo!), and I must say that it's good for my morale to find that they seem to be enjoying a real revival at the moment. This new kit presses all the right buttons for me. Right from the start, the new packaging looks great- just like those lavish old Cox and Monogram kits of the 60s which indeed is just what this is. Like the Ferraris and Chaparral before, this is a repro of a much-loved old Monogram model. All the parts are laid out in separate compartments in the box, which is printed in nice retro-style shades of brown, and there is even a clear plastic tray with hinged lid for keeping all those little screws and washers safe. The shell is lovely - I have always liked the shape of the 904, with its long nose and big faired-in headlights. The Monogram logo is still prominent on the inside, so MRRC have obviously not done much tampering with the moulds, which do show evidence of being a bit tired in the amount of flash present. It's the work of a moment to trim it off though, and all the parts fit perfectly. One thing I did do after looking at my old picture books, (I never did learn to read properly), is cut away the side window dividers, which are a bit heavy, and better represented with a little paint on the window glass itself. The mould lines above the doors need a little wet-and-dry too, for best effect. It makes a big difference, and lightens up the roof line a bit.

Anyway, the instruction sheet is thorough and profusely illustrated, although I wish now I had practised reading at school a bit better. The text is weird! 'Do not hesitate the building', it says. Well, I checked to see that Elvis had left, but other than that I'm baffled. MRRC's address is given as Jersey, but the kit was 'made in Europe'. Very vague and confusing, but no matter. I'd love to know what MRRC's founder, the blessed Alban Adams, late Mayor of Hertford, would make of it all, and what the long history of the firm has really been, but I guess the origins of this kit lie outside the English-speaking world.

On with the build. Sheer joy. Have a beer, fiddle the tiny screws in place, take them out again and put them in properly you fool. But it really goes together well, and you end up with a beautiful reproduction of the old Monogram chassis only in aluminium. And what's more, everything fits snugly under the svelte little body, and on the track, ran sweet as a nut first time.

More real fun came in changing gear ratios, swapping spacers around, tweaking things about here and there, and finally setting some really good lap times. It goes like the clappers! You really can make it go like a Fly car, just using the alternative parts provided in the kit, rather than having to do major surgery. And it's very satisfying to see this cute and accurate little scale model whizz round with the best of them.

I, for one, really love these old 60s road racers, although it's all a matter of personal taste, but they just look right on the Plexytrack, flashing past the old armcos and hay bales. A great companion to the Cobra, and I can't wait for a Scarab or a Lotus 19. Cheers, MRRC, whoever you are these days. ■



Dear Brian,

Many thanks for printing my article in the February issue and awarding me the prize car; that was a very pleasant surprise! Since writing the piece I've added another Ninco Super 1600 rally car to my collection - the Fiat Punto. It's another little corker - apart from the NC2 that is!

On the subject of rally cars, I wonder if anyone else has noticed a mistake on some of Scalextric's examples in the latest catalogue. Modern rally cars have the driver and co-driver's name on the side windows. The driver's name should be on top on his side and the co-driver's on his, but on both Mitsubishi's (page 27) and the works Focus (page 29) the names are the wrong way round. The rest of the rally cars are correct, even the Mitsubishi shown in $\frac{3}{4}$ view on page 26.

I realise that these may be prototypes and that the mistake may have been corrected in the production version, but I wonder if any of these wrongly marked cars have reached the shops? One for the collectors perhaps?

A note of caution though; my first issue new style Impreza has Richard Burns' name above Robert Reid on both sides. I have done some research on this one and it is prototypically correct. Check your rally cars now!

Best wishes
Mel Turbutt

.....
Dear Brian,

Re "GT faulty reviews" by Peter Novani in the February issue; if I still had a tail it would be between my legs. If I still had half a brain I would have realised that my statement that the GT40 was the only car to win Le Mans twice was incorrect.

The really sad thing is that I was actually present at the Sarthe circuit when the Jöst Porsches won in 84 and 85 but sometimes when you are assembling an article your vision becomes too tunnelled and overcomes your memory!

I would like to thank Peter for his erudite and honest observations; I know that they were made in good faith and I accept them in the same manner. I take on board his request to do more accurate research when compiling any future articles.

Best wishes, as ever
Tony Secchi

There are three things you lose as you get older; the first is your memory - now what the hell were the other two?

Keep up the good work Tony and if Peter gives you any more hassle I shall expose his desk top publishing errors to the membership!

Dear Brian,

I can't help thinking that some of the slot car manufacturers have lost the plot. The attraction of slot-cars to me is that they are not just models, they are toys. They go. They do something more than just look pretty. If I wanted to collect model cars because they looked nice on a shelf, I'd collect Dinky. Pretty painted plates would fill up a wall even quicker. The biggest manufacturers work on the premise that they are making toys too. They might try to target the collectors' market but their essential product design and marketing strategies are based on selling large numbers to people to play with.

Despite this, slot-car bodies are made ever more intricate with parts that will almost inevitably break if there's a spill during a race. I could cope with this if these vulnerable projections could be removed before use but they can't. Almost always, they are heat-sealed to the body. I could even cope with that if these parts were available as spares but generally they are not. Even if the parts were available, many can't be refitted without breaking other heat seals; for example to remove the driver's platform.

A few days after their debut as Christmas presents, four new Ninco Minis had lost two roof aerials (both of the others were parallel to the roof hanging on by a thread) four mirrors, two windscreen wipers and one door handle. One passenger seat had come adrift and was rattling around inside the passenger compartment as well. I can't believe that the visual appeal of the new cars would have been reduced much if the mirrors, wipers and handles had been formed from additional moulding on the major body parts and painted if necessary. The visual appeal of these used cars would certainly be much improved if they had been made in this way. The aerial is a different matter but it was only after I dismantled a body to refit the seat that it became clear that this could be removed. This Mini aerial is so poor, it is often damaged in the box in transit so why isn't it supplied loose in the box like Hornby mirrors used to be?

OK, the kids got to play with the cars and they don't care too much about the cosmetic damage so what's the problem? Well I like to race with my cars but I also care about how they look. I can cope with cars having small marks from use but I don't like having holes where mirrors should be, stalks that should be complete wipers or jagged plastic where half a spoiler has broken off. If anyone races, however skilled they are (and I'm not at all skilled) they have to allow that there will be spills and if parts are this exposed and fragile they will break off. So I can't race with these cars otherwise their visual appeal will disappear and can't be restored. To me, this defeats their point.

For another example, look at the Vanquish MG CA11 (Lola T-260 "L&M"). It's a striking car with huge spoilers front and rear. The front one is on two thin poles and extends over an inch in front of the body. These poles aren't a push fit into the body but are heat sealed so the spoiler can't be removed without damaging the car. Vanquish state on the box that the car is not a toy but it has a strong magnet, a fast motor and a differential. All of these are there solely to make the car (not toy?) run better and faster. If I ever race this car, the front spoiler will almost certainly break off - to be followed shortly by the rear spoiler.

It would be nice if these fragile, external components were a push fit. I gather that the reason they are heat sealed is to ensure that no parts fall off in the box. If they did, the large retailers would send them straight back rather than go to the bother of refitting them. Maybe there is some business sense for this approach but it's galling to have my hobby spoiled for such a trivial reason.

Slot-cars have improved by leaps and bounds over the last few years. A major part of this improvement is in the level of detailing. Their better appearance makes it very hard to pass them by without hammering your flexible friend and I appreciate this detailing as much as the next man. I just can't help feeling that as toys to be played with, "impressionist" cars would be just as pleasing on the eye as models whose photographic realism won't survive a few laps racing. They would certainly look better for longer.

Regards

Peter Zivanovic

A Night at the Opera

BY JOEL THURA

Those of you with long memories may recall that back in March 2002 I attended the Paris swapmeet. Today I will tell you what happened when I went for the first time in March 2001.

Somewhere around New Year 2001, whilst recovering from cheap alcohol abuse, I decided to attend the Paris swapmeet. I did mention it to fellow SSRC member David Lawson who at the time said little about it.

Because I was travelling on my own, I decided to keep costs to a minimum and buy a 24hrs ferry return (you have to be there and back in 24hrs). Being a bit of a gypsy and knowing the place reasonably well, I also decided that I would drive until tired and stop in one of the numerous cheap motorway hotels, or at worst, sleep in the car.

With about a fortnight to go, David Lawson said that he would like to go too, but that he did not want to sleep in the car, and wanted to book a hotel instead. I surfed the net for something suitable, and found a "Formula 1" hotel, a few kilometres from Soisy sur Seine, the actual location of the swapmeet. I rang the hotel and a woman took my booking and credit card details; during the conversation, I mentioned the fact that we would be arriving late, she said, "no problem, but you will have to use the machine to get your key". At that point she asked if I knew how to - not wanting to appear stupid, I replied, "Yes I do". I put the phone down thinking I had made a firm booking. Just to explain, France is full of very cheap hotels. Most of them look like blocks of flats, and they are only staffed for a few hours a day. The rest of the time you have to use a dispenser; you put your credit card in, and get issued with a room and a pin number to get in and out.

The day arrived, David turned up straight from work. I then realised that I had booked a later ferry than I had told him, so he missed out on an hour's sleep for nothing. We set off for Dover and the 7:15pm ferry. Made it with plenty

of time, boarded up, sat in the bar, and David said, "I should have told you before, but I always get seasick". Great! Actually, he wasn't, even though it was quite a lively crossing.

An update from Sally Traffic

Those journeys always take longer than they tell you in the brochure, that, plus the hour time difference, and we must have landed about 10 p.m. We set off down the A1, known as the autoroute du Nord (France's M1). We stopped on the way for a bite and a little rest, but we were always aware that it was getting seriously late. Went past Roissy airport at about midnight, pressed on towards Paris. By then it was raining heavily and pitch dark; I was sleepy, tired and grumpy, luckily, the traffic was light. Then as the A1 arrives in the less salubrious parts of the eastern suburbs of Paris to join the A3, I missed a slip road and took a wrong turn; we ended up on some deserted avenue somewhere. I stopped, turned back, and by luck rather than judgment, managed to find the motorway I had just left, I went back to the junction and got to the correct slip road. Hurrah!

I find travelling in France relatively easy, all the motorways are well signposted and you can drive across the entire country without looking at a map. What I normally do, is write down the number of the motorways with the relevant junctions, and the major town I will cross. I have also got a fair knowledge of Paris and the Northwest suburbs, where I grew up; and, I sort of know where the others are. Anyway my road list said "Peripherique Interieur" (inner ring road to you guys), then, crucially, N6, which goes straight to the hotel, the woman had said it was behind the Auchamp supermarket, about 6 miles south of Paris.

By now it was almost one in the morning, still we were really near, around the ring road we went, all of a sudden, I saw a sign for the A6, we had gone too far round! I turned onto it, thinking; it goes in the right direction, I'll turn

off at the earliest opportunity. Alas the A6 is a mega motorway, 6 lanes wide and very busy even at that time of night. So here we were, half lost, surrounded by French white van men in every lane, bright lights everywhere, and the only exit seem to be for Orly airport. I carried on, knowing that we were West of the airport, and wanted to be East of it. As the crow flies, the hotel was less than 5 miles away. All throughout, David remained calm and phlegmatic, but inside he must have been wondering what he had let himself in for. There he sat being driven at speed on the road-to-hell by a half-crazed Frenchman, surrounded by zigzagging Peugeot 106s and low flying Jumbos.

Finally we arrived at the first exit south of Orly, off I went, by the roundabout was a sign for a Formula 1 hotel, we could have used that one. But, I had booked us into another one on the other side of the airport. I parked the car and looked at the map, we were really near, but it was now 1:30 a.m. I was half asleep, and I really did not feel like finding my way around in the dark in some unknown suburb. If French motorways are well indicated, minor roads are not. So we went back to the turn off North of Orly, took the N86 (I think), because, at some stage it cuts across the N6 (are you still with me??) I got it wrong only once, did a screeching U turn in a large tree lined avenue, then found the N6, at last, we were on the right road. As advised, we found the Auchamp supermarket, and just behind, the Formula 1 sign flickered gently in the night.

Sharp spikes

This was obviously not a nice area, the car park was at the side of the building, and protected by an 8-foot fence with spikes. As we arrived, there was a crowd of people outside, some using the dispenser, others walking out of their cars, the huge gate was open, we drove in and found a space at the back of the hotel. Phew! There at last! We got out, stretched our legs, grabbed our luggage and walked to the front of the building, the huge gate was now closed. Those nice people who had just let us in, had also locked us in the car park. It had also started to rain again, I

considered climbing the gate, David dissuaded me, it was very high and those spikes looked very sharp, I walked around and found a gap in the fence, but it was too small to squeeze through.

At this point, it is difficult to explain in polite terms how we felt. I then remembered that I had printed the address from the website, with the phone number on it. I grabbed my mobile, and started dialling. I had to ring a UK number, the network then rang me back and gave me a line on a French network, I dialled the hotel number, a message told me “ring 346???34??” I had no pen, no paper, I got cut off! Aaargh! We were getting cold and wet, so we returned to the car, I redialled the UK number, got a line on the French network etc...etc... I must have tried 20 times, the Hotel number was engaged everytime. And everytime a little disembodied voice said: “you have £3.24 credit left!”

David and I finally had to admit defeat; we got ready to sleep in the car. An hour later, I awoke suddenly, there was a massive German Shepherd staring at me through the car window, I woke David up and said, “There must be a security guard around, look at this dog”. We drove slowly towards the front of the hotel, nothing. Then we spotted the fire exit wide open, someone had let the dog out for a walk. I said, “Let’s get in”, David replied “You go first, and if you make it past the dog alive, I will follow you”.

We fell asleep again

I awoke again to see a couple pull up in front of the hotel. I asked them to use their pin code to let us out of the car park, the woman replied, “There are no rooms left, we can’t get a pin number, sorry we can’t help you”. As they drove off, it dawned on me, the nice people who had locked us in the car park had also taken the last rooms, i.e. the ones we could have had if I had not got lost around Orly airport. We fell asleep again.

Just before 6am, I noticed that the gate was wide open, someone had gone, I drove the car out. A little van turned up, it was the baker. He let himself into the hotel to deliver the bread and croissants for breakfast, I had a chat with him,⇒⇒

and he left me his pin number, that's it, we could now get in! David said, "What's the point, it's nearly 6, in fact, back home, the clocks have gone forward so it's now 7am; 8am French time". I turned on the radio, the French announcer said "Don't forget, the clocks went forward last night". It was actually 9am; we had gone forward 3 hours in two minutes.

We both jumped, the swapmeet! It starts at 9! Off we went, luckily, the hall was really near, and in 10 minutes we were there.

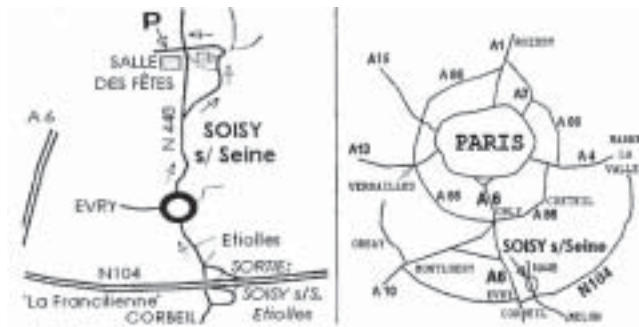
At last - the swapmeet

We went in and walked around for a couple of hours in a sleepy daze, by then the events of the night were catching up with us. We still managed to pick up some really good bargains, like an early Airfix Ford Cortina kit, mint bagged for £10; or a new SRS Porsche 956 body in Rothmans colours for £5. We bought some very nice vacforms, a Renault Dauphine for me and an Austin Healey for David. These are very cleverly made with a double skinned body, the inner skin is thin and carries the interior and air vents/grill detail, the outer thicker skin is the body, this allows the maker to put a lot more details than on a normal vacform, it is very ingenious and effective. We had a long chat with Guy Coriatt, the swapmeet organiser; I even sold a couple of scratchbuild cars.

We left at about 1 o'clock, and I then faced the unenviable task of driving back to Calais before my 24hrs ticket expired.

Me? Obsessed with slot-cars? Never! Was it worth it? Well, in spite of all the trouble, yes it was. As I have said before, it is very good, you will find items that you never see in the UK; and most Spanish cars are generally cheaper than over here. The French have a different attitude to collecting; the dealers are much more prepared to swap like for like items, and they will buy scratchbuild cars at very good prices.

This year's swapmeet is on Sunday March 16th, and there should be a race organized on the Saturday. Follow the directions on the map, email Guy Coriatt on gcoriatt@club-internet.fr or email me jthura@ricoh-uk.com (but I can't guarantee to get you there).



If you need accommodation, try the Etap Hotel on 0033 1 69 89 27 27, it is the most convenient and easiest to find.

I will be going, so if anyone fancies a lift (via Orly airport and various unknown parts of the Paris suburbs) just let me know. You never know, you too could be involved in the next episode in the life of the Southend Slot Racing Club.

Apologies if you are reading this after the event has taken place - I really should have included it last month but ran out of space. Still, there's always next year! ■

Wot! No wings?

BY THE EDITOR

There are some people, myself included, who don't really like modern Formula 1 cars. It is more than likely a sign of advancing age but we tend to believe that, "they don't make them like they used to!"

The current F1 car may be a high tech marvel, resplendent in its sponsors' colours, but we regard a true Grand Prix car as a slightly different beast. It doesn't have wings for a start; it is front engined and runs on skinny treaded tyres. It lacks pit to car telemetry, traction control and a hundred other things which today's drivers take for granted.

The livery is different as well - you can have any colour you like so long as it is green, blood red (not that pale Marlboro imitation seen on a modern Ferrari), blue or silver. Oh yes, nearly forgot, these cars have a strange, long forgotten device called a gear lever!

You will by now have realised that I am talking about those classic cars which ruled the racing tracks of the world till the early 60s - Vanwalls, BRMs, Maseratis and many others. If you have never seen, heard and smelt these mighty beasts in action then your life has been sadly lacking.

Until recently the slot-car enthusiast has been inadequately provided with models of this era but things are definitely looking up. It probably isn't commercially viable for the major manufacturers to make them as there is virtually no scope for repaints to recoup the mould costs, although Carrera have done quite a good job with the Mercedes and Auto Union.

The small cottage industries have come to the rescue though - Dave Yerbury and David Sykes make a range of resin bodyshells covering the period which can be turned into useful slot-cars with a modicum of work. I have examples of both and the finished result is perfectly acceptable, although obviously not up to the injection moulded standard of the major manufacturers. Incidentally, Dave Yerbury can make virtually any car body you want if scale drawings and photos can be found.

Pre-Add body kits

A more recent supplier is Mac Pinches who has just brought out his second series of kits covering the late 40s/early 50s period and the start of the Drivers World Championship.

The format is the same as his earlier series of 1930s cars but contain much improved decal sets produced by Mark Gussin to his usual high standards. They are made of resin and come complete with decals, driver, metal cast exhausts, filler caps etc. The cars available are as follows: Kit 11 - Talbot Lago as driven to victory by Louis Chiron in the 1949 French GP.

Kit 12 - Maserati 4CLT/48; second in the 1948 San Remo GP at the hands of Villoresi.

Kit 13 - Alfa Romeo 158 'Alfetta'; Farina's 1950 British GP winning car.

Kit 14 - Ferrari 375; Villoresi's Syracuse winner.

Kit 15 - BRM M1A; as driven by Moss and Fangio at Dunrod.

I hope the two Davids won't take offence but Mac's kits, with their extra metal detailing bits, are definitely the best - mind you they are also the dearest, so you pay your money and take your choice.

An added bonus from my point of view is that each man makes a different version of the glorious BRM V16 - slot-car heaven or what? I already have two of them and will soon be buying the Pre-Add Mk1 version to complete the set.

In a way I hope the major manufacturers don't enter this market as they would almost certainly ruin some exquisite bodies with turbo nutter motors and industrial strength magnets!

Contact details

AA Bodies (Dave Yerbury) Tel:- 01254 875262

David Sykes Tel:- 07946 514573

Email:- psykeo1@ukonline.co.uk

Pre-Add (Mac Pinches) Tel:- 01543 871849

Email:- pre-addbodykits@pinches5.fsnet.co.uk

Details and pictures of the Pre-Add cars are also available on Mark Gussins website:-

www.mgussin.freeuk.com

Day (or night) clubbing

BY TONY SECCHI

Many of the items printed in the Journal tell of setting up, running and operating local slot-car clubs. I find these articles quite interesting, as since my retirement, I have run a sort of “club” in my spare room.

I have covered the details of my old club that I attended in the sixties, so I thought (at the risk of boring anybody who bothers to read it) that I would set out how my present venture came about, how it is run and which type of cars we race.

In 1997 just before I retired, I came across a couple of second hand Scalextric cars in a charity shop for 40p each (C124 Ferrari 312T and March 240 6 wheeler) took them home and got them working. This got me hooked back onto slot-car racing after 35 years and my old hobby was quickly put on my growing list of “things to do after retirement”.

Having completely lost contact with the sport during that time and, therefore, not knowing any contacts within it, I had no real idea of what to do next. I finally went out and bought a Scalextric boxed set from an Argos store for £75; well I had to start somewhere. I duly assembled it on the living room carpet and lo and behold the “charity” cars worked! After a few weeks of this I decided that I needed a more demanding track layout and seriously thought about joining a club if I could find one.

It was about this time that channel 4 broadcast the famous (or infamous) programme on Steve Carter’s club in Wood Green, North London. I wrote to Channel 4, got Robert Bott’s address, contacted him and joined the NSCC.

At the time that all this was going on I had started playing with the idea of having a portable/permanent track layout in my spare room. I bought a Scalextric track layout book and some extra track sections from Beattie’s (now no more), designed and built a Monza like track by hand. I also started buying a few more cars and invited a couple of friends around one evening to race.

A club is born

It was at this point that I decided to run an “organised” club with my friends. We decided to run it mainly as a daytime venture (we all being retired) with the occasional long distance night-time event. We would have a structured system that was simple to run, so that we could have events possibly two or three times a week.

We decided that in the main the cars would have Scalextric running gear but over the years of course, Fly, Ninco, SCX, Carrera, Proslot etc. have been accepted and although we do allow Magnatraction, extra ballast is added to the very fast engined cars for parity. We allow choice of rear tyres but no tyre “goop”. Controllers (no brakes) are by Parma with 45 ohm resistors chosen for track suitability by consultation and trial. We use a DS 011 lap counter/timer to prevent any disputes. Although we are all approaching our seventies, we are still very competitive and before the lap counter/timer was installed a hand held stopwatch was used which caused all kinds of dissent - old farts we may be but we still like to win.

I run the club and order all the cars and accessories. My main sources of supply are Sean Fothergill at Pendle Slot Racing, the adverts in the Journal and for static body conversions or vacuum forms, “Carkits” at Southend on Sea and our own David Yerbury.

As stated, the track is based on the old Monza circuit with two banked curves and a cross over. It is 55’ 0” (17M) in length. Each race is over ten laps, except special events, and we usually race for about two or three hours in the afternoons. Finances to run the club come from the members, but I built and paid for the existing layout myself and I use it for testing and my own pleasure. Everything else is ordered and paid for as needed.

We have recently upgraded the track using the new Scalextric “Sport” system as you may have read in the January issue.

Those of you who are kind enough to read my contributions in the Journal will know that →→

we do not race open wheeled cars. We have nothing against them but we have always preferred to watch and race GT/Sports both in model and real life. At present our cars are divided into thirteen classes of ten cars each and are listed later herein. Each member is allowed to have two entries in each class but only run one for the duration of a championship. These last for four weeks and during that time we have to complete six events, running the cars on each lane. Each race is timed and points given for each event as per the present Grand Prix system. The points are shown on our huge illuminated, automatic, computer controlled score board above the track. (Actually, an A1 notice board with hand written results).

At the end of the year, we have an individual champion in each class and an overall champion who has accumulated the most points in all thirteen classes. He buys the drinks down the Pub.

Because we only have two lanes we allow cars to be put back in when deslotted - but as we are so experienced and such good drivers this rarely happens (I wish), but seriously, the track is open for testing on non-racing days and, as we are not as fast as we think, deslots are not a real problem. Anyway, if they do occur they are all part of racing whether model or real and add to the fun.

We start a new season every Easter when I return from my annual holiday and so far have managed to fit all the races in. Despite having designed and built the track, having all the time in the world to set up, tune and practice, I have never won the overall championship.

The club cat

There is one hazard that we all have to suffer from - my cat Beau. Sometimes he takes it in his affectionate mind to seek attention by sprinting down the passage, leaping onto and crossing the track to get to the windowsill on the far side. During this manoeuvre he has scant respect for any racing that is going on, so that as you approach the final bend with the finishing line in sight your car can hoofed off the circuit by 5kg

of speeding black and white feline. He has a different tactic for attention seeking when I am practising alone. He just saunters up and sits across the track at the Curva Parabolica putting an effective end to the session. Still, it is his flat!



Finally the classes that we run and some of the cars we feature are listed below.

GT cars (vintage)

One class of 10 including:

Ferrari 250GT
 Shelby Cobra Daytona
 Jaguar 'E' type (lightweight)
 Ferrari 275LM

GT cars (modern)

Two classes of 10 including:

Porsche 911 GT1
 McLaren F1 GTR (long and short tailed)
 Venturi 600LM
 Ferrari F40 and F50
 Bugatti EB110
 Callaway C12GT
 Zakspeed Ford Capri
 Daur Porsche 962 GTLM
 Jaguar XJS
 Lancia beta monte carlo

Le Mans sports cars (vintage)

Two classes of 10 including:

Porsche 917K
 Matra MS670
 Alfa Romeo 33TT3
 Ferrari P3 and P4
 Maserati Tipo T61
 Porsche 908
 Chaparral 2F, 2D and 2G

Sports Cars (modern)

Bentley EXP Speed 8
Nissan GTR 390
Toyota TS020 (Gt One)
Audi R8R
Audi R8C
Jöst Porsche WSC95
BMW V12 LM99
Panoz LMP1
Ferrari 333SP
Kremer Porsche K8

World Prototype Sports Cars WSPC Class 1

Five classes of 10 including:
Jaguar XJR6
Porsche 962C
Lancia LC2
Jaguar XJR8
Mercedes C9 in silver and in black livery
Toyota 89CV
Nissan R89C
Jaguar XJR9 in Castrol and Silk Cut livery

Aston Martin AMR1
Mazda 787B in Renown and Mazda livery
Jaguar XJR12
Peugeot 905B
Jaguar XJR14
Toyota TS010

*We have 22 versions of this ubiquitous model including all the Scalextric versions and several that we have reliveried.

Can-Am cars

McLaren M6A
Lola T160 and T260
Chapparal 2G
Porsche 917/10
Ferrari 712

We have been racing since 1998 and overall we have enjoyed every minute. I have re-discovered a sport that I thought no longer existed and have added a pleasant and absorbing interest to my retirement years - not a bad testimony for a “toy” is it? ■

Coffee time

BY DAVID BATES

Some friends were visiting over the Christmas holidays. The men folk, whilst not slot-car enthusiasts, were invited for a quick look at the collection displayed in what we call "the office" (there is a PC in there as well). One old friend, he's in his late 40s, picked up my Aston Martin Marshal's car. "Careful Mark", I said, "that cost me a lot of money". "I've got one of these in my loft", he replied, "and some other cars and stuff".

Too late! I had already admitted that this was potentially a valuable car. No chance of hearing him say, "you may as well have it; I have no use for it!" Now hardly had I got over this when Steve (nearly 50) began describing his hitherto unknown collection, all one owner from new! Clearly he has a lot of very early, boxed Bentleys, Bugattis etc. All relatively little used, in recent years anyway.

We went back to the living room. Martin who had previously remained silent on the subject said, "I've got some old track you may as well have; it is no use to me. No cars though". Ah well, I did not have the heart to say old track has no use/ value. It's the thought that counts.

Now the evening had taken an unexpected turn. Here was all this lovely stuff but none of it for sale! However it does prove that there are still collectable cars out there. My experience is that this sort of thing has all but dried up.

I suppose that whenever two or more collectors are gathered together, the subject of "cars I have bought and prices I have paid" tends to come up. I started marshalling my thoughts (get it?) before writing this letter in a coffee shop in Birmingham, where I had just paid £1.55 for a cappuccino which barely covered the bottom of the cup. That made me think of a couple of dirty, but complete and working Mini 1275 GTs bought for 50p at a car boot sale a few years ago. They cleaned up beautifully. Less than the price of a coffee!

So how about an idea for some ongoing correspondence - cars I have bought for the price of a coffee or less. Not an opportunity to gloat but maybe to give heart that there are still bargains to be had. Just a short note - car, price paid and when, to put the purchase in context. Alternatively, you might like to share your most satisfying acquisition, irrespective of price (mine might be the marshal's car, bought through the adverts in this magazine). In either case, written in no more time than it takes to drink a cup of coffee!

Must close now I am off to have another look at the Racer Club Ford GT40 which arrived in the post yesterday. Oh, did I mention a "free" car?

Any takers? ■

