



Contents

Swapmeets.....2
Membership Update.....4
Diary Dates.....5
NSCC 25th Anniversary.....6
Messages From Margate.....8
Traders Travels.....11
Ninco News.....13
Norman's Conquest.....15
Bits And Pieces.....18
Dear NSCC.....19
Ninco Review.....22
Revell Kits.....25
Toy Lust.....27
Wanderer's Witterings.....28
The Set That Never Was.....31
More Bits And Pieces.....34
Short Life Of A Legend.....35
Adverts.....39

Editor

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

Trade Advertising

Adrian Leggett
Roseville
Westwood Lane
Normandy
Guildford
Surrey
GU3 2JG
Tel:- 07773 967333
between 09:00 - 18:00
01483 810102 evenings
e-mail:- sales@nsccl.co.uk

You know you are a redneck when....

You think the last four words of the American national anthem are "Gentlemen, start your engines!" Apparently 'redneck' jokes are the US equivalent of our Irish ones and Gary Clift (an English NSCC member who emigrated to Canada last year) has recently sent me hundreds of the things. Thanks Gary - I am still chuckling over them.

Which brings us neatly to NASCAR and the Deep South obsession with this form of motor racing - I have had a "really good idea" about digital slot-cars. First, we need the facility to change between tracks, not just lanes. Think about it - eight lane circuits with the ability to move from the outside right across to the inside in one go.

Secondly, bring back the Scalextric banked curve in all four radii and build an enormous eight lane banked oval - Indianapolis in miniature. Next, fill it with slot NASCARS - six per lane should give us a field of 48 - throw the greens and away we go - 200 laps and three yellow flags later someone takes the high line into turn one.....

.....Unfortunately the third car in the draft loses adhesion and spins while two others attempt to drop down five lanes and overtake on the inside - hey presto a 30 slot-car pile-up! Model Motor Racing doesn't get any closer to the real thing than this.....Unless, of course, we could have pit-lanes as well!

Yes I know I am being silly, but I haven't been to a real motor race since last November and I am beginning to get withdrawal symptoms.

Incidentally, why are there no new NASCARS in the 2004 Scalextric line-up? Surely they haven't run out of reliveries already. We have recently introduced a class for them at the Mussel Bay club and they really are good fun to race - not to mention the fact that they appear to be the only current slot-car which can survive a 20 lap race without disintegrating!

Till next month

Brian



NSCC 25th Anniversary Slot Weekend and International Race Championship

By Gareth Jex

Several months back the committee invited me to join their ranks to take the vacant position of Promotions. For my sins I accepted. One of the first things I did was talk to other committee members and see what we had done to date and how we might build on this for the future, with the aim of promoting the club to new and old members in an effort to increase our membership and to add benefit to existing members.

A while back many of you completed a survey in which a large number of you wanted two things. First, a social weekend, similar to, but not replacing, the already excellent Hornby weekend, encompassing other manufacturers and with a larger capacity. Second, more racing - not written reports with times and actions, but an organised race series for members to compete in.

In response to those requests from you, we have spent the last months researching and planning two major new events for NSCC members. We are very pleased to officially announce the results of this planning.

NSCC 25th Anniversary Slot Weekend

Held over the weekend of May 21st – 22nd 2005 at the superb Toyota UK Headquarters in Epsom Surrey. This weekend will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of our club, featuring a new slot swapmeet (trade and members tables), exhibition displays from most of the major manufacturers, technical displays and car tuning tables, demonstration tracks including Digital, evening dinner (hopefully with guest speaker), quizzes, prizes, Toyota F1 Car Simulator and last but not least the finals of the

NSCC International Slot-car Race Championship

The basic concept of the championship is to hold races at your own race clubs and at various NSCC and sponsors' events, with box standard RTR (Ready to Race) slot-cars produced by the sponsors.

The race championship has in part been sponsored by some of the leading manufacturers of Slot-cars and they have specified which cars we are to use in the championship.

The Championship cars are:

Carrera	Enzo Ferrari Ref 25702/3
Fly	Saleen GT Race spec Refs 07019/20/21/22/24/26
Ninco	BMW M3 GTR Ref 50355 (plus others)
Scalextric	Lister Storm LMP 900 Ref C2521/A
SCX	Citroen Xsara WRC Ref 61040, 61510 (plus others)
Vanquish	McLaren M8c Racer spec. Ref S51

There will be some fantastic prizes and trophies on offer to the winners and finalists. Obviously there are some rules and regulations to go with the Championship, but you will have plenty of time to read these! The Championship officially starts in May 2004 and you have until the end of February 2005 to complete your mini championships and heats. The NSCC will be holding open rounds and fastest lap type competitions for those of you who can't get to a local club or start your own. The first of these will be at the Slough Slotswap meeting on May 16th 2004.



Some of the big traders are offering fantastic discounts on the purchase of Championship cars, check some of the adverts in this issue or ask your preferred dealer or Model shop.

For full details and the rules and regulations you can either download the full set from our web site (PDF document), send me an email and I'll reply with a Word document (6Mb+) or for those of you not on-line send me a stamped addressed C4 envelope (with £1 stamps).

We want to get members to clubs to race against each other. To do this we need to have details of all the clubs out there! Over the next few months we will be publishing a new section in the journal giving brief details of clubs around the world (not just the UK). So if you are a member of a slot club and would like to let others know about it please send us your details preferably with a few words and photos to put in the journal.

We will keep you up to date with all the latest developments over the next year and when specific details and plans are finalised we will publish more details.

We hope these two major events meet with your approval and look forward to hearing from you. Good Luck!

Our thanks to all our sponsors with their help and support in putting the Championship together and a very big thank you to Toyota UK Ltd. for offering us the use of their superb facilities.

Contact details for more information

Email: Promotions@nsc.co.uk

By post: Gareth Jex
C/O 2LK Design Ltd
The Courtyard
17 West Street
Farnham
Surrey
GU9 7DR



After the hectic round of Toyfairs around the world things are very quiet in the Scalextric world at the moment. In China it must be very different with so much new product due soon.

New Cars

New liveries of existing models are starting to trickle through but no completely new models yet. Recent arrivals are:



C2590 TVR Tuscan 400R "CDL Racing" No27

This is a predominantly white livery with a huge Union Jack flag on the roof.

C2562 Mini Cooper "John Cooper Challenge" No57

Finished in metallic dark green with the flag of St George emblazoned across the roof. This car is run in the championship by Robert Stern, a BMW and Mini dealership in Evesham and driven by Dominic Yarnold. It is a shame that Hornby cannot spell Robert as the car features a typographical error in the URL on the back of the car - oops.



C2567 Mercedes CLK DTM "Express Service" No4

The first of this year's CLK re-liveries is predominantly silver.

Both of these two cars feature lots of etched metal parts and the crisp tampo printing is very hard to fault. Some of it is so small that you need a magnifying glass to read it. The printing on the Mini A pillars surely being as small a font as it is possible to get. Production in China is certainly to a very high and consistent standard.



All of the new cars released so far this year feature printing on the Perspex box lid. This is in yellow and gives the general model name, licensing and permission details and logos for lights, Magnatraction, etc.

Continuous Development

Whilst new models are in manufacture, or arriving in the shops, work continues in Margate on products we will not see until later in the year. In the last month liveries have been finalised for the first Porsche Boxster in red and Audi TT in silver. Both these cars predominantly feature the manufacturers' logos.

The Ford Grand Torino design and livery is also complete. With so much interest in the new Starsky and Hutch film it should be popular. This model will also feature some clever electronics so that the red roof light actually flashes.

The open Corvette has a great deal of dashboard livery that you just can't see on the closed version. C2574 is the yellow road going Ford Mustang. This is based on the second version with no grill lights. The louvres over the back window are very effective. This year's new GT40 features revised ducting on the bonnet and two filler caps. It also features printing on the tyres. In response to criticism of the early GT40s where the rear spoiler easily fell off they are now glued in place before painting. This gives a much better bond between the bodyshell and the spoiler and is proving much more robust.

Manufacture of the new Lister LMP is complete and, as I write, it is on the water from China. Featuring a new separate sub-chassis carrying the motor and axle it will be interesting to see how this performs in competition. A much stiffer Sport version of this sub-chassis will be available later in the year. Just one screw needs to be removed to allow the sub-chassis to drop down to give access to the motor and back axle. The two motor wires are connected by two simple plugs which need pulling apart. This will make swapping parts for the various tuned motors, axles and gears so easy when they finally reach the shops.

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A new driver figure is in production with integral arms (!!!). Unfortunately he still features the same head although Hornby promise me that this will change in due course.

The first pit crew figures will be available in blue and yellow but the bundles with cars are still to be finalised.

The ASCARS will be type one Ford Taurus' with the in-line motor. This set effectively becomes the new Bash'n'Crash set which was the biggest seller last year.

This reminds me of an interesting fact recently researched by Hornby - 1 in 6 households in the UK have a Scalextric set. However, the contents of my loft and knowledge of simple statistics show that there obviously cannot be any others in Surrey!

MotoGP

The MotoGP bikes are still being developed further in response to feedback from the Toyfairs. The stabilising wings have been significantly changed with a thicker section towards the centre and a stiffening rib across them. This has removed their tendency to wobble slightly from side to side on the straights. The magnet holder has also been changed to allow some flexibility as to where it is positioned. Different strength magnets may also be available in the future. The bikes are great fun to race and feature incredible detail with lots of etched metal and extremely fine plastic mouldings. More information about the bikes is also available on a new part of the Hornby website dedicated to them. New website developments can also be seen for Sport World and Sport Digital too.

De Agostini

Disappointingly I am told that the Scalextric part-work magazine from De Agostini has been withdrawn and will not now be produced. They

are considering the response to the trials and something else may happen in the future. I desperately need two copies of **Issue 1** for my own collection so if you can help please give me a call.

Sport World

Sport World is nearly ready for beta testing and I look forward to reporting what this system is like to use properly. Last month I wrote that it could work with up to six cars at once. Hornby were quick to point out that the actual figure is EIGHT.

Feedback

Hornby really do like to receive feedback from NSCC members on their products and future plans. I also enjoy hearing from you and thanks to the members who take the trouble to give me a call or drop me a line. I will always try to pass on your comments to Hornby and I recently received a very interesting letter from member Brian Mitchell in Perth, Scotland. Brian was pondering how successful the bikes will be and requesting more classic racing cars in the line-up from the 20s to the 60s. What do you think ?

Competition

Finally: I am amazed that no one has spotted the glaring problem with one of the cars in the new catalogue. I must admit I hadn't spotted it either until Hornby pointed it out. I will extract a prize from Hornby to the first NSCC member drawn from a hat who correctly identifies which car has a significant bit missing! Answers on a postcard or email to me please.

Messages from Margate Email

Don't forget you can get Messages from Margate by email giving colour illustrations and up to the minute news. Send me an email to be added to the distribution list. ■

Traders travels

By Robert Learmouth
(Westwood Models)

Despite the perception that we now have too many slot-car swapmeets in the UK, we are currently coming towards the end of an 11-week run between national events (Milton Keynes and Loughborough). Of course, just like waiting for a bus, we will then see three events (Loughborough, Slough and Liphook) all happen within five weeks of each other from the last week of this month! So not too much to report on swapmeet activity this time although, as I write, I am about to pack my suitcase for Slotmania. This really is a mega event so hopefully some interesting tales to report from there next month.

Although we're only in April now, some of my January crystal ball predictions are starting to materialise. Fly do indeed seem to be getting their act back together and the recent GT40, Alfa 147, Ferrari 365 and BMW 3.5 CSL releases are, so Jon tells me, proving very popular. They also seem to be moderating the depressing amount of 'limited editions'. We're also hearing on the grapevine that the ambitious new release line-ups (across manufacturers) announced in January are indeed receiving a little nip and tuck. Nothing official yet but don't expect to see everything make it onto the shelves.

The star turn on eBay last month was a Scalextric tinplate electric Healey in near mint condition which fetched £995. A lot of money for a slot-car but not a great surprise for something of this rarity. A 1960s illuminated Scalextric dealer's sign fetched £350 - that seemed a bit high but it's a cracking thing to own. A chromed C99 P&G Mini Cooper fetched a surprising £232. Chromed cars are notoriously difficult to authenticate and bets are usually hedged well below this sort of amount. However this one had a plausible story in that it was 1 of 50 made for Toys R Us management. In terms of fast appreciating recent(ish), release cars how about an SCX Vintage Tyrrell P34 fetching £165? At the bargain end of things lucky buyers picked up a mint/boxed C94 P&G

Ferrari 312B2 for £8, a mint Hamleys Jaguar XJ220 for £8, a nice orange (French) Mirage for £28 and a mint French Matra 670 for £16. But remember folks, for every bargain like these there's a sad seller and, in this case, it was me...

I don't know if Brian will have space for the whole article but there was an interesting recent on-line piece published regarding the good fortunes of Hornby and in particular some of the things that have helped achieve this. We're told by Mr Martin, "We brought in a number of people who have a real passion for the two hobbies [railways and slot-cars] and are able to communicate on equal terms with guys out there who are enthusiastic about them". Watch out Adrian, they've hired someone who's after your job!

As joint-organiser, Slough now looms large on the horizon so to try and make this event the 'something different' we've always promised, two pleas. We have lots of space for you to come and show your 'thing' off, whatever that may be. We have plenty of circuits lined-up but if, for example, you'd like to bring your rare cars to show or give a demo of a model-making technique then please get in contact with me.

Also, we'd always planned a charity auction and with the recent events in Madrid we now have a new focus for the beneficiary. Many of us have friends, contacts or customers in Madrid and will no doubt have realised how close to home these threats now are. So this will be a good way to show they are in our thoughts by raising money for the families who have been left behind. If as a dealer, manufacturer, distributor or collector you have something to donate then please do so. The Slot City contribution will (hopefully) be a pair of Scalextric Renault F1s signed by the drivers so there's an interesting item to get the ball rolling and to make it worth a trip to come and bid too. You can phone 01793 497778 (Extension 12) or email me at Robert@westwoodmodels.com. Thank you. ■

A True Landmark

In 1974, Porsche presented a prototype 911 Turbo at the European motor shows. It met with such success that the model was released for sale the following year. It appears that history has repeated itself thirty years later as it is reported that during this year's Nuremberg Toy Fair, the model being praised by all visiting the Ninco stand was the silver Porsche 911 Turbo... and now this totally new model for Ninco is released as a cool "Anthracite" (50338) street version.

The distinctive 911 Turbo is sure to be a landmark in slot-car development. As well as incorporating some of the features Ninco introduced last year, such as the ProShock suspension and NC-5 Speeder motor, this model is coupled with an even higher level of detail including real rubber bumpers (*just like the full size 911*), new wheels (80714) and wide 20 x 11 slick tyres (80512). It includes the huge rear wing with a one-piece grille introduced on the full size version in 1978. This was mounted a little higher than earlier models so that a new intercooler could feed the mighty 300bhp 3.3 litre Boxer engine with more cooling air. It is also worth mentioning that, as well as transferring their turbo technology to the road-going 911, Porsche also installed the brake system from their 917 Le Mans race car.

'Ello John, gotta new motor...

Two new liveried and upgraded cars are on the shelves this month... First of all the Vodafone-sponsored Fiat Punto Super 1600 (50336) rally car based on that driven by José Pedro Fontes during the Portuguese championship. As well as the striking new colour scheme, the Punto now benefits from the more powerful NC-5 Speeder motor.

Next, the highly popular "angle-winder" BMW M3 GTR is released in its seventh race livery - this time in the colours of the Amprex (50335) sponsored car which competed in the Japanese GT Championship in both 2002 and 2003. The race distances can be up to 500km with compulsory stops to refuel and change drivers, making the event more of an endurance contest combining speed, reliability, driver skill, team ability and race strategy. The field is mainly made up of Japanese GT cars but you will find a few European cars such as the McLaren F1 GTR and the Porsche 911 GT3-R. This new Ninco BMW comes equipped with the 20,000rpm NC-5 Speeder motor.

Catalogue No.11

The new 44-page Ninco catalogue is out and what a treat it is! Sections showing sets, track, cars and spares are well laid out with fantastic close-up shots of some of the new cars. Half of the catalogue is dedicated to the various track sets, kits and accessories with a couple of pages showing the new Off Road Curve and Dune sets with at least five different configurations per set. Another two pages show how each of the nine extension kits can enhance every one of the five base sets. There are some beautiful shots of the soon to be released Porsche 934 among the Cars section. The last few pages list the current spares available and include pictures of all the latest wheels and tyres.

New address...

Aside from new cars, new liveries and new catalogue, The Hobby Company (Ninco's UK distributor) have a new address. They have moved to: Garforth Place, Knowlhill, Milton Keynes, MK5 8PH. *Wishing you all the best in your new home!* ■



Norman's conquest – revisited

Norman Griffiths oversaw Scalextric production from 1964-1971. Now in his 80s, he gives us an intriguing insight into the problems he encountered when he first arrived at Havant.

Paul Strange reports

Part 3 – the Formula Junior pile-up

Until February 1964, Norman Griffiths had mainly worked on Rovex train production, but all this was about to change dramatically. He'd already had some dealings with Scalextric, including setting up the Calais factory around 1962, but nothing hinted at what was to come on the Scalextric front and the vast problems he would be asked to solve.

An unexpected phone call from one of Lines Brothers' top brass was to send him scurrying down to a hotel in Emsworth just outside Havant near Portsmouth and a meeting the following day with the managing director of Minimodels. Much to his amazement, Norman had been appointed the new general manager of Scalextric, but there was little time to celebrate. One of the reasons for his sudden appointment became crystal-clear as soon as he entered the Scalextric factory. The Formula Juniors (the C66 Cooper and C67 Lotus) were high-volume lines

and the cornerstone of Scalextric's early-60s success. Much to Norman's astonishment, he discovered a mountain of returned Formula Junior sets, piled high in the repair department, and it was his job to sort it out.

"There were 30,000 returns on the Formula Juniors alone!", he says, as we chat at his home in Broadstairs, Kent. "Can you imagine – 30,000 returns! It was dreadful! In fact, I reckon for nearly every Formula Junior set they sent out, one came back! I arrived in February and the rejects from Christmas were still being stacked high in the repair department. There was no organisation whatsoever – it was diabolical. They had a big moulding shop, all the things were there that you needed, but there was poor organisation."

Norman discovered the returned sets had common faults. "The Formula Junior motor was going very badly when I arrived... it was diabolical. There was also a problem with the crown wheel being sheared from over-enthusiastic acceleration. And the original hand controller burned out repeatedly and was very, very finicky."

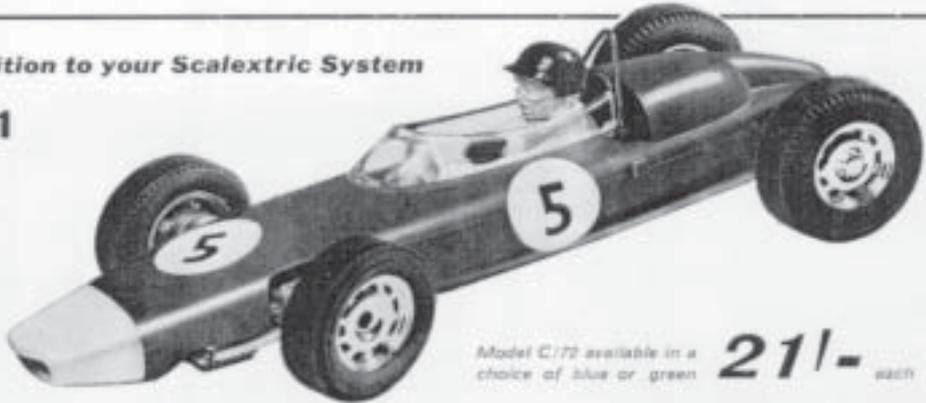
Norman realised that much of the motor's weakness originated in its manufacture, in particular its slim shaft. "Like the larger RX motor, the Junior motor was made in-house. The shaft was only 1/16th inch diameter, compared

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Another new addition to your Scalextric System

Formula 1 BRM

A fine 1/32 scale model complete with steering, giving even better road holding and higher speeds. As with all Scalextric cars it is fitted with interior trim and driver.



Model C/72 available in a choice of blue or green **21/-** each

with 3/30th inch for the RX motor. When the motor was made, the shaft was fed into a press tool and the armature was stamped out around it and stacked up until it was completed. A tenth of a thou difference meant that the armature didn't fit, or if it was 1/10,000th inch smaller, then the shaft sheared and it was loose. I experimented with the windings on the armature. As far as I was concerned, it was just trial and error. Lots of improvements were made to the motor in this way.

“The old hand throttles were eventually ditched because they used to burn out very easily. And, initially, the new ones weren't too brilliant either! I was only involved in the original hand throttles for a short time; the original design was on the way out as I came into Scalextric. They evolved into the trigger type which was easier to manufacture.”

Gradually improvements to the motor, the crown wheel and the hand throttle began to pay dividends. “It took three months to clear the initial backlog of repairs, but the proof of the pudding was that after my first year the returns of Formula Juniors began to go down.”

The Formula Junior went on to become one of Scalextric's biggest sellers, and blossomed into an increased range of vehicles, such as the C72/C85 BRM, the C73/C86 Porsche 804, the C81 Cooper and the C82 Lotus. To meet the high production demand, some of the Formula Junior components were made by outside firms. “The braided pick-ups were always a problem,” says Norman. “The tension on the pick-up was very important and it depended upon the manufacture of the braid. Some of them were very firm, but occasionally you'd get a batch in made of a softer braid and they'd fray more easily, and consequently you got shorting. It was very easily overcome, but when you're volume manufacturing, it was easy for slightly sub-standard braid to go through and then you've got problems on your hands with 300-400 cars going through before you know it.”

They had few problems with the bodies, though. “The people we used a lot to mould the Junior body – and many other Scalextric bodies during this period – were Riverhead Tools,

based at Riverhead in Kent. They'd made lot of railway bodies for us in the past and we were impressed with the detail and quality and their price, which was very good.”

Apart from the braids, the body and the sintered magnet (made from steel that had been heated, powdered, compressed and had no grain in it), the bulk of the Formula Junior – including the guide assembly, gearbox and windscreen – was made in-house. Once manufactured, the drivers' heads were sent outside for painting.

“We had herds of people from the local estate and they'd come in with their shopping bags and whatnot to pick up the heads. It was too much bother to paint them in-house. Someone would take away say a thousand heads and they'd paint the helmets, goggles and all that sort of thing – the minute detail – and then they'd come back.”

With many of the Formula Junior sets being sold mail-order, robust packaging was also vital to the operation. Minimodels used a local firm, Drings of Portsmouth, to design and supply this packaging. It was Drings that came up with the classic boxtop artwork, yellow cardboard interiors and chequered-flag inlay cards that are a distinctive hallmark of the early 60s sets, such as the glorious V3 Vintage Car set, the highly sought-after GK-1 Go-Kart set, and later on, the humble set 45, with the battling front-wheel drive C76 Mini Coopers. The boxes were built as tough as possible to survive the rigours of the postal service.

To test a prototype for a new set, Scalextric staff would fill the box with track, cars, hand controllers and so on, seal it up, hurl it high up in the air and allow it to crash to the ground. This extraordinary behaviour was repeated several times, then the contents of the box were inspected for damage to see what might happen to a boxed set in transit. “We were impressed with the quality of Drings' work,” says Norman. “Every time we had a new set, a new design was ordered and was tested in this manner. Our own packing people tested them and I certainly had a go – gleefully! And development were always there to see what was going on. I don't recall many returns due to the boxes collapsing.”



Drings of Portsmouth designed and supplied the robust packaging for Scalextric sets during the early 1960s

To produce a high volume model like the Formula Junior and to keep costs to a minimum, speed of manufacture was paramount. “Once all the component parts were ready, you’re talking literally minutes to build a Formula Junior. We operated a flow-line – similar to the ones used in regular car factories. We would have maybe 20 girls sitting either side of a moving belt, one to put in the motor, another to put on the wheels, the body caps, and so on. At the end of the line there was a quality inspector, checking the finished products. A whole car could be completed in two to three minutes. The assembly was all done on a bonus system. It was all piecemeal that wouldn’t be allowed today.”

Having solved its teething problems, reduced the repair pile to a minimum and meeting the large production targets that his bosses required, Norman became very fond of the Formula Junior.

“I always liked the big volume cars. The other cars seemed a bit pedantic when they were going round, whereas with the Formula Junior you could smack it round the track and they were always a great deal of fun. With the steering you could manage to slew it round a corner and get quite a good skid with it. And of course when we had a competition in the family or elsewhere, I would try to make myself a motor which gave a little bit more speed – never with any certainty, may I add! Just a ten-thousandth of an inch was the difference between a good and a bad motor.

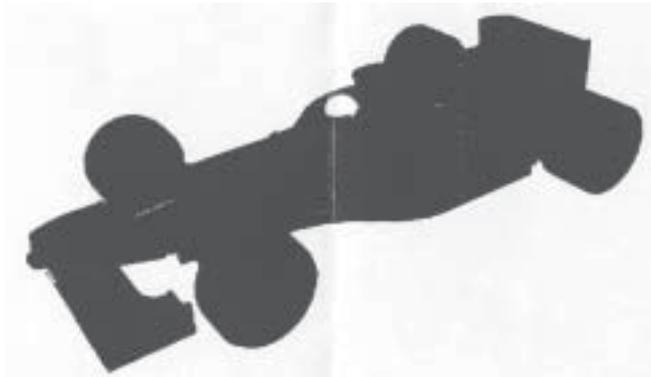
“Scalextric made a lot of money on the Formula Juniors. It was nice to be associated with that, because the car was such a pig when I first got there.” ■

Next month: on the right track

BITS AND PIECES

What is it?

Now that I have finally eliminated 'black blob syndrome' from the Journal *Graham Smith (Yes he!)* has decided to revive it. He received this picture from a distributor some years ago "to show what a new car release looked like"!



No it is not a fake - the original is still in Graham's possession; "can you tell what it is yet?" Anybody got any other examples?

Move over Frank Martin

Hornby's CEO is not the only one who can get a mention in *The Daily Telegraph* - the issue of Saturday 27th March contained an article about the recent auction of a James Bond set - complete with riveting quote from your editor! Apparently the set fetched £1300 - pity its owner hadn't heard of eBay really - he could have doubled his money and reduced the commission he paid!

Jammy git

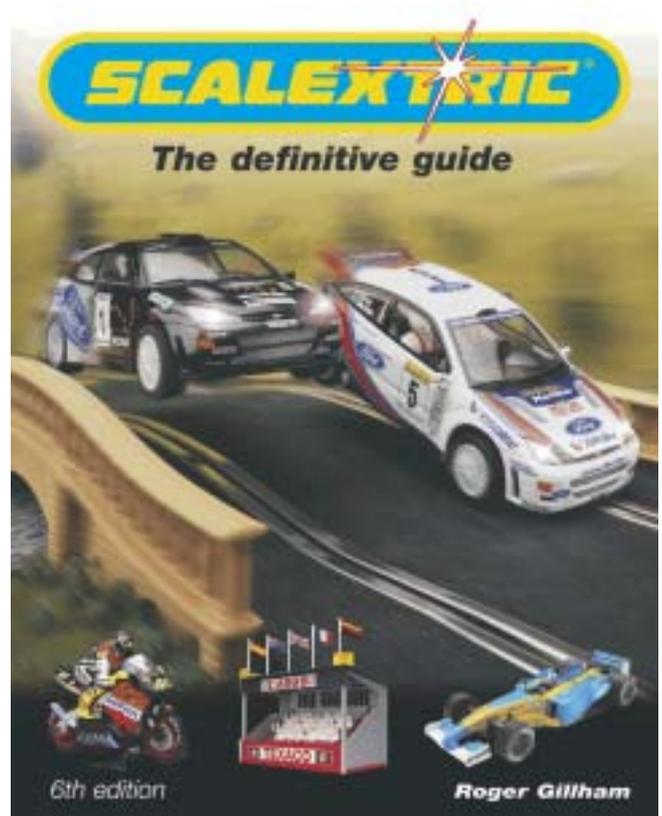
I had a phone call recently from a man who had been given a couple of Scalextric cars by a relative; he knew nothing about them so let his kids play with them. Then someone told him that 60s Scalextric cars were worth a bit so he put one on eBay to raise some pocket money for the children and got a large shock when he began to get emails from all over the world. He was a bit worried that he had described it incorrectly and would receive negative feedback so he wanted my advice.

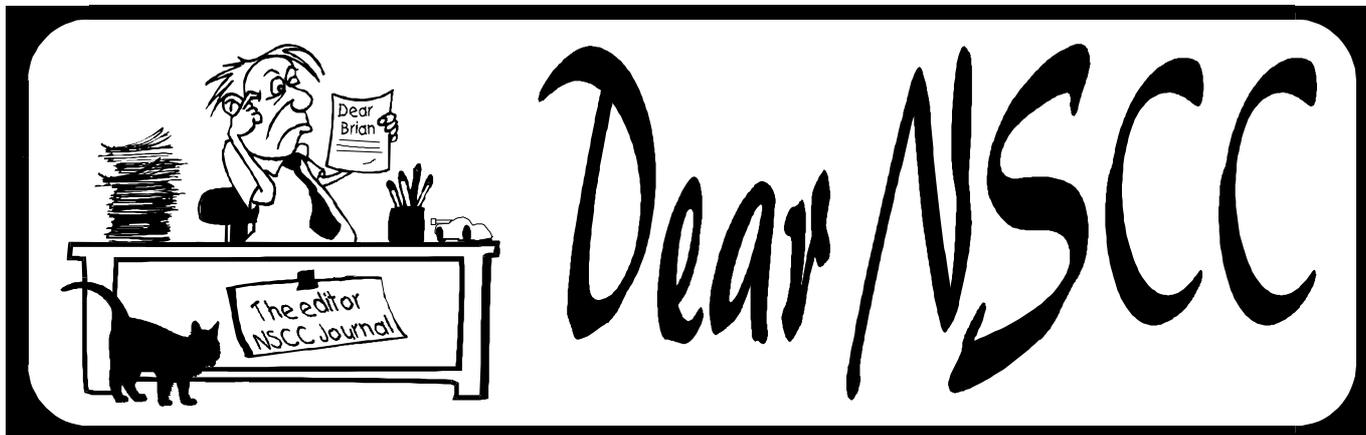
I was able to assure him that all was well and that the car in question was worth considerably more than the £10 - £15 he was expecting. He probably got an even bigger shock when the auction closed at £412! Why has no-one ever given me a *mint boxed yellow G65 Alfa?*..... Oh yes, the other one was a black Bentley - also mint boxed! Good job his kids didn't wreck them.

Roger's book

The 6th edition of Roger Gillham's enthusiasts guide, published by Haynes, will be launched at the Goodwood Revival meeting on the 4th September 2004.

RRP is £25 and it will contain 50% more pages and 400+ additional images including many pictures of UK, Spanish, Mexican, French and Australian sets. There will also be a dedicated chapter on Australia and New Zealand and new chapter on the 1960s Scalex model boats. It will, of course, be updated with all the new 2004 models, MotoGP etc.





Sir,
 My Scalextric RMS system does not work properly; therefore I want to ask if any reader of the journal could help me.

The basics are : PC - Pentium 500 mHz, 256 MB RAM, big enough disk space, COM 2 is used and acknowledged by the software (COM 1 is not available). Software: Win98 SE, RMS original version updated to the latest standard offered by the works.

The track: Scalextric Sport system, the shortest possible oval (2 straights on one side, Powerbase Sport connector, RMS connection straight, two connecting half straights in between (layout as shown on the cover of the RMS CD, one transformer, Scalextric Sport throttles. The software: installed to the location suggested, update to the latest specification made. The connection to the track is established and acknowledged.

The problem: it begins with starting the RMS software. There is no video show at the beginning; although I do not need to see the film, I will report this anyway.

Next problem: the software does not remember the number of the drivers chosen in the qualification mode.

And now the biggest of the troubles: when choosing "Start" on the upper bar of the RMS interface, nothing happens. No countdown, no comment, nothing. When you start driving around with any of the cars in one of the lanes (regardless if you have chosen the single seater the software suggests or you change it for another car), there comes the message: "Jump start lane 1 (or 2), penalty round". This is

continued till you stop driving around the oval. I was in contact with Adrian Norman at the Scalextric factory and he suggested checking the contacts under the track. This was to no avail. Now, after the long preliminaries, my questions: is this a basic fault of the RMS system or did I overlook anything important? Is there a cure or should I give up on it?

Have any other members had similar troubles? If so, how did they overcome them? Answers please to the journal or via email to konrad.rabl@cnet.at.

I am, yours etc,
 Konrad Rabl

.....

Sir,
 A few questions about Ninco items please:
 1) They have a lap counter called 'Pole Position' (ref 10403) with an optional software (PC) connection which controls times, laps etc. Has anybody out there tried it? What are its full functions? How much does it cost and is it any good?
 2) Ninco supply a plug-in adaptor with their sets and they also supply a stand alone wall plug/adaptor. They appear to be remarkably similar but the set one has a 14.8v 0.9a output whereas the stand alone jobbie delivers 13v with a 9.1va output.

What is the purpose of the two different outputs and which is best?

I am, yours etc,
 Glen Jackson



Sir,
I'm new to the NSCC this year, having spent the last few months trying to re-acquire those items I foolishly let go when I 'grew out' of Scalextric some twenty five years ago.

The upshot is that I'm now running a variety of cars (60s, 70s and some early 80s) on 'classic' track. All was well until recently when I started losing power (ie stop-start) on the standard curves. The track is in good order and I keep the rails clean using kitchen towels soaked in meths. I'm assuming my controllers and transformer/power pack are not at fault since the straights are unaffected. My current layout is not huge by the way.

I'm particularly keen to get to the bottom of it since I'm contemplating a more permanent set up soon and don't want to carry over any issues to that layout. I would be most interested to hear any suggestions from you or the membership as to what might be sapping my power on the curves. Many thanks.

I am, yours etc,
Phil Lanham

PS - Milton Keynes was fantastic - what an initiation to the club- keep up the good work.

.....
Sir,
Just to let you know, I have received a set of brake disks for my Fly Ferrari 365GTB from Gaugemaster, as mentioned in the March Journal. First class service Aaron - thanks.

I am, yours etc,
Richard Downham

Sir,
After reading the letter from Paul Roach, I think it might be an idea to include an article "*all you wanted to know about slot-cars but were afraid to ask*" as I consider myself a bit of a "dunce" when it comes to my knowledge of this.

The only way I can find information is by reading what is printed in the Journal and by listening to others far more knowledgeable than myself at Swapmeets, I don't like to bother the traders by asking them questions as they are always busy selling. I'm sure (or hope) that I am not the only one thinking this.

On another subject, Vince Cluderay's letter about his difficulty in obtaining the Ninco club car; I too have been waiting for mine since August last year. My subscription and payment for the car were debited from my credit card immediately. I have sent quite a few e-mails, none of which have been replied to ... a disgraceful attitude towards club members who are buying their products. Surely someone at Ninco can sort this out?

Thanks for doing a sterling job on the magazine; I look forward to it every month!

I am, yours etc,
Roy Gale

I did ask for a volunteer to answer members questions a couple of months ago but, sadly, I have yet to receive any offers.

It is obvious, from this month's batch of letters, that a lot of newish members need some basic help - so how about it? It's not a difficult job, someone must be able to do it.

NINCO *track test*

“Clear as Mud”
(50330) - Subaru WRC
2003 – (New Zealand)
By Marc Abbott

Rally racing, in the real world, has never been one of my fascinations, yet it is probably watched by more spectators than any other form of motor sport there is. I appreciate how masterful the drivers are etc, but it's not exactly wheel-to-wheel racing is it? (All hate mail to the editor please).

However, rallying slot-car style is a different kettle of fish altogether. It's a bit like saloon but with added extras like four wheel drive and on some cars, lights. Plus of course, you do race wheel to wheel (although I have seen some clubs on the net that do proper time trials up single lane hills etc).

I was looking forward to this one. I've been using a Ninco “German Rally” Porsche since it first came out and it certainly goes – you need a lot of concentration on twisty circuits – so to receive a brand spanking new Subaru with the infamous NC5 installed was really something I couldn't wait to try.

When the box arrived I was impressed with the “dirty, mud splattered look” that makes these modern rally slot-cars so realistic – even the box has some of the brown stuff on! This is supposed to be how the car looked when it finished the real event, which means Tommy Makinen must



have driven really well because there ‘ain't a dent on it!’ As we always expect from Ninco, detailing all over this car is excellent, as those of you that already own earlier versions of the Subaru will know. I like the ‘real’ spare tyre sitting behind the driver/navigator and presume that if I had the inclination to dismantle everything, I could use it on the car.

In this review, I thought I should start out as if I were Mr. General Public and get it straight out of the box and blast around the track, simply because that's what most of the people that purchase slot-cars to race around their homes would do, and if they find anything they don't like, they just assume the car's rubbish.

So off it went, into the first corner and then full power onto the straight, from where I got the impression that the magnet was doing a pretty good job of masking a problem. There was a rather worrying bouncing of the rear axle, especially under acceleration, so I made a quick pit stop to examine what was afoot. It had felt like (and look liked) the off-side rear tyre wasn't on the rim properly, but a quick inspection revealed a nasty mould defect, which was easily sorted by spinning the rear tyres lightly on sand paper. I've never had this problem with Ninco tyres before, so can confidently claim I was just unlucky.





Off it went again and I was pleased to see that it did indeed have a very good pace. I won't bore you with times, suffice to say that it's pretty damn quick and very easy to drive, although there was still a slight bounce under hard acceleration on the main straight.

Braking is excellent. If you have 'dynamic' brakes wired into your controllers, you have the extra effect from the 4 wheel drive set up, so you can leave it right 'till the last micro second before releasing the power.

A few more laps and I was getting really fast, the NC5 beginning to bed itself in nicely, but with speed the bouncing got worse. I wouldn't say this was a major problem and I think it may be down to either too much power going through a chassis that normally copes with an NC2 or the tightening and then flexing of the rubber band as it has to cope with massive changes in acceleration and deceleration.

Suddenly, the car's braking performance dramatically changed and it nearly caught me out going into the bend at the end of my main straight. I've come to know this problem well with Ninco 4 wheel drives and brought the car back to the pits. Taking the body off, my prediction was proven correct; the rubber band had come adrift and was flapping around both axles rather uselessly. As I stated, I knew of this from past experience, but it's easily fixed – just make sure that the two little wheels holding the band are exactly in line, fore and aft, then the

problem should be cured – you'll probably need some kind of spacers to achieve this as there is quite a bit of sideways movement on the front axle as standard.

With magnet removed, motor glued in, tyres trued, gears oiled, and body replaced in customary loose "rocky" mode, off we went back to the loft for another few laps. Fast it certainly is, but the 30 ohm controllers I normally use around my home circuit are a bit too 'punchy' through the tighter sections, so I quickly plugged in a Ninco 55 ohm and was better able to control the beast before me. In order to run in this mode however, you'll need to do something about the levels of grip. The front tyres dig in hard, especially on Ninco track and it doesn't really allow you to slide the back end out at all without tipping – but you know the tricks, so I'm not gonna preach 'em here. I also tested it on the SCX track at West London and Polistil track at Burnt Oak with very similar results.

All in all, a very nice (and powerful) car. Not sure how this will affect your local club rules. If you allow this car to run with an NC5 on board everyone else may have to either buy a similar car, or fit an NC5 into their older cars. Mind you, a lot of people may prefer the easier to handle NC2 anyway.

Well, I'm off to the car wash, must get these wheel arches cleaned up, there's mud all over the place! ■

Kits and cars at Christmas

By Tim Ainslie

The really great thing about Christmas is that I can legitimately browse around toy shops, looking for items on the children's Christmas lists.

At one of my nearest slot-car stockists I came across some nifty 1/32 kits from Revell. They are very different to the Cobra, Diablo, F-40 kits produced by Revell in the last few years apart from being snap together. The new range seems to have a Germanic influence as the cars are the Mercedes, Opel and Audi TT DTM cars. I was interested to see how they compared with the Hornby Mustang kit I had bought earlier in the year so the Audi and a Mercedes were purchased. They were retailing at the same price as the offerings from Hornby.



Completed Revell Snap Kits

They are impressive, being ready coloured and decorated with a mixture of what appears to be Tampo and Decals, they have chromed metal axles with tyres of rubber material. They also click together easily needing no glue.

I have yet to put the Hornby Mustang together as this will need to be made over a period of time as I am sure the painting and gluing will take longer than the 30 minutes to click together the Revell kits. The Mustang has a more detailed underpan but it has spigots for the wheels to attach to, as opposed to the axles included with the Revell models. The Mustang kit is moulded in white plastic with decorations

being printed onto self adhesive plastic film and the tyres are rubber as fitted to the motorised version.



Converted Revell Audi TT

Both manufacturers have produced a range of static kits that can be left in the pit areas as static display items or converted to run on the track and they are a welcome addition to the 1/32 Airfix E-type, Aston etc.

A bizarre item I came across while hunting for presents was a Carrera Mercedes 300SLR mounted on a plinth housing a digital clock and a red button that when pushed caused the sound of a most un-Mercedes like engine noise to come from within the plinth and to think I only used to go into Marks and Spencers for pants and socks.

During the Christmas period I discovered that big sisters never really stop having control over their little brothers, even when they are old enough to know better! For Christmas I had requested a Slot it Porsche 962 and an Italian Job Mini Cooper from the family, even though I had been hankering after a De Walt Tuscan to race since they were first announced. ➡

In the run up to Christmas, whilst finalising Boxing Day arrangements with my sister, she asked me out of the blue what I would like for Christmas. I tend to get rather self conscious when some one offers to give me something and so I mumbled that a Scalextric car would be nice. She then put me on the spot by asking what I would like specifically. An image of the sport version of the Tuscan De Walt popped into my mind. Which is how I ended up saying a TVR would be great. My brother in-law was listening in and I heard him mutter something derogatory about TVRs (He once owned one and I must admit that I remembered looking at the carpets



Traditional Christmas pastime

running up the walls of the interior of the car and wondering why they hadn't managed to glue them in place). The TVR I wanted has a higher build quality than his and was the latest offering from Scalextric, except I forgot to tell my sister that.

On Boxing Day whilst we are waiting to trade presents after lunch my older sister told me how the nice helpful man in the toyshop had showed her a batch of four TVRs going for a bargain price (Mental image of speed 12s, followed by mental scream, Not, four Speed 12s, surely not!!).

As she watched my face drop, with a twinkle in her eye, she went on to say how the nice, helpful man in the toyshop produced the catalogue and showed her the latest releases. Fortunately my sister has my powers of common-sense and decided the Tuscan was the one, and as I ripped off the wrapping paper there was the black and yellow De Walt colour scheme, which she had chosen because power-tools seemed to be more appropriate for me than the car advertising Harmon Cardon Heated rollers! ■

Toy lust -

Article from the August 1993 edition of Car magazine, discussing different toy car obsessions. Written by Richard Bremner; submitted by Dave Morrison

I was just seven when I started my campaign. It was directed at my parents, and consisted of ruses as sophisticated as gazing wistfully into toyshop windows, thumbing pointedly through catalogues and whining. It would be two years before I achieved my goal, and that's a long time at that age.

The inspiration for this campaign I stumbled on in the dining room of a friend's house. There, on a rug-covered and fully extended dining table, lay a Scalextric set. Two Mini Coopers, one green, one red, both with that single roof-mounted spotlight, scuttling around the circuit, negotiating chicanes, hump-backed bridges and flyovers as they circumnavigated grandstands, pit buildings and 1/32nd scale spectators. I was transfixed, and the seeds of an enduring strain of toy lust were sown.

They were eventually sated with Scalextric set number 41, the 'blow-out' set. This featured a piece of track that enabled you to trigger a flap beneath the wheels of your opponents car, causing it to leave the track in a spectacular fashion.

Once you've got a set, of course, your next desire is to expand it, an inclination that the makers are only too keen to cash in on. For the receipt of regular Saturday pennies, however, about the only readily affordable item in the catalogue was a replacement pair of pick-up braids. So my set used to grow on the standard anniversaries.

It's in recent years that my set has grown to what are, frankly, embarrassing proportions. Scalextric has been in production for more than 30 years now and there have been hundreds of different models in dozens of liveries, making the scope for acquisition near endless. Several hundred pounds and a few years later, I have over 200 models, masses of buildings, people and accessories and nowhere to use any of it. But, one day, there's going to be a massive layout in the Bremner house, six lanes of track, lines of pit buildings, fleets of cars. Then, I think, that seven-year-old's lust will have been sated. ■

Wanderer's Witterings

By Paul Lampard

Wand'er = *verb.* roams, ramble, *vi.* go astray, deviate; *-noun.* **-wanderer**, **-wanderlust** *noun.* irrepressible urge to....

That's according to the learned pages of the Collins English dictionary and I think it covers my slot-car passion pretty well. My hobby to date has been full of meandering, deviations and the insatiable urge to discover something or somewhere new.

I'm a relative newcomer to the hobby and I can still count the years on one hand ("Yes dear, I know that's because I can't count any higher" - but more on unwanted distractions later). I started off, like most do, as a boy 'playing' blissfully with a toy electric car on someone else's track. Years later as young men, we would gather at our mate's pad and race through midnight with beer assisted plastic projectiles and endless mirth. But friends part, real cars and bikes take priority, oh and that girl-house-marriage thing too, takes over.

Wobble

It was a Christmas a few years ago and a Santa's surprise of a C707 Jaguar Challenge set reawakened what turned out to be a nigh on all consuming monster. At this stage it's still a 'toy'. Where had I been, what's happening? Wow great stuff. Without giving it a thought for a decade (or was that two?) I'm a born again slottie. A visit to the local toyshop finds a dusty C853 Silverstone set to be had; such fun, the entire house is wall-to-wall carpeted with Scalextric track. It's wine and fondue this time but the mirth and competition remains the same. I find the hilarious entertainment factor of a Wild 3-Sixty set still at the top of any list. Then children start to arrive.

Deviation

"Mum say's I can't play any more, I've got to grow up". So, depressed I decide to squirrel a few things away instead, just to feed the habit

you understand in the hope for my retirement (yes I've been told I can forget "going out to play" till I'm 55 at the earliest and that's only if I get time off for good behaviour!). So I visit a bigger shop - Ninco, Fly who are they? Brilliant kit. SCX looks good value, hey their track fits too. Carerra - will that work on my track, maybe. I wonder who else knows about slot-cars?

Roam

This is where my article really starts, so thanks for your patience, but don't hold your breath in the hope that it gets better, I'm still learning remember. I offer the rest to all those new comers, such as me, to the humble fold of slot-car heaven. It's an exciting period to be a slottie for sure.

First – get informed. Join a club. Oh silly me you have haven't you. Have you tried the Scalextric Enthusiasts Club? No, then why not? I actually joined "Racer" first and I can't remember how I stumbled across the NSCC, I never realised there was another level/world to this. Get some magazines, particularly the foreign ones with glossy pictures (no lower shelf than that sir) normally found only at a model shop (steady, you are way ahead of me again). Now surf the web, but that's an entire article on its own and so I leave that to a mystic ether inclined individual to fill you in on that in a future article maybe, else just Ask Jeeves - he's quite bright sometimes for a digital servant. But best of all get out and visit.

Gone roaming

Toyshops, model shops, can be just great. Old, new, dusty or sparkling they all have their merits. I have had countless hours of pleasure and pain visiting some wonderful places, shops and people. I cannot over-estimate the value I place on an enthusiastic, knowledgeable dealer who really loves his vocation. If he's good I fill his till up month in month out, if not - well sod him to

be polite. Milk them well as they often have an amazing wealth of information and can really make your day if you're lucky. It's the old two way-street thing, treat them well, don't waste their time and they'll start to remember you by name and put stuff behind the shelf for your next visit(s). Visit them all because what suits me may not suit you. My local is the best part of 100 miles away because I like it, full stop. The chain-store just round the corner is for Christmas and for Barney and Barbie as far as I'm concerned.

Check around, like most things, prices vary; the first shop may be trying to stiff you an extra wad for the last Carrera "x" car, whereas two shops down the road, the cabinet holds six of the buggers and they're 50% off as he's "had 'em for years and is trying to shift 'em". On one particular occasion, I saw just what I wanted in the glass prison of one shopkeeper, but he wanted a ton for it. Outraged, but resilient, I enquired if he would "trade", he would "for the right car" which by chance I had remembered seeing at another shop, so quick round trip with crossed fingers and a RRP purchase later, the trade was done - result. This cautious approach has occasionally blown up in my face though as I've missed the run of an item, but again this is where the specialist dealers turn up trumps. More than once I have missed the boat and a certain Biggin Hill based proprietor or the "internationally travelled gentleman" has got me out of the mire. So many thanks to them.

Don't forget old Jeeves, he can save a lot of wasted legwork for you too as the electronic medium has a hoard of both excellent and sometimes less so retailers and individuals to feed your needs and I have several favourites. As I've stated, some of the more reputable dealers have saved me a lot of work and I do dip into their stock often. But I need to get touchy-feely sometimes, if you know what I mean, so out I go. Once you know what is out there or more importantly what you missed you can always log on to the one-eye wonder to find that elusive limited edition or non-stocked item. I use both mediums and that serves me well.

Back to roaming. First do your homework; check the yellow pages, Scalextric dealer sheet, A-Z and maps. The mantra of P⁶ is not a Ferrari Le Mans hybrid that had a blow out on the Mulsanne at a ton-eighty in '71, but Proper Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance. I have used road maps to varied effect but being a professional techie I'm GPS ready now and that's a massive aid. Pick a route that suits you and have some fun, with GPS you're never truly lost, just the routes can be like a magical mystery tour and hence GPS has taken me places both marvellous and misleading but has always got me to the final destination, just not the way I had intended.

My other pleasure is motorbikes and getting on my Honda Fireblade and zooming off to Lands End via the twisties of Dartmoor is an absolute blast. I visit a few shops on the way, have fish and chips or ice cream on the beach (depending on the season) then bugger off back home via a few more. Excellent. It's the journey that makes it, so don't set your sights too high on the shop as it might be devoid of any cars at all but still claims to be a Scalextric dealer as it sells a "few spare braids". It might be gone or moved, that's happened far too many times for my liking, so memo to me to talk to the Factory Liaison Officer about putting a cracker up Hornby's publication department. At least Hornby's catalogues are believable, why do Fly bother - they look great but deliver poor, and where is the Ninco catalogue for the last TWO years, once is careless but twice is just unforgivable. Oops I wandered but I did warn you I would.

The bike works well on several levels as picking your way through traffic is a breeze and you can park in the shop if they let you, don't laugh I told you my dealer was helpful. Only problem is you can only buy so much stuff, some days I come back empty handed anyway, other times I find a long forgotten box in a dusty corner of a tired seaside toyshop (you know, the type with yellow film in the window to stop the merchandise going off). No holy grails yet like that missing Bugatti or James Bond set, but that's not my scene anyway, my grail is more likely =>

to be a C2273 Subaru Police car, I know my limits. It's also a bummer when it's cold or rains. Big softy or fair-weather biker you say, but I did say "enjoy yourself" plus I've done all that cold wet stuff thank you and if your idea of heaven is sitting in wet underpants for six hours then perhaps you enjoyed nappies as a baby. Anyway, most good shops will post it on (at a price of course) or keep it for you.

The car, though practical and cavernous, does have the perennial parking problem. I've spent too much time trying to find that elusive parking space to be ripped off at £2 plus an hour or worse (- a 'wish you weren't here ticket' from the local parking Gestapo), only to find the shop shut, gone or empty of any delights. Plus the journey is less fun. So the only advice I can offer here is remember to have a lot a change for the meters.

Astray

Swapmeets, ah the elixir of life, but also Pandora's box i.e. once opened all hell breaks loose. As swapmeets are a regular feature in the journal I won't dwell on the specifics, just some personal witterings. Location - they always seem some else than where I am. I lived in Milton Keynes for nigh on a decade, moved away, then discovered the religion of Scalextric and found one of the principle churches was in Milton bloody Keynes! Oh but the deep joy they bring, they have so much cracking kit (and a fair amount of tat) that you need a will of iron to restrain yourself from doing something really silly. I try to control myself with a list; it's a looonnnng list I admit, plus the wallet is thinned down to cash only and the card cemented under the patio which the wife sits on sipping petrol whilst picking her fangs with matches. I try to go with a mate, who acts as a levelling device, with comments like, "you've got to be kidding" and, "you'll kick yourself if you don't". With my steely resolve crumbling I circumnavigate the hallowed halls and worship at the altars of our slottie demi-gods. Please remember to enjoy yourself and try and pay a fair and reasonable price or we'll all suffer. If you pay x hundred quid for a bit of warped plastic they will charge

us even more, but equally if you try to stuff the seller he'll go broke and won't be here next year to show his wares, either way it will kill it for some of us. Moderation and balance it is then. Again try to visit a few swapmeets and see which ones tickle your fancy best.

Deviation and lust

We touched on money a bit. I am finding cost a massive driver on choice and decisions, more so in the last few years with the wealth of new manufacturers and top-notch fare they have. So I try to remember that the kids need to eat this week, or did I feed them last week, anyway, try to limit your self. Pah, who am I to talk, that Racer RTR is ravenous and who could resist a morsel of Maxi-Models, and I must must must have that beautiful thingy! But also do we really need that 27th relivery of a Benetton 193 and who do Fly think we are, even Bill Gates would have a struggle to afford all their LEs. Plus unless you've got a spare warehouse to stash your stuff and your relative owns Pilkington glass and makes cabinets, where the hell are you going to put them. Try to start off with just the cars you really like, no I mean really, really want. Some people try a theme, say all Porsches or any Gulf car, eras i.e. 60-70s, rally cars or one makes like Fly, Scalextric only etc. The list is endless. Me, I go for new moulds, no reliveries, well ok, sometimes I've succumbed, but as they don't do an equivalent of financial Viagra yet the wallet gets a bit flimsy sometimes and as I've already pawned the car and the wife refuses point blank to sell the kids for medical experiments (get so attached these mums you know) I will just have to limit myself to real world economics.

Ramble

So if you perhaps see some lanky git in leathers slinking out of your local slot-shop with either full arms and a grin or shoulders dropped and bagless, on his way to a fish and chip supper on the harbour/church wall, shuffle up for a chat about slots and bikes. Especially if you're the owner of a C2273 Subaru Police car in need of a good home.... ■

A Scalextric set that never was.....

By Keith Crowe

Whilst working for the Editor in the capacity of Research Assistant I have come across some information about a set that was planned but never released. A few of you may think that this was yet another 60s or 70s set but incredibly this was as recently as 2003. It all began with the planned production of 'The Italian Job Minis' and someone at Hornby devised 'a cunning plan'.

Themed Gift Set

The idea of a 'themed Gift Set' in the same vein as James Bond, Batman or Turtles of the past was suggested; the idea was discussed further and the decision to go into development was taken.

But what was to be the content of the Set? Many suggestions were discussed. James Bond was a natural choice, the popularity of the films is obvious, not to mention the highly collectable nature of the 60s offering. The downside to Bond was twofold it had already been done and it was also known that another manufacturer was poised to release an updated version - therefore Bond was rejected. Scooby Doo was considered (70s cartoon now released as a film) as was The Simpsons but the final decision was taken to create the set to include the three Italian Job Minis on an elongated oval figure of eight with a flyover. The set was given a planned release date of April 1st 2004 and provisionally numbered as C1966.

However, as with all things, the plan started to be developed and it took Hornby down a path that meant dusting off some old ideas and creating some new ones. This had a few distinct advantages. they could utilise proven ideas and add a few items from the box marked 'maybe one day' that had been researched before but never released.

Alfa Romeo or Turtles Camper Van?

Very quickly it was decided to make the change from a two lane to a four lane circuit, the principle argument being that there are three Minis and this is the core of the film and this should be reflected in the set. The next question was - what could be included to occupy the fourth lane? It was here that a few interesting ideas were thrown into the melting pot! The first, easiest, and most predictable idea was a repaint of C197/C496 Alfa Romeo 155 in Carabinieri colours with the additional benefit that this could also be released as a separate model and continue the trend of 'Police' vehicles. The second was quite amusing as it was suggested that the 'Turtles' VW camper van would be used to create a people carrier for the gang. For those of you familiar with the film this role was played by a Thames 5 cwt that had a very pronounced nose down stance (as does the Turtles camper van) and an engine that had a very distinctive sound on deceleration, often accompanied with a odd 'popping' noise, if I remember correctly. It was felt that a new mould for a 1960s Thames would be a little expensive for just one production run particularly as a future individually issued 'repaint' would have very little interest to today's modern users. consequently this plan was eventually dropped.

A Coach! You must be joking!

It was at about this stage that the development meetings became very interesting and a thought was expressed that was to result in resurrecting an older idea and the creation of new ones. "Why not", someone said, "have a coach. which the Minis could drive into?" I can only imagine that laughter or stunned silence met this comment until someone recalled that this was not really a new idea but an old one revisited. ⇒⇒

Hornby had studied some years ago the idea of a Capri driving into a moving box van/trailer type lorry (see Journal 220, July 2000, page 5, Son of Mole and Journal 221, August 2000, page 9. Factory Lines). Anxious to add something 'new' to the set work immediately began on a mock up of a 1960's Vega Major Coach similar to the one used in the original film and modelled in the 60s by Corgi.

With the plans dusted off the Capri lorry idea a snag was quickly identified as they would have two cars running on the same track (sorry coach and car!). Although initially a problem this was again resolved by using an old idea first seen with the Datsun 4x4 Pick Ups. This system allowed two Datsuns to run on the same track, the trailing car 'nudging' the lead car thus activating a spring mechanism that tossed the lead Datsun off the track! 'Lane merging' track sections were developed in the newer Sport Track style and were tested with the Minis and a mock up coach. Although a great deal of skill was required to get the Mini into the coach it was possible provided that a very long straight was included, The coach idea was in and the Alfa was held as reserve should costs overrun.

Banked Curves Return

Due to the enormous straight needed for the coach/ Mini idea this, now very large track, had a very large hole in the middle and suggestions were required as to how this could be filled. The final choice was to resurrect the (dreaded) C187 Banked Curve. Again old track section plans were revisited and a revised pit lane entrance/ exit section was produced as a mock up that allowed the cars to be switched/directed into the 'infield' of the figure of eight loop and back again to the main circuit.

From the revised 'Pit Lane' section they drove onto a two lane oval which now included a set of banked curves at each end. This neatly represented the original film in which the Mini's are 'chased' across roof tops that included a banked section. This also might allow future development, and possible re-issue, of the 'Pit Lane' section much demanded by collectors for

a long time. Also included in this 'infield' section was the 'flying leap' track section taken directly from the C563 'Batman Leap' Set. This would come complete with a half straight fill in section for those of us that didn't fancy sending our Minis/Alfa/Coach airborne!

An Ambulance, some smoke and a CD

A few further ideas were suggested and again these were put into the development stage. Those of you familiar with the film will recall an ambulance was used in the planning of the robbery, intended only to blow the doors from the ambulance it was in fact blown to pieces by the inept explosives 'expert'. This one idea spurned two more 'plans' the first of which brought back the earlier mentioned idea of the 'Turtles' VW Camper Van. Now Tampo printed as an ambulance and built in 'push fit' sections it was designed to fall apart at the press of a button, an additional benefit was that this vehicle could be produced as part of the new static 'kit' range to enhance home circuits.

It was to be accompanied with smoke from a redesigned C 170 Rev Start track section and would be placed within the infield section of the large track alongside the 'Inner Banked Oval'. It was planned to have a small pyrotechnic device to blow the 'Ambulance' to pieces but prudence/common sense/Health and Safety/EU Regulations prevented the use of even small pieces of Dynamite or C4 explosives!! The second spin-off idea was to produce a CD with authentic Mini engine sounds, explosive bangs (ambulance), Police siren (Alfa) and of course the immortal line from Michael Caine "You're only supposed to blow the bloody doors off". This of course is reminiscent of the earlier 45 rpm record 'Roar'. For those of you under twenty please ask your Mother/Father/Uncle/Aunt what a '45 rpm record' was!

Figures?

The final touch was the plan to remodel some old moulds and create some new figures, planned to have a set of six including two very

startled looking Italian policemen based on the binocular carrying spectator. Two gun toting 'Mafioso' based on a remodelled refuelling Pit Crew' now minus his refuelling can but carrying a rifle, a Michael Caine 'driver' straight from the original standing figure buckling up his crash helmet and finally a new mould that bears a striking resemblance to Benny Hill!

The Final Concept

To recap, the proposed set now consisted of a huge four lane circuit complete with the three 'Italian Job' Minis, an Alfa Police car, a big coach, an exploding/smoking ambulance, a CD, new figures, an inner (oval shaped) banked curved circuit, lane changing sections, a flying leap and the ability to run two vehicles on the same track. Coupled with the inevitable crash barriers, bridge supports, power bases, throttles etc. it resulted in a set that was, in size, big enough to put a club circuit to shame!

Problems, 'Number Crunchers' and Doh!

Obvious problems now started to be identified, the first being the exceptionally large number of track pieces in the set, mainly to complete the long straight section needed to allow the Mini/Coach innovation to work. The expense to rework old moulds and track sections was beginning to spiral as was the cost of the new figures. The development of the coach was high and was based on older plans but was still under threat due to high costs. Regrettably at this stage the 'number crunching auditors' were called in.

Even dropping the coach and replacing with the (alternative) Alfa Police car did not bring down projected costs to a reasonable level, it also removed a key 'play' element of the set. Later decisions to drop the CD, inner Banked Oval and figures did bring down track size and costs but completely robbed the set of its lustre and, a few said, the whole idea of the 'Themed Set'. Now seriously 'restructured' it was beginning to lose favour within the company as it was now not much different from any other set. The radical ideas and innovations were just proving too

costly; regrettably the decision 'to pull the plug' was eventually taken and further development stopped. Plan B was adopted which resulted in what we now know to be 'The Simpsons' Set complete with a skateboarding Homer and Bart.

To my knowledge no part of this proposed Set exists nor do plans to create it. The cost to produce would be huge as would the selling price considering its content. Lets face it who would buy it or even have a room large enough to set it up in? It does however make you think though, what if.....

And Finally - during the last year I have been compiling an index for the Newsletter/Journal which is well on the way to completion. I am still missing several copies from 1984 - 1987 though. If anybody has spares they could donate/sell/lend please get in touch with Brian at the usual address. Photocopies would be perfectly acceptable. ■

BITS AND PIECES

Advert time

Cast your eyes over this one, sent in by *Stephen Barber*, who has also provided a translation.

The small lettering at the top says: "Peter Widmayer, DAS contact partner, on the topic of justice." Large letters in centre: "Justice is, when one cannot be pushed out of the loop that easily." Small letters underneath: "We want you to get your rights"



The photo was taken on January 25th this year in Nuremberg, Germany; DAS is an insurance company. Presumably the track is computer-generated, and the hand controller looks like a Carrera one; funny that they have created a version of the old Scalextric loop-the-loop track - maybe somebody in the ad agency knew of its existence and was inspired by it, maybe that person had the same mad mind as the original designer. Presumably the car is fitted with magnets . . . Poor old Peter Widmayer looks bored stiff.

Stranger than fiction

I was thinking about doing an April Fool advert for 'Scalextric tyre warmers' this month so I had a quick look for pictures of the real thing on the web. Look what I found at <http://www.rc-car-online.de/htstarteng.htm> -



"HT-tyre warmers for two tyres. One size fits all touring car, truck and Formula 1 tires, narrow and wide! 12 volt dc operated. The tyre warmers are delivered in a handy storage box. Tyre warmer-set for two tyres, 89.00 Euros."

Actually they are meant for Radio Control cars but I am sure you could use them on slot-cars as well. Yet another 'cunning plan' comes to nought!

Loughborough swapmeet

A reminder to anyone planning to attend this event on the 25th April -

PLEASE BRING YOUR NSCC

MEMBERSHIP CARD WITH YOU

- you may find your entry somewhat delayed if you turn up without it.

The AGM will also be held during the swapmeet and the committee would really like to hear your views about the club - if you can manage to tear yourself away from the goodies on display for a little while.

The (short) life of a legend

By Tony Secchi

Those of you who saw the recent TV series on the world's most expensive auction items will be familiar with the subject of this article - The Ferrari 'Testa Rossa'.

Yet again, model builder extraordinaire David Yerbury has had a flash of nostalgic inspiration and this time created a 1/32-scale fibreglass resin bodied version of this famous, fabulous car.

With his erudite historical sense, he phoned and asked me if I would take on the task of building, testing and reviewing it. As David himself said "Who better to do this job than an Italian?" Of course I jumped at the chance, as I am very familiar with this unique car.

Raced as a 330P (for prototype) the 330 TRI/LM, to give the car its proper title, was literally a 'one off' version produced by the Factory for one reason and one reason only - to win the 1962 Le Mans 24 hours, which it duly did with the then current F1 world champion Phil Hill and the Belgian Olivier Gendebien doing the driving. It was just one car against the rest, signing off as a magnificent postscript to what had been a grand era.

Fantuzzi designed the shape but his clean lines looked somewhat less aerodynamic when the car took to the track. As raced, the body was festooned with scoops and grills for brake cooling, bug deflector, Perspex bubble over the down-draught carbs, tail spoiler, huge bonnet scoop, aerodynamic wing/crash bar behind the cockpit and wide 'sharknose' front based on the narrower version of the 1961 Ferrari 156 GP car that Phil Hill had used to win his title.

The name 'Testa Rossa' is synonymous with some of the most memorable successes in the history of the Ferrari marque. Most (older) members will know that the English translation of the name 'Testa Rossa' is literally 'Red Head' and refers to the engine because the camshaft/rocker box covers that adorned the cylinder heads were painted that colour.

The TR project actually began in 1956 with the 500 TR and the 'Testa Rossa' (in its various forms) won the World Sportscar Championship in 1958, 60 and 61, this run being interrupted in 1959 by Aston Martin and a driving genius called Stirling Moss. This particular engine was a 65 degree V12 putting out 390 bhp at 7,000 rpm, with a capacity of just under 4 litres to comply with the 1962 prototype class rules.

Incidentally, as a general rule, if you ever want to find out the full engine capacity of any competition Ferrari sports car, simply multiply the marque number - which indicates the cubic capacity of one cylinder - by the magic number 12 and you have the answer i.e. Testa Rossa P3/330 TRI/LM = 330 x 12 = 3960 c.c.

This famous engine, introduced in 1957, was also the power base (once again in various capacities) for the 250 GT Berlinetta, 250 GTO, 250 GTO LM 64 and the 275 LM - the last Ferrari ever to win Le Mans.

Ferrari won at the Sarthe circuit six times in succession from 1960 to 1965 and the 'Testa Rossa's' 1962 win was the last for a front engined car. Hill and Gendebien drove the singleton Ferrari to victory at an average speed of 115 m.p.h., hitting 180 m.p.h. on the Mulsanne straight. The Scuderia were to win Le Mans again in 1963/64 and 65 before the Ford GT40's wins in the next four years (1966 to 1969).

Although I was 30 years old in 1962, I did not start to visit the Le Mans circuit until the penultimate year of Ferrari domination, when Nino Vaccarella and Jean Guichet won with the beautiful 275 P2. At that time I was not to know that one year and one victory later was to be the Factory's swansong and that they would never win again in the 20th. century. They officially ceased to compete after 1967. So this is a very historically important car and David's superb model does it full justice. ⇒

Construction

As this is a 'first run' model there is a bit of work to do, but that aspect is no problem and is always enjoyable to an old model maker like me. The casting has to be cut away below the sill line as with many fibreglass resin bodies and you have to take care to get the profiles right and not 'chip' the material. Proceed with caution is the byword; it is easier to take a bit off than to add a bit more on.

David had also produced a clear plastic vacuum formed windscreen and rear wing/crash bar, a bug deflector and a carb 'bubble' cover. He also incorporated a headless body figure integrally with the cockpit so that one can fit the driver's head choice.

The body is cast in red but it needed a spray gloss coat and, as I was in the process of re-spraying my own personal Ferrari 250 GTO (the Pink Kar version not a real one!), I decided to kill two birds with one stone and spray them both at the same time. An open faced helmeted head was added to the driver's body, the overalls of which were hand painted light blue. The flat cockpit area was also hand painted but in matt black.

The headlights, side lights, exhaust pipes and bonnet fixings were picked out in silver and the wing/crash bar and windscreen surround in red to match the body.

Commercial sponsorship was rare in 1962 so the car only carried a few logos, generally relative to the companies whose products were used by the factory (Shell for oil, Champion for plugs, Magnetti Marelli for the electronics). I used my common sense along with my own photographs and recollections of that era to add those which I decided appropriate

The car's racing number was six and I replicated these by using waterslide transfers on four 'Blick' white self-adhesive roundels which worked well. David sent me a Xerox copy of a review of the car from a 1969 'Model Car' magazine which had front and side photos of the car racing at Le Mans and side, front and rear elevations plus a plan. It also listed the wheelbase and track. The photos allowed me to confirm

the position of racing numbers, logos etc. and the drawing showed up details that David had included in his model that I was able to enhance.

For instance, I was able to source a couple of circular chromed rim rear lights from stock for the rear valance and I made up my own 'Prova Mod.' label (Prototype Modena). 'Prancing Horse' waterslide transfers were added to the flanks and nose. The bug deflector, bonnet bubble, windscreen and wing were superglued to the body as on the drawing. I also added a single windscreen wiper and rear view mirror. Two sets of double chromed tail pipes were glued to the underside rear of the car, one set each side. Finally, the whole lot was given a single coat of clear polythene gloss for protection.

The undersill level of the body casting is flat so that any surplus material can be cut off with a hacksaw. The wheel arches have to be cut out by hand with a fretsaw and then profiled to shape with a strip of sandpaper wrapped around a suitably sized mandrel. The next step was to drill out the seven apertures on the body - the two 'sharknose' vents, the four body vents for the front and rear brakes and the bonnet slot for the trumpets of the six downdraught Weber carbs. These were finished to the correct shape and size using a set of rat-tailed files. The first six openings were backed by lightweight, fine gauge aluminium mesh from a real car body repair kit.

The bonnet slot was a modification added by myself. I made a facsimile carb 'stack' by inserting six rows of two Scalextric pick up guide eyelets (the type which used to connect the motor wiring to the braids in the old days). These were inverted and glued into a balsa wood base. Attached to the underside of the bonnet and just protruding into the Perspex 'bubble' cover, they look quite authentic even if I say so myself.

The Ninco chassis was modified in width and length to snugly fit underneath the body and it was secured to by way of two fixing posts and screws, one front and one rear. This method has been written up in the Journal by a few other members and me before so I will just briefly summarise it here. The underpan is lightly screwed to the posts, which are trimmed to length and then glued to the inside of the body.



When the glue is set the chassis can be removed. The length of the mounting posts can be adjusted to suit the car's ride height either by trimming or adding shims.

I used a Mabuchi 'S' type motor, in line, which was fixed in the chassis by unscrewing the engine mount bracket and turning it round. This enables the engine, which has its endbell at the same end as the pinion, to be fitted in the correct position. You can then move the complete mounting with the motor onboard, lengthways in the chassis recess to get an exact mesh with the crownwheel before rescrewing or gluing the mount in permanently. As ever, I used a standard Scalextric rear axle and final drive. This, along with a standard Scalextric pinion fitted to the motor gives parity of gearing with all the other cars in its class. We will race it against Ferrari P3 and P4, Mercedes 300 SLR, Ford GT40, Maserati Tipo T61 and a couple of Chaparrals - 2D and 2F.

The final step was to fit the wheels to the axles (cut to suit the width of the body) with superglue. The rear tyres were checked for rotation and trueness and then we were ready for.....

The testing

Normally it takes me one or two tries and a couple of hours to set up a car but this one was different; I have never had to spend so much

time on set up, balance and fine tuning as I have on this car. In the end I did get the car to go extremely well but it was not easy. I could not put my finger on any one thing - it seemed that both ends of the car were working against each other and in retrospect they probably were.

As usual I started the process by using just the bare chassis and running gear, adding the body and fine tuning the whole car at a later stage. So off we went - nice electrical contacts, strong pick up, and good engine power but erratic grip! The chassis was all over the place, slewing around, surging on and off power, and deslotting at every bend. It was impossible to control.

I went back to square one and started at the motor wires from the engine to the pick up guide and found that one of them was loosely soldered to the endbell. I sorted that and then found that the end of the other wire was pulling out of the eyelet fixing in the pick up - this was also rectified. So now I had an even power curve but still no front stability or rear grip - a bit like Bridgestones after 20 laps.

I addressed the front end first to try and counteract the continuous deslotting. The problem was that the chassis was tipping up at the front like a speedboat, eventually coming out of the slot as the oscillations reached a pitch. By pushing the chassis/running gear around the track by hand I found that there was too much⇒

vertical play in the front axle brackets and that the car was bouncing up on the pick-up braids. A piece of 1 mm thick by 5 mm wide plastic sheet glued under the axle aligned the chassis in the correct ratio to the front wheels and all was well. A small amount of lead behind the axle line kept the front end in the slot (just like Montoya's Michelins after 20 laps).

The rear was still causing a problem, being about as directional as a drunken lawnmower. David's rear tyres are authentically narrow as the era demanded and also have a very high aspect ratio (no low profile tyres in '62). These tyres had been cast in two halves as was the standard and just like David's Lotus that I reviewed and tested a couple of months ago had the same mould ridge in the centre of the tyre but no tread, so that by sanding off this ridge I was able to increase the rear grip. I also filed out the inside of the rear wheel arches to increase the track to the maximum possible without the wheels protruding past the bodyline.

I had positioned a Scalextric bar magnet behind the rear axle inside the chassis but this seemed to add to the 'nose up' attitude I mentioned earlier. I removed this and glued it to the underside of the chassis just in front of the rear axle and bingo! I had a sweet handling, good braking and quick car. To achieve this had taken the best part of four days but finally the car felt and drove great.

In retrospect, I realise that, as this was an elderly car, the centre of gravity was quite high and by moving the location of the ballast/magnet to the underside I had significantly lowered and improved it. Sometimes the old memory and brain cells need a jolt! The car lost a bit of speed when the body was attached but needed no final tuning when raced complete.

I did a series of 10 lap runs, about twelve in all and averaged 43.24 secs. per run with an all out best of 41.97. This is a very good time for a 10 lap stint on my track and in fact was faster than the Vanquish Shadow that I tested last year. That was a heavier, newer car whereas the running gear of the 'Testa Rossa' (except the

tyres) has been used, tried and tested in other cars. The Shadow will undoubtedly get quicker as have the other Vanquish models that we race.

The car is very stable and it looks just right on the track where it can compete with honour against the others in its class. To see a model of this great and famous car racing round my 'Monza' circuit is a pleasing and emotive experience.

I have included the trials and tribulations of set up and tuning for those who would like to build their own cars and to show that even if you have been doing it for 40+ years like I have you can still get it wrong. I have enjoyed the whole process of building and painting this unique car and I know that I will certainly enjoy the owning and racing of it.

David Yerbury's generosity, consummate skill as a model maker, combined with his knowledge and love of motor racing heritage are refreshing in this present time. I am deeply indebted to David and I hope that his faith in this Italian has been justified and that in his eyes I have done the 'Testa Rossa' justice. ■