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NSCC

The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

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Editor takes Eau Rouge flat in sixth

Well, actually only the first part - the second half was taken upside down through the gravel trap. Needless to say, I wasn't in a real Formula 1 car, merely a virtual one, courtesy of the Grand Prix 3 game which I received as a birthday present last month.

I have long resisted installing any games on the editorial computer because I knew I wouldn't get any work done but I finally succumbed and it is surprising that the Journal has been finished this month. The best thing about the GP3 game is the amazing variety of "driver aids" (or "cheats" as we used to call them) available and I started musing about the possibility of using them in slot-car racing.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have automatic braking, steering help, launch control and, best of all, indestructibility? Even my extremely modest slot-racing talents would be transformed. Hold on a minute though - isn't that exactly where the current generation of magnet cars is headed?

The modern slot-car is an absolute masterpiece; the body mouldings and the level of detail is light years away from those found even five years ago. The chassis modifications and the use of powerful magnets have improved the handling to such an extent that previously difficult corners can be taken flat out. I fear the time is not far away when it will be impossible to de-slot and what will happen to the hobby then?

In the meantime, though, let's take advantage of modern technology and enjoy ourselves - have a look at Tony Secchi's piece on page 33 if you want to learn more about the best use of magnets. Must go now - the Journal is complete and I have some unfinished business at Spa Francorchamps!

And Finally - thank you all very much for your increased article input this month; I have been unable to fit it all in so please be patient if your piece is not included as I will publish everything in due course.

Till next month
Brian

*Adrian Norman reports on current news
from the Scalextric Headquarters in*



FACTORY FOCUS

Despite being under-resourced (it seems that every work place is these days) Hornby Hobbies' production changes have also brought about organisational changes that are now being reflected in reality.

Hornby have taken on a new recruit in the position of Brand Manager; his name, Ben Collins. Yes, the racing driver/commentator many of you will have heard and seen racing in various series over the last few years. Ben's latest exploit was to push the Ascari up to 5th place before retiring from the 24 hr Le Mans race with only a short stint to go. Taking on Ben reflects Hornby's intention to keep the profile of Scalextric up there at the front.

One of his first projects is to help install a six lane public race circuit at the Croydon Mega Bowl where the public can enjoy the spills and thrills of Scalextric racing. Centre spread adverts have appeared in the press with the promise of ten minutes of fantastic fun racing DTM Astras. I hope you've tried the Astras. The racers at my local club think they are possibly the best from Scalextric yet.

On to other news.

The Scalextric 2nd Edition Catalogue for 2001 is just about going to print as you read this. Check out the Scalextric website during August or September. You'll be pleased to find that it has undergone a total revamp. Because the site will now be developed

in-house, it is intended that it will be updated on a regular basis. Again this reinforces Hornby's desire to keep the profile of Scalextric vibrant.

What news of new product, I hear you ask. Well, the website and the 2nd edition catalogue will reveal some interesting items, one of which will be a special edition Subaru Impreza (Burns, No.5) in conjunction with ProDrive. The box packaging will have ProDrive logos and will be identified by C2341A. The new shape Subaru is due for release in September. NASCAR cars will also be more widely available which will please many enthusiasts. Fresh licencing deals have now enabled the interested parties to allow the sale of Scalextric NASCARs in most countries around the world. One exception is the Viagra car which will be limited to North America. The new body Taurus NASCAR is due for release in November.

The Argos Rally set recently available with a silver Subaru will be released again with a different colour Subaru - possibly red. Also, a 'High Speed' set (generic artwork box lid) has also reported to have been seen in Holland called (C106) 'Highspeed F1'. The two cars are the Mika McLaren and a Ferrari or the Mika McLaren and the Benetton No.9 car.



More exciting products are promised. More news next month. ■

West Country rambles -

Or how I went for a tramp in the woods

BY VINE FENNEL

Oh dear! It would seem that someone has upset the editor. Mind you, under the same circumstances I probably wouldn't have been very chuffed! My reply wouldn't have been as tactful either!

Here follows a little story that will hopefully make Brian feel not quite so alone in the world. I have vague recollections of articles relating to similar circumstances but this relates to experiences down this way. The way I see it is that it all relates to do's and don'ts. There are those who do and those who don't. Those who don't usually moan about the things that those who do do.

I do for our club. Who we are isn't important but the story is. For about six years now I have been the one who does for our club. By that I mean Vice-Chairman (we have a Chairman but he doesn't play because of work), Treasurer, Secretary, Race Organiser, Results Writer-upper, Rules and Regs maker, Toilet Cleaner etc. We used to have a permanent setup, rent free and all very nice thank you. Then came the time when circumstances dictated that we would have to find a new home. So off I went and got us a room in a pub, rent-free - absolute heaven. Okay so we had to move out occasionally when they had a function on but it's a small hardship to endure.

Came the fateful day (Saturday) to vacate our much loved (but cold and basic premises) for the hardship of the pub. Bearing in mind that the track was never designed to be moved; although built in sections it needed a Luton Van to fit the bigger bits in. The only person that came to help me was.....my missus. The Chairman and one other turned up to help me get the bits up the stairs into our new home and later in the week someone else turned up to put it all together again. Oh yes, the Chairman helped load the van with all the rubbish that had accumulated over about eight years, but it was

the missus who came down the dump with me to unload it all, and then came back to the old clubhouse to sweep up and leave it all shipshape.

When we had to move out that was fine because we would dismantle after racing on club night but then I would have to arrange a van, either a friend who had a works van that was big enough or, if he wasn't available, hire one. (Luckily I'm well known and it usually only cost a tenner.) Organize some help to shift it out, either the new guy, who's also a friend or at a push, the wife's boy (who doesn't race). Reverse the previous bit to get it all back in again plus an hour or so midweek to reassemble, and get ready to listen to all the moans on Friday about the joints not being right, or power-loss or some other crap. They don't think to look at it themselves, but expect me to sort it. On more than one occasion they have been told to do it themselves if they don't like the way I'm doing it. I'm still doing it.

One Wednesday evening at work and I'm informed that there's been a late booking and we have to miss Friday. Phone the wife and get her to ring everyone to let them know ASAP. Among the replies she got were, "bit late". They knew within half an hour of me knowing. What can I say? I could go on forever on this subject, but what's the point? I do it because I love my racing, and if I don't do it, no bugger else will.

So Brian, don't think you're not appreciated, because there's about 1200 other people in the club who didn't send you a letter containing a whole load of negatives. There will be people out there who know who we are, and one who was there, and others who would have been if they had lived closer and have offered in the past and been turned down. This isn't aimed at them or any one else in actual fact, but there are those who don't and those who do and those that would if they could but can't! ■

A `Day In The Life`

Part 8 - decoration

BY ADRIAN NORMAN

One of the most significant technical advances since Scalextric was introduced has been the finishing. In the early days cars were supplied with self-adhesive stickers and a sheet of transfers for the owner to apply. Nowadays some parts are spray painted through elaborate masks and the amazingly detailed sponsors markings are tampon printed direct onto the bodies.

The principle is like lithography whereby the required markings are finely etched onto a steel plate. Ink is then flooded over the plate and wiped off leaving just the ink that has filled the etched shape. This is then picked up by a rubber pad and applied to the car body. The process allows for printing onto rounded surfaces as well as flat and gives very precise definition. The ink is quick drying and virtually scuff proof thus being ideal for the type of product that is frequently handled and subject to impact and abrasion.

Applying a livery to a body shell has two main processes; spraying the body with paint to achieve the base livery colour and then the process of applying ink for the finer livery detail.

At the spray booths operatives mount the bodies on matrix blocks for one-colour body spray operations or in 'clam shell' masks for part body spraying.



A Formula 1 car gets its first coat of paint.

The car is a white base plastic Benetton receiving one of the several shades of blue, for which there is a separate mask to attach at each spray operation. The wet bodies are later sent through a large drying oven on a conveyor belt.



The operator doesn't need a mask as the steel funnel at the left of the photograph is sucking the excess airborne atomised paint away from the spraying area.

A good example of the use of clamshell masks is the first issue yellow and blue Renault Megane. The plastic base colour was yellow and, therefore, the rear half of the car was sprayed blue. The clamshell mask is made of steel and fits exactly over the parts of the car that do not need spraying. And I mean exact! The masks fit so finely that the paint will not bleed into the masked area. ➡



The tampo-printing room is a dust free zone, hence the plastic trays not cardboard boxes.

These red trays, stacked in columns of about twenty, contain about thirty cars each. The cars here will be plain bodied or may already have been part-sprayed, and now wait to be decorated.

At the tampo printing work area, the car body is placed on a former block to support the body. The automatic printing machines are loaded with the correct colour inks. Rubber stamps collect the ink from an etching of the logo that has been preloaded with just the right amount of ink. The ink is transferred from the etching plate to the rubber stamps, then to the surface of the car.



This ink-printing machine is in the process of stamping five different colours on to the black body of the Vauxhall Vectra body.

The Vectra sits on its 'former', in the foreground, whilst the five rubber pads are about to collect the ink from the plates below.

This is where that 'rare' print variation can occur! On occasions the former may be slightly out of position, a millimetre perhaps, but enough to stop the rubber ink stamp from touching the car at all, resulting in a missing logo! It is also possible for the operative not to realise that the ink reservoir has emptied whilst printing. Perhaps forty or fifty cars may slip through the factory with this 'error' and be delivered to the retailers.

In the print room, an area has been set aside for the work teams to sit down and discuss printing processes and iron out any problems. This area has a display of all the cars currently under production and in the current catalogue. These are used for reference purposes when discussing problems or investigating ways to improve the processes.



Here, a three-colour 'tampo' machine is used to start the printing on the original Scalextric Toyota Corolla livery.

The environment is crucial to successful printing. If the air is too humid or too dry this will affect the manner in which the ink 'takes' to the plastic and affects smudging, bleeding and drying. The print room is also a dust free area. No cardboard or similar 'dusty' materials are allowed in the print room. Moulded car components are delivered to the room on plastic trays and exit the room in the same way. Specks of airborne dust could spoil a complete production run by settling on the still wet components. ■

Meet the advertisers -

Phil Smith

I started my slot car business ten years ago after spending twenty five years in the motor trade; yes I was a second hand car salesman! The recession of the late 80s totally devastated the motor trade and I don't think the second hand car business has ever recovered to this day. So I am really glad to be out of it.

I had collected a lot of model railway and die-cast cars and to make ends meet decided to sell them, first at boot fairs and then later at toy fairs. Of course people bring in things to sell as well, and before I knew it, I was a toy trader.

In one box were a few Scalextric cars, a MK1 Escort and a Mini Clubman amongst them; I had bought the Roger Gillham book some years previously and spent some time absorbing the knowledge, so I had a fair idea about the cars.

I had slot cars in the sixties, but not Scalextric, mostly Monogram and Revell. In fact my first car was the same as Derek Cooper's, a Monogram Lola GT, which is still one of my favourites. Pretty soon the railway and die-cast were dropped and I was dealing solely in slot-cars. I was now on a pretty fast learning curve, making quite a few mistakes along the way! Like asking Steve De Havilland £45 for a MB Scalextric 1/24 Ferrari GP! To Steve's credit, he did give me £100 for it.

Mail order was started in 1993, just an ad in the NSCC, which was then just about the only way! The web site was on-line in the summer of 1997 and this really transformed the business. Being able to reach the whole world of collectors in one go means that I have customers from Beirut to Papa New Guinea and Brazil to Japan!

My first trip abroad was in April 1993 to Paul Hamo's sadly missed meeting in St. Amand, Northern France. (please Paul, when are you going to have it again?) Quickly followed by trips to Spain, Holland and Germany and then the USA. It was on these trips that I have made so many good friends overseas which makes this job such a pleasure! The last trip to Bordeaux for the 1st International slot race

meeting in June was a great success, and I even managed to come first in the 1/32 scale concours! Sadly my racing leaves something to be desired, as I have a total lack of hand-eye coordination, so was only 11th overall.

I now specialise in all slot cars including HO and I am trying to keep a complete collection of Fly cars for sale at all times, at the last count I had 135 cars out of an approximate 160. I only like to sell mint or near mint cars and any Scalextric cars with the dreaded brown marks are usually put in the spares box, unless they are something rare of course. Usually there are over 1500 different cars listed and the stock literally changes daily.

The website (www.scaleslotcars.com) now has secure on-line ordering and even a chat forum and has been such a success that I have dropped all postal lists. Swapmeets and Toyfairs still continue as there is no substitute for meeting people face to face, and I hope I will see you at one soon. ■

Just how gullible are we?

BY STEVE WESTBY

For years I've marvelled at the success of Franklin Mint and their many imitators. They produce a constant stream of different collectables. The numbers produced of each one are always strictly limited, ... limited to the number they think they'll be able to sell!

Then you come across stories of well-to-do ladies of a certain age who for years have "invested" in these things, thimbles, plates, dolls, whatever. They are shocked to find that the resale value of their collection is only a fraction of what they have paid for them. I've always felt smug about these sad people and sniggered at their gullibility. But now I look at my stack of limited edition slot cars and wonder if I'm as daft as they are.

Everybody seems to be at it, Scalextric, Fly, Pink Kar, Carrera, with editions ranging from 100 to 10,000. From one perspective, there seems to be little wrong with it. Slot-car manufacturers are in business to make money, not pander to our whims. These editions can be viewed as a legitimate marketing ploy and nobody forces us to buy them. But then you look at the prices charged for some of these cars and you have to ask just how legitimate it really is.

OK, for cars produced in limited quantities there may be additional tooling costs, but for how many limited editions is that the case? Most of them are standard shapes, just produced in a different colour plastic and/or with different liveries. Many of them have a nice presentation box, but look at them, how many of these boxes cost more than a few pence at most to produce? Also, what about the extra space they take up, a problem many collectors are constantly battling to cope with.

Then there are the subjects, shouldn't they be special as well? A Mini-Replicas limited edition of Fangio or Moss in a Mercedes W196 is special. But when companies like Fly have built their reputation on representing real cars as liveried at particular events, doesn't it seem a little perverse for most of their limited editions to represent cars that don't even exist?

As long as we're only talking about the difference between £25 for a standard model and £40 for a limited edition, maybe none of this is too important. Even if the profit margins of the manufacturer are excessive, does it really matter? As I said earlier, nobody forces us to buy them, but it doesn't stop there. Fly have just produced the S100 limited edition to celebrate a million cars. They are asking us to pay around £200 for a car that will cost them little more to produce than their regular limited editions. Presumably the scarcity value will rapidly see these cars changing hands for much more than this, perhaps up to the levels seen for the Pace Car. All this for a model that Fly could, if they chose, reproduce many times at a cost to them of less than £5 per copy. Which brings us back to Franklin Mint and my reincarnation as a gullible blue-rinse matron.

On the other hand, perhaps we'll all start suffering from wallet-fatigue. I've just seen an S100 sell at auction for only (ha ha) £140. Perhaps this will be the final straw that kills the golden goose, if you'll excuse the mixed metaphor.

And what happens when the bubble bursts? I've seen a Fly T2 bid up to over £6000 on a Spanish web site. Again, for something that could be reproduced for £5. Now we're talking serious money, how many months income does this represent for most of us? Are we getting into the sort of false market that, eventually, can only crash? Dutch Tulip bulbs, South Sea Bubble, classic Ferraris, and now us? How many collectors will get their fingers burnt if someone discovers a hoard of T2s or Pace Cars in a storeroom somewhere?

Perhaps this is all a little too apocalyptic, or is it worth thinking about, next time you feel the irresistible urge to "invest" in a limited edition? Personally I think I'll be spending more time at boot sales, perhaps one day I'll find that elusive Scalextric Auto Union, meanwhile I'll carry on trying to corner the market in F1 Shadows with the rear wing missing. ■

Dear Members,
In some ways I was disappointed to receive Pete Edward's letter that was published in the June issue but in a sort of perverse way it needs something like this to open our eyes to how others see us.

Pete was quite right that the AGM was a shambles, it was badly organised, publicised and communicated. This we had recognised before we received Pete's letter and for next year we have booked a separate room at Loughborough with sufficient space for all those who wish to attend. This should ensure that we have a constructive and well attended AGM enabling a good exchange of views and giving a clear way forward for the club.

The issues that Pete raised in respect of the running of the Swapmeet have been taken up with Quorn, organisers of the Loughborough event, and due to a change in personnel at the club the organiser was new to the event and was thus uncertain of his role in respect of the NSCC and its members. They have also accepted that although the signposting to the actual building was clear there was a complete



absence of signs once the building was reached. For all of us that knew where it was there was no problem but for those new members it took some initiative to find the swapmeet. This will be rectified for next year.

In order for new members to more easily identify committee members at swapmeets in future I have suggested that we be provided with differently coloured badges so we can more easily be identified and pointed out. This should assist all members, as although we would like to know everyone, with a club of some 1100 members it is just not possible.

I trust that the experience that Pete went through at Loughborough is not typical of our new members and that the above has gone some way to rectifying that experience. I would also like to thank Pete for writing to us pointing out his experience as only from such feedback can we progress and develop the club and our mutual interest in "Scalextric". The committee and I would always be pleased to receive your views on such matters so we can take the development of the club forward. ■

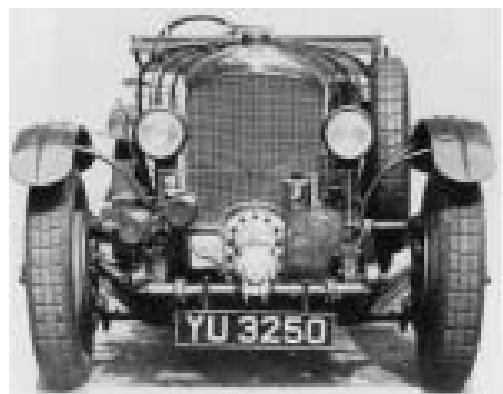
Blower Bentley - mystery solved

My thanks to Steve De Haviland for clearing up my confusion over the C64 Bentley which I mentioned in my editorial last month.

Apparently when Scalextric were planning to make the first two vintage models the directors paid a visit to the Beaulieu Motor Museum which was located near the Havant factory. It was here that they found the 4.5 litre Bentley (registration number YU3250) which, incidentally was the very first production "Blower" produced.

This visit also explains why the C65 Alfa was produced in it's strange blue colour as opposed to the correct Italian racing red. Apparently the Alfa was on loan to the museum

and the owner had resprayed it blue. Motorsport knowledge was never a strong point of the Scalextric design department during the sixties so they merely copied the car without checking the livery. ■





Dear Brian,

I wonder if there's a member out there who can help me out.

I have an early rubber track covered Paddock, well it would be covered if I had the roof supports. Looking at the base and roof, the supports would appear to be thin rods of about 3/32" diameter, is this correct and if so how long should they be? Plain steel or painted, colour? I also have a very nice VIP set, early sports cars with bright tin track, it says 'Set A' on the box. Has anyone got a set of instructions they could photocopy for me? I think I have figured out how to put the track together but not sure how to connect the power to the track and fix the crash barriers etc., I'm also looking for some parts for the cars I have, please see my advert. I would like to take this opportunity to say what a professional job you do editing the journal, I'm sure the majority of members appreciate this as much as I do.

Many thanks

Peter Youd

.....

Dear Brian,

Please allow me to advise members of a current problem with the range of Fly cars.

The dreaded split body mounting posts has reared its head again. Would other members please check their retail stock/collections. Several cars that were OK in my collection have now shown split posts. I know this problem is not a new one with Fly and indeed has been brought to our attention before by another member. However, it is still happening; not all models may show it immediately and it happens right across the range.

Its not always the same body post that has failed and it would seem to be a problem with the current plastic used although Fly could reduce it by increasing the thickness of the posts themselves. Other manufacturers in the same price band use ABS or other durable plastics and it is almost non existent with their cars.

So come on Fly. You have no excuse; get this one sorted. I am not against your products but until the plastic is changed I would advise members to keep a close eye on their collection.

Regards

Anthony Clayden



Dear Brian,

Sitting here in the East Anglian backwoods (not that far from yourself) reading the July issue of the Journal, I was prompted to write and express a few thoughts on the current round of whinging and criticism which has reared its head within the club.

I joined the NSCC in 1992, and, like Adrian Norman, am really only interested in all things Scalextric. Times have changed, and competitors to the famous old name have come along - great for the hobby - and although I have little interest in Fly, Ninco etc. as a collector, can understand other people's love of these manufacturers; the club name has changed and articles about them can be found in most issues of the Journal. Certainly, a section for Fly Focus or Ninco News would be welcomed by devotees of these makes, but as you rightly pointed out, detailed info can only be circulated if contact can be made and maintained with the Spanish companies and someone is prepared to get involved and do this.

Having had the pleasure of Adrian's company at the Goodwood Revival Meeting NSCC track two years ago, and being made most welcome at the Viking Club on my visits to relations in Ramsgate, I can well understand why Simon Kohler from Hornby shows such an interest in the NSCC and imparts both information and, indeed, prizes for competitions etc. It is important for both the NSCC and, for that matter, Hornby that the relationship continues, but, as you rightly said, Mr. Kohler is not just there to pander to the NSCC, so an occasional lack of contact or information is understandable.

Lack of pages in the Journal or adverts is down to us all - the members of the Club - I am as much to blame as anyone - 9 years of membership and only one previous article. Rather than moaning about things, let's all try to contribute; there must be some interesting stories, finds, home tracks etc. out there. As for adverts, you cannot force people to advertise items in the journal. The Internet is now playing a greater part in this area, Ebay is an easy way to get to a vast audience and get a good price for your goods; not good for the club advert section, or for those of us without Internet access. The days of seeing two page Journal adverts from people like Mark Scale or Pendle Slotracing are gone. Traders reach a far wider customer base and can offer their entire stocks through their Web Sites so who can blame them. However, they all have telephones, give them a call. They are all keen to chat about the hobby, send latest lists or keep an eye out for that elusive car or part.

As for the AGM, being on the Committee of the local Sunday Football League, and having encountered a lack of interest in attending an AGM, I can understand the frustrations of those running the NSCC. Unfortunately everyone is quite happy to let someone else do the work and organise things, and equally happy to criticise their efforts. The best way of looking at it is either attend the AGM or accept the decisions and direction of the club; we all have an opportunity to have our say. The committee runs the club as elected representatives of the membership. So finally lets stop criticising the efforts of the minority, all try to contribute a bit more and take the NSCC forward.

Yours sincerely

Shaun Bennett

Dear Brian and all in the NSCC,

I have been a member for some 4 1/2 years now and have in that time learnt a great deal about slot-car racing and collecting. The vast majority of this information has been learnt as a direct result of joining the club.

I could not believe that anyone could write such a negative letter as was submitted by Graham Smith last month. It is always very easy to criticise the efforts of other people but very much harder to do something constructive and useful yourself. Perhaps if Graham were to try and submit something to the Journal instead of belittling other people's efforts he may come to understand the difficulties involved. We should all remember that this is only a club of people interested in slot-cars. The committee members run the club on a voluntary basis on behalf of the membership. If Graham Smith has ever tried to organise an activity involving other people himself, he would realise just how difficult it is to get persons to volunteer to be committee members or organisers in any walk of life unless they get paid for it, or obtain an advantage in some other way shape or form. The AGM article in the June issue listed the committee member's commercial interests, which appear to be minimal. I have over the years been involved with various other totally different activities and clubs. The problem is always the same - getting people to give up some of their time to be organisers or committee members. All it takes is a few stupid letters like the one last month to knock people's enthusiasm and they soon get fed up and say why should I bother. No committee - No club.

May I say that I for one look forward to the Journal every month and was particularly pleased to read Peter Novani's article on the Dislot Super Racing Computer System since this is the leading contender to go on our 45 foot 4 lane Scalextric track which is housed in the attic. (We moved fairly recently and no longer have a spare room - where it used to live. A large attic space for the track was a big criteria whilst house hunting). However, I'm currently contemplating ways to make things more user friendly for the racing. At the moment it's just a boarded attic. I think that Velux windows will be a must, as are ventilation and insulation from the cold of winter and heat of summer. A full loft conversion and proper stairs are somewhat beyond us financially, so knowing that a good many of you have Scalextric tracks in your attics I would be pleased to know how the ventilation/insulation problems are best solved.

To finish off I would just like to say that although I missed this years AGM - (it clashed with something else), I attended the 3 previous years AGMs. On these occasions I found that whilst it was clearly publicised as being on at the Loughborough Swapmeet, the time and location were rather ambiguous. To be fair though I can remember Adrian Norman going round Swapmeets trying to press gang people into attending the AGM. And also on each occasion the AGM clearly being announced to all present. In spite of this on each occasion only approx. 8 persons attended the meeting, even though dozens and dozens of people were in the room at the time. In fact at the first AGM I went to I think there were 7 people, and of those present one was my son Stuart, and another was my friend Mark Edmonds who had just come along to look at the NSCC (he has since joined).

All this just goes to underline the apathy that can be received when trying to organise things, and shows that we must try harder to support those that do their best for the running of the club. Encouragement and constructive input is the best way forward. Carry on your good work Brian.

Regards

Nigel Thompson



Dear Brian,

Whinge, whinge, whinge etc. Have I hit a nerve?

I wrote this letter after making a point of not sending in anything for a long time to see if anybody else would sit back and do nothing or put pen to paper their opinions.

Alan enjoyed my letters; it provoked club members to have a go back or agree. Phil Etgart and I had some great verbal “ding dongs”, then had a chat and a laugh when we would meet up at a swapmeet. This even included a very visible chat and handshake on his part because members were expecting a punch up - no chance, he was far too big!

I have several contributions of interest that could be printed in the Journal:

- 1) A six part exposé “the removal of axle fluff”
- 2) Removing tyres and drinking tea at the same time
- 3) The dangers of picking your nose and holding the soldering iron at the same time (with medical notes)

Yo ¿estas de acuerdo comprender Espanola.

If people didn't criticize you would have no further improvement. How many members would buy 1980s spec. slot-cars built in 2001?

Last of all, I have been approached over the years by many NSCC members, most of them complete strangers, who have made a point of asking around so they can find me at a swapmeet, who have agreed with comments made by me in several magazines and told me to stick with my writing style as they enjoy reading my letters and discussing them with other club members.

They obviously can tell when I am having a non too serious dig and without my letter it would only be 35 pages.

Graham D. Smith (Toyota Corollas are great!)

Dear Brian,

My slot-car collecting passion is for Porsches (bad news really!) and while my naive enthusiasm has led me to a collection of getting on for 250 cars, I am constantly being surprised to find more examples from smaller and older manufacturers (latest examples would be Faller and Lindberg)

So I am pleading for help. If anyone has, and is willing to colour photocopy (I pay) any of their catalogues containing Porsches, I would be most grateful. What I am really looking for, is anything outside of the Fly, Scalextric, Ninco stable, as even though I am aware of, and have collected many other manufacturers, I would like to build a complete database (then I can spend the rest of my life looking for them!) My phone number is 01903 745660 or email c.holt@ukonline.co.uk

Thanks
Chris Holt

Austin A35 build and test

BY ALAN SLADE

Having bought one for Carol, all my memories, and the expertise, of my previous life as a motor mechanic (that's what we were then, not technicians) came flooding back to me and I thought that I would like to have one for myself as well.

Knowing what I paid for Essie, as Carol has christened ESE 780, and knowing what it would cost to produce a Speedwell replica so that I could recreate some of the giant killing events that A35s often carried out, I chickened out and made do with a 1:32 size one instead! Mind you in terms of what I have had to do it may have been easier to do as I originally intended!



The donor car came from Phil Barry and was a straight swop for a Ford Zodiac V8 in Alan Mann colours that I had campaigned in a historic saloon series. The fibreglass body was made by someone in Kent and is a very good representation of a 2 door Austin A35 saloon circa 1960. When I got the car it was a sort of Speedwell Blue and carried 1965 Rallye Monte-Carlo rally plates and it still does. To complete the picture it now sports period number plates courtesy of an MRRC Mini.

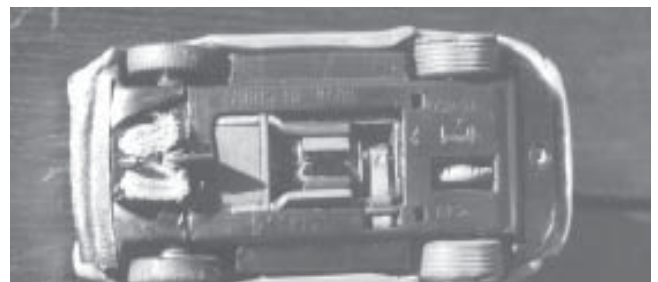
Another feature of the car when I got it was the Scalextric Mini 1275GT chassis. Now this could be argued to be the ideal for a giant killing car, but it just did not look right with the tiny wheels and fat tyres especially with the front wheels dangling in the air. No, something drastic was required. Enter stage left an unsuspecting donor car in the shape of a Fiat 850 Coupé,

don't worry it was not an original C42 TC-850 but an SCX reissue. The choice of this car was for various reasons 1] I had a spare one (I also now have one without a chassis!); 2] the wheels looked right; 3] the wheelbase looked right and 4] it required a very narrow chassis.

As anyone who has ever carried out a conversion on a model car will tell you, things are never as straightforward as they seem in the beginning. Whereas the Fiat has a similar width body to the Austin the wheelarches are totally different, and to get the wheels inside the body required the complete removal of the bosses on the wheels. Even with the inside of the wheels now touching the brass axle spacers I still had to thin the bodywork down and take the outside edge off the tyres. Still it all works now.

Next problem was the front of the car. Even though it looked right I found that the wheelbase on the Fiat was a fraction too long and the wheels were rubbing on the bodywork at the front. Whatever I tried I could not cure it and in the end decided that I had to shorten the chassis. But where? The only sensible(?) place is just in front of the forward engine mounting, so out came the trusty junior hacksaw and the deed was duly done.

Unfortunately because of the peculiarity of the A35 body shape the front tyres were still rubbing on the body and I could see no easy way round the situation. Whilst sitting back and having the obligatory head scratch at this slight setback, I was idly playing with the contents of my 'Airfix - MRRC spares' box and noticed a pair of wire wheels which had originally



The modified chassis and wheels.



Stablemates.

Sun is often a hazard when racing in Scotland.

It does not help taking pictures either!

belonged to an E-Type Jaguar. A quick check and they looked just right, as I suppose they should coming from a car of the same era. The only slight problem was that they were front wheels and therefore had rather large holes in the centre. A quick visit to the lathe to make up some adaptors and all was well. With the two different widths of tyre I think it adds to the period look when cars often had slightly wider rear tyres. The fact that the Airfix ones had also become quite hard over the years is a bonus as there is now no grip at the front to cause the car to dig in on corners!

To complete the period feel of the car I removed the SCX RX-4 engine and fitted an open frame Scalextric RX engine. This has the twin advantage of extra weight low down (essential for a high narrow car such as the A35) and because of the magnet position gives a degree of 'magnattraction'. Unfortunately this is not an original specification engine as it is fitted with the armature from a Power Sledge, but what the heck - it's all period.

All that remains now is for me to finish off the detailing with things such as a roll cage, the lights, bonnet straps, etc.

When it is finally finished I will also dispense with the sticky tape holding the front of the chassis onto the body - but then again that is also a period feature.

I have not been able to carry out any comparative testing with the A35 because Knockhill is currently on long term loan. But when I came south for the AGM I ran it at my old track at Quorn and was well pleased with it. Provided that I did not get too enthusiastic on the twisty bits and try to keep up with these modern 4WD saloons it was great fun to drive. The engine provides a surprising amount of grunt and produced a very respectable top speed on the 'straight', so that the main difference was the lack of 'on rails' cornering. A giant killer? I should say that it is well capable of running with my Jaguar, specially with the advantage of the engine magnet when used on Plexytrack. ■



A recent business item on BBC Breakfast News caught Mole's attention. Apparently the profits of Hornby Hobbies Limited are up 66% BEFORE one-off payments.

This is usually the politically correct way of saying that there have been 'special' payments that the auditors will not reveal, but which normally translates into severance or 'restructuring' payments. Judging from the item in the Daily Telegraph it would appear that these one-off payments must have been quite large as they quote a profit rise of only 24%. Mole will let you do the sums and see what you make the 42% difference to be.

But there was more, and this was the interesting bit, they interviewed a very nice man called Frank Martin who, while admitting that all production was now transferred to China with an improvement in quality, production, etc., and a reduction in costs (to Hornby that is, not the customer) then went on to do a really good sales pitch on forthcoming Hornby products. Apparently there will soon be a Scalextric track planner "just like the one for Hornby trains" (have they brought out the rights to S-Plan I wonder?), and a new virtual Scalextric race game where you can choose your virtual Scalextric car and race it on your virtual track that you have just designed.

There was no mention of virtual marshals to put your virtual Scalextric back on when it virtually fell off your virtual track, or even if virtual bits fell off when you hit the virtual wall or floor as at this point the interviewer realised what was happening and ended the interview. Let's have more of this man Martin on business television and radio and we can all learn about new product.

More from the television - yes with all the F&M troubles and hordes of squaddies digging dirty great holes all over the place with super large JCB's (and they accuse us of ruining lawns!) its best to stay indoors when you are only a few inches long. How many readers spotted the

next super accessory from SCX being road tested, if that is the correct term, on Top Gear? It should make quite an interesting item but I'm not sure how it will be used except on a rally circuit where part of the track represents a road section and speed limits have to be obeyed. What is Mole rambling on about? Why a 'Gottcha' camera.

If anyone is still awake at this point (I assume Essex Man is, otherwise he would not have read my last missive), the point about the Fly 1 millionth car is not only the rather high price but also that it has taken them around six years to get there, Hornby produce more than that in a year. Someone will no doubt let Mole know how many repaints of each car that represents as Fly have only produced around 20 models.

A cousin from warmer climes points out that the Sisu truck is not actually sold by Fly Car Models, but marketed under the GB Track name. A small point but I'm sure that the members would want accuracy in our reporting or else they may be inclined to write rude letters to the editor. Fly plan to produce under the Super Trucks range, a Mercedes - four models, and a MAN - again four models.

Being one of the long grey haired variety and not only having survived the current F&M outbreak but also able to remember the last one (still awake at the back?) Mole is very much in favour of the current crop of historic, sorry classic, sports cars as that is what he remembers disturbing his sleep as he burrowed under such places as Brands, Goodwood and Thruxton. To add to his delight is the McLaren M6 from Maximodels as this is probably one of his all time favourite cars, and excellent as the model is, reliving all those memories of the 'Bruce and Denny' show, Mole still cannot afford one. Would anyone like to offer him a little test drive?

Well that's all for this month, I had better find the Zimmer frame as I can hear a JCB approaching. As always do not keep it to yourself, tell Mole. ■

Nostalgia rules - ok

BY JEFF DAVIES

The second annual rail race took place at Nevill Hall, Abergavenny on Sunday July 22nd. The weather was glorious and, as they used to say at Brooklands, the right crowd attended.

The event was sponsored by Slot Classic who produced twelve of the most beautiful 1938 Auto Union D-type rail racers, to commemorate the event. This is, as far as I am aware, the first complete rail racers built by a manufacturer. The amount of work required to produce these models must have been astronomical; everyone was completely bowled over by them.

This event was by far the closest in spirit to the original rail race meetings, where every single person was out to help everyone else. John Roche and John Jenner both had their first rail race at Abergavenny, John Jenner racing a worm driven rail car; the first I've ever seen in action.

After reading all the old books I thought it would be incredibly slow, but this wasn't the case and it was not far off the pace of the gear driven cars. In the afternoon it came close to winning a couple of times, finishing second in three races. I was so impressed with it that next year there will be a class specifically for worm driven rail cars as they last raced in the mid-fifties.

The day started with a vast amount of "we must make these cars work" as a considerable number of newly constructed cars had yet to be tried. Among these were the three proxy entries, one from Australia constructed by David Bantoft and Phil Kalbfell, the other two from British Columbia in Canada and were built by Lari Davidson. He hand carved two beautiful bodies for them.

I also had a new Alfa Romeo which I was positive wouldn't work as it had a most unusual guide system. It worked brilliantly, much to my surprise, and was probably the quickest car there. The only problem was that the body was held on by a single screw, and I could not see it lasting long.

The first race for the Monzanapolis trophy was between myself, John Moxon and Stephen

Moxon. John had trouble with his Jaguar, quite common as rail cars are notoriously temperamental, so I lent him mine (big mistake).

I won the first race with the Alfa Romeo, with John coming second with my Jag. Half way through the second race my Alfa slowed dramatically as the body mounting came loose and flopped hopelessly on the wheels, and I had to fetch another car. John won narrowly from his brother, with me coming miles behind. In the third race John just beat my Alfa Romeo 12C and set a record for the greatest number of laps completed. I had mixed feelings being beaten by my own car!

Nick won the second group, beating Phil Barry and my son Richard and finishing with a total just one shy of John Moxon's total. The main event went extremely well, being won by Stephen Moxon in both the morning and afternoon heats. I finished second in both, with John Moxon third.

The proxy race was really good fun, with three teams of three drivers which drove each car in turn on a different lane. John Moxon won the first race with Lari Davidson's Indianapolis style racer, then John Jenner's team won the second race with the Eldorado special then Mike Adams, who'd never driven a rail car before, won the last race with the Australian Bugatti Atlantic, equalling the greatest number of laps anyone completed in the proxy race. This was enough for the Bugatti to win by a single lap over the Eldorado Special, so each of the proxy cars won a race.

The day was a really great experience and showed how model car events should be, with lots of laughing and lots of fun. The event was a fine tribute to the original rail racers.

I would like to thank Slot Classic for their incredible efforts with the Auto Unions, Pendle Slot Racing for sponsoring the Lari Davidson trophy, Riverside Raceway for sponsoring the John Moxon trophy (Monzanapolis trophy - which was won by the man himself!) and Monarch Lines for their help. ■

Nostalgia rules - 2

BY JOHN ROCHE

I have just had one of the most enjoyable days for a long time. I got up at 6am to ride my motorcycle through 140 miles of beautiful English and Welsh scenery to Abergavenny for the race meeting on the world's only existing rail race track. Rail racing was the ancestor of slot racing from the mid 50s, a raised rail carries the negative current and a lower rail the positive. The last rail track was replaced by a slot track in 1964.

I only finished building my car just after midnight last night and I didn't really know what I was doing. However, Jeff Davies website (<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/j.davies4>) was a great help and Jeff was very obliging with further advice by e-mail.

It was the first car I had scratch built for at least six or eight years so my building skills were rusty, this combined with the fact that I'm about as clumsy as a ballet dancing hippopotamus made it quite a challenge. I had an early 60's Pittman 196B motor in my future projects box, so I used that as it was near enough period, this is an open frame motor similar to early Scalextric with a built in rear axle bracket. The body was a Nostalgia fibreglass 1952 V16 BRM from www.hobbycentre.com.au and gears (MRRC bevels), wheels and tyres from SCD Parma.



I attached 2 1/16" brass rods to the side of the motor which held a brass plate between them ahead of the motor. A bracket mounted the front axle above the brass plate and the shoe for the raised rail was soldered directly below making the chassis live. The wiper for the second rail was insulated from the chassis by a piece of plastic sheet. The important thing is to have at least 1/4 inch ground clearance. Photos on Jeff Davies' website above should clarify this.

Obviously, I couldn't track test the car and on arrival, it wouldn't run. I was immediately offered help and it would eventually just about complete a lap - ambition achieved. Further suggestions from other racers gradually improved its performance throughout practice and the races leading up to the lunch break. The main improvements were replacing my positive wiper which was too stiff with pick up braid and soldering a piece of braid in the middle of the shoe. I also needed to remove the plastic insulation between the chassis and wiper as the car was riding on a lump of solder not the braid causing it to de-slot (de-rail?).

During practice we were divided up into groups of 3 (3 lane track) according to our times, we then ran 3 heats. Before lunch, I was second or 3rd in my races. One final tweak and I won all 3 of my races after lunch with a marked improvement in the number of laps completed.

The atmosphere was extremely friendly, helpful and good humoured. Everybody that attended was there to enjoy themselves and to experience something a bit different.

At the end of the meeting, I had another 140 mile blast home and arrived just in time to watch the Champ cars on TV.

Today has really revitalised my enthusiasm for our hobby and has made me determined to find time to build at least one car for the Marconi Proxy races and to finish building my routed track which has been under construction for over a year. I am really grateful to everyone involved. ■

Coming out of the attic!

BY PETER SOLARI

For some time now, a few friends and I have got together in the loft to engage in a little bit of friendly slot-car racing. Over the years we have built up a collection of cars including Scalextric, SCX, Ninco and Fly which we normally race like-for-like.

The track has also grown and with the addition of start lights & lap timer, it has become a bit more advanced since the “Ready, Steady,...GO!” days. (The “GO!” normally being shouted after one of the cars has already left the start-line!). For whatever reason, we have never joined a model-racing club and although quite content with meeting every couple of weeks to race each other, we have always wondered what it would be like to compete in a real race against real racers. I suppose one of the reasons we have never entered such an event is that after reading numerous articles about how to race-tune your car, customise your throttle, etc., we have felt that our “off-the-shelf” cars would not be competitive enough. Of course, we have tried dabbling in ‘super magnets’ & ‘silicone tyres’ but tend not to make any serious modifications as we feel that this takes away the characteristics unique to each type of car.

When talking to ‘non-enthusiasts’ about slot-car racing, a common response is that we should “get out more”, so when I saw the Medway Model Racing Group notice in a recent issue of the NSCC Journal, it offered us this chance. Medway Model Racing Group was running a “Fly Historic Challenge” open to all with cars from the Fly Classic & GB Track range. I applied for the full competition rules and was pleased to see that these cars were to be raced pretty much out of the box; only standard bodies, chassis, motors, magnets and wheels were allowed. OK, if we were ever going to try this out, this was our opportunity!

The day arrived and we set out on our sixty minute journey to Walderslade stopping off for a quick snack en-route. Our apologies to the man who emerged from the passenger side of the vehicle parked in front of us at Thurrock

services - we were not laughing at you; we were just discussing how serious we thought most people would be taking this competition, when out he pops wearing a full racing-drivers outfit..... “I hope he’s not competing with us today!”

On arrival at the venue, practice had already started. We made ourselves known to Alan Green who was chiefly responsible for organising the event. He had been forewarned that this was to be our first taste of competing outside the loft and so introduced us to Terry and Paul, both seasoned members of the club, who were to be on hand throughout the day to give us a few tips. The 6 lane track layout looked great. It was made up entirely of Scalextric track sections fitted to a series of green boards for ease of assembly. The inner & outer lanes were edged by a continuous border sporting the familiar red on white markings found at all race circuits. The boards were arranged on tables placing the track at a suitable height for marshals and spectators, while competitors stood on a raised platform overlooking the track with colour coded stations for plugging in their throttles. Individual transformers power the corresponding coloured lanes and with the aid of some sensors, lights & some very clever software, a computer is able to start the race, check for ‘jump starts’ and accurately time each lap. Positions and lap times throughout the day were clearly and colourfully displayed on the wall using a projector.

Practice involved a series of 2 minute sessions where competitors were allowed to try each lane on a first-come-first-served basis. The middle four lanes don’t suffer from those dreaded tight inner curves and it took me a while to figure out why the queue always consisted of only 4 people until we joined it and then, out of nowhere another group of 4 joined on! It took me a little while to be able to complete a whole lap without de-slotting but as I became more familiar with the circuit, my lap times tumbled - well to be more precise, trickled - to a more respectable level.

⇒→

Towards the end of the practice session, all competitors were invited to have their cars scrutinised, pay their entry fee and collect their raffle ticket for a Ninco Race Set. At the end of practice, Alan officially welcomed us all, explained a few house rules and set out the order of the day's event. Seven trophies were up for grabs, one for each of the finalists and one for the winner of the 'Junior class'. 27 racers had turned out for this Fly Historic Challenge and the points gained over the first 2 rounds would decide which lucky 24 would go through to the quarter final. Although our main objective was to have fun and enjoy the day, we really were hoping not to finish last!

Eleven o'clock arrived all too soon and now it was time to get down to some serious racing. Marshals took their places around the circuit, the first 6 competitors took their places on the platform, the next 6 competitors frantically checked, double-checked and made final adjustments to their cars and everyone else watched with bated breath. Red light.....Green light.....and the event was well and truly underway. Round 1 consisted of five fast & furious laps where the key was to try and stay on. With an average lap time of about 7 seconds, the race can be finished in a little over half a minute! All competitors raced once on each lane and points were awarded according to finishing position; 1st - 7 points, 2nd - 5pts, 3rd - 4pts, 4th - 3pts, 5th - 2pts and 6th - 1 point. My colleague, Paul, finished 5th, 4th & 3rd in his first three heats! It was at this stage we recalled discussing the possibility of actually coming away with something at the end of the day. My first three heats awarded me with the sum of 3 points from three 6th place finishes..... I checked to see if I still had my raffle ticket, as this appeared to be my only hope of coming away with something!

During the races, I also had my first taste of marshalling. This is actually much harder than most people think. When marshalling, you must only concentrate on your particular corner and not allow yourself to follow the cars beyond this point or indeed watch any other part of the race. It is quite distracting when you hear cars leave the track or people call out but if you allow your

concentration to wander, you can miss a car de-slot under your nose! With race lap times now between 6.5 & 9 seconds, it is absolutely essential to replace a car quickly. I estimate that even with an experienced marshal replacing your car, if you come off, it will cost you at least 3 seconds; that's just about half a lap! Marshalling is a thankless task but when racing you have to remember two things:

1) No matter what you think, the marshal will always be able to re-slot your car quicker than you.

2) If you stay in your slot, you won't need the marshals' help!

My last race of this session brought about my worst result of the day. "How can you get worse than 6th?" I hear you ask. The start was OK and by turn 5 of the first lap, I only had 2 cars in front of me! However between turn 6 & 7, my car swerved a little and I noticed a distinct lack of traction. The rest of the pack shot past dropping me to 6th and as I slowed, my left-rear tyre also overtook me. Oh no, I was now in 7th place! By this time, lap 2 had started and although a helpful marshal tried replacing the wheel for me, as soon as I accelerated away, off it came again. No time for repair or replacement as the race was now well in to the penultimate lap, so with the sound of that old Kenny Rogers classic "You picked a fine time to leave me, loose wheel" going over & over in my head, I gracefully retired.

A natural break occurred at the end of Round 1 and as if by magic, a hot & cold buffet had appeared. We all tucked in and chatted about the morning's racing. This also gave us an opportunity to pick up a few tips from the more experienced racers. The track was left 'powered-up' giving a few of us the opportunity for a bit more testing. This proved to be fatal for poor Paul; his car came out of his lane just after a bend and found its way into another lane just as full power was being applied to it. (It's probably worth mentioning at this point that I don't believe there are any corners on this circuit that can be taken at full throttle). The result was that his Ferrari approached the next bend at an ever increasing speed, continued in a straight line into

the barrier and then as if in slow motion, launched into the air and landed on the wooden floor in a very big way. With minutes to go before the start of round two it was more a case of “Gentleman, we can rebuild it” than “Gentlemen, start your engines”! Panic stricken, we rushed to the ‘pits’, whipped out the superglue and started to perform a little “plastic surgery”.

The challenge for Round 2 was to complete a further 6 races each but this time the heats would last 15 laps. A chart was produced indicating who competed in which race and soon enough we all resumed racing. Although my finishing positions were improving, with 3 races to go, I found myself fighting for 24th place. (Again, I checked for my raffle ticket... yes... still there!). My last race awarded me with my highest finishing position of 3rd place but more importantly I had qualified for a place in the quarter final. Following a ‘chicane incident’, Paul was forced to bring on his spare car for the remaining few races but still managed to qualify. So on to the quarter finals - a slightly longer race but only finishing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd would secure a place in the semis. I was drawn for the first of the four heats with the inside lane and all those lovely inner curves! The pressure was too much and a 5th place finish put an end to my racing for the day. Paul was on next and, still running with the spare car, finished an impressive 4th! It would have been fantastic to go on to the next round but at this stage, experience tends to outweigh luck.

Semifinal time arrived and it was at this point I detected a slight change in the air. All competitors still involved in the race now seemed to be even more focused and the mood was generally more intense than that of the first two rounds. Six competitors would go through to the final and six would end up so near yet so far from a trophy. We marshalled both semi final heats at what we considered to be ‘medium to low risk’ corners but the quality of racing meant that there were very few ‘offs’. John Scandrett (a member of MMRG) produced a blisteringly fast lap time of 6.35 seconds in his semifinal heat.

This would remain the fastest lap of the day. It was now time for the final and so the top six drivers placed their cars on their lanes and took up their respective positions on the platform. There was no way we were going to marshal this one as we felt it was best left to more experienced people. We must confess to maintaining a low profile until all of the marshalling posts were taken). Just before the start, we gathered round the track with the rest of the spectators.

The 25-lap final produced some of the closest racing of the day with everyone lapping consistently fast. It was a really exciting race to watch and listen to with commentary from a budding Murray Walker at the control computer. Again, not too many cars coming out of their slots but we could feel the tension build up when they did. It is obvious that for many people, slot car racing is not just a hobby but also a very serious sport. First across the finishing line was Keith Fishenden, closely followed by Paul Hatcher and Neil St John. As well as winning the Junior trophy, Richard Green took fourth place overall. Fifth & sixth places went to Terry Battersby and Stuart Hatcher. All that now remained was for Alan to present the trophies to the finalists, draw the winning raffle ticket (which went to Andy Moore - not me!) and close the event with a few words of thanks. On behalf of the “loft-boys” I’d also like to thank everyone, especially MMRG for their very kind hospitality. All involved, including the visiting clubs (Viking, Larkfield and New Addington), made us feel very welcome indeed. A big ‘thank you’ to Wendy & Laura for organising the food for all the hungry racers and for keeping the tea & coffee flowing throughout the afternoon.

Although this was our first real race experience, it is certain we will be entering similar events as we enjoyed every single minute of this one. Aside from the good social atmosphere, one of the lasting impressions we have taken with us is how professional and smoothly the event ran. The whole day stayed on schedule and without a hitch. Good show, Medway! We can’t remember the last time we had so much fun for a fiver! ■

M.M.M. *

Much Maligned Magnets* or the current use of magnatraction as a roadholding aid

BY TONY SECCHI

Many articles have been written and printed in the Journal over recent months (particularly Peter Novani's excellent offering 'May the downforce be with you' in the December 2000 issue) voicing many opinions and observations on this mildly controversial subject. So at the risk of boring the pants off everybody I thought that I would add my own personal views to that list.

Firstly, I must state to all my fellow members who despise magnetic aids to traction, that I admire and uphold their principles and defend them. However, I do feel that local clubs and our own National organisation can encompass both points of view. Just to clarify my stance, I am not advocating adding magnatraction to cars of the past that were not designed for it - they can function perfectly well as they were intended to - in separate events and classes. All that I am saying is that as most modern cars today have magnatraction incorporated why not use it.

Under the loose-ish format that we run at my home track we look on magnatraction as a replacement for the lead and Plasticine ballast that we used in the sixties. The following is not an advocacy for magnets per se, it is just a series of observations, test and running results over a period of three years weekly competition.

Very recently Scalextric, for example, have been producing models with multiple location facilities in the chassis underpan for the magnet in their latest cars and this gives a modicum of flexibility to accommodate one's own personal style of driving. As Steve Carter has noted at his club, the most popular magnet placement at our track is just in front of an in-line engine or centrally in the underpan for a sidewinder.

As I see it there are three main criteria when using magnets and they are as follows:

1. Position
2. Depth projection from underside of chassis

3. Magnet type, size and strength

Let us deal with the position first and for simplicity and common usage stick to in-line engine layouts. As previously stated, the most popular placement is in front of the engine. This gives good overall stability and, if combined with good grip from the rear tyres, very effective handling. On long wheelbase cars or cars with pronounced rear overhang (unusual today) some of us found that putting the magnet between the rear of the engine and the final drive gives increased rear grip and more stability in the twisty bits by virtue of increased load on the tyres - a bit like ground effect on real cars. However, a visual check will show that this is at the expense of heavy rear tyre wear and on some cars a lightness at the front if the magnet is too low or too strong. Testing usually eliminates this.

One of my friends puts his magnet just behind the rear of the pick up. He says that this gives him good front end stability, keeps the guide firmly in the slot and at the same time allows him to drive in his preferred 'tail out' attitude. He is certainly quick on open curves but our series of tight left/right chicane turns often catches him out and he does lose time there - swings and roundabouts I guess. His front tyres also give him a slight resistance but this seems not to worry him.

The depth of the magnets's projection from the underside of the chassis is also critical; obviously it is very important to have the magnet at the correct height from the guide rails. Too high - little effect. Too low - little speed. The early Scalextric magnets were quite thin (about 2 mm) and glued to a metal 'A' plate which was screwed into the chassis with the magnet between engine and final drive. I personally found this configuration very effective. Later, when the brown plastic bar magnets were used, they were thicker (about 3 mm) so a recessed slot was incorporated into the chassis in which the

magnets were glued. In both cases the magnet undersurface was just below the bottom of the protruding engine casing. both systems work well, but from my own experience, even better if replaced by similar sized, slightly more powerful magnets - more of that later.

In some cases we have used 'Fly' circular magnets and bar magnets from cupboard door catches. (both about 4/5 mm thick). Although more powerful and generally only used with 'Ninco' NC2 type motors, the main advantage with these magnets is that when fitted into the chassis via a compatible shaped cut out, they can be adjusted for vertical height thereby giving a degree of 'tuning' to suit the individual.

As for the types of magnet, we used to use all sorts that we could get our hands on, but over time we have rationalized them down to the following

Scalextric steel magnet in it's own plate - 25mm long, 8mm wide and 2mm thick medium strength.

Scalextric Plastic brown bar magnet - 25mm long, 8mm wide and 3mm thick - medium to low strength.

'MAP' 122-02 - cupboard door catch magnets - 20mm long, 7mm wide and 4mm thick. - medium strength but variable as its depth gives a degree of vertical placement in the underpan.

Proslot PS 6001 chrome plated steel magnet 25mm long, 7mm wide and 1mm thick - quite strong and has two points in it's favour. Firstly, it can directly replace both of the Scalextric magnets in-situ and secondly, it can be superglued to the underside of the chassis without having cut a slot or a recess.

Fly 70179 - chrome plated steel circular magnets - 7mm in diameter and 4mm thick. - very strong, but again the depth allows vertical height adjustment in the chassis.

This last magnet is used in our new 'Formula Libre' class where more or less, anything goes within reason (vacuum formed bodies for instance). There are some basic rules, but we like to run this category similar to the late lamented 'CAN-AM' series for open topped sports cars run in Canada and America from

1966 onwards. This 'no rules' championship allowed the use of five to seven litre engines (mainly by Chevrolet) and for the first five years was dominated by Bruce McLaren built cars. He, of course, founded the famous McLaren Fl car company long before Ron Dennis and co. were even heard of. He died at Goodwood in 1970 testing his own McLaren M8D Can-Am car. Apart from the name, his heritage is hardly credited within today's commercial set up.

Anyway, in our 'Formula Libre' championship several of my friends have experimented with multiple magnatraction sometimes using as many as three - yes three ! This is not as daft as it sounds. By using NC2 or Slot. It[®] Boxer powerful engines, vacuum formed bodies and magnets of different strength, size (sometimes cut in half) and projection/placement you can tune your car for most styles. One point of caution here - adjusted and positioned properly they can give massive roadholding ability, but at the expense of heavy tyre wear, plus, over time, the downforce does increase braid wear to the point of destruction, sometimes literally pulling them out of the guide.

The most favoured set up in these cars is a PS 6001 stuck to the chassis underside midway between pick up and engine. A Scalextric brown bar recessed in front of the engine and a Map' 122.02 recessed flush behind the engine. Modified thus the cars are very fast and stable in the twisty bits, can be braked later into open bends, can have the power put down earlier on the exits, but of course are slower in a straight line. They can be de-slotted or spun if over pushed, and are more suited to tracks like mine with short straights, lots of bends and tight bits - which is why we instigated this particular class in the first place.

So you pays your money and you takes your choice. Race vintage non magnetic, remove magnets, race magnets or go 'Formula Libre'. It is all up to you and your club's format. But remember, whatever you do it is all good serious fun and that within our many faceted association we have room for all tastes. ■

Slot-Tech Porsche Open Challenge

BY JAMES BROWN

Forty three drivers, from four different clubs, armed with every type of Porsche, turned up to do battle at Pendle Scalextric Club on Sunday 24th June 2001. The rules were very open allowing the use of many “scalextric type” components that are generally banned on club nights. Each driver had their own ideas as to which car, motor, gears, tyres and set-up would lead them to victory!

With Pendle Slot Racing’s new H.Q. just down the road and a 10% discount for all the racers the possibilities were awesome, and with free practice all day on the Saturday (for visiting drivers only) there was plenty of time to prepare. During Saturday practice the lap times started to tumble as drivers got to grips with the super smooth 5 lane 118ft Pendle track, as the home drivers sat and watched.

On Sunday morning the track was open at 9.00am for free practice (again for visiting drivers only) who had not practised on the Saturday. Everyone else (including the home drivers) had a 5-minute warm-up to check their cars were ok. Each driver was asked to sign in and declare the car and motor they were running and given a randomly chosen race number.

Qualifying started at 11.00am with each driver having 2 x 30 second runs on the lanes of their choice (one inside lane and one outside lane) with the best distance travelled on either lane to count. Roland Brooks (North London) had drawn #1 and set the early pace with a best run of 3.08 laps which was immediately equalled by his club mate William. Paul “the governor” Darby (Phoenix) managed a 3.09 to secure a top 10 position in the heats and top visiting driver. All but one of the home drivers filled the top 8 positions with Nick Hurst (club champion) and Steve Swann (seasoned racer) battling it out for the top position. Steve posted a blistering run of 3.52 but Nick kept his cool

and crept in front with a 3.64

Racing started at 12.30pm and consisted of 5 x 5 minute runs with the distance travelled on each lane being recorded and added together at the end of the event. The driver with the greatest distance travelled on all 5 lanes would be declared the winner. The heats were run in reverse qualifying order.

All drivers raced 1 heat, marshalled 1 heat then rested for 7 heats (35 minutes) which gave ample time to make adjustments to their car or have a bite to eat from the Pendle club kitchen which was run all day by Carole Hirst, Sarah, and Bernadette (my good lady wife) serving an assortment of sandwiches, toasties, pop, crisps and chocolate, (tea and coffee was free).

The racing was close and good natured with some friendly club rivalry thrown in. As it took nearly 6 hours to get through the heats I won’t bore you with any race commentary but here is a list of the Heat winners:-

- Heat 1. Rob Lyons (North Staffs)
- Heat 2. Carl Probert (North Staffs)
- Heat 3. Mark Probert (North Staffs)
- Heat 4. James Lymer (North Staffs)
- Heat 5. Don Stanley (North London)
- Heat 6. Mac Pinches (Phoenix)
- Heat 7. Pete Murphy (Pendle)
- Heat 8. Paul Darby (Phoenix)

At the end of the event the top 5 cars were opened up and scrutineered, the cars were left on the start straight for anyone to examine and see what modifications had been done. Those drivers who did examine the top 5 cars were totally surprised by the winning car; it was an all but standard Proslot GT3!

Once everyone had satisfied their curiosity it was time for prize giving. The winners of each heat won a Proslot Porsche (the car to have at Pendle) donated by Monarch Lines and Pendle Slot Racing. The winners were:-

The top junior (under 16) was awarded a ➡➡



The winning car

certificate and £50 voucher donated by Jon Sword of SRA, the winner was Neil Hirst (Pendle)

The Slot-Tech award, of a certificate and bottle of bubbly for best-engineered and most innovative car went to Gareth Jones (North Staffs) for his 4wd Hornby 962

The overall top 3 drivers were awarded trophies donated by Slot-Tech the winners were:-

1st Nick Hirst (Pendle)

2nd Steve Swann (Pendle)

3rd Wayne McGowan (Pendle)

Over a quarter of the 43 drivers went home with a prize! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the drivers for supporting this event and the sponsors for their very generous prizes. ■

Porsche Open -

The Phoenix club rise to the challenge

BY JON SWORD

Always ready for a challenge fifteen members of Phoenix Scalextric Club joined members from three other clubs, Pendle, North London and North Staffs for a race event with a difference. A total of 43 drivers competed for the honours at the superb Pendle Club circuit at junior and senior level. The circuit is a five lane wooden track, 118feet in length and believe me it is super smooth. The rules were very simple. Any Porsche car could be used and could be modified from any parts from a list of manufacturers, no 'bodgit and scratchit' gadgets allowed and drivers had to retain the chassis and top section of car as standard.

During the build up to the event Sean at Pendle was kept very busy both as adviser and dealer! Slot.It® parts were popular and the Proslot Porsche GT3 seemed to be the racers' choice. Well, you've guessed it, once we got a chance to practice on the Saturday we changed our minds and out came the Fly GT1 Evos. Saturday was free practice and only visitors were allowed on the circuit. However I had travelled up very early and Nick Hirst let us in, I quickly asked to have a look at his car and put it around the track. It was superb! I was depressed. The Pendle lads have a reputation for knowing their stuff and add to that the home advantage we knew we were in for a bit of a struggle. As always though, the more you practice the better you get and the lap times improved throughout the day. There was a great atmosphere developing and we were well looked after by Carole Hirst, Sarah and Bernadette from the Pendle kitchen and the discount offered at the new Pendle business unit was very welcome (cars, cars and more cars everywhere, made Richard Welch stare like a rabbit caught in headlights!).

Saturday night meant a club outing to Blackpool where we played spot the woman with the correctly spelt tattoo! Glad to report we had learned from our experiences at the Hastings

meeting and stayed well away from the pub. However this only happened after we tricked Paul 'the Guv'nor' Darby into having a lie down and we will give you a shout mate...honest! Rumour has it he was sanding tyres all through the night, well it sounded like it?!

Sunday and free practice was open only to those that did not practice on Saturday. Once they were set all other drivers including the home team were given a five-minute warm up. Qualifying was based on two 30 second runs on the inside and outside lanes of the track, now rubbered up and giving better grip. Roland Brooks kicked off first, setting the pace and his teammate William was hard on his heels. Our top lads, 'Skippy', Daz 'the Iceman' Mac Pinches and Darbs were all on the pace and the juniors, Sam, Aaron and 'Busby' were becoming more competent. Each driver raced for 30 seconds going for overall distance to establish a running order. To be honest when Nick Hirst took his go he was pure class and an obvious favourite to win. We were impressed. Good to see Sean Fothergill come out of retirement and run his 'stealth car', silently slipping around the track in impressive style.

The races began at 12.30. The system was the fairest, going for distance over all lanes to establish a winner. There were plenty of individual battles going on as reputations and club rivalry mattered within the overall context of the competition. North Staffs established themselves as leaders of the 'we are the loudest club competition' and even managed to bring along a fair number of camp followers and slot groupies! It was hard to tell the Phoenix lads apart as we were all dressed in our new club shirts, spot the spelling error! The racing was close, good-natured and very enjoyable.

Thanks to all for a great weekend, see you at the new Phoenix track soon for the return match..... ■

The allure of rubber!

Part 7 - Final lap

BY PETER BOITA

To put the final “concours” finish to the job you need to buy two products from any good motor accessory dealer. For the underside of the track you need Armor All Low Gloss Protectorant and for the top of the track Auto Glym Bumper Black Aerosol Spray - which isn't black at all by the way; It's clear!

This is by far the best product for restoring the track surface as you get a great natural finish with good traction. I also tried - wait for it, Car Plan Tyre Paint, Autoglym Bumper Care, Black Trim Wax, black shoe cream, Duplicolour, Vinylkote and Humbrol Paint!

Turn the track over and start with the underside of the track first. Spray some Armor All into a shallow container and with a soft 1" paintbrush just paint it generously to “feed” the underside rubber of the track. Wipe the brush off and then use it to slightly dry off the excess. That's it really for the underside except to say that later on in the day just even out the coating still using your paintbrush wiped “dry” until the Armor All has dried to a nice even shine. A word of warning though; don't let this product get onto the top surface of the track or it will play havoc with the traction of the cars later on!

Now turn the track back up the correct way for the very last step in the restoration process. Make sure no WD40, or anything else for that matter, has found its way onto the surface of the track. If it has, remove it with a piece of clean kitchen towel and some methylated spirits if it is particularly greasy or ingrained. I would urge you, however, to work carefully and keep everything scrupulously clean as you progress through each stage of the restoration process because you really don't want to have to fix something again because of previous carelessness. As an aside here, if you are after absolute maximum traction and are happy with how the track surface looks then you can just omit to dress the surface and run your cars on it “as is”.

Assuming you want to totally finish the job

here's what to do next. Using a different shallow dish and paintbrush (to avoid contaminating the track surface) spray some of the clear Autoglym Bumper Black Spray into the dish and start by painting the thin sides of the track. Continue with the track surface. Be a little careful here; don't brush the spray onto the metal rails and don't use too much over the track surface generally. Also, resist spraying the track directly from the aerosol. Apart from it going all over the place and also onto the metal rails (which you certainly don't want to happen) you will get “hot spot” circles which are impossible to blend out and will definitely spoil the finished job (I know I tried it!). Be careful as well that you don't handle the bottom of the track at all as the underside finish will not have “gone off” yet and you will get marks all over the place.

The rubber also has a tendency to “drink” the Autoglym Bumper Black so don't put too much on. You are really looking to get a nice low level satin sheen that makes the newly painted white lines sparkle and the now nourished black rubber track contrast dramatically against them. If you do overdo it with the spray, to the extent of losing too much traction when you run your cars, it is a simple matter to barely moisten a lint free cloth with (ideally) isopropyl alcohol or, failing that, methylated spirits or even Vodka (!) and lightly wipe the track over to remove only the topmost coating. Do not press too hard as you only need to remove the excess spray that is lying on the very uppermost layer of the track surface. If you just remove the top excess spray you will still be left with a track surface that looks attractive because of the spray finish that lies below the surface traction layer. By the way, don't use lighter fuel as it's too heavy duty for this subtle job.

Obviously, if you are going for a static display, the track surface can be left as “glossy” as you wish. Alternatively, you can control the track traction conditions totally with the above technique. So, for example, if you want to

simulate running at Spa in Belgium in the pouring rain leave the track a bit more glossy than usual! What you can also do on an existing track, or plan it into your restoration track project, is to have, say, a long straight section of track left untreated with the first one or two sections of curves quite glossy and the rest of the bend untreated. This has the effect of a track that hasn't quite dried out yet! It also means that you have to brake severely on the straight for the corner, take it really easy on "the wet bits" and then power out of the bend; very entertaining.

If you have followed the process carefully, taken your time and worked cleanly you will now have a piece of track that looks factory fresh and, dare I say it, better than new and in concours condition. If, by the way, you are going to use some restored track sections to mount a static display you can even leave the end metal connecting tabs off to give a neater appearance to the overall job. Time taken for this stage 15 minutes.

If you add up all the times for the various stages of restoration you can see the time I took to get an absolutely perfect piece of track was

about 4 hours and 45 minutes. Worth every second when you see the finished job though! As a way of learning and trying the restoration process why not just start with one piece of track designed to show off your 60s cars and build up from there restoring a whole circuit if that's what you eventually would like to achieve? That way it doesn't look too daunting to start with! If it is of help to someone I have a small quantity of rubber track already stripped of its rails and connectors, which will save you 30% restoration time, so if anyone out there fancies putting the above restoration techniques into place please contact me on 020 8679 0888 and you'll be able to pick my spares up for a bargain price!

Likewise, if anyone out there can help me to find my last elusive "wants" please call me on the same number they are: C57 Aston Martins in Red and Yellow. Le Mans Start MM/T.37, Paddock MM/A.224 and Goodwood Chicane MM/T.46 all in the early rubber track. Well, all that remains for me to say I've really enjoyed sharing my knowledge with you over these series of articles and to wish you good luck as and when you should try the restoration techniques for yourself. ■