



No.253 APRIL 2003

BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

© NSCC 2003

Contents

Club Staff.....	2
Swapmeet.....	3
Membership Update.....	4
Diary Dates.....	5
Messages From Margate.....	7
Members Moments.....	9
Model Maker May 1959.....	10
Repro Parts.....	13
Carrera Corner.....	15
Swapmeet Update.....	16
Trader's Travels.....	17
Bits And Pieces.....	19
Shipment From Spain.....	20
SCX Review.....	21
Meet The Advertisers.....	23
Sport V Classic.....	29
BRM V16.....	31
<u>Members Ads.....</u>	<u>34</u>

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



The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Your call is important to us

Why is it so difficult to buy anything these days? I sometimes wonder whether shops and service providers actually want our custom.

I recently spent two days trying to buy tickets for the Champcar event at Brands Hatch; as my requirements weren't straightforward I was unable to book on-line so I rang the advertised number. A robot voice welcomed me and said it would connect me to a real person as soon as possible; I then had to listen to a particularly dire piece of hold music for five minutes before robot woman informed me that all the real people were busy but my call was important to them so please hold. I waited fifteen minutes and gave up.

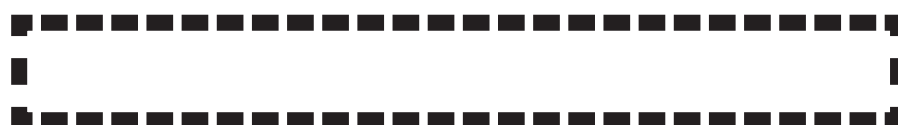
This scenario was repeated at regular intervals for the next 48 hours - I once held for 45 minutes without success - if my call was really important to Octagon Motorsports I would suggest that it might help if they actually employed someone to answer the bloody phone! No wonder they are going bust - the words 'piss up' and 'brewery' come to mind. Eventually I did manage to get through and completed the transaction which is more than can be said for my attempts to buy a Scalextric car from a model shop in Lincoln last year.

I forget the name of the shop but it is near the centre of the city and the slot-cars are kept in the basement behind large sheets of plate glass which are so encrusted in grime that it is difficult to actually see what is available. It does, however, have considerable amounts of obsolete Scalextric dating back to the early 90s. Now you would think that with such an obvious slow moving stock problem the owner would be glad to get rid of some of them - far from it. On enquiring the price of a Power and Glory Ford 3L I was quoted £40 and, no, he was not prepared to haggle. I made my excuses and left; a year later I returned and the same car was still there at £50! I wonder why?

And Finally - work got in the way this month (I hate stocktaking!) so I have only had time to do 36 pages. Normal service should be resumed in May.

Till next month

Brian





New cars

Several of this year's new releases have hit the shelves this month. Most notable are three new liveries of existing models:

C2481 Porsche 911 GT3R "DeWalt No99"

C2490 Caterham 7 "Gulf No1"

C2496 Ford Focus WRC "No34" and the other non-Sport release of the GT40:

C2465 Ford GT MkII 1966 Le Mans "No5"

However several more cars are due for release shortly, in fact by the time you read this some will probably have arrived. These will include the new DTM Mercedes CLKs and Opel Astra Coupes, C2509A the Sport Version of the red GT40 and the other GT3R release - C2480 Porsche 911 GT3R Yankees.

Mike Walters from Hornby is particularly pleased with the performance of the Mercedes and the livery of C2391A is particularly striking. Like the real car it is quite wide and there is a gap of several mms between the contrate for the sidewinder motor and the wheel.

Sport versions

The Mercedes and Opel will use a new method for denoting sport versions. The sleeve around the Sport box clearly shows the number of the limited edition. Inside the box, hidden under the tray with the spare guides, etc. is a credit card sized certificate giving the unique number for that car. On the car itself, firmly glued into a rebate in the chassis is a small metal plate engraved with the word "Limited". If you trash this chassis – you don't get another one!!

In the future

Development is continuing on cars for release later in the year too. The new Mini Coopers are finished and aren't too far away. Look out for several versions through other resellers in addition to those in the Scalextric catalogue.

Some of you may have seen the prototype Corvette L88 on the web as shown at the German and US toy fairs. This car is undergoing some reshaping of the front as a direct result of feedback from those pictures – especially from hugely passionate Stingray fanatics! Expect to see several versions later in the year in both open and closed formats with different lights too. There is a wealth of fine detail on this car which features a front mounted motor with long propshaft. The liveries are still in discussion.

The new TVR 440 exists in stereolithography mode and looks as striking as the real car. Have a look at the www.tvr.co.uk and follow the motorsport links to get some idea of what the final version will look like. Other liveries are also in negotiation. A new, and still secret, development will appear on this car too - definitely something to look forward to but if I told you I would have to kill you - so, sorry!

The Indycar is also taking shape. I have seen the hand decorated version of C2515 Delara Penzoil. Have a look at www.scalextric.co.uk to see some pictures of it. The lines are crisp and uncluttered and there are not too many bits to break off. It is intended for this model to replace the very simple High and Low nose F3 cars at a bargain price too. Other liveries are not yet finalised - some will be real Indycar liveries and some will be generic.

⇒

Goodwood

The Goodwood Festival of Speed and Revival Race Meeting are a must for any motor racing enthusiast. This year there is an extra reason for the Scalextric fan to attend as Hornby have taken a major three year sponsorship deal. At the Festival Of Speed the public will have the chance to race up a model of the actual hill climb circuit. This track is over 16m long and has a height difference between start and finish of nearly 2m. Fully landscaped with terrain and trees, even seeing your car as it nears the top will be tricky. Clever use of 2 RMS track sections has enabled times for the ascent and descent to be measured separately. It is expected that there will be a competition for the FTD! There is also a special triple car special pack. This is a high quality presentation box in the Goodwood colours containing the 3 1966 GT40s in black, gold and blue. These will be Sport versions but, before you all explode and cry "foul", these are not exactly the same as the cars previously released - they feature a weathered appearance as befitting after a long a gruelling race. Although this set has been commissioned by Goodwood it will be available through the normal channels.

In the news

Four Scalextric items were recently auctioned on eBay in support of Comic Relief - an early Sport set, a unique Sport trial packaging livery for a fictitious version of the Cadillac and two prototype MG Lolas - one in white and one in black. Hornby were pleased to raise over £700 for the charity. One of the items has gone to Australia and another to Belgium. This was a great opportunity to obtain some unique pieces of Scalextric history.

The Spanish MiniAutos magazine voted the Scalextric (or Superslot in their case) GT40 as car of the year for 2002 and a smart trophy is on display in the Margate factory reception.

Hornby also won the prestigious Company of the Year Award sponsored by Price-Waterhouse - Coopers in association with the London Stock Exchange and the Financial Times – Well done Hornby!

Club car

Hornby have expressed a willingness to create an NSCC car for us again this year. I need your help to determine what we would like, how it should be decorated and how many we should make. Therefore I would like you to answer the following simple questions and send your replies to me. Common sense must apply here – we are NOT going to have a new mould made for us and we are NOT going to get a full blown international racing livery either – the licensing costs would be prohibitive. However we could ask for anything from the recent range including something not yet released like the new Mini. We could have either a real race livery or an NSCC/Scalextric livery – for example if we chose a Caterham 7 we could ask one the participants in the Caterham Cup if we could copy their livery or we could make something up using club and Scalextric logos. I stress though, that if we choose an NSCC livery – that this would be a fully, highly decorated car – not just a bit of text down the side. This car will not be cheap – expect to pay the normal rate, say £30 with p&p and you will be asked to pre-purchase too. Any profit will go into the club's coffers to fund other activities when needed.

I don't promise that your requests will fully influence the result - commercial implications may have a greater effect on what we can have. If not enough people are interested it will not happen.

So, bearing all this in mind:

- 1) Would you pre-purchase a club car at around £30?
- 2) What car would you like us to produce?
- 3) What livery - a real racing livery or an NSCC/Scalextric livery
- 4) Any other comments or suggestions?

Please email or mail me with your answers. Contact details on the committee page. When I have your responses I will approach Hornby again and agree the car and livery to be produced and the price. We will then ask you to pre-purchase to cover production costs.

I look forward to your responses with trepidation! ■

Practical slot racing - Part 1

by D.J.Laidlaw Dickson

Model Maker May 1959

FROM VINE FENNEL

Before rushing in to attempt any kind of formula designing for slot racing standards, it would be as well to see what the existing commercial equipment has to offer. Scalextric were first in the field with their black rubber base track with inset tinplate slots. Two-lane track width is approximately 6 1/4 in. Slots are 1/8 in. wide and have a depth of about 3/16th in. The all-metal VIP track also caters in basic form for two-car operation with an overall width of 5 7/8 in., lane separation of 2 7/8 in., outside track edge of 1 3/8 in., and slot again of about 1/8 in. width, and mainly infinite depth (open).

Scalextric cars at present are built to an undisclosed "scale" which for practical purposes can be taken as about 1/27th. The manufacturers have just advised us that new cars will be appearing in 1/30th scale (2/5 in. to the foot), and this will be their ultimate standard scale. The original track size will be retained. The actual lane separation is already excellent for the most popular scale of 1/32; one cannot quarrel with slot gap or depth, and its channel nature makes it equally suitable for both in-slot or wipe-surface current collection systems. But for serious club use the amount of track left on the track edges is insufficient to allow full use to be made of slot racing's particular speciality, the corner drift. This should be equal to the lane separations of 3 in., so that cars in all lanes can enjoy full drifts, snakes, etc., both on the bends and on straights, without the artificial reduction of the hazard by restraining fences.

V.I.P. already subscribes to a true 1/32 in. scale for its cars but presents definite disadvantages for club use (we emphasise this club use: we have no quarrel with its fitness for purpose at domestic level) in that cars share a common negative, adjoining cars racing with

opposite polarity. This necessitates changing over leads when changing tracks and obviously would slow up the tempo of club competitions. The somewhat complicated "sleeper" fixing systems is also a deterrent. V.I.P. however, offers interesting possibilities in other directions, of which more later in this series.

We are left then with Scalextric basic track to which additional 1 1/2 in. strips are added to each side. This can be done with battened hardboard painted to match the track with comparatively little trouble for those using this system.

Geometry of the drift

Before we proceed to track-making it would be as well to be quite sure in our minds exactly what the slide - or drift - expected from our slot models amounts to and why it occurs at all. Rail racing adherents will say blithely that they do not get any appreciable slide and yet the cars go fast enough. Quite right, of course they do not, because, just when a slide would be starting, the inside wheel comes bang against the rail and so prevents it ever developing.

If we consider a free-running car about to turn into a bend, the driver turns his steering wheel, thus influencing the direction of the vehicle, but the tendency of the rear end where the driving wheels are is to continue in a straight line. If the driver is too ambitious the power of the rear is greater than the turning power at the front and the car begins to "break away" at the back. Skilful driving can prevent an accident by easing the wheel back into the straight position momentarily and all is well.

This mechanical fact has been developed over the years by racing drivers who have learned to "steer with the accelerator" thus bringing the car through a bend the shortest way

round in a steady controlled drift. This power drift is what we are aiming for in slot racing. Taking a corner this way without restraining fencing or rails is a new thrill for the model racing car enthusiast.

Track Making

Clubs will no doubt wish to construct their own layouts entirely, and we would suggest that they follow these suggested standards, as summarised in Table 1. Such a circuit would be ideal for 1/32 racing, possible for 1/27, and in many cases up to 1/24, while the tiny 1/40 Crescent and Corgi-based cars would also operate happily on it.

Number of lanes	Distance between lanes	Space on outside of lanes	Overall width
2	3 in.	3 in.	9½ in.
3	3 in.	3 in.	12½ in.
4	3 in.	3 in.	15½ in.
5	3 in.	3 in.	18½ in.
6	3 in.	3 in.	21½ in.
Width of slot	¼ in.
Depth of slot (minimum)	⅜ in.
Width of surface wipe (minimum)	¼ in.
Positive to be on left, facing direction of running.			

It is in the actual building that apparent snags of difficulty have arisen. Slots must certainly be cut but this should present no real problem if the circuit is first drawn up to scale on paper and track surface cut to shape with a bandsaw (if you are lucky enough to have one, or can borrow one) or more tediously with fretsaw, or compromise fashion, with a power-drill saw on the straights and fretsaw on the bends. If slots are not being cut track still has to be marked out and drilled, etc., for rail, so where is the frightful extra work? At this stage we do not propose to offer revolutionary new current collecting mediums. We will content ourselves with the suggestion that 1/8 x 3/16 rectangular section aluminium or dural is reasonable in price, could be laid to straights or round bends without undue difficulty. Some trouble might be experienced in securing it in place, though

bolting through with fine countersunk bolts should be possible. Continuity of joints could be achieved with screw on plate. Conductivity of this metal is over 50% that of copper, so that its bulk would more than compensate for any voltage drop.

Those intent on the easy way will find that the Preminco tape sold for this purpose is surprisingly robust, and, we are assured by clubs using it, will stand up adequately to the heavy use expected of a club track. This can be fixed with any of the popular impact adhesives, and can be eased round corners down to a radius of 5in!

Others have reported successful use of ordinary 18swg copper wire soldered to heads of flat brass brads driven in at about 3in intervals. This is quick to do, cheap, and sufficiently reminiscent of rail racing to appeal. The slightly raised nature of the wire is not enough to prevent wheels crossing and recrossing the wires with the utmost facility. It does though, place a premium on really adequate current collecting shoes.

Current collection

Some very fancy methods have been suggested. Our own experience is that surface-wipe methods far excel any other type, unless the builder can bring watch-precision methods to his aid, which means not very many of us!

This simplest form is that already offered by M.R.R.C. Ltd., in the shape of an insulated shoe which fits in the slot, the upper part being flanges of a T-shaped bracket on each arm of which is secured a spring steel, phosphor bronze, or brass foil current collector which wipes the appropriate surface.

V.I.P. have now an improved form of pick-up which consists of the teased wires of a multistrand lead projecting almost vertically downwards from its insulated housing. It can be adjusted for most satisfactory length, replaced easily as required, and needs no special skill in making or fixing.

The hinged hard brass wiper, held to the track by a single strand of control line cable, has been the "standard club method" at Worksop ⇒

for positive rail pick-up since that club's inception, and has survived the gruelling experience of two of the country's bumpiest circuits quite happily, and recently triumphed on their latest perfectly smooth one, so that it seems to suit both worlds (and this for current pick-up on 18swg wire, surface laid).

Actual slot peg can be either a single peg of slightly less than 1/8in. diameter going down into the slot, a double of this peg, located 3/8in. behind the first, or a flat plate about 1/2in. long (M.R.R.C. style).

In our next instalment we will present the case for steering as a "must" on slot tracks, but for the moment we have we feel offered enough food for thought (and action please!).

Any comments on any aspects of slottery will be welcomed - already we find the scope widening so fast that an almost unlimited series of articles can be envisaged into the distant future, but fresh thought and notions are eagerly awaited. ■

Scalextric spare parts

BY STEVE CANNON

Having been disappointed with the quality and availability of spare parts for the vintage Scalextric cars in my collection (and the cars I sell), I looked into the concept of producing injection moulded replacement parts and, in conjunction with Roger Barker, the 'Really Useful Spares Company' was born.

Whilst still in its early days we can now supply a small range of high quality injection moulded plastic parts. First off the production line have been screens for:-

C74 Austin Healey 3000

C75 Mercedes 190 SL

C78 AC Cobra

All are £3.85, \$6.00 US or 6 Euros each

These screens are made from a high quality modern plastic, which makes them virtually unbreakable.

Next are chromed wheels for:

C74 Austin Healey

C62 Ferrari 156

C69 Ferrari 250GT

All are £1.25, \$2.00 US or 2 Euros each.

We have also produced a range of wafer thin metallised decal sheets for:-

C77 Ford GT40 #7 (White Car)

C77 Ford GT40 #12 (Blue Car)

C78 AC Cobra #11 (Green Car)

C78 AC Cobra #66 (Red Car)

All are £3.85, \$6.00 US or 6 Euros each

Also the first tyres are off the production line for the C74 Austin Healey at £1.25, \$2.00 US or 2 Euros each.

Many more parts are due soon enabling collectors to restore these vintage cars to their former glory.

All parts are available from:-

The Really Useful Spares Company web site at:- www.8sc.co.uk/useful.htm

email : rusc@8sc.co.uk

Tel : ++44 (0) 115 9681113

Or from Rob Learmouth at Westwood Models.

Suggestions for other parts that we should be making will be welcomed from all NSCC members. ■

Repro Parts Register

Following my request last month for someone to produce a list of all the repro part suppliers Peter Boita has volunteered for the job.

I have passed on the information which I have already gathered but he would welcome any further information which you can provide.

Any suppliers who wish to publicize their products should get in touch with him at peter_boita@btconnect.com with their details.

Whoops - cock-up department

Last month's Journal included a piece from John Carmichael requesting members to email him if they were interested in having a small quantity of high quality repro parts made. Unfortunately, due to my incompetence, his email address was omitted: contact John at jrac@bigfoot.com if there are some parts you would like to see made (eg C8 and C9 screens).

Carrera Corner

BY STEVE BAKER

Most of us will by now have seen something from Carrera, but probably not that much... well that's what I thought when Gareth Jex (yes he of the MG fetish, and too much time on his hands) first suggested I write a Carrera column.

Sounds like a good idea, I thought; a small range manufacturer, the occasional freebie to review or pass on to be reviewed. Sounds like a bit of fun, so I wrote to Brian, and got his permission to approach Jon Burcham who is the Marketing Manager at Nikko toys UK, the UK distributor for Carrera. Jon kindly agreed and suggested I take a look at the website www.nikko-toys.co.uk which has the full range of toys Nikko distribute, not just slot-cars. It has a link to the Carrera website www.carrera-toys.de and, despite this being a German site, it is in English.

The Carrera website is very good; it gives pictures of their full 2003 product range, plus limited editions, and 9 various sets. Carrera produce 3 scales of cars, as you should all know from the Christmas quiz. Their EXCLUSIV range which is 1:24th scale; the EVOLUTION range which is 1:32nd scale and the GO 1:43rd range. Most of us are interested in the Evolution range, but take the time to look at the Exclusiv range particularly if you like E-type Jags, and Porsche Carrera 6s, these look amazing. In the Go range many will know about the James Bond set with the Aston Martin DB7 and Jaguar XKR, unfortunately so far they have not

produced the XKR in any other scale, I will try to persuade them otherwise!

Anyway on to a review, I was sent a gorgeous looking Evolution Pontiac GTO '66 Custom ref. 25466. This is in black with flames around the bonnet and wheel arches; it is a truly good-looking car. It has a full cockpit, with driver, and LOTS of chrome work as you expect with an American street-rod. On the underside, it has the usual Carrera adjustable sliding magnet, and polarity-reversing switch. But how does it handle? Well, if you want a car that never comes off the track then don't look at these cars, but if you want a car that you have to drive, one which handles very much as the actual car would then this car is for you (and I know how these cars handle as I drive a Jensen Interceptor 7.2 litre V8, almost 2 tonnes and 330BHP). When run on a steel track with the magnet it was good; it could not keep up with cars like the Hornby Camaros, but they are meant to be track racing cars. This is a street-rod, it goes fast in a straight line but you have to drive carefully through the corners; the magnet helps with this but not too much. You can get a nice balance between magnet and driver ability by adjusting the magnet. However, if you really want to 'drive' these cars then ditch the magnet and put some weight in either side of the drive shaft - this being a true front engine, rear wheel drive car. This changes the car's handling, but not too much, if you like it loosens it up a bit, but it can become a tail happy monster, ooooh the fun! ➡



So far, this all sounds very positive, and mostly it is, but as with anything it's not perfect. Criticisms are that the guide flag is not right. As a street rod the front is low and it has large rear wheels, this places the underpan at an angle, which means that the guide flag is also at an angle and not vertical to the slot which may be one reason why it can de-slot very easily until you get used to driving it. In fact I think this is one area which Carrera need to address across their entire 1:32nd and 1:24th ranges, the guide flags are not as good as they could be. Also the gearing is too high, the Pontiac has been tested on a steel track of about 95 feet in length and you never get it up to anything like full speed, even on the longer copper tape track at Home Farm, Liphook it's only a quick blat down the straight, and let off for the corner.

In summary, this car has been seen/raced by at least a dozen people all of whom are regular racers. All said it looked really good, but none expected it to go too well, they were ALL pleasantly surprised by how well it does go once weighted.

Until the next time. ■

Trader's travels

BY ROBERT LEARMOUTH
(WESTWOOD MODELS)

We've just returned from a pleasant week in North Yorkshire. As always, I took the chance to search out the local model shops - sadly a creature moving ever nearer to extinction.

By way of example, 20 years ago we had four well-stocked model shops in the centre of Swindon, now we have just one. That said, the shop we have left (Spot-On in Fleet Street) is actually a new shop which is particularly well-stocked. I do sometimes wonder how much the Internet/mail order has to answer for in this respect but I think the truth is that High Street model shops were on the decline well before the advent of the virtual shop era. Anyway, if you're in the vicinity, Scarborough has a particularly well preserved example of the species on Eastborough near the sea-front.

The first Wembley Swapmeet (a general toy fair) finally came round on 2nd March. This was a long awaited event which promised much as the spiritual successor to the old Picketts Lock event. At the old event there was something of a hotbed for slot-car activity and as a swapmeet in general it was well regarded. Speaking purely for ourselves, sadly the event didn't live up to expectations. The crowds were a bit thin and the interest in slot-cars was modest. We just about covered our costs and the day did have an interesting twist, as a football fan, in being able to witness Wembley Stadium in its later stages of demolition. The next event is 29th June and hopefully both visitors and stall-holders alike will enjoy a better day.

As I write, Dordrecht (Rotterdam) SLN swapmeet is coming up this weekend. This will be the 3rd Dutch swapmeet we'll have attended but we are still relative newcomers to the international scene compared with some dealers. The Dutch are extremely enthusiastic about their slot-car collecting and extend a warm welcome to the visiting dealers. In many respects it's just like being at an NSCC event and there

is certainly no shortage of tables, comparing favourably with several of our events. We're even getting use to the dodgy banknotes now! It's nice to be able to put faces to the emails and to see a different crop of goodies on sale. It's difficult to justify a special trip without paying for your way with a table but the travelling costs can be surprisingly modest. Our Chunnel trip was picked up for just £59 period return and diesel fuel (if you're fortunate to use this) is around 2/3rds the cost of that in the UK.

Insurance

Is your collection properly insured? Did you know that with many household contents policies, if you are underinsured then you will only receive the relevant fraction of the sum assured in the event of payout. For example, the real worth of your household contents (with your collection) is £60,000 but your sum assured is £40,000. Your house burns down, how much do you receive - £40,000? Nope you receive $\frac{£40,000}{£60,000} = 66\%$ of £40,000, i.e. £26,666. Of course, if you are overinsured (typically) you only get what your gear is actually worth, not the sum assured! You can bet you won't be insured for taking your trading stock on the road either. We have specialist trader insurance but a very similar collector's policy is available from our insurers. I'm not going to plug them here but email us if you want further details.

Since Phil Egart left the hobby the Journal has been a bit lacking in trader input; Scale Models have made some valuable contributions but Julie is currently fully occupied with the new baby so I have asked Robert to fill the gap. Hopefully this will become a semi-regular column and he can keep us informed from a commercial point of view. I am sure Robert would welcome any feedback and questions from members.

BITS AND PIECES

0% Loans

The Hornby sales policy of encouraging middle aged men with disposable income to spend vast sums of money on Sport track and other products has produced an interesting prospect, *writes Tim Ainslie.*

Hornby's market research has indicated that it is the lack of a room in which to install a circuit that is holding back many customers from realising their purchasing potential. You are probably aware of many well known brands entering into the financial world by offering credit cards to customers with inducements such as money off gas bills, air miles etc. Well Hornby are considering offering 0% interest loans to potential customers in order for them to build an extension to their property to house a Scalextric circuit. This must be paid off within 3 years and the customer is obliged to purchase £1,000 plus worth of Scalextric track or other products to qualify for the loan.

Unfortunately there are only limited funds available for this project and demand will be high. It is likely that the offer will be withdrawn during early April.

Don't try this at home

The BBC Grand Prix 2003 season preview magazine (available now at all good newsagents! - sorry, couldn't resist that one) shows all this years circuits in... yes, you've guessed it, Scalextric Sport track!

It shows all 16 circuits, each complete with a 'you need this from Scalextric' table showing all the parts required to make the layout in the confines of your own living room (women permitting) or loft!

If anyone is brave enough to make the layouts, don't follow the pictures too closely as some of them have an odd number of cross-overs! Ooops, hope I haven't ruined Racer magazine's next "Spot the Difference" competition.

sent in by Peter Solari

GSR magazine

As many of you will be aware the Spanish club "Guia Slot Racing" has produced a high quality colour magazine for many years now. The good news is that it is now available in a bi-lingual version.

Unfortunately, readers of "Model Slot Car" may have gained the wrong impression about this excellent magazine as the editor unwisely chose to ridicule the English translation of the first issue - the words 'glasshouses', 'stones' and 'throw' come to mind. Admittedly, the first edition left a lot to be desired in the language department but the second issue now available is greatly improved in this respect and I can thoroughly recommend it.

It is available from the usual sources at £4.95 or contact Colette at Monarch Lines for further information.



During my trip to the London Toy Fair back in January, I visited all the major manufacturers to get some information for my Toy Fair report (see January Journal). During my discussions with Bachmann (the UK distributor for SCX) and Nikko (distributor for Carrera) it became clear that neither had a great deal of knowledge of our club.

Hornby over the years have had close links with the NSCC and 'Factory Focus' (written by Adrian Norman) and now 'Messages from Margate' (written by Rob Smith) seem to be one of the most popular sections of the journal. They are the first sections I go to (after the ads).

As to why the other manufacturers haven't followed suit is unknown. This is where I come in! Over the last few weeks I have had various conversations with Bachmann and SCX in Spain and this is the first of a new section of the journal.

Why me? - Nobody else wanted to do it and I was in the right place at the right time!

Who am I? - I'm a collector of slot-cars, mainly Hornby and SCX with the odd Ninco, Fly and Spirit model. At the last count, I have about 800 cars and most of the Scalextric buildings and accessories. I will admit to also having a sad passion for MG Slot-cars (see my previous article on Scalextric MG).

Racing? - I also attempt to race slot-cars at my two local clubs in Farnham and Home Farm in Liphook. I say 'attempt' because to be quite honest I usually come last or very near the bottom! Practice will hopefully improve my performance. However going slot-car racing two nights most weeks, does mean that I discuss slot-car virtually every day! I'm in good company too Rob Smith has just joined our Farnham club and Steve Baker (Farnham Chairman) will be my opposite number with Carrera.

My home circuit is under construction in the garage and will consist of Hornby and SCX Classic track timed via DS System components. The Farnham club runs on a four lane Ninco track and Liphook is Routed MDF with cooper tape. So hopefully any reviews will cover most of the major track types and give a rounded view of the cars performance etc.

At this stage I'm not really sure how much info I will be able to get hold of and how many of your questions I will get answers to, but if we don't start somewhere we will never know.

To begin with Bachmann have sent me a few cars to review, the first review of the Audi R8 is published this month. I will distribute the samples to various club members for testing. What I really think will be of use is trying to get answers to your questions.

I can't guarantee to make this a monthly thing, it will all depend on your input, SCX/Bachmann's input and my spare time, but I will do my best. If you have any questions, suggestions, comments or even complaints, I will do my best to get them answered. In the meantime if you have any suggestions as to how I can improve please let me know.

Best route to get in touch will be via email on gareth@2lk.com or, if you have no computer access you can always use snail mail:

Gareth Jex (SCX)
c/o 2LK Design Ltd
The Courtyard,
17 West Street
Farnham,
Surrey,
GU9 7DR

A full review of SCX new products for 2003 will be in next month's journal. ■



Audi R8 "Gulf"

By Jamie Coles

First up - to put the following review in context: I am 95% an amateur slot-car racer and less than 5% a collector, hence this review will predominantly focus on the pros and cons of the new SCX Audi R8 as a slot-car to be raced rather than one to be put away in a display case.

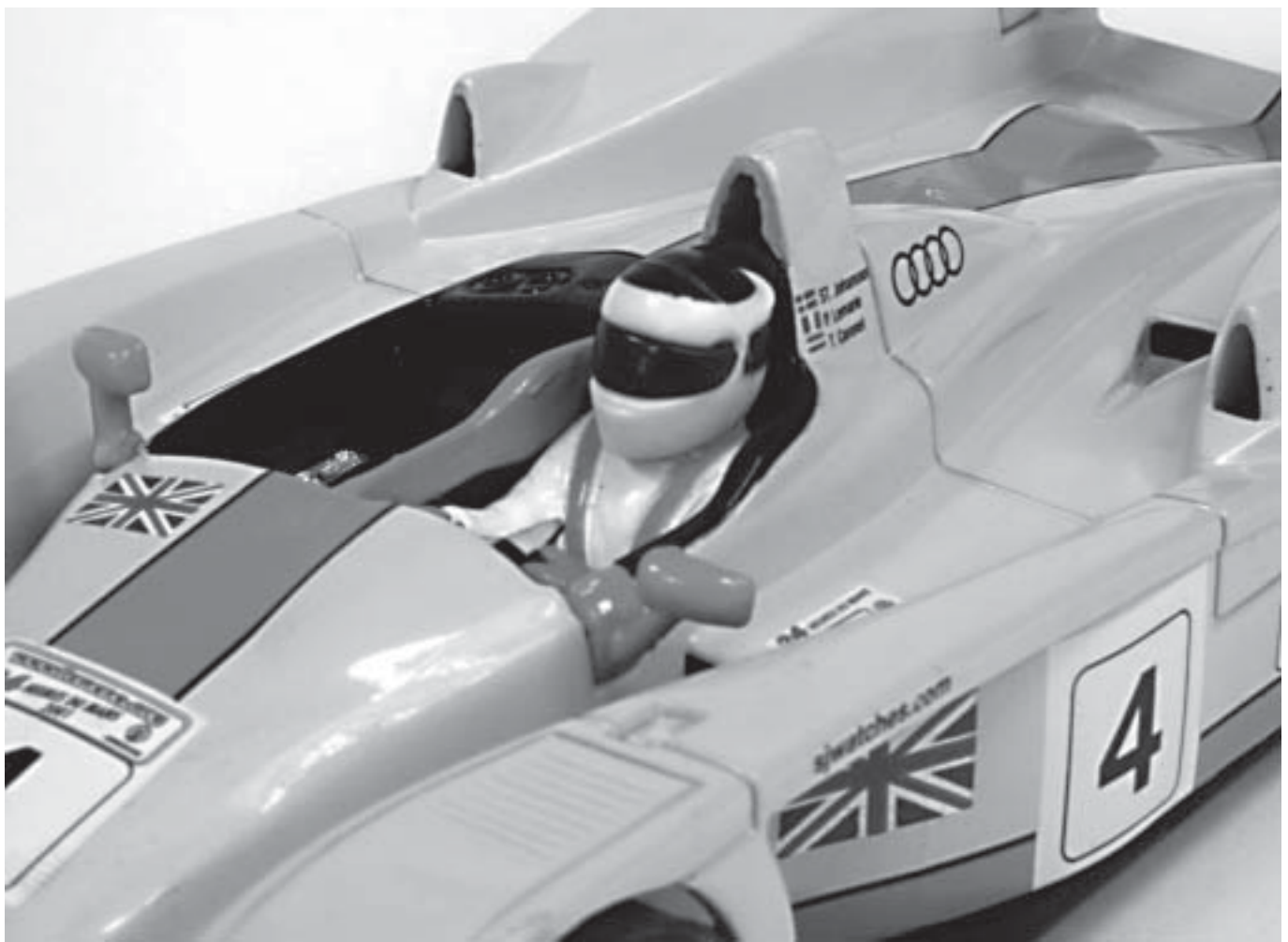
I have always thought that whoever dreamt up the orange and duck-egg blue livery of the Gulf cars was a genius - it is relatively simple yet instantly recognisable and can be applied to almost any car and make it stand out from other liveries.

The Audi R80 looks, on first impressions, stunning, and would grace any collection. But,

on slightly closer inspection I would have to point out, as this is meant to be a non-biased review, what I feel detracts from an otherwise impressive model.

For my purposes, to race the car, these are minor, but nevertheless I feel are valid for collectors. The light blue colour of the livery highlights any slight blemish or dust speck caught in the final clear coat. Again as there are no mesh or closed ducts behind the front wheels dirt, or dust is highlighted by the light blue colour.

Finally, and probably my main concern is that this is a model of a 24-hour racing car - where are the working lights? Scalextric's MG →→



Lolas have them and other SCX cars have them so the precedent is there and so is the technology.

As is natural to all boys, of whatever age, I just had to unscrew the base plate to take the car apart and peek inside. The copper strips which are fixed to the base plate replace the old-fashioned set up of trailing wires that are just asking to be snagged and come loose - notoriously when no soldering iron is present. It also avoids the embarrassment of having made all the connections, only to have the car career backwards!

Similarly for younger users there is nothing more frustrating than having to wait until a "grown-up" comes home in order to reconnect a disconnected wire that's come off the engine.

So, to the track, which at Farnham is about a 10 foot 4 lane Ninco circuit, where one of the fastest cars is my 'box standard' Fly Joest Porsche, which would be the car it would have to match up to in order to join my racing stable.

The car was placed on the track straight from the box, and from the second the familiar "tug" as the magnet took hold and with each increasing circuit I knew I would like it and, if I had to buy the car, I would have handed the money over there and then. It was very easy to get into a rhythm of when to increase the throttle and when to back off slightly.

The engine is slightly noisy but the response is excellent, partly because of the strong adjustable bar magnet just in front of the rear wheels. But this does not hinder the acceleration too much, and the acceleration curve is steep so you hit the speed you want quickly. So; excellent for a circuit with short straights in between curves.



On the curves, the magnet gives excellent road holding and when a colleague was pacing me with my Joest Porsche the Audi R8 was keeping up with it.

One of the benefits of the slight acceleration delay is that if you put the power down a bit too early coming out of a corner the car is very forgiving. And of course the sprung guide, which is also self-centring, evens any slight dips or unevenness in the track, due to a bridge for instance, so the car just keeps on going.

But when it lets go it does so big time, so keep the glue handy for the wing mirrors and the rear wing and my orange nose is scuffed, too! To be fair to the car, I did have to drive pretty recklessly (for a change!) in order for that to happen.

So, in conclusion, I must say I would definitely add this car to my racing collection as it is FUN to drive and competitive but needs to be raced to win so there is still input required from the driver.

And it looks so gorgeous too! Just add the lights please SCX. ■

Meet the advertisers - Pendle Slot Racing

BY SEAN FOTHERSGILL

I started collecting Scalextric in the late 80s, my interest was kindled by the popularity of car boot sales in the area. Sunday mornings were spent trawling the various boot sales in search of bargains. Initially I had purchased a job lot of Scalextric by replying to an advert in the local paper. The purchase included several cars and hundreds of feet of track although most of it was rusty and twisted and had to be discarded.

My knowledge of Scalextric was in its infancy and it increased each time I purchased more Scalextric at a market or car boot fair, then through sheer chance I answered an advert in the local paper; the seller was a collector of Scalextric cars and after a long chat on the telephone he pointed me in the direction of the NSCC and Roger Gillham's book.

From that time on I have been hooked, some would say obsessed! If somebody had said back then that, a few years later, I would have made a business out of selling slot-cars I would have split my sides laughing. At that time I had a good job as a skilled panel beater working in the body shop at a Ford main dealership. The work was hard but enjoyable and I got huge enjoyment out of recovering accident damaged cars and rebuilding them to as good as new. But, gradually the shine wore off the job and I was looking for a new direction. The Scalextric collecting was still strong and I had started to trade my doubles and excess track through ads in the local paper. Each time an ad appeared the phone line was red hot and it gave me the courage to quit work and concentrate on selling full time. Before this point I had started to race at a slot-car club in Bolton, which, although only 25 miles away, was a tedious journey so along with a couple of friends I found premises above an old workshop in which I could see there was the potential to build our own slot track. For six

months we raced on a tiny 3 lane circuit which was tight and twisty but great fun, while the club room was painted and the track we still race on today was being built. This is when racing became an important part of my life. We spent hours at the club setting up cars, testing, adjusting and rebuilding trying to find ways of reducing lap times by 1/100ths of seconds.

This was also to be an important part of my business in years to come, as we have the reputation for carrying huge stocks of spare and upgrade parts and racers from clubs world-wide contact us with their requirements. ■



Dear Brian,

I'm writing to you to take issue over the comments you made following Chris Angold's article in last month's journal. To quote, "My thanks to Tigger and Tony Secchi for taking up my request for facts and figures on Sport track, rather than vague opinions and derogatory comments."

I felt these comments were aimed at my article in the December 2002 Journal which was based on my experiences at the Brussels 24 hour race; my comments weren't vague opinions, the race in fact provided a very balanced 24 hour test for the Sport track. The layout of the circuit in 2002 was exactly the same as 2001 except it was now Sport track, the cars were exactly the same specification as 2001- so what better test? I stand by the comments I made in my original article, there was no grip and lap times were up by up to 3 seconds, I would also point out that I did say the track sat very flat and there were no contact problems, so it certainly wasn't derogatory, just a statement of facts.

As for Tony's and Chris' trials I would say both had obviously put in a lot of time and effort and produced very thorough results, but there was one obvious flaw that stood out, in Tony's trial all the cars had magnets on and in Chris's trial all but two had them. A magnet on any car will, to a great degree, mask grip problems, I would still say the Brussels race was a far better test of the relative qualities of the two types of track and in my opinion Classic has the upper hand simply because of the greater levels of grip it provides to cars without magnets.

Regards

Russell Turner

As it happens my comments weren't actually referring to Russell's article at all but some other pieces I had read which had rubbished the track without actually trying it! Anyway, please accept my apologies for not making this clear and giving the wrong impression.

However, in the light of the above letter I do feel obliged to make some observations about the article:

- 1) 95% of slot-cars are run on small to medium sized home/club tracks with the magnet in place.**
- 2) It is only to be expected that Hornby would have designed the new track with this in mind.**
- 3) Nowhere in the original article does it mention that non-magnet cars were being used.**
- 4) I feel that it was grossly unfair to Hornby to state "My overall impression of the Sport track is that it is a very poor product", as you did in the original article. I do not dispute your facts about this particular race but there is a world of difference between considered criticism of the stuff and a blanket condemnation, based on one event, using cars for which it was not primarily designed.**

As regards non-magnet cars and Sport track there is an article by Tim Ainslie on this very subject elsewhere in this month's issue. It is very gratifying to see members picking up on previous pieces and expanding the debate. This is one of the main aims of the club - the Journal is your voice - please use it.

Dear Brian,

My wife, whilst not a member, is an avid reader of the monthly mag, mostly because she says it gives her a good laugh that there are so many other sad cases such as myself. She collects small china animals, so I would question whether she has the right to have a go at me, well I would if I had the bottle.

But sometimes she does come up with ideas that once you look at them more closely seem blindingly obvious. In particular the AGM's, to prove she does read the mag, she knew that the AGM's are held in Loughborough, she knew that the committee have passed comments previously about these not always being well attended. So then she asks me "So why don't they hold the AGM at Milton Keynes? It says here that it's the best attended swapmeet", referring to Nigel Copcutt's article. My reply was "Good question, but you're asking the wrong person".

I seem to remember this being covered before, but to keep the peace in my household (on her instruction) I'm asking, why is the AGM held at Loughborough? and, if Milton Keynes is so well attended shouldn't the AGM be moved so that more members will attend, or at least have less of an excuse not to. It would be easy for me to justify reasons why the AGM should move to Milton Keynes, but having never attended an AGM myself (solely due to its location) I cannot see any significant reason to keep it at Loughborough, surely if the masses attend one more than the other, then mob rule wins? I'll close this now, having set the proverbial cat amongst the pigeons.

Thanks,
Steve Baker

That's a very good question Steve. I'm glad you asked me that! I haven't got a clue - Can anybody help?

.....

Dear Brian

Just a quick note to say thank you to all those involved in the Christmas competition, for the Ramsgate car I was very lucky to win. Since joining the club in 1997 the journal has continued to evolve into a more professional publication, which is a great credit to both Alan and yourself. Keep up the good work and may the force be with you.

Many Thanks
Dave Wilcock

.....

Dear Brian,

Having only just joined the NSCC and reading the February Journal for the first time, I may be able to help with the letter from Ian Thompson on lighting for his circuit.

I came across a site on the internet called Home Racing World at, www.homeracingworld.com; it is a really good site with a lot of interesting articles. In the Pit Row section there is an article called "Let there be light" on how to make lights for racing circuits. Also in Model Car Racing magazine No8 March/April Issue Russell Cox has used Lionel Train accessory light stands and a Lionel light tower for his Scalextric racing circuit; Lionel train accessories are available from Tennents Trains Halesowen, Birmingham. 012 1-550 1266. I hope this will be of some use.

Regards
Jonathan Johnson

Slow motion!

BY PETER NOVANI

It would appear from recent comments published in the Journal, that there is growing discord amongst some members concerning the high speeds attained by the current crop of slot-cars. And, in the context of home racing, I would add my concerns regarding the validity of excessively powerful motors. They are not only inappropriate, but, in the case of historic type slot-cars, totally unrealistic. It's surely an undesirable situation whereby historic based slot-cars can achieve lap times comparable with those of a modern Formula One slot-car. Evidently, in their quest to out perform each other, certain slot-car manufacturers are zealously targeting outright speed as their holy grail. And yet, there is a straightforward remedy that enables you to take full control of those ever increasing speeds – it's called an adjustable power transformer.

Following the completion of my four lane 'exhibition' track layout back in 1998, four old style black-box Scalextric transformers were rigged up to power it. Consequently, each lane had its own power supply to obviate those annoying power surges if one, or more, cars left the track. However, once the layout was taken on-the-road to entertain the public at motoring shows, it soon became obvious that not everyone had an innate ability to control a motorised plastic toy around a reasonably difficult circuit.

Even utilising cars such as the durable, if somewhat pedestrian, NC-1 powered Ninco Ferrari F50, failed to eliminate the many 'offs' experienced by the racing public. A frustrating situation for them, and also for those who marshal the track. Eventually, it came to my attention that certain slot-car clubs, contrary to popular belief, actually embrace the concept of artificially slowing slot-cars. That's achieved by means of an adjustable power supply. Further enquiries established that the DS Electronic Racing Products range included two types of transformer that would meet my needs. I've successfully used their digital lap timing system

and infrared gantry combination, coupled with their Stop & Go boxes, for many years (see my DS review, June 2001). So I was already a convert of this innovative Spanish company.

They produce the basic P2, which delivers the power in a variety of volts; 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18, and the more substantial and sophisticated digital version, the P5. The latter unit adjusts the power from 4 volts right through to 21 volts, and each and every voltage increment in between. Initially, the cheaper P2 version was purchased. But, I soon found the specific incremental adjustments too restrictive for the type of usage I envisaged. For example, it meant that the Ninco F50s (my preferred choice for public events) were either too fast using 12 volts, or rather slow using only 9 volts.

I eventually opted for the significantly more expensive P5. That version allows greater flexibility as the exact settings for a given slot-car can be selected. Ideally, if money is no object, then each lane should be powered by a P5. That said, even using a single unit, as I do, the power surge issue isn't a factor, as the cars tend to remain on the track for longer periods – halleluia! Using DS Electronic Racing Products' electronic wizardry also permits historic slot-cars to circumnavigate a layout at a speed commiserate with the era of racing they are purporting to depict. Conversely, if you're hell bent on attaining 'ballistic' levels of performance, then crank up the transformer to maximum. Then you'll suddenly discover the need to acquire an ultra low ohm controller and kit out the marshals present with suitably sturdy protective jock straps.

Let's face it, having acquired a competition licence, race drivers rarely leap straight into a Formula One car. No, they tend to steadily work their way up the performance ladder, mastering various lower categories along the way. That's a philosophy you can adopt once an adjustable power transformer has been incorporated within your track layout. Cheers! ■

Sport V Classic - The missing links?

BY TIM AINSLIE

The comparisons of Sport and Classic track carried out by Tony Secchi (Feb. 2003) and Chris Angold (March 2003) have highlighted that it is not possible to compare the two tracks in terms of which gives the best racing surface without considering a range of influencing factors.

I have had the opportunity to compare a Scalextric Ford Focus and GT40 on both track surfaces. The Focus is a rally car and to me that means that I would like to be able to drive it around corners to mimic the style of driving seen in rallying i.e. with tail out. However on Sport track I found it nearly impossible to slide the rear end, most attempts only succeeded in rolling the car over. My experience of driving the same car around the same radius (two) curves on classic track and the difference is amazing. It is possible to tail out around an entire curve with no hint of the car wanting to roll over.

The only explanation I can think of for this difference would seem that the track and tyre relationship has an influence on the characteristics of performance of individual cars

Tyre wear

Another observation relates to tyre wear. I obtained one of the GT40 cars used at the last Margate weekend, this car had completed over 1000 laps of the Sport circuit supplied by Hornby for the weekend. It had been raced hard all weekend with and without magnets. It was a surprise to me that the performance did not suffer dramatically when the magnets were removed. The car that I took home from the weekend had almost no tyre wear evident despite the distance it had covered at flat out racing speeds.

I have a Classic set up at home with a series of eight foot straights and predominantly radius two and three curves, it provides a lap of

approximately forty five feet. After only two hundred laps on this circuit the rear tyres on the GT40 have worn with patches showing no tread at all. The rear tyres of the Focus have the same wear appearing with a similar distance covered on the Classic track. It would be interesting to hear if this tyre wear has been the experience of other members.

The tests carried out by Tony and Chris show that the GT40 is quicker on Sport track and I would suggest that this is because the tyre compound is more compatible with the smoother Sport track. If the results of the tests are analysed, the newer Scalextric cars all performed better on the Sport surface. If you think about it, the smoother Sport track should provide a greater surface area for grip compared to the pimply surface of Classic. Combine this with new softer compound tyres and the better performance would be expected on the Sport track.

Magnet strength

Another influence on performance is the different strength of magnets, Tony's test of his Lola showed consistency between Sport and Classic. The reason was, in all probability, the strength of the magnet, which Tony admitted was the strongest of all the cars tested. If the test had been done with the magnet removed the results may have shown some variation between the track tests.

The strength of magnet is a major factor in many modern cars being able to circulate as if they are glued to the track, just compare the performance of many of the Fly models with and without magnets.

I think we have been searching for a simple answer in the Sport versus Classic debate and like life, which is rarely simple, the answer lies in the blend of several factors. Sport and Classic have different surfaces, that will produce a ⇒

variation in performance with certain cars. Sport track will be less satisfying for those who use non magnet cars with harder compound tyres as the grip factor will not be as good as with the more abrasive Classic surface.

Conclusions

If the aim is to get the car around the track in the quickest time then strong magnets, soft compound tyres and Sport track will provide the best blend. Ultimately it is up to individuals to define what performance is required from their cars - outright speed - or the ability to drift around corners?

So, before throwing out all the old track, it may be worth keeping some Classic pieces to incorporate into a Sport circuit. This could add an extra dimension to the way in which the cars have to be driven and ultimately it may be worth retaining a Classic track for rallying or older type cars.

Time for a summary of the debate about Sport track so far methinks.

The extra track sections and wider radius curves have been generally welcomed.

Initially there were some problems with the electrical connections but this no longer seems to be a problem.

Many people think that an opportunity has been missed to widen the track slightly.

Nearly all cars with magnets are quicker on Sport track.

Some club racers using modern cars without magnet and, possibly, harder compound tyres report that they are slower on Sport track. This is obviously a problem which needs further investigation - do we have a volunteer to carry out some more controlled tests?

One more question: if magnets hide handling deficiencies on Sport track and hard compound tyres struggle for grip on it - how come a C68 Aston Martin on 30 year old rock hard "Dunlops" is quicker on Sport track? ■

British Racing Motors V16

BY DAVE YERBURY

You can guarantee if you asked a committee to design a racecar it would never work. The BRM V16 was no different, the combined efforts of an outdated chassis and an over complicated engine saw to that.

BRM's 1.5 Litre supercharged 16 cylinder was the most complex and ambitious effort of a Grand Prix car to date. It was not advanced for its time, it was a bit different, but success was never forthcoming. Some say it was built with a kind of blind national passion; others ridiculed the misguided enthusiasm of its creators.

With peace looming after six years making war materials the motor industry felt anything was achievable. Mays managed to get specialised branches of industry to supply parts for his racing car, the dream of Berthone. No one wanted to take charge of the project and manufacturers were not keen for others to be involved with their part in the project. Thus it was doomed from the start. In February 1947 British Motor Racing Research Trust was formed whose job was to control and coordinate the venture.

Grand Prix racing had formulated rules to cover 1947 to 1953. The favoured category at which BRM was aimed at was the supercharged 1.5 litre group. The first car was finally ready in December 1949; by then 3 seasons had already

passed and the standards to which the BRM had been built were now obsolete. Grand Prix followers watching Alfa Romeo and Maserati cars develop observed that there were good and bad design features in both. Other problems in a 300 mile race were keeping these engines cool when they are producing over 380 bhp even with their large radiator entries and masses of bonnet louvres to get rid of the heat. Yet the BRM, as yet unraced, was equipped with a small opening for the radiator and had no louvres on the body at all. The BRM looked impressive, more so with the bonnet off with its offset massive 16 cylinders in two banks of 8 at an angle of 135 degrees. On the front of which was an imposing two stage Rolls Royce centrifugal supercharger.

On the plus side the one thing that everybody will remember, if they have been lucky enough to hear it, is the sound emanating from the V16 through those exhaust pipes.

All this from an engine with the tiniest pistons with a bore of 49.53mm or just over an inch and three quarters in English, just the right size for a freshly boiled egg. They had a hard life through being pressurised to around 40psi with the crankshaft turning at 12,000 rpm, unheard of in its day. Alfa who were the benchmark of the day ran their straight 8s at only 8000 rpm.

A lot of hopes were pinned on the BRM but most doubted whether Mays and Berthone =>



could deliver. The news of delays and problems with the engine and cooling did not raise hopes, but those at Bourne persevered and against all odds finally got it to the start line for the International Trophy at Silverstone in August 1950. It was a close thing with the car missing practice and lining up at the rear of the grid. Raymond Sommer had been engaged to drive but even this G.P star could not prevent the drive shaft breaking when the flag dropped, only managing to roll a few yards in its first race. Four years had nearly elapsed and most people were losing faith, although enthusiasts were still looking for a glimmer of hope. It did manage a couple of wins at Goodwood in the rain, driven by Reg Parnell against poor opposition.

When the 1952 season dawned it was supposed to be the penultimate year in G.P racing for which BRM had been conceived. When the first race arrived BRM were still testing and unable to attend. Alfa Romeo had shocked the Grand Prix scene by withdrawing that season which left the newly formed Ferrari

team unopposed except for BRM. BRM's poor 1950 and 1951 showing and its non appearance in the first race of the season caused an urgent high level meeting at which the decision was taken to abandon F1 racing 2 years early. The F2 voiturette grids were well supported and the championship passed to this category.

At national events in 1954 the promising but unfortunate projectiles were pleasing the British racing enthusiasts. Circuit owners fell over themselves to give these cars a chance to race. From its inception to its demise the wonderful sound of that engine never changed.

The car I have modelled is the later MK2 version built in 1954 using the short stub exhausts that made an even more ear splitting sound. By now the car was reliable and ran with very few problems, although by now they were limited to short races.

Is there a moral in this story or life that if you want anything doing don't ask a committee do it yourself or get the professionals in! ■