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Grumpy old men

Why does every piece of modern technology have to beep at you? The computer does it, the fax machine does it, the photocopier has six different versions and mobile phones not only beep at you they have loud irritating ring tones as well. I am going to punch the next person whose phone emits the "crazy frog" screech!

Not to be left out; slot-car electronic gizmos drive you round the bend with their beeping as well. All of which brings us neatly to Scalextric Digital and my first prolonged experience of the system at the recent Hornby/NSCC Ramsgate weekend. A wonderful event, as usual, but one I approached with a little trepidation.

I had heard a number of reports about Digital being somewhat unreliable so when Rob Smith informed me that I was in charge of race control I envisaged a nightmare two days of overloads and trashed cars! However, I am happy to report that it ran almost faultlessly.

The set-up was provided by Hornby so I think it is safe to assume that Adrian Norman would make damn sure he tested it beforehand but we didn't suffer a single overload over two days of almost constant use. We ran more than 50 races of 20 laps each and experienced only a few minor problems, most of them induced by the participants. You can hardly blame Scalextric when somebody pulls the power supply out of its socket!

The cars survived the numerous rear end shunts extremely well and yes - I have to admit - I thoroughly enjoyed playing with the system. I am almost tempted to buy one apart from one teensy weensy drawback - the bloody thing keeps beeping at you!

And Finally - this is the 67th Journal that I have produced which makes me the longest serving NSCC editor ever. I must be crackers to do it for so long. Isn't it time I was given the gold watch and pensioned off?

Till next month

Brian



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by
Rob Smith



MESSAGES FROM MARGATE

March has been a great month for Scalextric enthusiasts with two completely new cars plus three NSCC specials being released. The new cars were the Maseratis which were reviewed last month after being flown directly from China for the NSCC to get their hands on first.

C2504A Maserati Coupe Cambiocorsa Trofeo 2003 No 42 and C2505A No 41

C2504A is the red and white #42 car and C2505A the grey #41 car with white pin stripe decoration. Both Sport versions are limited editions of 5000 worldwide. The chrome grill surround and Maserati's famous Trident logo are finely detailed. Look out for a third version C2659 later in the year. ⇒



C2630A Maserati MC12 No33

The Maserati MC12 is currently competing in the GT1 Championship around the world. The Scalextric version is a big car flawlessly finished in blue with a huge white trident on the roof. This Sport version is a limited edition of 5000. The bodywork has very finely moulded louvres in the bonnet, front wings and engine cover and there are several uses of different mesh etched metal grills. It is amazing how detail has continued to improve – where will it all end. The MC12 uses the same sub-chassis as the Lister LMP carrying the motor and back axle in a rigid carrier that can be relaxed in the chassis. A Sport tuning version of this sub-chassis will be released later in the year and look out for C2678 the spectacular road-going version too.

C2569A and C2599A Mini Cooper S 25th Anniversary.

After what seems like a lifetime of waiting the NSCC Minis have finally arrived and are stacked floor to ceiling in my dining room. Hornby have done a superb job for us and every detail has been covered. C2569A is the white and green car and C2599A is the yellow and blue one. They are full Sport versions and the outer sleeves show the club logo prominently. Inside the box there is a brief paragraph about our 25th Anniversary and the Mini Cooper S. The credit card sized certificate also carries the club logo and declares each one to be a limited edition of just 500 pieces. Each car has NSCC on the roof and blended into the paint on the sides. The club logo is on the bonnet, the URL on the windscreen and the racing number is 25 – to mark the occasion. The rear wing has the Scalextric Sport logo on it. Many thanks must be made to Hornby and we are very privileged to be allowed such a special and such a small limited edition.

The cars to be shipped by post should be with you as you read this and the remainder will be at the Loughborough swapmeet 17/04/05 and the special Epsom weekend 20-21/05/05. If you can't make either of those dates please make alternative arrangements for collection. There are just a few pairs left so contact me very quickly if you have missed out.

C2682 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution 7 \WRC Collectors Club 2005 and C2682B Mitsubishi Lancer NSCC Special Weekend 2005.

C2682 is this year's Scalextric Enthusiasts Club car presented to all SEC members joining or renewing their membership in 2005. The car is white and features several Scalextric logos as this livery was rallied by Gwyndaf Evans on last years Wales Rally GB.

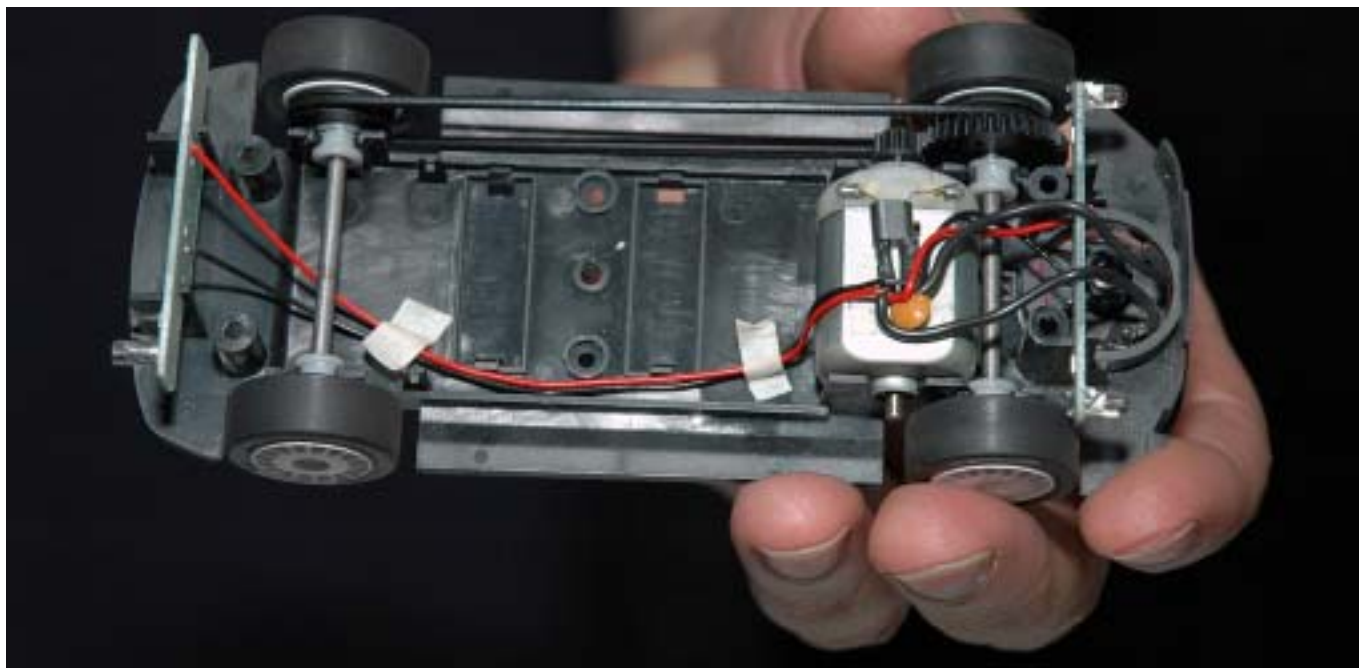
C2682B is a very special version of this car presented to attendees of the NSCC/Hornby weekend earlier in March. Just 48 of this very rare edition were produced as a gift from Hornby and once again our sincere thanks are due. The original roof decoration is replaced with the NSCC logo and NSCC also appears on the bonnet and the club URL along the sills. Each car comes with an individual named and numbered A4 sized certificate of authenticity signed by Adrian Norman of Hornby Hobbies. Unfortunately one of these cars went missing over the weekend – so if you are offered one without a certificate please let me know – I have the missing certificate!

Coming Soon

News is just breaking about another GT40 livery due in the next couple of months. This is C2683A, a Sport version car in yellow and to be sold exclusively in Germany. A prototype Mini Cooper S livery was shown at the Ramsgate weekend and this may find its way into a proposed set to be sold by BMW. More news on this one when the deal has been signed by Hornby and BMW.

The development of the Ferraris is coming on well and the first decoration samples of the F1 car are currently with Ferrari in Italy for approval. Apparently Ferrari are particularly meticulous about these approvals so it doesn't mean the car will be with us soon.

The next car to reach the shops should be the Peugeot 307 with the clean and the dirty finishes. This is a new departure for Scalextric as it features a front mounted side-winder motor driving the front wheels. A rubber band then takes drive to the rear wheels too. Samples of the Peugeot were at the Ramsgate weekend for



test and this unusual layout was extremely successful. Several sceptics amongst the testers were immediately impressed at how well this radical layout really works. When they come out please try it and let me know what you think – our feedback is always appreciated by Hornby. The design team at Hornby has been changing recently with two new designers now working full time on Scalextric as the previous expert migrates onto the difficult issues of Hornby International railways. Look out for some new ideas coming along – it is never dull with such a fast pace of slot-car development.

With the Peugeots should be some reliveries of existing models including the red Ford GT, red Ford Mustang and blue Chevrolet Corvette.

Design of the new pit lane buildings is also progressing well and the first samples are being reviewed. The pit wall item will be last to be released as this hasn't even been designed yet!

The Hornby Roadshow vehicle is currently busy with railway activities but look out for it in Scalextric guise at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in June. Hornby will have several tracks and displays at our weekend in May so come and have a look at what is in the current product line. ■



The Big One!

NSCC 25TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND UPDATES
21st - 22nd May 2005 – Toyota GB Headquarters, Epsom, Surrey

Time seems to be flying by and organization for our big weekend is coming together well. All the various activities being held at the weekend are now in advanced stages of preparation and a couple of new items have been added.

Special Limited Edition Scalextric car

Those of you lucky enough to have been invited to race in the championship finals will receive a limited edition Scalextric car. Those not lucky enough to race will be able to win several of these cars over the weekend in various raffles, driving competitions and quizzes. The cars will be unique to the event, you will have to wait until the event to see what they are!

Evening Dinner “Birthday Party”

Last month we announced the Birthday Party! This will (subject to enough pre-bookings!) be held from 7.30pm on the Saturday evening at the Toyota GB Headquarters. The full menu is still being confirmed, but there will be options on the night. The cost per head will be £30 and this will include a three course meal, ½ bottle of wine and some birthday cake. There will be a quiz (including questions on all the sponsors' cars), raffle, charity auction and presentations.

As I mentioned we need to have a minimum number of places booked to be able to confirm the evening dinner so please contact me to book your place. You can reserve your booking by sending me an email, telephone call or post. See address at the end of this article. Payment in the form of a cheque should be sent at the same time as your order, overseas visitors can pay by credit card. No money will be cashed until the event is 100% confirmed.

**PLEASE BOOK ASAP TO AVOID
DISAPPOINTMENT!**

Hotels

Several members have requested details of local hotels to book accommodation. A list has now been compiled and is available on the NSCC website. Please note that the NSCC does not recommend any specific hotel nor can we vouch for the quality of any hotel/company listed. We recommend you book early! Please note there are no facilities available at the venue for camping or for caravans.

Pendle Chassis Competition

A number of entries have been received for this competition, but please remember that you can enter your car or cars on the day, so you still have plenty of time.

Traders/Members Tables

As we go to press there are 15 tables left for the swapmeet (on both days). These are available on a first come first served basis and cost £50 (per 6'x2' table) for the weekend. If you would like to book a table please contact me as soon as possible. There is a form to fill out which can be sent by post or email. Please note all bookings must be made by current NSCC members only, this is to comply with NSCC swapmeet rules and to ensure we can assist with any disputes.

Any bookings already made, but not paid for, please send your money to me now.

Happy helpers and flyers

Thanks to those members who got in touch to request more flyers and posters, we have had more made so any other members who would like to drop a poster into their local model shop or club please get in touch, alternatively you can download a flyer from our web site.

T-Shirts

We hope to have some special NSCC T-shirts for sale over the weekend. Thank you to Tina Kitchener for organizing this! ⇨⇨

Race championship

Following the deadline date for clubs to return their heats and mini championship results, we can now confirm the names of those invited to race at the Championship finals in May.

If for some reason you think your name should be on this list and is not then please contact me ASAP to discuss, your results may have been lost in the post or I may have made a mistake.

All those listed should have received their official invitation either by post or email, again if you have not received your invite, please contact me ASAP.

You have until 11th April to return your invitation to me to confirm if you can or cannot race.

In alphabetical order:

Adrian Norman
Alec Edge
Anders Brinnen
Andy Crompton
Bill Charters
Cedric Lemaire
Craig Whittle
David Dickson
Frederic Fisch
Gareth Ditchfield
Geoff Brown
Graeme Thoburn
Henk Pijpers
Ian Thompson
Jack Thoburn
Jacob Wright
James Turley
Jamie Kelly
Jim Moyes
John Kelly
John Watts
Keith Fishenden
Lee Andrews
Mark Byrne
Mark Hatton
Matt Tucker
Mike Kerr
Mike Thompson
Neil Lucas
Noel Taylor

Oliver Bauwens
Paul Darby
Paul Leyser
Phil Walker
Richard Welch
Scott Brownlee
Simon Lancaster
Sinclair Trotter
Steve Baker
Sweden TBC x 2
BSCRA TBCx 2
Thierry Denis
Thomas Wanner
Tony Wheeler

The very best of luck to all the racers in the finals; we look forward to seeing you at the weekend. The sponsors have supplied some fantastic prizes and trophies and each of you will receive a special limited edition car during the presentations on Sunday

Manufacturers' Exhibits

At the time of going to press the following manufacturers have confirmed attendance at the weekend:

Carrera, Monarch Lines, MRRC, Ninco, Scalextric, SCX, Slotfire, Slot Forum, Slot.It, Vanquish MG.

Unfortunately Fly (Gaugemaster) are now unable to attend, but will be sending some great prizes.

We have had confirmation from Toyota of the first of their exhibits:



Don't be confused, This is not a Proslot - this is the real thing! The F1 Race simulator will also be at the event

Charity

The chosen charity for the event is “The Children’s Trust”, based at Tadworth in Surrey, which is a registered charity providing special care for the severely disabled children many of whom have particularly complex health needs. The NSCC will donate all profits made (after costs) from the weekend, including monies raised in the auctions, raffles etc. This is a very worthy cause and one we hope you will all support. Full details on the charity can be found on their web site:

<http://www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/>

Thank you!

Last but not least an advanced thank you? This event was organized specifically at the request from a number of members for a large event; it has taken over 18 months to organize and we hope it will be a great success and raise a lot of money for charity. None of this will be possible

if you don’t come along! Please let all your friends and family know about the event and bring the kids along. We look forward to seeing you at the weekend.

All enquiries, birthday party bookings, table bookings, championship enquires etc, to:

Gareth Jex
NSCC
Care of 2LK Design Ltd
The Courtyard
17 West Street
Farnham
Surrey
GU9 7DR

Tel (day) 01252 720 001
Tel (eve) 01252 674 900 (between 8.00pm –
10.00pm)
Tel (mbl) 07710 727 001



Yellow Peril

First of three new cars recently released by Ninco is the superb Peugeot 307 “Pirelli” Muddy (50367). This model is certainly the best all-round Rally car Ninco have produced and has already enjoyed success in its Mexico and Monte Carlo WRC guises. This version is offered in bright yellow with the Pirelli ‘tyre-fist’ pictured on the bonnet, roof and doors. It marks the new partnership between Pirelli and Peugeot with this car being driven by Marcus Gronholm during a special event in Italy. The faithfully scaled slot-car is packed with all the necessary components to perform on track such as NC-5 Speeder motor, 4-wheel drive and ProShock-2 suspension. A realistic mud-effect splatters the otherwise pristine paintwork.

Fast and safe

Another re-livery of a popular new model is the “Takata” sponsored Honda NSX (50364) based on the 2004 car driven by Ryo Michigami and Sebastien Philippe in the GT500 class. This year the Team Honda drivers are out for both teams’ and drivers’ titles so will be pushing very hard...



and I’m sure the racers among you will be doing the same. With Takata being one of the world’s largest manufacturers of automotive safety systems such as seat-belts and air bags, if you do manage to lose control of your NC-5 powered Super GT, rest assured your 1/32nd scale driver will be safely protected!

Energy Boost

The last of Ninco’s re-liveried trio is the Renault Clio Super 1600. ‘Battery’ energy drink and ‘Playstation 2’ were the main sponsors of this little hot hatch during the 2002 Neste Rally of Finland. The then 22 year-old Mikko Hirvonen was fastest in his class over twenty of the twenty-two special stages in the S1600 category. No



surprise then that he competed last year driving for the Subaru WRC team and started the 2005 season off behind the wheel of a Ford Focus WRC car. The Ninco Clio comes equipped with ProShock suspension for excellent handling over standard, Raid or snow track surfaces and the powerful NC-5 Speeder motor.



Here Today, Gone Tomorrow!

The 2005 “Catalunya-Costa Brava Historics” limited edition car (50365) sold out within hours

of being advertised through the Club Ninco web-based newsletter. This year the special car is a unique livery Porsche 911 carrying the number “05”. Limited to only 600 pieces, it was sure to be a good seller. Unfortunately, unless you read your mail as it arrives, most people (*yes, me included*) read about the offer just before reading the notification that they had all sold out!! Inevitably they have started to appear on auction sites selling for quite a bit more than their original €55 price tag... so much for the *serious collector!*

And the Winner Is...

It is with great pleasure that I announce Marc Abbott as the clear winner of the “Arrows Competition”. Marc repainted an Arrows in the Jaguar F1 Team colours and it looks absolutely fantastic! The Jaguar-green paint colour was spot-on and it was evident that great care had been taken when applying the decals. (*Not wanting to play down Marc’s efforts, he tells me the hardest part was finding an Arrows for £15*). Well done Marc, your prize is on its way. ■





Last month I spoke about different makes of H:O chassis in an effort to increase awareness of the scale. This time around I am focusing on another side of the H:O 'arena' and that is collecting.

Like the racing side of the scale, this is something that the uninitiated may not be aware of. Due to size constraints it is fair to say that most H:O slot-cars do not have the correct wheelbases or look particularly accurate. Despite this some of the cars look fabulous and can be worth fairly large sums of money. A good example would be the 'Watson' Williams F1 car by Aurora, worth at least £140.



Aurora F1 from early 1980s in semi-Marlboro colours

Based on Aurora's Williams FW07 body-shell, this car has an interpretation of the McLaren colour scheme of the day. John Watson was one of the drivers, hence the name. The fact that this car was only made in small quantities, coupled to the very non politically correct colour scheme, has made the price what

it is. I do think, however, that it is a really good looking item – not always the case when something is rare. There have been many film and TV related H:O cars over the years, in fact Playing Mantis/Ertl are planning some 'Back to the Future' cars (presumably Delorean) for this summer. One of the best cars in this sub-category remains the Dodge Charger from the "Dukes of Hazzard" series that ran from 1979 to 1985, and known the world over as 'General Lee'. It isn't particularly accurate to the TV version (even the number is wrong!), being a repaint of the bodyshell released by Aurora in 1970. Nonetheless it looks good, and its iconic status has contributed a great deal to its current value of £70-80.



A general version of THE general!

A good example of how many collectible cars are not necessarily good looking is the Greddy Porsche 962 Le Mans car from 1990. OK, it is not terrible, but both Tomy (who made the Greddy car) and Tyco have made lots of 956/962 versions and a good few look better.



Greddy Porsche 962

However, this particular car was made in a small quantity and that is the main factor in its value of around £50-60. In addition I imagine many slotterers set out collecting Porsches in general, stumbled upon this model and so it became 'must have'. Oftentimes a slot-car ends up as sought after because it is unusual. There are many H:O cars that fall into this description, the 'Trick Truck' from Tyco and Green 'Peace Tank' from Aurora. Whilst the tank is worth only £15 the Trick Truck has rocketed to £60-70 since its release in 1975.

value at best. There are about 4-5 releases that are the exceptions. One of these is the 'Duracell' Indycar from the first year of production.



Despite appearance this car is not battery powered!



A bizarre (therefore collectible) slot-car. Believe me there are many others!

Scalextric have only been in the H:O 'game' for a decade and most of the cars have held their

Scarcer than other cars as it was a 'set only' release, and different enough to push some collector's buttons, this car is worth \$50 nowadays, especially to US collectors who were not able to buy Micro Scalextrics 'over there'. These cars are very much the tip of the iceberg. Check out <http://www.H:Oslotcars.com/slotcars.html> to see hundreds of other weird/wonderful/expensive cars. Remember too, if you want to get into this scale, to check out my club's website: www.bglawns.com/eaH:Orc.htm especially the video and gallery sections, email me (slots@bglawns.com) or telephone on 01268 573377 for details. ■

Hornby Weekend 2005

First time - but not the last

By Matt Tucker

I opened up the January issue of the Journal and out fell a leaflet that demanded to be completed - an application form for the annual NSCC/Hornby weekend. With only 48 places available and a rather exclusive car presented to all attendees by Hornby it made it, in my eyes, an extremely prestigious event - especially so as it is the 25th year of the NSCC (1981-2005).

My dilemma was clear, the potential of a slot-car social extravaganza and at least a month of penance (the weekend covered Mothering Sunday) or accept my fate and do my sonly/fatherly duties for my mother and my wife. Well it was only a possible attendance, what chance have I of getting one of the 48 places when there could be a vast over-subscription. The solution became clear and, not wanting to risk the wrath too early, I covertly completed the application form and surreptitiously filled in our calendar “?Hornby w/e Ramsgate?”.

About two weeks later I got suspicious that my cover was blown - I started getting little (well actually quite blatant) digs; “Don’t forget Mothering Sunday, you need to help Sam make it a special day for me!”, “Of course my love,” I replied. As Mothering Sunday was at least six weeks away I thought this odd until I reviewed my calendar entry and noted that the following words were emblazoned over my entry, “You are JOKING!!!!”

Well I had to confront the issue and my wife reluctantly conceded I could go after I explained there were only 48 places and thus I did not think my chances of being invited were that high. Imagine my pleasure (and anxiety) when I got an email from Rob Smith saying I had been successful. I quickly replied accepting the invite and sent the cheque off to cover the cost of the room. Over dinner I showed my wife the email and said how lucky I was. I stared up at

her with puppy dog hope in my eyes. To my amazement she said, “Fair enough, but you’ll be making this up to me for a long time”. A penance that I felt was worth it.

Well, enough insight in to my home life and on to the weekend. I could not make it down to Ramsgate on the Friday night (two nights away was an issue I was not willing to tackle!) so up at 5am on Saturday and catch a train at 06.03. I arrived in Ramsgate at 09.50 and scrunched (snow covered Kent in early March) my way to the esplanade. The event officially started at 10.00 and I thought a quick brisk walk would get me there wide awake and fashionably late. I arrived at the hotel at 10.10 and walked over to the conference suite. I opened the door and was quite taken aback at the sight of a packed room with much laughter, chatting and ogling at cabinets filled with slot-cars. Centre stage I made out a large thronged layout with six hopefuls battling (literally) it out on a two-lane course. Yep six on two lanes – the racing over the weekend had gone digital.

After about five minutes of mingling and saying hello to those I recognised I looked on the scoreboard and noted with surprise I had seven points against my name. It seemed to be the bottom score and I thought it must be a mistake seeing as I had not raced. Then it dawned on me I’d missed my first race and had been given 7 points for a DNS. Note to self – when they say start at 10.00 they mean it!

How time flies!

The morning flew by in a mixture of racing, chatting, casting admiring eyes over the array of slot-cars that were on display and wondering why some innocuous blobs of plastic and what looked like an unpainted Ford GT (the latest version) were getting a lot of attention. Cabinet custodians were having to wipe away dribble

marks off the glass! I was particularly taken by a great collection of brilliantly humorous customised vehicles made by Mike Ronald. The models included Thunderbirds and Wacky Races.

Also in the cabinet was a pre-production model that I think could easily be added to the humorous range – the forthcoming Batmobile. Next to it was, what I presumed, a model of a large car (e.g. a Torino) from the Micro range. It turned out to be the Batmobile companion the Ford Crown Victoria - Gotham City Police car.

Both the Batmobile and the police car are 1/43rd scale - why? Well in one of the excellent Q&A sessions we had with Hornby they said that to get licensing and product approval from Warner Bros they had to keep the Batmobile to scale otherwise they would not approve it. In 1/32nd scale the Batmobile would straddle two lanes and nowt would get past it. Thus they had



Pre-production Batmobile and police car

to make it in 1/43rd scale and likewise its companion. Hornby said they weren't going to be producing any other 1/43rd scale cars.

A big highlight was a pre-production model of the Cooper Climax – it was tiny but looked good and, noting the comments I overheard, I'm sure will be a good seller. Unfortunately the Sharknose Ferrari was not available as the pre-production model was currently with Ferrari awaiting shape approval along with the F1. =>



Pre-production Cooper F1

A working model of the imminent Peugeot 307 WRC was available along with its designer Darren Nye. It has a sidewinder motor up front that drives the front wheels with a tight belt providing rear wheel drive. The boat from China is on its way bringing the first production run and this model had unpainted pink pilots. Anyway the car handled like a dream without a magnet - if you overcooked a corner, as long as you applied the throttle, the car would pull itself forward whereas other rear wheel driven cars will spin out. The guide has about 2mm of vertical play in it to allow for variation in tyre height and wear to enable to guide to stay in contact with the track – I loved the car. I hope it is a big success and Hornby make all future rally models with this set-up.

Performance upgrades

There was a discussion about incorporating the 360° guide into the rally cars (as per the imminent Drift cars) so that if you overcooked a corner and spun you'd need to go back down the course and deliberately spin it round again to get going in the right direction. I think that idea should be worth pursuing.

Samples of the performance parts were shown around and looked good – if they are as



New performance parts

good as current market leaders Slot. It then in terms of VFM the Scalextric parts will blow them out of the water. The wheels and crowns incorporated a robust 3mm grub screw and, in a nice touch, an Allen key was included in the packaging. The crowns had a separate aligner that would allow you to use these crowns with any dimension of pinion – a good development. Also of note is the range of rubber tyres which are designed for Sport track (not yet tested on other surfaces). We took the tyres and swapped the rears on a TVR 400R (with no magnet) – on a small track the normal tyres allowed a slidey lap of 3.2 seconds – the new tyres were slipped on and lap times tumbled to 1.9 seconds – a huge improvement.

Pit lane

We had a presentation of what is being termed “The Junction” by newly recruited Hornby designer Andy Page. Andy and Hornby are excited and proud of this development. For the digital user it means versatility - a pitlane comes straight to mind but also single lane offshoots, 3, 4+ lanes of digital racing, single lane chicanes, etc. The potential is great and this piece of track will add considerably to the array of track designs you will be able to produce. It worked flawlessly as a pitlane. There was talk about Hornby adding a manual switch to allow the track to be used by analogue track users as a pitlane. I got the impression that Hornby probably won't be adding this function to the product as they feel if the user wants that then it is an easy job for them to do and can't justify the increased cost if incorporated. I think this is a silly move as many potential analogue buyers won't purchase it if it requires their own intervention. I know I would not if I wanted a pitlane for my analogue track.

Another nice surprise was that the 25th Anniversary Mini Cooper S were available for distribution. I picked up my two and during Saturday evening spent quite a while admiring the unique liveries of both cars - a grand job and well worth the money.

Racing

The racing was definitely fast and furious and I don't think any of us had really experienced digital racing in any sort of competitive arena. This inexperience showed and carnage was a word used a lot. Some mastered the technique of lane changing to overtake and stay out of trouble. I, like the majority, did not. I got past people by waiting for their mistakes (i.e. crash) or giving them a gentle extra nudge round the corner to help them let you slide by - well it was usually more like a big shove! Over the day I felt the racing became much better as people got

produced a noticeable drop in power and thus responsiveness if many were lane changing in unison. Some were not convinced but I felt assured by Adrian's words.

We completed five of the six heats during the first day and a clear leader emerged - Scott Brownlee. The racing continued on Sunday morning and Scott consolidated his position at the top with a final total of nine points (one for a win through to six for a 6th (or seven for DNS)). The top five places were separated by just five points but a big concentration of six racers occupied joint 6th place on 15 points. A runoff



Crap Racer - Moi? - The editor winning the 1st heat of the day

used to it and got the idea that the best strategy was not always to produce as fast a lap as you can, but stay out of trouble. Most people commented on the intermittent lag feel to the cars and in the Q&A session Adrian Norman assured us that a revised 15v power supply (we were using two 30va (delivering exactly 12v)) will be available as this overcomes any issues of lag. The lag, we were informed, was caused by the need for the lane changer's solenoid to recharge after being used – a very short recharge but it

of these competitors took place with the top three going into the semi-finals along with the initial top five. I managed to get in to a semi-final much to my pleasure. These were raced with the newly released digital Mini Coopers and the final with Mercedes DTMs, with both races involving making an obligatory pit-stop using the pre-production "Junction" track. Anyway, Scott kept his form and ran away in the final lapping everyone; a very deserved win as he was by far the most consistent racer, ➡

instinctively knowing how to keep out of trouble. Jim Moyes came second and was presented with two Dutch club Audi TTs in blue and silver. Scott was awarded some very nice digital products for his total domination.

There were a number of ladies attending although all but one were slot- widows. On the Saturday the partners of the Editor and Secretary went into town with Tina Kitchener and returned with a surprise promised for the following day. What was revealed at the start of the Ladies' Race was a modification even Hornby hadn't thought of - various plastic zoo animals, mostly endangered species, being unceremoniously stuck to the bonnet or roof of the cars (with Blu-Tack) by Tina, Chris and Sandi; the first NSCC-sponsored Jungle Rally! The poor animals were hurled round the course, with many not surviving the first lap. In fact the giraffe took out the Dunlop Bridge and most species finished the race placed on the highly endangered list. I could not, hand on my heart, say that no animals were hurt in the making of this production! The whole race produced much merriment and close racing, even though one or two cars had a two-animal handicap on some laps (fumbled marshalling by the men). Tina Kitchener won the event and was awarded a very nice limited edition Dutch Scalextric club Audi TT - her fiancé Karl Cornell could be heard jealously trying to persuade her to hand

over the goodies by saying, "Well I did pay for the room upgrade" - he'll need to do more than that to get his mits on that beaut (the car that is).

Below: the start of the Jungle Rally



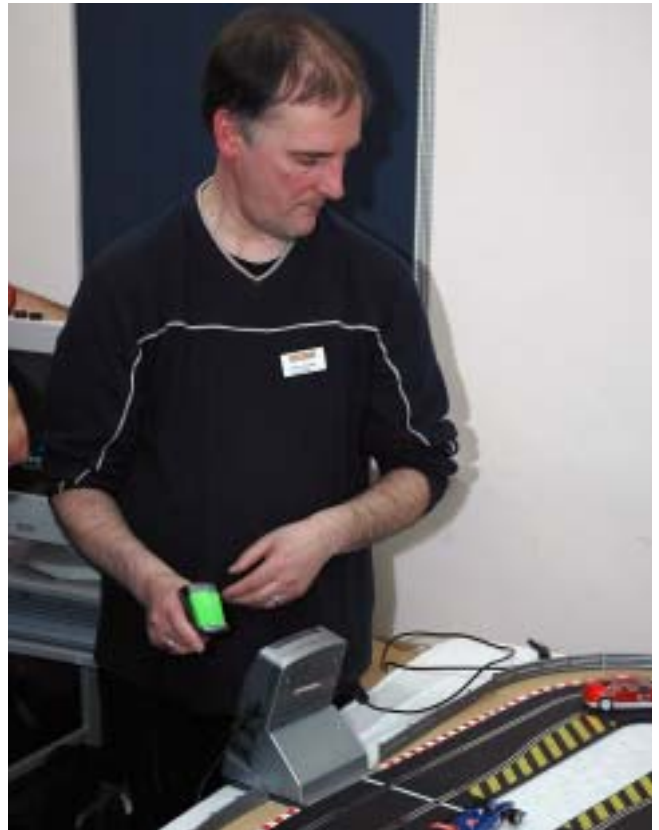


Above: test model of a Moto GP fetched £125 in the auction

Below: Scott Brownlee - race competition winner



Above: Rob Smith guards the auction goodies



Adrian Norman ponders the wonders of Sport World



Prototypes galore for those with large wallets

Adrian was running Sport World on a small circuit with a prize of a place in the racing finals at the 25th Anniversary weekend for the fastest 10 laps which incorporated a pit stop. It proved addictive, with Graeme Thoburn and Derek Cooper most definitely hooked vying for the fastest time. Graeme prevailed in a very close battle - they both conceded that this aspect of Sport World is highly addictive and enjoyable.



Derek Cooper and Graeme Thoburn engaged in a dispute over 1st place in the Sport World competition

Insights into Hornby

Over the weekend we had Q&A sessions which centred around product development, digital shortcomings and an in depth discussion of Sport World. To aid the latter Adrian was indebted to the superb assistance of Rob Smith who definitely has the skills - although I'd recommend you choose a prettier version if given the choice!

From the ensuing discussions and my interrogation of Mike Walters (Director of Product Development at Hornby) during the Saturday evening meal I was left feeling Hornby are extremely enthused by Sport World and its possibilities. It can, if you wish, make racing more realistic e.g. pit stop strategy, yellow flag (power is cut to 50% if someone comes off), etc.) but could also be a tool to bring the individual home racer and clubs together in overall leagues. Also they envisaged sponsored or even celebrity races taking place online, but they acknowledged it would need significant support

from Hornby until it had self momentum. One thing slipped was that Hornby saw that if online racing was really successful then it was another potential income stream in the form of pay per race!

People were cynical about the potential to create a virtual league just because, by the nature of racers, they would look at ways of ensuring they had the best opportunity to win. Derek Cooper highlighted his in depth knowledge of enhancing your chances of winning (to us mortals known as cheating) tactics while minimising the risk of being caught. Derek showed he had spent much time thinking about this issue by informing the gathering that enhancing cars to perform 1% better would be undetectable in a virtual world and over 100 laps that makes 1 lap difference, or how about running on a course with one less straight in it. It was acknowledged there will always be cheats although the system would allow you to pick up obvious discrepancies but ultimately it relied on a gentleman's code of conduct and that a cheating win is a hollow win (although in a league a win is a win!). We will have to wait and see.

On other topics Mike said digital is not aimed at clubs, and that the future would see a Sport World and digital convergence. It is technically possible now but end user cost would make it currently prohibitive. Concerning rumours about other cars Mike said that the Ferrari licence would be made the most of but also indicated other new models would be produced this year - an Escort slipped in to this conversation and was not denied!

Quiz

The quiz was held after the Saturday evening meal. I'd heard that last year's quiz was deemed too obscure and, as such, the two most avid issue raisers were volunteered to do this year's questions. I was thus hopeful that I would have a slight chance of knowing a good proportion of the answers - how wrong could I be. I don't know what I scored but I'm sure it would have been graded a U even after copying from Mike Walters who did just as badly (although he did

know the company that took over from Triang). The winners (Jim Moyes and Henk Pijpers scored a respectable 55 out of a possible 110 which in 'O' level terms would be graded as a C (not a great top mark). They both were awarded a Digital Conversion set in appreciation of their knowledge. I think the quiz master(s), whoever they are in the future, will need to have more realistic expectations about the general in depth knowledge of the ensemble.

Raffle and Auction

A raffle was held with Hornby donating the track that was raced on, some digital lane changers and some merchandising posters. Most people won an item and a superb £518 was raised.

Hornby also kindly make available a wide array of unusual and rare items that are auctioned at the end of the weekend. All the proceeds are donated to charity which this year, as in other years, is the local Cancer Care Appeal supported by Hornby Hobbies. Also the Dutch Scalextric Club donated two of their uniquely liveried 2005 Audi TT club cars which caused a decent bidding war and raised £160. Over 40 items went under the hammer with Adrian providing a potted history of each of the products - most were pre-production models, design mock-ups, and colour test models. Derek Cooper and Phil Smith bid against each other

for a couple of items much to the annoyance of each other - no cartel going on between them then! Anyway, the four highlights (i.e. went for significant lolly) were:

The MotoGP range has not been received with huge enthusiasm by the racing/collecting enthusiasts but a final test model of a bike with handmade wing weights (after Hornby realised they need more help round the corners) went for £125. An indication of the future collectability of these models?

A Chevy MonteCarlo NASCAR early test model. It was a translucent yellow with clear glass - these two attributes never made it into the final model. Bidding reached a heady £230!

A Millennium TVR - approximately 250 were made and presented as gifts to employees at the Margate factory; nobody knows how many mint versions survive. Anyway a sought after model which fetched £220.

The other car was a plain looking Ford GT. Well it turned out to be a full running pre-production model with a body shape that was altered for final approval. The body panel and rear wheel arches had harder edges which were smoothed and rounded for the final model. Therefore this was a unique car and explained to me why so many had shown considerable interest. The final bid was a staggering £575 which drew gasps from the crowd but a big grin from the happy winning bidder. *(see below)* =>



I am not really a collector but even I got caught in the atmosphere – there were two digital controllers moulded in blue plastic (all controllers are, and we were told will only be, moulded in silver plastic) – an unusual item and I thought it would be nice to have your own unique controller. Anyway by that time (after an evening at the bar) I only had £30 on me (cash and cheque were the only acceptable payment) and no cheque book. Well, I bid, but the two controllers went for £35 and £40 - ah well!

Finally the Cheetah which stood so proud on the bonnet of the winning Audi TT as it hurtled round the track in the ladies race was auctioned off for £3 - I think it was eventually presented to Derek Cooper after his comments in the previous evening's Q&A session.

Over £3,500 was raised for charity – outstanding!

Time to go home

Usually the end of an event is quite an anti-climax but not this weekend. The final gesture, as you got ready to leave, was to be presented with the NSCC/Hornby 2005 car. Only 48 are produced and along with the car, a Mitsubishi WRC (the 2005 Racer magazine car) with the NSCC 25th logo on the roof and NSCC inscribed on the bonnet and side panel, you received a personal certificate of authenticity signed by Adrian. I now proudly own #44 and it takes pride of place in my cabinet.

What a great weekend and thoroughly recommended. I'll be sending in my application for next year's event. However it would not be a success if it was not for the effort put in by the committee and, in particular, Rob Smith and also Hornby and its staff who gave up their own time to make the event even more special. To them, from me and I'm sure all attendees, our thanks. ■



The special weekend car given to all attendees

Over the past month, I have observed prices tumbling on eBay. I have also seen many auctions where the reserve price has not been met when the auction closes. Hopefully this is because everyone is saving his or her cash for the next swapmeet!

This month I shall take a look at the scenery (not out of the window) but that designed for the slot-car circuit. This now comes in many forms, but personally, I like the original sixties plastic kit buildings. These are based on the Goodwood circuit in its 1960s heyday. They came in kit form for the enthusiastic schoolboy or girl to assemble. These kits have had a production run for many years. In fact, the Grandstand and Dunlop Bridge can still be purchased from your Scalextric retailer. Although the colours and pre-assembly may be different, the actual appearance is identical.

Cardboard cut outs are now available as part of the Scalextric sport range. They do leave a lot to the imagination rather than replicate modern formula one circuits around the world. For instance, the new Grandstand that appears to be based on the Malaysian Sepang circuit doesn't come close to towering over the track like we see on the television.

Resin replicas mean we can customise our track buildings with different roof and brick colours for marshal's huts etc. Love it or hate it, resin is robust and unlike the cardboard and plastic buildings, it will not jump out of the way when you car plummets into it. You may find yourself spending more time in the pits!

Once you've added buildings to your circuit, a cheering crowd is required. Let us thank the "Pink People" for endless combinations. Once carefully separated, painted with your left over paint from model Airfix kits, these devoted fans have sat for hours watching slot-cars complete laps and crash over and over again. Now we have a new generation of pre painted sports

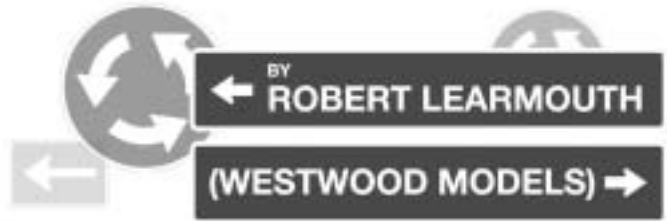
fans, mechanics, and even pit babes. This is not a bad thing; as computer games become more realistic it is only right our slot-car figures do too!

Fencing and barriers help to set the scene but their purpose is greater. Many times I have deslotted only to bounce back on track from the barrier. A good mixture of barriers is still readily available.

Recent prices

C234 Dunlop Crosswalk	£50 - £80
Unbuilt Crosswalk	£155+
A209 Grandstand	£5 - £10
A228 Refreshment Kiosk	£59
A238 Timekeeper's Hut	£92
A239 Trackside Lights	£73
A263 Trophy set	£31
A226 Gate Unit	£10 - £15
C177 Goodwood Chicane	£72.10
K703 Control Centre	£59 - £81
Unbuilt Control Centre	£155

All items above were complete and most with original packaging. ■



Whilst being entirely respectful of those who say it, I've always promised myself that I would never utter a contemporary version of the words, "We never had television in my day, we used to entertain ourselves with the piano or a set of spoons". But I realise that's exactly what I do every time I grumble about how things were before eBay. Those of us who talk about the good old days when swapmeets were intense affairs and journal ads were plentiful are factually correct but so what? You can't turn the clock back and eBay's not going to go away - that's how people want to do business now. It's a prickly way of trading but you learn to minimise the risks. You still get burnt sometimes but as long as it's not too often you take it on the chin.

Brian Rogers asked me the other day how I thought eBay would develop. Well I think in terms of how it affects most of us it's probably reached maturity. It's done certain things to obsolete prices but these are (mostly) back where they started and appear to be stabilising and more predictable now. Lots more stuff has been liberated from lofts than we realised existed but I think that's slowing down now and can't go on forever. Ebay have milked pricing structures but have hopefully pushed the boat out as far as they dare now. They want to develop globally and talk about developing presence in the third world but how is that going to affect slot-cars? They also talk about using new technologies like sound and video to jazz up listings but would us lot need that sort of thing? I'm also cynical about eBay harnessing anything like that as their user-interface is very old-fashioned and creaks already.

However eBay continues to have an effect on the outside market and I'm not sure it's finished yet. I think it has damaged NSCC swapmeet attendance and could continue to do so further. But the flip side is there is a new generation of collectors who grew-up on eBay and now want to investigate life back on the ground through open events. Expectations of the discounts available on new release stuff have changed because of eBay and it has had a significant part to play in the difficulties some supply parties are now suffering. We have some way to go before we clearly understand the exact effect of that. Can anything rock eBay? I don't think we'll see any form of credible competition established. However there must be a chance a very large corporation such as a US media giant would find value in acquiring eBay and perhaps change how things are done. The size of the user base and marketing opportunity that goes with it is phenomenal. I also think there's a chance a government (it may not be ours but others will follow) will introduce an on-line auction sales tax. Do some simple sums, the value of slot-cars alone going through eBay per annum is anywhere upwards of £2,000,000. How long does a potential revenue stream like that stay untapped?

Back on swapmeets, things have been unbearably quite for the last six or so weeks since Milton Keynes and we still have a couple of weeks to go before Loughborough. Is there really no one out there who would be prepared to look at running an NSCC event further north, eg Manchester? It won't happen by itself and neither will it happen courtesy of the NSCC committee. The committee do not

organise swapmeets, willing individuals do. There is plenty of advice available for potential organisers. Just give me a shout and I can point you in the right direction and/or help myself. An event in March could sit well in the calendar. We then have the Dutch SLN swapmeet in Lelystad at the end of April. As always I'm looking forward to this trip that saw 7 UK dealers in attendance last time! I only wish we could manage even just one Dutch dealer at each of our UK swapmeets but unfortunately the arrangement is rarely reciprocated. If any Dutch member can suggest a suitable means of encouraging your fellow countrymen to UK

events please let me know! And expect a little personal persuasion in Lelystad to come and see us at Swindon next January!

Rumour has it three of the main slot-car manufacturers will rapidly be producing second editions of their catalogues. All featured images of Ferraris that were not correctly authorised. I don't believe in passing on this sort of embarrassment as gossip and for the sake of it but as collectors you'll probably want to secure yourself copies of the 1st editions now. I believe they will be withdrawn where possible. I'm not going to mention which manufacturers but you can use some common sense here as to whom we're talking about! ■

BITS & PIECES

Slot-car Clubs

The NSCC keeps an on-line register of slot-car clubs throughout the UK along with many more clubs from around the world at our website www.nsc.co.uk. Periodically we like to ensure that the details of these clubs are accurate. If you belong to, or know of any clubs, please visit the website page and check that the details are correct. The more accurate this information is, the more likely you are to attract members to your club. Please advise any inaccuracies to webmaster@nsc.co.uk.

Thank you.

Adrian Norman

Ramsgate raffle

The Hornby/NSCC weekend was yet again a great success and enjoyed by all who attended but the Chairman must apologise for getting the raffle wrong - it went on for too long and in an effort to be fair to all failed to recognise the number of tickets that some people had bought - so sorry.

However the good news was that the weekend raised over £3,500 for Cancer Care - a superb effort to raise over £70 per person so thanks to all for that and to Hornby who supplied the raffle and auction items.

Richard Winter

Christmas competition winners

Virtually everybody who entered came up with the correct answers - apart from Rod Moore who sent in a blank entry form as usual!

The answers were:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 - Worn brass | Ross Brawn |
| 2 - Claim shame | Sam Michael |
| 3 - No dinners | Ron Dennis |
| 4 - My lame sox | Max Mosely |
| 5 - Set no beer licence | Bernie Ecclestone |

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 6 - Beat for ravioli | Flavio Briatore |
| 7 - Tumble Tzars organ | Zsolt Baumgartner |
| 8 - Did hard vicars | David Richards |
| 9 - Harbour gent | Norbert Haug |
| 10 - Ivy on Honda stand | Anthony Davidson |

Now we will get on to the important bit - the winners! Archie, the editorial cat, has smiled on the following people:

- 21/82 Dave Yerbury
- 207/86 David Cordle
- 276/87 Alex Hastings
- 330/88 Richard Snell
- 395/88 Kevin Myler
- 398/88 Jean Luc Orban
- 546/89 Graham Pritchard
- 895/91 Tony Bant
- 1154/92 Alain Vanachter
- 1710/95 Chris Lale
- 2040/96 Chris Holt
- 2238/97 Mel Turbutt
- 2509/99 Phil Skinner
- 2701/01 Stephen Beach
- 2811/02 Brian Williams
- 2822/02 David Jessett
- 3014/04 Stephen Daniel
- 3083/04 Reuben Forrester

Stephen Beach will receive the top prize of a Scalextric Sport Digital set; everyone else will be sent a prize car of my choice. Please be patient - there are a lot of parcels to pack up in my spare time and it could take a couple of months before you receive your prize.

Graham Smith (yes he!) will also receive a car for setting the questions.

I would like to express my thanks to the manufacturers/distributors who provided the prizes: Hornby Hobbies/Scalextric, The Hobby Co/Ninco, Monarch Lines/Vanquish, Tecnitoys SCX and Pendle Slot Racing.

Slotfire track system

By Gareth Jex

Sometimes you are just in the right place at the right time! Just before a recent business trip to the Netherlands I saw a quick notice on Slotforum about a new track system manufactured in Germany. I got in touch with the owner of the company Rolf to ask for a few details and it turned out he was based less than half an hour away from where I would be staying. A few emails and a Multimap click later and we arranged to meet.

Based in Cologne, Germany, Slotfire has a small showroom for demonstrating their track products plus a display in the window of Rolf's collection with a few items for sale. Production began in December 2003 and the system is being constantly developed with new track designs being introduced. Opening times for the showroom are limited so if you plan a trip contact Rolf in advance to ensure it will be open.

Basically the system is a routed (or CNC cut)

wood and metal braid based set-up much as you would expect to see at a commercial club. No major story there, but the difference with this is the quality of build and the modular approach to construction.

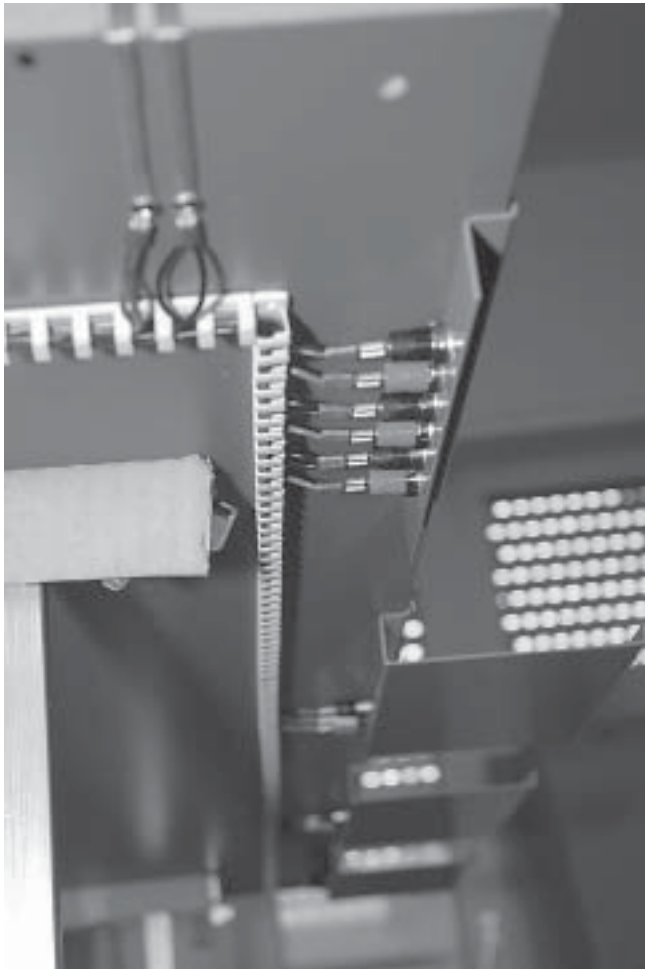
The system is based on approximately 20 pre-designed panels, specifically designed for home use. Each module is 1700mm by 850 mm and is available in several different track surface styles to suit customer requirements. Each one is completely finished and no additional wiring or connections are required. Slotfire will also sell you controllers, power and lap timing/counting equipment to suit your needs. At the recent German Toyfair a new bridge section was released.

The boards are available in different track surface finishes - plain MDF (unpainted), or laminated MDF (white or grey). In addition to the surface you can choose to have flat steel braid self adhesive tape or the cheaper option =>



of copper tape. The track borders are also CNC cut into the surface to aid painting. I tried several different brands of cars and grip was good. The surface appears to be smooth but, a bit like Sport track, the grip is there.

Wiring and controller connections are top quality with attention to detail in all respects; I doubt you will find a neater electrical loom on any track. Each driver position includes a metal tray to place the hand controller; standard Banana plugs are used.



There are three lanes spaced for 1/24th or 1/32 scale with lanes converging on several corners. One advantage of the metal braid is that it gives a magnet effect - not as strong as commercial track but enough to help. This braid is sold separately on request.

Each module board costs the same at approximately £235 each for a completely finished product; this reduces to about £160 for a laminated board supplied with metal braid for self application. The cheapest boards are the white laminated ones for copper tape which can

be purchased for £72 each. The main board for the driver position costs in the region of £285. All prices plus carriage from Germany. Final costs will depend on individual specification and requirements.



If you have wanted a routed track at home but don't feel up to making it yourself you can't go too far wrong with this system. I managed to convince Rolf to bring it along to our 25th Anniversary weekend in May. We will use it for one of the finals and then you can use it free of charge. As a sideline Rolf also sells a German manufactured tyre truing machine which I can recommend.

For full details on Slotfire see their website: www.slotfire.de - it is in German but there is an on-line translation button. For those not on the web the telephone number is +49 221 47 477.■

Here's to the first 25 years - but where now?

By Roger Barker

Like many others before me, I have long held this wonderful world of slot-cars very close to my heart, certainly as hobbies go. For me they are just as fascinating now as they were thirty five years ago when, after much pestering, I acquired my very first Scalextric set while on a family holiday in Jersey. "You can have it son, but you have to carry it home." I remember my Father's words so clearly. Needless to say I did! So a lifelong passion began.

During my later teens and twenties my affair lay dormant while other hobbies took centre stage. However, during my early thirties, marriage and children brought about a re-kindling of the 'Scalextric Bug'. I floundered around for a couple of years on my own, trawling the local carboots and free ads looking for anything related to slot-cars, when a chance conversation put me in touch with a mythical organisation called the NSCC and 'WOW' - all of a sudden the doors to Aladdin's Cave were blown open, there were more slot-cars in existence than I could have possibly imagined. It was fantastic, I simply could not wait for the next issue of the newsletter to arrive and read all those fabulous adverts with cars and spares for sale, then the frenetic phone calls at some unearthly time of the morning to drag some bleary eyed fellow slotter out of bed, so I could be the first to get the bargain out of his advert and all in the safety of the NSCC's code of conduct between the buyer and seller. Could things possibly get any better? Indeed they could.

Next I tried attending a Swapmeet. They were unbelievable! They brought back those wonderful feelings I had long forgotten from my childhood when gazing in the window of my old local toy shop; the buzz of excitement in the hall was amazing, so much to see and buy and the NSCC was responsible for all that, it was the

centre of the slot-car world. The all dominant influence, the biggest and best medium in the UK and probably the world for anything and everything about slot-cars and then along came the Internet and eBay.

Now the ads in the Journal are virtually a dim and distant memory, swapmeets appear to be in decline in their current format and the Internet and eBay appear to have stolen the crown as the best medium for this wonderful hobby. This leads me to the celebration of the first twenty five years of the club and asking the question, where do we, the NSCC, go from here?

Let me air a few ideas to you with regard to the above; firstly the Journal. It goes without saying that what is produced is of the highest quality, but for me, and I am sure many other current and indeed lapsed members, the adverts were so much the best part as it was the best way to buy sell or swap goods under the safe umbrella of the NSCC rules. However the immediacy of the Internet and especially eBay have rendered the Journal redundant as a vehicle to buy, sell or swap.

I would ask the question as to whether it would be more practical to base the Journal on the web, where articles could still appear monthly. It could have a members' access only real time saleroom, where we could advertise our items for sale or swap, just as we used to do in the journal and have the safe knowledge that we are dealing with fellow members and not some made up eBay name. (Any transaction would still come under the NSCC guidelines). This would have the effect of making the NSCC relevant to many more members again.

I can already hear the cries of woe from those who are not on the Internet, but I would venture to suggest that a vast majority of the membership are on the web. The club could have its own slot-car forum for the issues of ➤➤

the day to be debated. I would also suggest that the money saved on the monthly printing bill would easily cover the running costs the Journal on-line. There would be nothing to stop the club producing a high quality yearly Review, which could contain the best of the previous year's articles. This could be issued when members renew subscriptions, so they still have hard copy to read and maybe with the savings we could have a free NSCC car. This is not to steal anything from the "Racer Club", who are without doubt, in my opinion, a huge threat to the NSCC as they too are going after the Dads and Lads market - offering a glossy magazine and a free car, all for a similar subscription to that of the NSCC.

Now may I move on to an even more controversial and much debated subject - Swapmeets. These, like the Journal, have been an integral part of the collectors' calendar for as long as I have been a member and, in fact, many years before. These live slot-car forums form the framework of the slot-car year but these too, I fear, are beginning to wilt under the onslaught of eBay and Internet websites. I strongly believe that these events should be encouraged and supported. I read with interest the article featured last month which made many salient points and obviously a major issue is open or closed meets.

Let me take you through my thoughts on these events. Currently there are four NSCC meets: Milton Keynes (approx 200 attendees), Loughborough (120 attendees), Liphook (100) and Newark (100). I have estimated these attendances, but believe them to be reasonably accurate. It means that, in total, 520 people visit swapmeets, a good percentage of whom attend more than just one event; several attend all of them, so realistically I would say that at best around 300 members attend just one meet per year. This out of a current membership of 950, of which around 100 live outside the UK, which in rough terms means that 500 UK based members never attend a Swapmeet at all!

I appreciate that the figures are very much an approximation, but the point to make is that we are very much in danger of losing these

events if more members do not attend them. Eventually (and it is starting to happen) traders will become more and more selective as to where they attend; some in fact have stopped attending at all and this creates the vicious circle - less to see, fewer go next time, until the organiser realises it is not cost effective to continue and so the event folds (this too has happened). The figures suggest that if every member attended just one meet per year, you would triple attendances and get back to the truly vibrant events we once enjoyed.

This leads to the question of Open or Closed. Sadly I fear that to remain closed they will by and large die. Open events should, if run properly, will bring new people into the hobby and the NSCC and hopefully encourage ex-members back. I appreciate that the reason for closed meets was as much to do with security as anything, but times have changed and I do not feel the club can afford that luxury any longer.

The recent Swindon event was heavily advertised in the local area and I know that Jon and Rob Learmouth put an extraordinary amount of work into the planning and execution of the event. Amazingly over 400 people attended, making it arguably the biggest event of its kind in the UK, maybe even Europe. Everyone I have spoken to has heaped praise on the event. Maybe this is a sign of the future?

I believe the NSCC event at Toyota is to be open, that is to be applauded. If this a sign that the committee is to allow the 'Bread and Butter' meets that have been the backbone of the club's calendar for all these years to go the same way. The timing of this event did also cause me some concern as it is scheduled the week before the Liphook meet; again is this not against the criteria set by the club with regard to not having NSCC events too close together. I do not wish to get involved in who knew and didn't know or what was said to who etc, but at best I think the timing is unfortunate and was probably avoidable. (I hope neither event suffers).

I did ask the question of a couple of current committee members as to why the committee decided to have an open event. I did get differing replies; one said it was to do with making new

people aware of the hobby, also to promote the club and celebrate the quarter century. The sponsorship of the event along with table sales would cover the costs. The other said that it (the event) needed 500 people to break even and it was felt that getting 500 members over the two days was not achievable and getting non-members was the only way to make it viable. It is really not relevant as to which is the case; what is pertinent is that figures suggest that the membership alone is not sufficient to support the event.

This also appears to be the way swapmeets are now heading. There are simply two answers: 1) If the meets remain closed then the existing members must support them much more readily than they are at the moment and/or 2) Allow the meets to go open, let market forces decide which survive, but ensure that the NSCC has a presence at each event in the country thus ensuring that every possible potential new member is canvassed.

So we have reached twenty five years of the NSCC, will there be another twenty five? I for one hope so. I would like to think that I would still be around and an active member of the club, even though I will be dangerously close to my three score years and ten. Will there still be Journals and swapmeets? I truly do not know; all I know is, that like all things, the club must evolve sooner rather than later if it is to survive and thrive in this hi-tech era we now live in.

This article is not an attack on anyone, but if it manages to provoke debate over the future of the club, then hopefully it will have achieved something. I want to see the club survive, so as to help perpetuate the hobby I enjoy so much, but I fear that if it continues without any plan to modernise itself for the future as a vehicle for both the enthusiast and manufacturer it will become irrelevant, and with that irrelevancy it will, I fear, become extinct. I for one do not wish that to happen. ■

How many cubes to circle an oval?

By David Sykes

Do you know where I am going yet? Aahh yes the growl, howl or thunder of a race tuned performance race engine. How many cylinders 16, 12, 10, 8, 6? - no just four. What cubic capacity 6lt, 3lt, 2 ½ lt, 1 ½ lt. No let's have 750 that's err hem ¾ lt. Now we are really getting the ingredients for a truly astounding racing machine.

Have you worked out which illustrious make yet - Ferrari? Bentley? Well if you said Lotus, you would at least be warm because one of these formed the basis of Colin Chapman's first car. Go on, it's on the tip of your tongue. Yes, Austin, the Austin Seven no less.

The Austin Seven started life in 1922 as a small car to beat the rapidly rising road tax and to bring affordable motoring to the masses - oh, and whilst it was at it saved Mr Austin from bankruptcy. It had four wheel brakes, something unusual for a 1922 car. To reduce costs the front and rear operated independently: the front by the hand brake and the useless rears by the foot brake.

So how did this car ever go racing? Well Herbert Austin was very cautious and would not waste good money on racing - however the company tester, Lou Kings, took a Seven up Shelsey Walsh in 89.8 seconds in 1922. Then in 1923 Herbert's son-in-law, Capt. Arthur Waite, took a seriously stripped Seven to Brooklands and beat the cycle car opposition at 62.64 mph on Easter Sunday. It then went on to win at Monza in the Italian cycle car Grand Prix.

Enter stage right, Gordon England (how can any man fail with a name like that) who convinced Mr Austin to build him a similar car to Waite's. This done they lapped Brooklands at over 70mph. Gordon England continued to develop his car, shedding weight and tuning the engine to set several new records at Brooklands and to split the works Salmsons in the October

200 miles race for cars of 1100 cc (remember the Austin only had 747 cc). In 1924 Brooklands was England's happy hunting ground winning races and all class records.

Capt. Waite realized he needed something up his sleeve to beat England (yep we have a Dick Dastardly moment). He had a Roots supercharger fitted to raise the bhp from 25 to 43. He also had to lower the compression ratio to stop the head being blown off the pistons. The car managed more than 80mph but England still won the Brooklands 200 and then retired. (As an aside England's car renamed "Mrs Jo Jo" won the 1928 Brooklands 200.)

In 1929 a works Austin team entered the double twelve race at Brooklands, this was supposed to be a 24hr race like Le Mans but the residents complained so the race was split over two days, good old Brits. Painted orange like the works machines the Barnes brothers' cars won their class (not too hard as the only entrants?) The works team was not faring very well when Herbert Austin was looking to enter the Tourist Trophy in Ulster so Gordon England was recruited as team manager. The Sevens had a five-lap start on the rest of the field with S.V. Holbrook and Archie Frazer Nash driving. Only the Alfa of Campari and Rudolph Caracciola in a Mercedes could catch the little orange cars. The racing pedigree of the Austin Seven then took a knock in the early thirties with the rise of the MG Midget. It is the Ulster TT model which is the first Austin Seven I have modelled. The second is something a little more sporting.

Sir Herbert Austin did not take kindly to his hard won records being taken off him by MG and in 1932, he hired Murray Jamieson to work on an MG beating car. Jamieson's first Seven managed 120 mph producing 75 bhp from the side valve engine but he was quietly working on an all out racer.



This car first appeared in 1936 with a highly supercharged twin overhead cam hemi-head engine of 744 cc which could rev to 14500 rpm and give more than 120 bhp. The engine was a work of art but had cost a fortune and so the chassis it drove was a little compromised using the front suspension from the side valve car and a solid rear axle. The bodywork was similar to the side valve cars - very slim but quite tall to accommodate the twin camshafts. Records, hill climbs and races began to fall to the new car after teething troubles were ironed out. It was just a shame that MG ceased racing due to the extreme cost.

section of brass tube in the body shell. I tend not to bother with a chassis using the body itself to hold the axles in brass tube bearings and the motor glued in to the shell with epoxy. It just takes a sharp snap to remove it again. For the Ulster TT model I use a standard Mabuchi engine but have to shorten the motor shaft a couple of millimetres to fit it in. The Twin Cam model is even more trying. It can be done but forget a chassis, even Pendle's excellent one. The interior of the shell is only about a centimetre wide so currently the only motor to fit is the ultra thin ones supplied in PinkKar Bugattis which are a little under powered but in such a small light body do quite well. I have yet to try one of Scalextric's new versions from the GP bikes which should also fit. Have a look at my web page: www.psykeo1.ukonline.co.uk for more details of motorizing.

The twin cam did have an outing in the pre 66 GP class at Scale Models raceway after my race car, a Delage, jumped lanes during warm-up and was powered into the scenery and off the circuit. Apart from being underpowered it



Is it possible to motorize these cars for slot racing? Well yes, both need a modified slot guide to allow it to be fitted ahead of the front axle. I cut off the standard guide peg and glued in a piece of brass rod, which fitted neatly into a

performed well, kept its balance, performed tail out drifts and did not lose its manners even when it got described as a tractor. After a steady race it came home third but, with a more powerful motor, it could have challenged for the lead. ■