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Bra wars - car wars?

There is a titillating little trade dispute going on at the moment; apparently certain members of what is laughingly entitled the European Community have taken exception to the fact that most of our clothes are now imported from China and home-grown textile firms are going bust at a rate of knots. Thus a huge quantity of Chinese manufactured clothing is currently impounded in various warehouses around Europe.

I must confess that the idea of a serious bra shortage in Western Europe does have a certain appeal to the male mind but the implications for our own little world of toy plastic cars could also be interesting. Just suppose that a certain Spanish slot-car manufacturer decided to kick up a fuss about all its competitors importing their products from the Far East.....!

“Police had to be called to a well known toy store in London when 50 shoppers started fighting over the one slot-car set left in the shop. Following a complaint to the European Commission about Chinese manufactured products the entire Christmas supplies of Scalextric, SCX and Carrera sets were impounded by Customs and Excise at Dover. Within hours toyshops across the country were stripped bare of their remaining stock as parents, desperate to obtain a slot-car for their offspring’s Christmas present, descended en masse on Fly and Ninco stockists. A government spokesperson denied that they were deliberately spoiling Christmas for the children and said that they were making every effort to resolve the situation. The Home Secretary was also forced to deny a report in the ‘Sun’ that his grandchild’s Scalextric set had entered the country in the diplomatic baggage of the Chinese ambassador.”

And Finally - speaking of car wars, we went to our local Stock-Car Stadium recently to watch banger racing; best £10 I have spent in a long while - six hours of solid entertainment and if you haven’t seen a caravan destruction derby then you haven’t lived!

Till next month

Brian



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by
Rob Smith



MESSAGES FROM MARGATE

An exciting month for Scalextric collectors with two completely new models and several excellent reliveries reaching the shops.

C2592A/C2592 Opel Vectra GTS V8 DTM Manuel Reuter

C2593 Opel Vectra GTS V8 DTM Heinz-Harold Frentzen

Firstly we have the new mould. This is the long awaited Opel Vectra announced last year as a replacement for the catalogued Audi A4. Both cars have very bright liveries and lots of chrome - very bling. The cars modelled are raced this year in the DTM (Deutsche Tourenwagen-Masters) driven by Heinz-Harold Frentzen and Manuel Reuter. The full sized car has a 90° V 8, front mounted unit longitudinally mounted, 3.998 litre, 4 valves/cylinder, DOHC, fuel injection, naturally aspirated engine with a 6 speed sequential gearbox driving the rear wheels. Power is rated at 476bhp. The Scalextric car has a sidewinder motor. Only C2592, the blue one, is available in a limited edition of 5000 as a Sport edition.

Two more versions of the Vectra will be released in Germany only in the next few weeks.

C2670 Nissan 350Z "Alpine" and C2671 Nissan 350Z "Pioneer"

The second new mould is the Nissan 350Z. Disappointingly this has no interior and painted on lights - but then it needs to be able to stand up to the rigours of drift racing. Drifting is a new type of racing popular in Japan, the US and increasingly in the UK and Europe. Drivers

demonstrate ultimate car control and balance as they perform a series of power slides and fish tails. Race winners are usually the last ones to spin! The Scalextric cars are fitted with a unique guide blade system that allows 360° movement. Don't picture the old Wild 360 guide system as this is a completely new and more advanced system. With the use of two small pins the rotation can be restricted to enable more normal racing. These two solo cars are identical to those in set C1156 Powerslide but have completely different liveries to those pictures in the catalogue. The Pioneer car is green and the Alpine car is orange.

C2678 Maserati MC12 Road Car



The road version of Maserati's amazing MC12 is finished in a striking pearlescent white that we have not seen on a slot-car before. The finish is quite outstanding too. The Maserati MC12 is a two-seater long-tail coupe-spider with a long wheel base (2800 mm). It has a typical racing/sporty set-up with a removable hard top. It is ➔

also powered by a naturally aspirated 12-cylinder 65° V engine that displaces 5998 cc and punches out 465 kW (630hp) at 7500 rpm. Highly advanced composites and alloys have enhanced its structural rigidity and kept its overall weight down. The MC12's bodywork is entirely carbon fibre, while its stress-bearing chassis is made from a carbon fibre and Nomex honeycomb sandwich. It must make quite an outstanding road car!

C2654 Chevrolet Camaro 1969 Vince Gimondo "No40"

In my opinion this is the best Camaro livery yet and is finished in flawless black paint with silver detailing. In the UK this car is only available as a limited edition of 1000 pieces sold through the Scalextric Collectors Centres but in the US it is on general release. The gold limited edition sticker is on the underside of the plinth and not on the sleeve. The US version is in different packaging. Some retailers have been selling this at a marked up price so shop around first.

C2697 Ford Gran Torino Plain White



Another plain white car release only in the US. This Torino is based on the forthcoming NASCAR version as it does not include the mountings for the Starsky and Hutch roof light.

C2688W Maserati Red No25 and C2689W Maserati Silver No24

The final new cars for this month are two Maserati Coupes unique to a Toys-R-Us exclusive set C1166L. The cars have simple but effective liveries in red and silver and a matching silver and red! The set is an X3 layout and retails for £89.99



C8324 Race+ Pit Crew Jack and Wheel Men - Red/C8325 Race+ Pit Crew Fuel and Wheel Men - Red

A third pit crew is now available. Predictably this is in red to match the forthcoming Ferraris.



First picture of the Schumacher Ferrari

Coming Soon

The next few weeks will have a single seater theme with classic releases of C2640A Ferrari 156 and C2639A Cooper Climax T53 together with the second version of the Vanwall C2663

complete with a new wheel design. Bringing everything up to date will be the F1 Ferrari of Michael Schumacher and the McLarens of Raikkonen and Montoya.

Surprisingly the new Argos catalogue does not contain any unique new cars. Two of the new sets, Rally Sport (with Subaru Impreza and Peugeot 307) and Formula 1 (Ferrari and McLaren) are exclusive to Argos - presumably with different track configurations. Please let me know if anyone buys these sets and the cars do differ from their solo counterparts.

Web Update

Hornby have not been idle on the web front either and there are several new Service Sheets available for download. Work on SportWorld is drawing to a close and the new product will soon be released. As this relies heavily on the Internet look out for a whole new emphasis on the web soon. ■



One of two totally new RAID models announced by Ninco earlier this year is about to hit the shelves. The eagerly awaited Volkswagen Touareg “Dakar 04” (50380) is based on one of two VWs entered in last year’s Dakar Rally. Both cars were highly successful taking 1st and 2nd place in their cubic capacity class with the innovative 2.3TDI turbodiesel engine. With a retirement rate of nearly 60 percent in the car category, the 2004 Dakar Rally was reported to have been one of the toughest yet, making VW’s achievements even more impressive.

This VW Touareg carries number 204 which was raced by Jutta Kleinschmidt and Fabrizia Pons who brought the car safely over

the finishing line in 17th place overall. Jutta’s 2001 Dakar winning Mitsubishi Pajero (50305) released a while ago can still be purchased and is listed in the current Ninco catalogue. All Ninco 1/32nd scale Raid cars are powered by the high torque NC-7 Raid motor. Interchangeable ProShock suspension and ProArm drop guide are two other standard features found on all Raid vehicles.

Street Racers

Just after going to press last month, I took delivery of my very own Mitsubishi Lancer “Tuning” (50395). As far as looks are concerned, this car really is the new King of Bling, with a lot more street cred than the hot-hatch Saxo ➡➡





“Tuning” car from 2002. The colour scheme is shiny sparkling silver with matt black bonnet, roof and boot with two subtle stripes trailing along each side from the front wheel arches. This street machine is kitted out with a massive rear spoiler, four highly chromed wheels and silvered door mirrors.

The chassis houses the standard NC-5 motor and is also fitted with the blue ProShock

suspension system. But, enough said... I’m sure one lucky member will be receiving one of these for review very soon.

The street racing theme continues this month with the second of the new Tuning Style releases - the BMW M3 “Tuning” (50400). This is offered in a striking orange and black livery and is also fitted with bright chrome rims. However, the combination of angle-winder and NC-6 is going to offer serious competition so beware if you’re racing for pinks!



GT News...

Two GT class cars are released this month. First of all, the well-liked McLaren F1 GTR appears in a new livery based on the 1995 Le Mans entry from the Jacardi sponsored Giroix Racing Team (50397). The full size beast finished 5th at the hands of Fabien Giroix, Jean-Denis Delatraz and Olivier Grouillard. The actual '95 Le Mans winning entry was produced by Ninco back in 1996 with an NC-1 motor fitted. The No.59 Ueno Clinic sponsored car (50129) is unlikely to keep up with this new release as today’s McLaren is fitted with an NC-5 motor and round super magnet.

Secondly, the last of the four scheduled Toyota Supra GT cars for this year is released in the Woodone livery (50383). Alongside the Honda NSX GT cars, this series has already proved to be very popular. Again, this car is fitted with an NC-5 motor, 32:12 crown and pinion, JGTC hubs and low profile tyres.



Above - Competitors at the 9 hour event

Below - the grid line-up



9hr event

During last month, GT Raceway played host to an all-Ninco, 9 hour endurance competition at their home circuit in Essex. Six teams including some of the UK's most experienced drivers (*and me!*) took part in the event with each team racing for 90 minutes on each of the six lanes. Eastcote won the day completing 2,741 laps, just 18 laps ahead of Southwest. The home team, Essex, finished third but achieved the fastest lap of the event (*10.33 seconds*). As expected, the Ninco track performed faultlessly throughout the race. On behalf of all those who took part, I would like to say a big thank you to Graeme Thoburn and his family for putting on a superb event.

24hr event

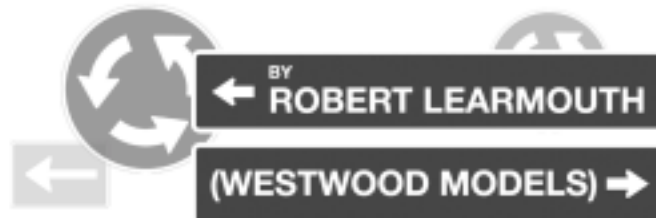
Eastcote are to host a 24-hour race which is now confirmed to take place on the 8th and 9th

October at Yeading Football Club, Hayes, Middlesex. Twelve teams have placed their deposits and there are up to 4 more places available. The Ninco track will be 47m running length and either 12 or 16 lane Ninco subject to final team lists.

To take one of the remaining places, please contact Brian Steptoe on 020 8868 4478 or by e-mail (brian@pitstoppromotions.co.uk)

Review cars

Many of you have requested Ninco cars to review for the Journal. Our editor is the lucky individual who is furnished with all the new releases from The Hobby Co, Ninco's exclusive UK distributor. Please send your request to Brian (details on page 1) and he'll add you to the reviewers' list. ■



As the summer draws to a close, thoughts are inevitably turning towards the start of the new swapmeet season. The Milton Keynes open event kicks things off in the UK, though a new swapmeet in Holland at Almere (close to Amsterdam) precedes that on 11 September. The latter will represent an interesting challenge for me to attend, as I will be at a wedding reception in Brighton till the mid-evening the day before so I will be trying the night-boat for the first time. I suspect I won't manage much sleep during the crossing so expect to see me slumped over the swapmeet table during the event taking 40 winks!

From where I'm sat at least, there has been a deafening silence in terms of feedback from what slot-car enthusiasts want to see from the swapmeet calendar. This would appear to either signify a worrying apathy or contentment that the organisers will do the right thing in the end. I actually believe the latter is the case and that the calendar is indeed sorting itself out. There have been no new swapmeets shoe-horned in for some months now and in fact we have said goodbye to some long-standing events (what's happened to Worthing Mr Perris? A very good little event!) So for me at least things are sorting themselves out and I hope the events we now have will continue to prompt enough interest to keep going. As I've said before, not all events are cut out to be big events and the smaller events are just as welcome from my point of view as they give rise to opportunities that would evade you at a busier event. Dare I suggest (again) that a new northern event (near Manchester) would be welcome?

Perhaps of some encouragement to the swapmeet community is the fact that I think, just think mind, that the very first shoots of recovery in the obsolete market might be taking place on Ebay. For sure there has been too much new product for some collectors and perhaps they are now getting a bigger kick out of the old stuff. And these things go in phases anyway. As new collectors come on-board the new stuff is the most accessible but in time they get to check out the older stuff and perhaps form an interest. I can't back this up with hard facts mind – just a feeling!

It has been interesting to see distribution of SCX in the UK change hands recently. It would be wrong to speculate here why that has happened but presumably it wasn't because everything was going swimmingly. SCX were once the second biggest manufacturer (okay, of two only) in the UK. I don't have sales figures to back it up but in terms of perceived interest I would guess they are fourth now behind Fly and Carrera. I do sometimes wonder how much the Spanish care about the UK market. I perceive a policy of 'take what the Spanish like or leave it'.

The Digital market does not appear to be gaining the momentum that demand would apparently suggest possible. The range of Hornby Digital ready cars has remained as-is from the January schedule (which was pretty limited) and conversion chips have not reached dealers in the numbers expected. Presumably this is due to manufacturing schedules. With the Christmas retail run-in starting in September (yes it really is that early) then you'd hope that supply and the range improves quickly now!

See you at a swapmeet soon hopefully! ■

Did anyone notice the James Bond set for sale in the USA? It sold for around \$1500 to a buyer from Spain.

Or did it? The USA seller simply cloned the photos and description from a UK set that sold a couple of weeks earlier. It was the USA seller's first item for sale so there was NO feedback. I even used Ebay's "ask seller a question" to see if it was the same set but got no reply. Ebay have now removed the set from their database but I don't know if the buyer sent any money.

Also beware of buyers asking if you have any more of an item you can sell them outside Ebay. It's tempting to save the selling fees but risky. Usually international buyers wanting cheap postage and paying by Paypal.

Because if you post anything without a tracking number, and the buyer says nothing arrived, Paypal will refund their money even if you send it "signed for." How many of you have actually read the Paypal user agreement before clicking "I agree"?

It's safer to use "buy it now" and stay with Ebay. You will have the feedback tool to use. You can email the buyer the item number before it shows up for auction.

Recent prices

1960's tinplate set #1 boxed	£206
Jump Jockey set	£45
Set 50 tatty but complete	£28
Knight Rider Pursuit Mode	£42
C64 green Bentley	£65
Catalogue #1, some prices written in	£60 ■

NINCO

track test

50382 Super GT 'Denso' Toyota Team SARD Supra

Reviewed by Scott Brownlee

The organisers of the Super GT series, previously known as the Japanese GT Championship, refer to it as, “the ultimate form of Hako (tin top) racing”. The lack of modesty, for the Japanese, is surprising but as a claim, in any language, it is hard to argue with.

The cars are as fast as single-seaters, the packed grids are made up of cars from 19 different manufacturers and the use of success ballast means the winner is never a foregone conclusion. No wonder it is one of the very few motor racing series that is seeing a growth in popularity in recent times.

That fame was confirmed, not before time for many of us, when Ninco announced it would be releasing the star cars from the series; the Honda NSX, the Nissan Skyline and the Toyota Supra. We have yet to see the Nissan, and it will probably change to a 350Z by the time it gets released, but the NSX quickly made its mark as a wickedly quick out-of-the-box car. The Supra has followed with the same layout and, if anything, proven even faster, but then I would think that wouldn't I.

The Denso car is run by Toyota Team SARD, one of four works teams. SARD has represented Toyota since the 1980s and is owned by Shun Kato who, in 1973, became the first Japanese driver to race at Le Mans. Toyota Racing Developments (TRD) delivers complete cars to each team before the season, but otherwise the teams are free to hire drivers and make developments as they see fit; a bit like Ninco supplying these to club racers.



The body of the slot-car is a very accurate rendition of the complex shape with many open vents and ducts. It is also very light, wide and although strong with few parts to break off - this is no Fly - it does look a little toy-like. There are two reasons; the decoration which, although printed well, is applied over an unpainted white body, and the wheels which are too big and the tyres too low profile. The wheels undoubtedly score high on the eye candy-o-meter, but it renders them less like those on the real car and more like lightweight aluminium hubs seen on a BSCRA 'thingie'. Curiously, the Esso liveried car has more realistic looking smaller wheels and taller profile tyres.

⇒

Of course Ninco cars are always excellent runners and the Supra is no exception. Out of the box the car is fast and smooth, both with and without the powerful button magnet in place. The angle-winder motor set up is familiar from both the NSX and BMW M3 GTR. The chassis is very similar to the NSX - as it should be for close competition - with cross bracing for strength, although I noted that some serious racers strengthen the area between the rear wheels with glue, brass rods and assorted scaffolding poles.

The 20,000rpm 'Speeder' motor drives the brass bush mounted rear axle via a 'go faster' red plastic, bevelled crown wheel and offers very smooth performance. Personally, I consider these screaming motors a pain because I run on tight tracks with no brakes and so have little chance to let them have their head. I can not help thinking a good old NC-1 engined car, like the original Ninco DTMs, would be more drivable and more fun, but that's me being a Luddite again.

Handling with the magnet in is typically very fast up to the point it flies off the track.

With no magnet (as God intended) it depends what track you are running it on. On Ninco the wide tyres get lots of grip, on Sport much less, demanding a smoother, calmer trigger finger. On wood it depends. On standard tyres with no additives the car slides nicely. With tyres soaked in potions it looks (I have only observed, not driven the car in such a state) like the magnet has been made to work with copper tape. As ever, you pay your money and you make your choice.

Simply put, the Supra is another great Ninco slot-car. It offers value for money, good detail, strong build and great performance. It also comes at a good time for collectors of Toyota slot-cars (I am clearly not the only one) with Ninco bringing out not only the Supra, but the Champ Cars too. Team Slot has the Celica rally car, MRRC the Gp5 car (so obscure even my colleagues at Toyota Deutschland had not heard of it) and at least three makers have versions of the F1 car. If only Slot.It would do the GT-One and Vanquish the Toyota 7 I would have little left to wish for. Except maybe Revell doing the Shelby 2000GT. ■

Back To The Future!

Scalextric Ferrari 156 sharknose revisited

Review by the Editor

Large numbers of the latest slot-cars regularly arrive on the editorial doorstep so I tend to get a bit blasé about most new releases and am only too happy to pass them on to members for review purposes. However, every once in a while, a true gem arrives and goes straight into the box labelled 'editor's perks'. Such is the case with the Scalextric Ferrari 156 'sharknose' which turned up with its running mate, the Cooper T53.

As you are probably aware this is not the first time that Scalextric have produced this car - the original version dates back to the early sixties. I have several in my collection so, by way of a change, I thought I would review both versions side by side and see just how far slot-cars have progressed in the last 40 odd years.

It's red son - blood red!

The real car is considered one of the all-time classics but, in truth it wasn't that great. Yes, it ran away with the 1961 World Championship but it really didn't have much competition; engine size was reduced from the previous 2.5 to 1.5 litres at the start of the season and, just like today, most of the teams spent so much time arguing against it that they weren't ready for the new regulations. Only Ferrari turned up with a completely new car - the rest grudgingly modified the previous one and were surprised when they were blown away!

Ferrari 1-2-3s were not uncommon that year and the sharknose won five of the eight Grands Prix - only the driving genius of Stirling Moss denied them victory at Monaco and the Nurburgring. They didn't attend the final USA race as a mark of respect to Wolfgang Von Trips who had been killed at the previous round; by then the championship was already in the bag.

By 1962 the English teams had got their act together and, although the 156 raced for another three seasons, it was just making up the

numbers and only won two more races - one in 1963 and a final victory in 1964. All the cars were eventually broken up and the only one in existence today is a replica commissioned by the singer Chris Rea and built from the original drawings. It featured in the film "La Passione" made in 1996 and was the best thing in a rubbish movie. I understand that the Scalextric model is based on this replica.

I think the lasting appeal of the car is due to its distinctive shape, recognised by everybody who had the Dinky Toy in their youth and the epic 1961 Monaco Grand Prix when Stirling held off three of the things in an outdated, underpowered Lotus for nearly three hours.

Which brings me neatly to a puzzle - why have Scalextric chosen to pair it with the 1960 T53 Cooper driven by Jack Brabham? Their first vintage release was a pair of cars from the same race and the logical partner for the 156 would be a Lotus 18/21, the only car to beat the Ferraris in a straight fight. If this was impossible then a Cooper T55 would have been just as easy to make and would be contemporary with the 156. In fact most Coopers looked identical to the untrained eye and they could have called this one a T55 and nobody would have noticed!

This strange choice of models has been a recurring feature of Scalextric production schedules throughout the years - time and again they have ignored the obvious candidate and brought out some 'back of the grid' dog of a car. I am convinced that there has rarely been anybody involved in the decision making who has any passion for motor racing at all.

Be that as it may, the Cooper is still a superb little slot-car which will grace anybody's display cabinet and give a similar performance to the Ferrari on the track.

On then, at last, to the subject of the article - C90 race tuned 156 (the 'Sport' version of the time) versus the latest C2640A offering. Let battle commence!

⇒

In the red corner....

A typical 60s blob of red plastic almost totally devoid of any detail with only paper number roundels for decoration; even the prancing horse emblem is only just visible moulded into the body. The car is certainly larger than 1/32 scale (probably about 1/30th as were many others of the time) and the wheels and tyres are even further out of scale. The front axle looks as though it has been fabricated from a lump of



scaffold pole and there is a complete lack of suspension and engine detail. The only minor concession to detailing is a pair of unrealistically shiny exhaust pipes. The earlier C62 version was also produced in the obligatory blue, yellow and green versions - the 60s equivalent of a fictitious relivery! As an aside the yellow one did actually exist; Olivier Gendebien drove one painted in Belgian national colours to fourth place in the 1961 Spa Grand Prix! In fact this race was a Ferrari 1-2-3-4 which shows just how dominant they were.

On the plus side it was a solid model which would survive numerous crashes in one piece - find one today and it will probably be in good condition apart from the exhausts which will almost certainly be missing.

To sum up - a typical Scalextric car of its day which, even today, still has a certain charm. It is far too easy to make fun of early slot-cars but, by the standards of the time, it was no worse than many and a good deal better than most.

In the other red corner....

As fine an example of a 21st Century slot-car as you are likely to find - everything about this one just screams, "To die for!" No doubt the rivet counters could find something to criticise in the appearance of this model but I simply cannot fault it. I don't know how close to true scale it is - there are always compromises in model making - but it looks right when viewed from any angle.



The detailing is wonderful - from the photo-etched grille inside the nose via the tiny dashboard to the engine detail visible through the rear grille. Add in suspension, brakes, carburettor ports, correct driver representation and perfect tampon printing - it just gets even better.

Best of all - the paintwork - if the car is not sprayed in genuine Ferrari blood red paint supplied direct from Maranello then I'm a banana. If I were being really, really picky I would comment that the finish is a tad too glossy; 1960's paint jobs were nowhere near modern standards and racing cars of the era looked a lot duller than their modern cousins.

So, as a scale model - first round to the new car by a considerable margin; it is always a bit unfair to compare production techniques from two different eras but it is important to get the overall picture as we move on to the next round. Has on-track performance been improved as dramatically as scale appearance?

Seconds out - Round 2

First out on the test track was the C90 - well, after a bit of delay. Having ferreted one out of the collection which hadn't turned a wheel for 20 years I found there was a bit of work to do on it first - fitting new braids and giving the motor an oiling was the easy part but the tyres, needless to say, were rock hard and useless. The obvious answer was to fit a set of Ortmanns from R/S Slot Racing but, as there were several different tyre combinations used as original equipment, I sought Colin Spark's advice on the matter. By return of post I received four of each type for evaluation and eventually settled on #28 for the rears and #28D for the fronts; this gave a good set-up of big fat slicks at the back and fairly narrow, less grippy ones at the front.



I have used several of Colin's products on current racing cars with generally favourable results but this was the first time I had tried them on a vintage car. Suffice to say I was highly impressed - they obviously give much better grip than original equipment but also have just the right characteristics for true-to-life tail out motoring.

After a few warm up laps I began to attack the exit of the corners and found the old warhorse an absolute delight to drive; a dab of extra power and out drifts the back end, wait till all is lined up for the straight, full power and away we go. If you overcook it slightly then a lift of the throttle will bring it nicely back into line.

If you want to give your older cars an outing then you really must try these tyres - I cannot praise them highly enough.

The only real handling fault I found with the car was a tendency to understeer off if you left the braking a fraction too late. Needless to say, the lap times were not comparable to modern magnet cars but I could just about squeeze a sub five second lap out of the old girl which is not at all bad on my test track.

Round 3

Now it was the turn of the new kid on the block; straight out of the box, as you would expect, it absolutely flew - sub four second laps without any effort on my part and a best time of 3.5 seconds.



According to the latest 'Racer' magazine this Ferrari has a reduced strength magnet so it won't be faster than modern cars - if you believe that you will also believe in the tooth fairy! You can put it on a piece of track and rotate it over 90° before it falls off. Combined with a very light body and the turbo nutter MotoGP engine it is a seriously quick car.

Naturally enough the magnet held it rigidly to the rails until you did something exceedingly stupid and launched it into the stratosphere but, oddly, it had the same tendency to understeer off as its ancestor. Overall though I thoroughly enjoyed playing with it even if the speeds it achieved were totally unrealistic. ⇨

Newcomer on the ropes

The test was not over yet though; I felt obliged to even things up by removing the magnet from the new car. This was not easy to achieve as, in common with most modern Scalextric cars, it is an absolute pig to take apart. Even after I had removed all the screws the thing was so tightly fitted together that I was convinced I had forgotten one and prising the magnet out almost required a bench press!

Putting it back together was equally difficult - not all advances in production methods are for the better - I would love to see a video of the assembly line so I could learn how to reassemble a modern slot-car correctly!

On to the track once more and I swear I could hear the older car having a quiet chuckle to itself! Sure enough the new one was virtually undriveable - a combination of true scale narrow tyres and a powerful motor meant wheelspin all down the straight and an almost inevitable trip into the scenery when it got to the

twisty bits. I had to concentrate really hard and still couldn't get under six seconds for the lap - over a second slower than the C90. Mind you it would hang the tail out on the bends now!

As a final test I decided to fit the magnet to the 60's car - yes I know it is sacrilege and Fred Francis is probably turning in his grave but it had to be done! The result was quite surprising, consistent laps just over the four second mark and a best time of 3.8 seconds - just a whisker slower than the modern car. My test track does not have an abundance of long straights so this result flatters the earlier car somewhat. The difference would be much more marked on a bigger track where the current model could really stretch its legs but it just goes to show that, performance wise, there wasn't much wrong with the older cars.

And the winner is...

No contest really - the current Ferrari is light years ahead on all fronts. It is better looking, more detailed, much faster on the straights and infinitely better through the corners (so long as you are happy with Magnatraction). It is also surprisingly robust; the review car still has a full complement of exhausts and the only thing which has fallen off is the front grille mesh. It is only clipped in so a small dab of superglue will probably provide a permanent repair.

There is no doubt in my mind that it is a serious contender for slot-car of the year and, believe me, I am very hard to please. Scalextric have come a long way indeed since those early years.

Just one thing remains to ponder though; after the testing was done the new car was returned to its box but I thought I would just give the C90 a few more laps for old time's sake. An hour later I was still playing with it! You can't beat a good old'un! Now where did I put that C89 race tuned BRM? ■



Photos provided by Adrian Norman

Ferrari

OFFICIAL LICENSED PRODUCT



A Rare British Victory

By Bill Grigg

You may recall (or probably not!) that some while ago I wrote an article about my friend Chris's first attempt at a resin body, an Alfa Romeo 12c, and mentioned my hope that he'd make me a B type Connaught. Well, silver tongued old me, he did, and you can see the moulding and the resulting car after my finishing off labours here.



The technique for making it was similar to the Alfa (although the exhaust was even more tricky, trying to get the air out of a long thin mould) so I won't bore you again, but suffice to say the finished car, fitted with an old Scalextric Power Sledge and some of R/S's Ortmann tyres goes and handles very well and will give those pesky 'works' Scalextric Maserati 250Fs a run for their money - as long as they don't cheat with Magnatraction. Which is similar to the events at Syracuse in 1955. Now read on...

Connaught Engineering was set up soon after the Second World War by Rodney Clarke and Mike Oliver, respectively designer and engineer, as an offshoot of their business, Continental Cars Ltd at Send in Surrey. Both men competed in minor events with Bugattis (they had hoped to set up a British agency if Bugatti had resumed production post war) and they also prepared racing cars for Kenneth McAlpine with considerable success in various events. However, McAlpine's real ambition was to race his own cars and so was born the Connaught L Series sports car, based on a rebodied Lea-Francis chassis. Oliver developed the

Leaf engine to produce considerably more power and, with McAlpine and Clarke driving the works cars and production of a small number of customer cars, the L series did sufficiently well in British events in 1949/50 to encourage them to build a car for Formula 2

The resultant A series, still with the Lea-Francis based engine, made its debut at Castle Combe in October 1950. It had a conventional tubular chassis and, originally, a wishbone and torsion bar suspension all round. This was soon improved on by fitting a de Dion rear end which gave the car a reputation for good roadholding, but unfortunately the engine was not up to exploiting the full potential of the chassis. So when, in 1952, Connaught were deposited, unexpectedly, into front line Grand Prix racing by the adoption of Formula 2 as the premier formula for 1952/3, although reasonable placings were gained in secondary events in



1952 (not to mention 4th and 5th in the British GP), 1953 was nothing at all to write home about. Nevertheless the A Type soldiered on as a grid filler in 1954 and continued to compete in British events for some time thereafter.

Having been unintentionally introduced to Grand Prix racing Connaught decided to compete in the new 2500cc Grand Prix formula of 1954 onwards. They realised that a new pure racing engine would be necessary but could not afford to develop their own, so cast about for a suitable one 'off the shelf'. The new Coventry →

Climax Godiva V-8 seemed very promising but development of that engine was abandoned as the makers were discouraged by the, as it turned out overly optimistic, horsepower figures other manufacturers were quoting. That might well have put back the British renaissance by a good few years as the engine was showing promise and we know how successful Coventry Climax were to become in a later formula.

After investigating and rejecting several other contemporary British design projects Rodney Clarke fell back on the latest Alta four-cylinder, twin cam engine for which he acquired exclusive rights. However, this wasn't what Connaught had originally hoped for, as the Alta was basically the latest version of a 1929 design. In the event the engine was never reliable and often had to be nursed by keeping the revs down so, like the A type, the B type didn't have the power to exploit its chassis to the full.

That chassis was a simple ladder type with coil and wishbone front suspension and torsion bar and de Dion rear end. Fuel was carried in two side and one tail tanks. Carburation started with fuel injection but as time went on the cars ran mainly with twin Weber carburettors. Advanced features were Dunlop magnesium alloy wheels and disk brakes. To maximise the power available the first B Series had full-width aerodynamic bodies, with a large tail-fin, developed using Connaught's own basic wind tunnel. In testing it actually turned out that the Connaught's streamlining was more effective than that of the contemporary Mercedes W196.

The matt green finished cars were not ready until the start of 1955 and then funds would only allow entry in selected races rather than a complete season. Works drivers were Jack Fairman and Kenneth McAlpine and two further cars were built for private owners, another streamliner for Leslie Marr and an open wheeler for Rob Walker. There were a few successes in minor events (including first and third in the Brighton Speed Trials – not much F1 opposition there!) but in the British GP Fairman non-started and the other three (Rob Walker's car shared by Tony Rolt and Peter

Walker) were completely outclassed. Towards the end of the season the efficient but vulnerable and expensive to repair streamlined bodywork was ditched in favour of a more conventional style, but this meant revising the fuel tankage to just one large tail tank which didn't do much for the handling.

Although they had picked up some minor placings, for financial reasons the team seriously considered pulling out at the end of 1955 but were at the last minute invited to run in the postponed non-championship Syracuse Grand Prix in October as the organisers were short of entries and offered tempting starting money. Drivers had to be recruited last minute and from a somewhat limited choice Connaught picked the experienced Les Leston and rookie dentist Tony Brooks – neither of whom had so much as sat in a Grand Prix car before.

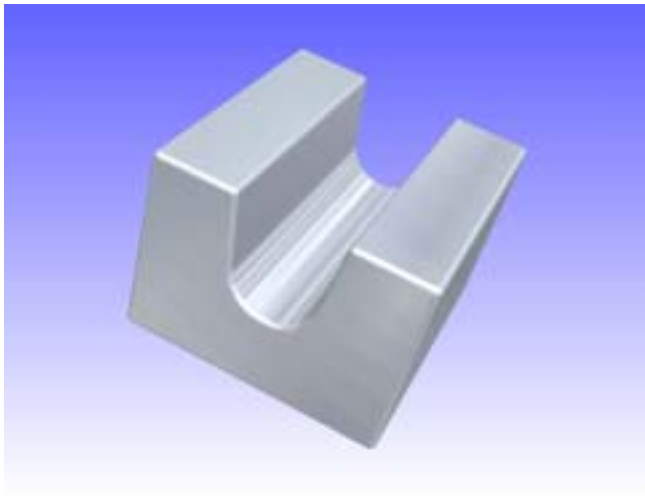
After various trials and tribulations the Connaught racing car transporters (ex London Transport Green Line coaches) reached Sicily (nearly 2,000 miles and some fairly rural roads away!) where the two drivers, who had flown out, were learning the circuit on hired Vespa scooters. Come practice and the Connaughts, Brooks in B1 an open wheeler and Leston in B2, a streamliner, were restricted to limited laps lest they blow an engine and lose the starting money. However, this left Brooks on pole in front of three works Maseratis, though Leston was on the fifth row after practice problems and with the streamliner more difficult to position for tight lines.

Come the race, although beaten away by the three Maseratis, after a fierce dice with Musso, Brooks, carrying number 22, had passed them all by lap 12 and drove away to win by 51 seconds. Hooray, first GP win for a green British racing car since 1924! This was the high point of Connaught's fortunes and although the win prompted them to soldier on for a couple more years that Alta engine was never powerful or reliable enough to make the most of the chassis and there wasn't any money to replace it so minor placings were all that ever came their way. ■

BITS & PIECES

RX Magnets

South Pole Magnets - a company which designs and markets replacement magnets for Hornby/Triang model locos has recently discovered that the same motors are used in old Scalextric/MRRC cars. The motors are known as X03/X04 type. The magnets can have an amazing effect on performance since the original steel versions lose their magnetism over the years.



They sell these magnets on Ebay but have offered a discount to NSCC members. Contact: sales@southpolemagnets.com for further details.

UKSlotracer.com Sports / GT Challenge 16th October 2005 North London SME

UKSlotracer.com is proud to announce its first race meet to be held at the North London SME track on Sunday, 16th October. The race meet is for hard body scale race cars (Fly, Scalextric etc) and for any racer, novice to world champ. For further details and rules visit: <http://www.ukslotracer.com/uksr2/webpages/home.htm>

The event is being sponsored by Monarch Lines and Top Slots 'n' Trains.

Very Smart

Slot-cars pop up everywhere these days - a recent issue of the 'Smart Owners Club' magazine featured the natty 1/32 version shown below.



I believe Sean from Pendle Slot Racing sells the kit if anybody wants one.

Richard James

Scalextric B&B

Looking for somewhere to stay in Somerset? Then give Bay Rose House near Cheddar Gorge a try - a very acceptable Bed and Breakfast establishment by all accounts with the added bonus of an in-house Scalextric Digital circuit to play on! Best not tell the other half about this bit though! Guests can race on the circuit free of charge and there is a weekly 'fastest lap' competition.

The owner is a Scalextric enthusiast and has also recently opened a larger commercial raceway in Cheddar itself; it is located in the courtyard of the Cheddar Cheese Company and is thought to be the first Digital public track in the UK.

Details of both B&B and raceway can be found at:

<http://www.bayrose.co.uk/index.htm> or phone 01934 741377.

Brian

SCX Séat Cupra GT

Reviewed by Simon Randall



I found this review quite an interesting exercise: I have bought many cars over the years, some by mail order, and others in shops and at swapmeets where you can see the goods. I have been mostly pleased with my purchases from an aesthetic point, as I think we tend to buy cars we find visually appealing anyway. But, to review a car, I had to think about the looks and performance of the car more deeply.

I had bid on an SCX Seat Cupra GT on Ebay before as I think this concept car looks great. The bidding went beyond what I was prepared to pay, so, when I got the chance to review one I leapt at it! The wait for the car to arrive was tantalising...and when it arrived it did not disappoint!

Shelf appeal

The SCX box is a new style for this car: there is no backing card, just a clear top all the way round. The car is raised on a central block allowing a good view of the car; after all we are interested in the car not the packaging, so top marks so far.



The paint and decal finish on the car is good, if not quite to the Fly standard, but the colours are vibrant and the print is crisp. The interior features a driver figure with painted on seat belts, a full roll cage, extinguisher and a mildly detailed engine. Unfortunately some grey body paint has ended up on the tyres, which may be an isolated problem on this model. Whilst handling the car, it becomes apparent that the pod mounted motor moves quite freely, so much so that the rear tyres rub on the arches.... More of this later.



Taking the car to bits is easy for oiling and maintenance, just three screws. Top marks again!

Now off for some track time!

Initially I used the car straight from the box. It has a fair turn of acceleration and the usual excellent SCX motor braking. Handling wise, it de-slotted a couple of times due to the double braid system lifting the nose when cornering. Gareth had warned me of this, so a quick tweak later and a much more satisfactory



cornering speed can be achieved. At this point I noticed just how bright the Xenon headlights are, they really shine even in a room with plenty of natural sunlight! After several laps, I began to notice a pattern of stuttering acceleration through corners; perhaps those rear arches were rubbing and slowing the car as the body rolled on the motor pod? I removed the body and ran the bare chassis for a few laps with startling results to the times!! Body back on with the screws lightly tightened this time, and the car handled much better.

Out with the magnet

Wow! What a transformation! The car glides very smoothly around the track: it can be hurled into corners at quite high speeds without flying off and you can apply power very early on through a bend and get a smooth power slide to line up for the straight, lovely! I really like the way this handles without a magnet! I also like the self centring guide; it's nothing new, but very helpful for the marshals when you are racing. I found myself doing lots of laps without crashing. I was thoroughly enjoying this set up!

I have done a few "best" lap times for comparison:

Car	Magnet	No Magnet	Body off!
Scalextric Boxster	4.3 sec	6.8 sec	---
Ninco BMW V12LM	5.2 sec	6.4 sec	---
Scalextric MG Lola	4.0 sec	---	---
Slot.it Porsche 956	---	6.3 sec	---
SCX Seat Cupra GT	5.1 sec	6.5 sec	3.9 sec (with Mag)

I suggested to Gareth that I could do a short and long term test of this model, so I will be racing it at the club over the next season. This will prove the car in competition over the next three months and I will tune it within the class regulations. I did want to try it in the GT1 class, but looking at the times against a Lola it is going to be outpaced unless I can sort it to run at the body-off pace. The other class it would be eligible for is the Open class (no magnet, weight allowed) so I will have a stab at this and report my findings.

Overall this is a visually pleasing model of an unusual car. It has good racing potential which I will try to unlock in both magnet and non-magnet format. Look out for the race report.

Would I buy one? Yes!

Why? It looks good, and in non-magnet trim it is an absolute delight to fling about the track! ■

Scalextric Nissan 350z Drift Car

Reviewed by Jamie Kelly

When visiting the annual toy fair at ExCel, back in January my gaze was distracted by a certain car on the Scalextric stand. This amazing model of a Nissan 350Z was pulling 180 degree turns and doing super slides. This totally shocked me. Being a Scalextric fan and the type of guy that tries different things out, I had a go. During this test I became even more shocked than before, it was incredible. I hadn't seen anything like it on the market before so, when Brian (the editor), offered me the opportunity to write a review I jumped at the chance.

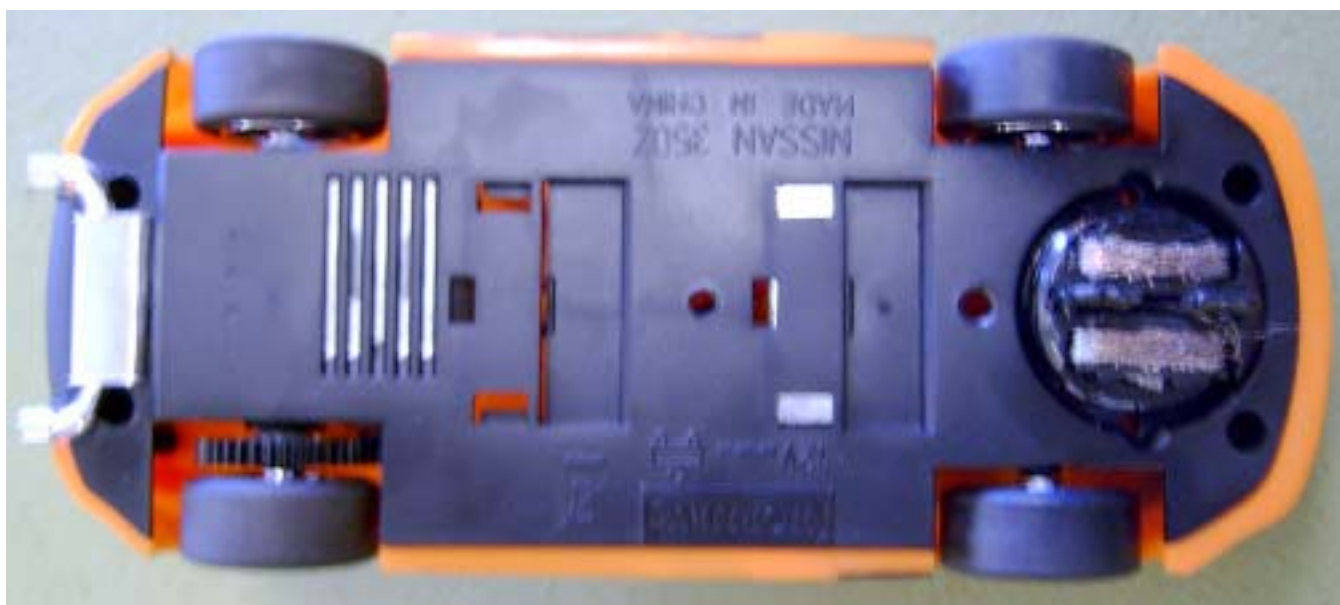
What we have is a two door car with a tough shell which will take a bit of a beating in a bright orange livery with black flames on the sides and roof of the car; it is just simply a scorching design. Tinted black windows and twin exhausts at the rear add effect and provide a great feeling of speed. The wheel rims are highly accurate to the street car of today, the sparkly silver finish giving outstanding detail. The rear wing is held in by two screws, so detaching it is very simple.

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Underneath the model your eyes will immediately drift to the front of the car where the 360° guide is situated, with no spring back action. This will allow the car to drift sideways and completely round. Moving along you next see the rectangular shaped bar magnet situated in the middle to front area of the vehicle; this magnet can be moved if you wish to, but I would recommend leaving it where it is because it would affect the drift ability of the car. This rear wheel driven sidewinder car is powered by a

sides of the guide. Overall it will be great fun for all the family, whether you want Drift or racing capabilities. It can be bought in the Scalextric Power Slide Drift set, where you would get the car I've been reviewing plus a green Nissan 350Z, enough track to form a figure of 8 and some barrels and boxes. These barrels and boxes are there so that you can slide on the track but trying not to knock these barrels over which is very challenging. This set is available now. The individual cars will be out later this year. ■



stable standard Mabuchi S motor of 18,000 rpm. The wheel diameter is 21mm and the wheels are held in place by 57 mm axles.

When I tested it at Mussel Bay raceway in King's Lynn, my expectations were relatively low, until I ran it. The ability to spin the vehicle is very easy after a bit of practice. When running the car, I was trying to push its capabilities as far as I could. I even managed to pull off a full 360° turn! I bet you can't find any other car that does that. To get the best fun out of the car, it is best to use the figure of 8 track, shown in the Scalextric Drift boxed set. This includes a crossover section instead of a bridge to add even more chaos.

But, if you are looking at the car from a racing point of view, it is potentially very good. The guide can be made to behave as standard by simply inserting the two screws supplied both

Seemed Like A Good Idea.....

By Annette Goodman

It was bound to happen. If you insist on telling practically everyone you meet how into Scalextric you are, eventually someone will say, "Fancy running a race night then?" I'm not quite sure exactly how we ended up running our first ever race meeting, but I can remember it being mentioned sometime late last year at our local Morris Minor Owners Club, then us missing one meeting in November 2004. The next thing we knew, Sue Gibbs, one of the committee members, called and said, "You're booked for the July 2005 meet". "We are?!" OK, that's months away, lets not worry about it for now

Hmm You can't have a Scalextric night at a Morris Minor club without Morris' to race, can you? So this was our first challenge. But where to get them from apparently VIP made a version many years ago, but these are pretty rare to say the least, and certainly not suitable for racing. Eventually we decided it would have to be something along the lines of the current batch of cheap die-casts that are out there, and thus began our second slot-racing first – a scratch build.

Vigorous searching of the net found a couple of useful sites, one of which took you through the whole process from beginning to end, so off we went to find the 'ingredients'. Latex, resin and paints were purchased from the local model shop, and the boot sales provided the die cast and Lego to build the mould. On reflection, the lounge floor probably wasn't the best place to start messing with liquid latex, especially when you have three cats, but eventually we managed to produce a reasonable enough mould that wasn't too hairy. It took a few goes to get the hang of casting the body, but eventually we had a couple of passable shells, which, when fitted with the adjustable chassis and magnets that we purchased at the 25th

Anniversary event, produced a rather nifty little car, sadly not quite comparable with the real thing as these versions could keep up with the other cars, didn't rust at the first sign of water or leak oil all over the road, and actually stopped when you wanted them too!

Now I like to think I have a pretty good grip on the contents of Tony's collection but, when we came to dig out some cars to race and show, even I was amazed at the contents of our spare room. Every box contained more and more treasures, it was like Christmas come early! "Oh, that's where that went ..."! By the time I'd finished choosing our display from the 'finds' upstairs, I'd already filled up a plastic storage box, and I hadn't even started on the more interesting stuff in the display cabinets. It was at this point I decided to phone Sue and tell her I was having a crisis, I was surrounded by cars and boxes, I didn't know what to do next and it was all her fault. She just laughed.

Next was the choice of cars to race. They'd have to be indestructible, cheap and above all – something we had four of, as we were using an old four lane set. Eventually we chose four ASCARS and four of the cheap Audis/Porsches for the main event as we were pretty certain these would survive multiple trips across the floor and be easily replaceable if they didn't. The smaller track had whatever we had pairs of duplicates of: two 1275 GT Minis, two Ford GT40 mk IIs (Sport edition no less!), two Cosworths and a Porsche/Mercedes endurance.

On the day of the event we left work early, packed all the cars up neatly, and bundled them into the car. We arrived at the pub at 6.00pm, and by the time everyone arrived at 7.30pm we had a pretty respectable set-up going. Then the fun began

There were a lot of mutters of, "Last time I played Scalextric was 30 years ago with the =>



kids”, and, “I need a refresher course”. At first people seemed a bit reserved about ‘getting stuck in’. Luckily Sue is very persuasive (this is how we ended up in this position in the first place!) and pretty soon all but three of the members had been signed up for racing. Tony and I abstained, due to the fact that we needed to marshall (me) and keep an eye on the display (him), and had nothing at all to do with the fact that we knew we’d probably be beaten hands down on our own track, as those who have seen us race will know!

The smaller ‘test’ track worked well, and people liked the idea of being able to try out the cars without having to embarrass themselves in front of everyone on the larger track. It also



meant there was plenty to do for those not racing, and that a couple of people who had brought their own cars also had somewhere to play.

Sue was organising the heats, and made notes of the names and positions. We had debated various race set-ups – Sport Digital, RMS etc, but eventually decided the simpler the better (both for us and the racers), so used the old mechanical lap counters that came with the four lane set we were using. The racing was run in heats, based on the amount of laps people completed in five minutes (this being reduced at each heat). So whilst Tony stood and ‘guarded’ the display at one end of the room, and Sue monitored the lap counter, I stood at the other end of the track by the sharpest bend, being continuously pelted by flying cars – and those little solid models don’t ‘alf hurt!! I’m sure some of our members thought the idea was to see how many times they could hit me in five minutes! As they were all older than me, and I’d been brought up to respect my elders, I resisted the urge on a number of occasions to chuck a car back at them, or worse!

We then had a ‘show and tell’ session during the drink/raffle break. This wasn’t in the original job description!! Luckily, as those of you



who've met him know, Tony can talk the hind legs off a donkey about Scalextric so he was able to improvise a quick chat about some of the cars we'd brought along, and about how we got into Scalextric in the first place. Once we got going it was quite easy, and unlike the NSCC events, hardly anyone knew anything about Scalextric anyway, so any errors or omissions went unchallenged – perfect! There were plenty of questions and everyone seemed genuinely interested. I acted as not so glamorous assistant, and while Tony was talking about some of the cars, I took them on very slow laps of honour

round the track. This began when someone asked if the older cars worked on the new track. Tony replied that they did, and I then proceeded to run our 1960s black Bentley, a very much admired model on the table, round the circuit, much to the amazement (and indeed audible gasps!) of the audience. I'm still glowing green with envy though as one of the club's members had actually driven the real thing in his youth while I could only drool over the one at Goodwood this year!

After this we finished the racing, and people then had a chance to play with the cars on the big track, including our Morris'. All things considered, I think we did really well, with only one (repairable) car casualty.

All in all a very successful and fun night, and one both Tony and I would repeat – though personally not without some kind of armour next time! We've already had a number of members asking when the next one is, and one who's now looking out for a set for his young grandson. ■