



A busy pit scene, as Vanwall No. 6 has a quick tyre change while a Cooper leads a Ferrari into Paddock Bend. On the left of the picture can be seen the lap counter which operates faultlessly all the time.

BRANDS HATCH

Michael Scott describes how he and a few friends constructed a table top working model of Brands Hatch circuit, complete with scenic effects

A friend of mine suggested that model car racing would be more thrilling if scenery was added to the circuit.

As I had never seen a scenic model race-track, I roped in a few more friends and together we decided to copy Brands Hatch, adding all the contours and scenery which make the circuit so interesting.

Our main problem was lack of space. Eventually a limit of 6ft. x 4ft. was agreed upon as being the most convenient size for a table top.

Before any track was bought a baseboard was constructed using softboard on a wooden framework, and this was nailed down to form a solid base on which to lay the track and build the scenery.

Wrenn Formula 152 equipment was chosen for this model because of its size, it being one of the smallest electric car racing systems on the market. The Wrenn leaflet was duly consulted and there we discovered a plan for Brands Hatch. However, we did not use this particular plan because there was no room for the pits which are an important part of the circuit. So the Wrenn plan was modified somewhat to suit our requirements and although the proportions are not very exact in some places, the overall shape is quite a good likeness to the real thing.

In order to make room for the pits Top Straight was lengthened by one section as was Pilgrims Rise, this allowed Bottom Straight to be further away from Top Straight, with the result that Portobello Straight had to be cut to a single section. Dingle Dell was increased from one to three sections. As you can see from the diagrams, we had to alter the whole circuit from a long narrow one to very nearly a square, to fit our small baseboard.

The outside edge of the baseboard was made up from lengths of 1in. x 1in. wood and balsa wood, and Beatiplast was put over this and glued to the edge of the track. Druids Corner was raised

by using cork ballast slopes and the hills were made by covering newspaper and blocks of wood with Beatiplast. The largest area was covered with a sheet of softboard and again Beatiplast was used to cover the whole area.

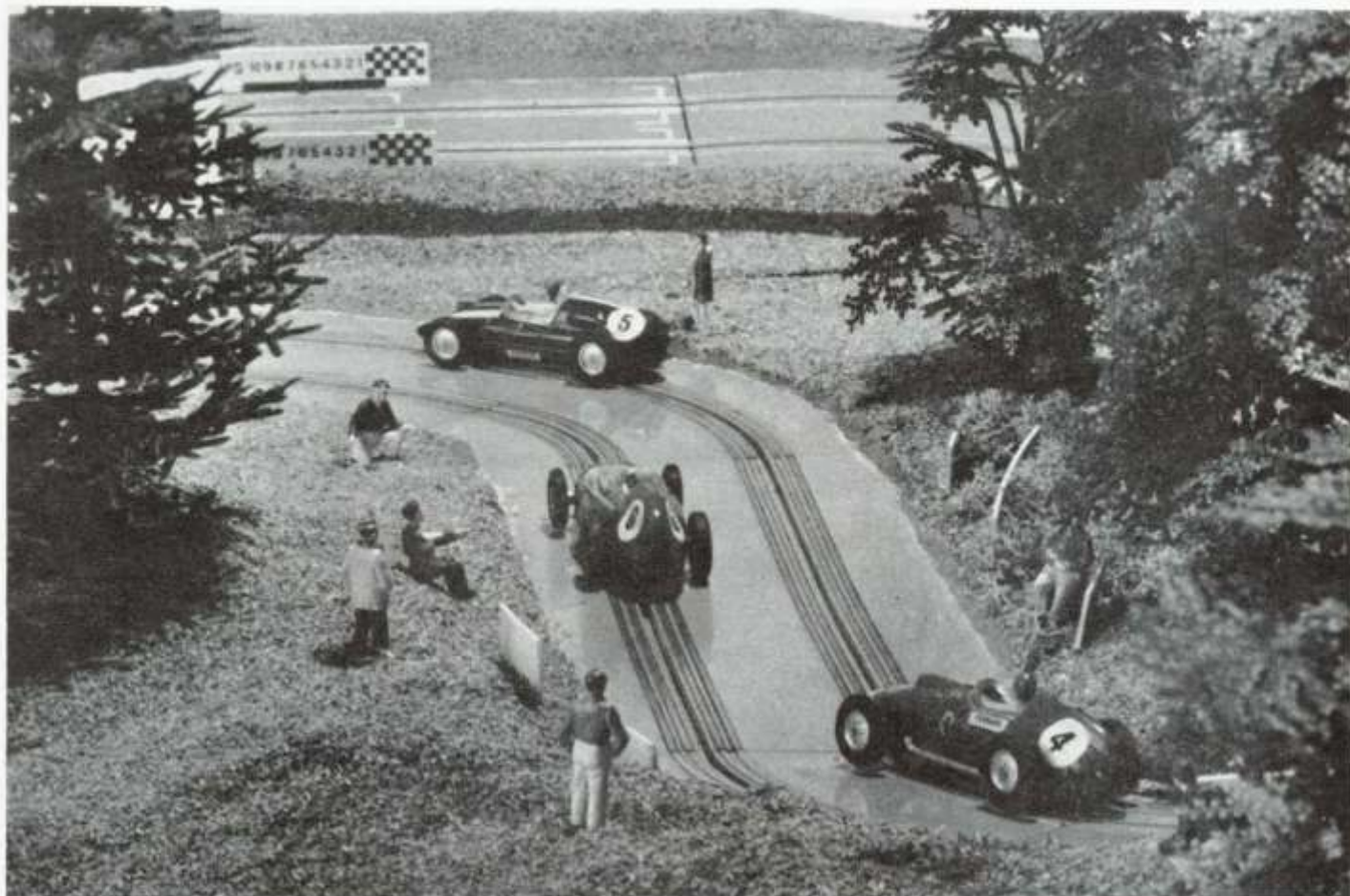
When the Beatiplast had been wetted and had completely dried, dyed scenic material was sprinkled on top and glued with a solution of Latex and water which, when it dries, remains completely invisible. The excess "grass" was removed with a small vacuum cleaner so that there would be no bits to fall onto the track. The small road from the paddock to the pits was added for effect and has no practical use whatsoever, it merely conveys its whereabouts and can be used to park cars when they are not being raced.

One of the reasons why Brands Hatch was chosen for our model was because of its attractive setting amongst hills and trees, so we each purchased some Britains trees and glued them to the Beatiplast in the most prominent positions to give an idea as to where the main concentration should be. When these photographs were taken, only a few trees were in position, but eventually there will be a complete forest, as in the prototype.

Now we had the basic layout with a lap counter at one end of the pit area, and a deflector section on Pilgrims Drop. It was decided that the terminal section should be at Stirling's Bend so that the drivers could reach any part of the circuit when a car came off the track. In the fourth picture this can be seen in front of a Wrenn crash barrier which was erected to hide the wires.

The advertisement boards on Druids Bend in the second photograph were cut out from a crash barrier and Wrenn transfers were attached to these pieces and provide some essential realism to the layout.

Two sets of pits were bought and the flags were put on the





Stephen Hall (Cooper) takes the lead on the inside at Druids from Michael Scott's Ferrari.

flagpoles as shown in the Wrenn instructions. Transfers were again used for the right-hand pits where Vanwall and Maserati were put instead of Cooper and Ferrari. A grandstand was added on Paddock Bend and eventually there will be one on Hawthorn's Bend and one opposite the pits.

All the figures are Wrenn accessories and seem to give life to the circuit, which without them would seem rather dull.

The whole operation took four of us about six weeks to complete, working only in the evenings, and we all agreed that the time and money was well spent.

Although we had a few practice laps during the construction of the circuit, we did not begin serious racing until a few minor problems had been solved.

The first problem, which I have already mentioned, was that of "grass" falling on to the track and in the slots. The vacuum cleaner was brought into action, but whenever a car took a corner really fast on the outside lane, the rear wheels scattered bits of material on to the track, and the next time round the car would be stopped or slowed down because of particles being caught in the pick-ups.

To overcome this, the loose areas were given another coat of Latex solution and seem to resist the countless spinning cars without any ill effect.

The track was found to be extremely slippery immediately after the work had been finished, so we used a damp cloth to clean it, and used Rail Cleaner for the contacts.

It took some time for the drivers to get used to the circuit which is as tricky to drive on as the real Brands Hatch, but once the technique was mastered, some really exciting racing took place.

The deflector section on Pilgrims Drop works very well, but until this is electrified it is too much trouble to keep leaning over

the circuit to change lanes. However, if we had put this nearer the control point, it would have solved our problem.

Generally we have found that the car on the outside lane is faster than the one on the inside, because the power can be applied much sooner on the exit of a bend owing to the presence of our banks. The tail will slide out, but instead of spinning, the car slides against the bank and consequently goes round corners considerably faster than the inside car.

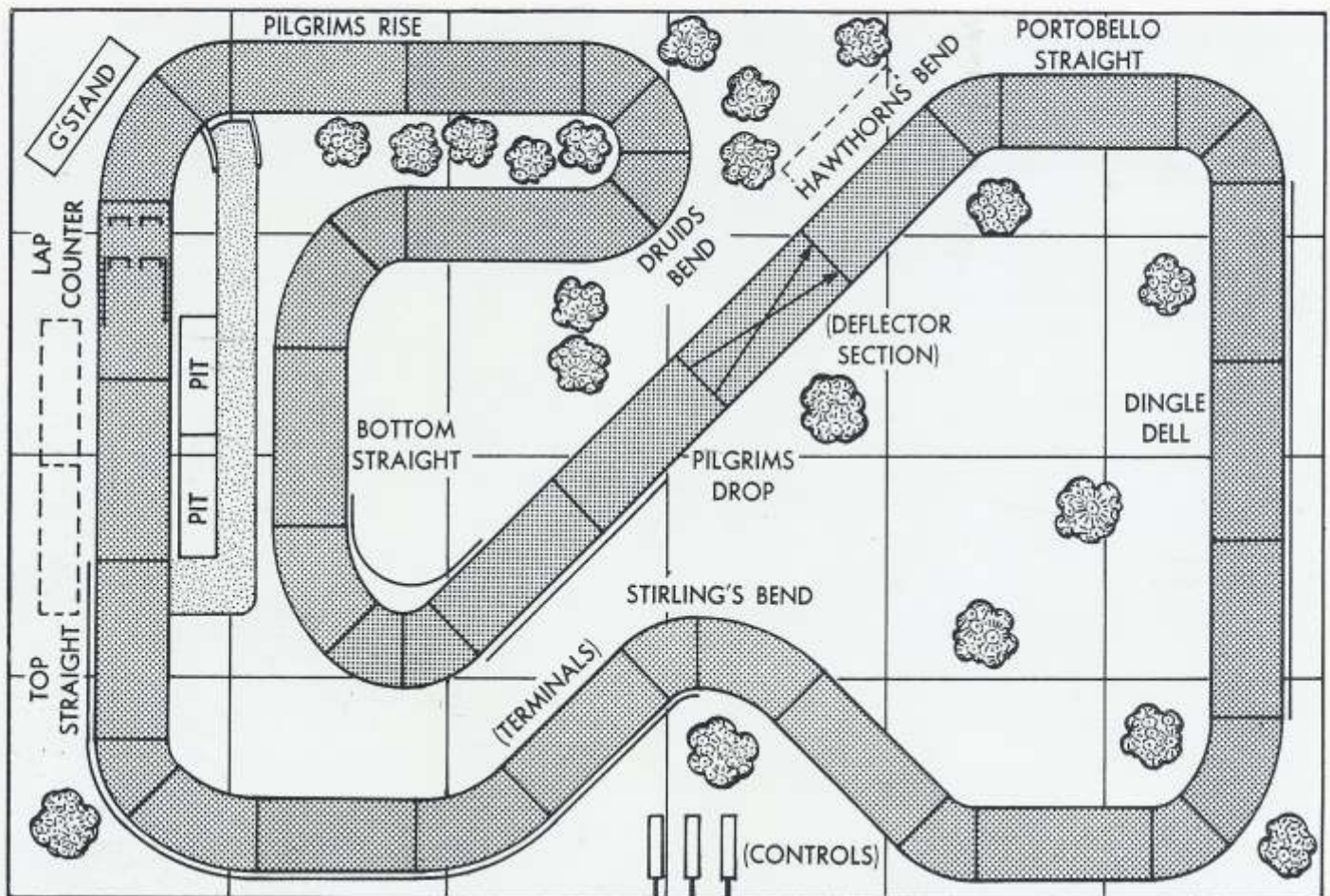
Ten laps is usually the length of a normal race, with occasional five-lap sprints and we rarely use more than two cars, because of the difficulty of counting the laps. The photographs show that we can use more, but on this size of track it can become too hectic when there are cars on the same lane all trying to use the deflector. Many times two cars have used the deflector on separate lanes and have crashed in mid air!

The record for ten consecutive laps is held by Stephen Hall in the Cooper at 1 minute 16 seconds, but this is being challenged at every meeting until our target of 1 minute dead has been reached.

At the moment I am experimenting with old, soft rear tyres on the Ferrari and plasticine on the tail of the car, and so far my unofficial ten-lap record is 1 minute 15 seconds, so Stephen Hall had better think about making his Cooper go even faster!

TOP RIGHT: British Racing Green out in front! Stephen Hall's Cooper enters Bottom Bend closely followed by a Vanwall (No. 6) while Michael Scott (Ferrari) tries hard to catch them.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A marshall waves the blue flag at the Cooper (No. 5) which is about to be overtaken by the Ferrari at Stirling's Bend. A Maserati is struggling to catch the leaders. Note the spectator in the tree.



A scale plan of the Wrenn Formula 152 circuit—each square represents 12in. The positions of the lap counter, deflector and terminal sections can be seen clearly in the diagram. Note that 4in. radius curves have been used in conjunction with 8in. curves to produce more authentic shapes for the corners. Dotted outlines are proposed grandstand sites.



'Brands Hatch in miniature. This interesting circuit is made from Wrenn 152 components' (photo taken from Meccano Magazine supplement)