

# Proposal to start the Electric Car Racing Association

## 1 The Original Proposal for ECRA

This article from the July 1960 edition of Model Maker is the earliest known record about ECRA

MODEL  
MAKER

### The ELECTRIC RACING CAR ASSOCIATION

Some thoughts by Laurie Cranshaw

TO be or not to be? That is the question which has prompted the following observations and ideas.

The first things to consider are:

- (a) Is such an association necessary or desirable?
  - (b) Do the clubs and therefore the members want one; and
  - (c) Are they prepared to support it?
- I must admit to a certain amount of doubt in my own mind after seeing the almost total lack of response to the bait thrown out by the MODEL MAKER in its editorial some time ago. However, although they do not feel that they should be part of such an association, and I agree with them, I feel certain they would assist in its formation and I will show at the end of this article how this can be done.

In order to assist the clubs in deciding their own attitude to such an association the following comments should be carefully studied.

- (1) A majority desire for control and direction of the sport.
- (2) A willingness on the part of several individuals to serve the majority.
- (3) A willingness on the part of the clubs and members to accept the decisions of those few; and
- (4) A willingness on the part of all to provide the necessary finance.

Let us take these points a little further.

(1) The creation of a controlling body in any activity does mean that some clubs and individuals must sink their own preferences in favour of the good of the majority and the best interests of the sport as a whole. Take, for instance, the depth of slot. A decision may be taken that it be 3/16 in. This would mean that any club with a slot only 1/8 in. would have to modify its track if it wished to invite other clubs or run an open meeting. Many other examples will spring to mind.

(2) A very important one this. Certain individuals, and this might be you, will have

to be prepared to give up some of their precious spare time, travel considerable distances to attend meetings, and work for the good of the cause.

(3) This should be obvious if the association is to work effectively.

(4) A sore problem with all clubs and the great majority of model car folk, but it must be faced squarely at the start as nothing hamstringing a body as lack of funds. After the necessary meetings to inaugurate the Organisation I think two meetings per year should be sufficient to cope with the necessary business. Now these meetings will involve travel for most of its members and they cannot be expected to bear this cost out of their own pockets. There will also be such things as meeting rooms, stationery, printing, duplicating, postage and various other expenses of like kind. How can these costs be met? Sources which spring readily to mind are:

- (a) Registration fee for club affiliation. This might be anything from £2 - £5 per year for a start.
- (b) Permit fees for all meetings other than closed club meetings — might be up to £1 per meeting.
- (c) Drivers' licences for competition in open events — perhaps say 5s. each.
- (d) Registration fees for cars for open meetings — perhaps 2s. 6d. per car.

Other means will occur to you quite readily, I am quite sure, and must be considered.

We now come to the all important matter of representation or who shall serve on this central body. To have a delegate from each club would be expensive on the central funds and may well be too unwieldy. However, if the clubs are willing to face the expense, then it might be tried even if only for the inaugural meeting. Another way, and to my mind a more practical way, would be delegates appointed on a seasonal basis. Clubs in reasonably close proximity to each other could form a group and appoint one of their number as a delegate who would speak for all the clubs in the group and possibly bring to the meetings a card vote on any particular proposition. This would certainly reduce the expense and would make the committee more manageable.

I think you will appreciate that in a loosely knit organisation such as this must be, a substantial amount of the work would be done by posted circular and correspondence. This would demand a paragon of a secretary.

I would even go as far as to say that the whole success of such an organisation might well depend on that one person.

Let us now consider the position of the MODEL MAKER. A correspondent suggested that they should form the association, but in the recent editorial various reasons why this was not desirable were given. I personally quite agree with those reasons and let's face it — isn't this a way of getting something ready-made for us? To be worthwhile it should be the result of our own efforts and the MODEL MAKER should be left free to report, suggest and criticise free of bias. The MODEL MAKER can assist in the initial stages and I am quite sure they will do so. I suggest that to obtain the feeling of the movement they insert a coupon which the clubs could tear out and return so that a firm opinion of whether to go ahead or not could be formed. This coupon would be so worded so as to gain a general answer to the questions raised above. If this were not considered practical then a coupon could be sent to all known clubs. However, I feel that one in our own paper is the best answer as it could then be returned by individuals and so give us a wider cross-section of opinion. I think, too, that as an "outsider" looking in, the MODEL MAKER might well agree to receive these coupons and be in the best position to assess the position and give an opinion whether the interest is sufficient to warrant calling an inaugural meeting. If the interest be sufficient then I suggest a period of four weeks as a limit for the return of the coupons.

I quite realise that in the space of this short article I have only scratched the surface of the scheme and that many more aspects will spring to readers' minds. However, I do think that the fundamentals have been sufficiently discussed to expose the difficulties we must overcome and to give clubs something to discuss and form and express their opinion.

With relief I pass the ball to you — the clubs and enthusiasts.

MODEL MAKER is happy to co-operate and invites all electric car enthusiasts to complete the following form which can be copied out on plain paper, if preferred, to prevent cutting the magazine. It is suggested that the forms be returned to the Editor, MODEL MAKER, 35 Clarendon Road, Watford, Herts; we will then analyse the answers and forward them to Mr. Cranshaw who, like every other enthusiast, no doubt has limited time for what can well be a mammoth job.

## PROPOSED ELECTRIC RACING CAR ASSOCIATION

1. Do you consider a Controlling Body necessary and/or desirable?  
YES / NO.
2. Are you willing to subscribe the necessary finance? YES / NO.
3. Would you prefer funds to be raised by: Annual club registration fee / Permit fees for open meetings / Drivers' licences / Car registration fee / Club affiliation fee—so much per head. What do you consider a reasonable sum per year for your chosen category? .....
4. Are you already a member of a club? YES / NO.
5. Do you favour Club or Regional delegates?
6. Would you travel more than 20 miles to a race meeting? YES/NO.  
How far?.....
7. Do you prefer slot or rail? SLOT / RAIL.
8. Which scale would you choose—allowed one only? 1/24  
1/32 1/40.

Delete those answers you do not favour.

Your support in answering these questions is the first step towards regularisation of standards etc. Please return by July 25th.

If you are a club secretary replying on behalf of your club, please state how many members.....

Name..... Senr. (over 16)/Junr.

Address .....

Club .....

## 2 Feedback on the original proposal

This article was published in the September 1960 edition of Model Maker

The results of the voting are interesting.

### What Scale?

The majority voted for 1/32 scale, and that has been used for the National Championships ever since.

Nearly a quarter of the voters wanted 1/24 scale. ECRA first produced 1/24 rules for the 1967 season. Although there was some use of these ECRA rules at club level, most 1/24 racing in the 60s and 70s was held at raceways to different rules.

The Association first organised 1/24 championships in 1994.

### Rail or Slot?

The vote was overwhelmingly for slot rather than rail, yet the initial National championships in 1961, 62 and 63 were for rail and it was not until 1964 that ECRA's first slot racing Nationals was held.

Laurie Cranshaw's article (3 – see next page) gives some of the thinking behind this.

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## **THE PROPOSED ELECTRIC CAR RACING ASSOCIATION**

**R**ESPONSE to the idea of an Association to govern the basic needs of electric car racing has proved somewhat mixed. Presumably those who did not trouble to send in forms do not feel the need for any organisation, though one or two wrote in to object to the potential "regimentation" such an organisation would produce. Well, no-one could say that model aircraft are regimented, but without the S.M.A.E. as a governing body there would be chaos from a competitive point of view; further, manufacturers produce engines, etc., to recognised classes, following decisions by the central council (decisions reached by the most democratic of means) and people who don't wish to become members of the S.M.A.E. are quite happy and satisfied with the goods they buy. The same state would eventually be achieved by a national car body—standardisation for competitions and so forth, manufacturers catering to known specifications, etc., but free-lance modellers able to follow their own ideas entirely as they wish. There would be no compulsion to affiliate to the organisation, and no means of making people do so even if anyone ever had the idea of trying.

Having cleared the air on that—and it seemed necessary to do so in view of some comments—let us turn to a break-down of the replies received. Again, the questions asked were only to get the drift of opinion, and do not presage anything so absurd as a ban on any particular aspect. Percentages of replies are given, taking into account two choices where given, which means that some totals naturally exceed 100 per cent.

Fund-raising : Annual club registration 42 per cent. (suggestions range from £2 - £3 3s.). Permit fees for open meetings 5 per cent. (10s. - 25s.). Drivers' licences 22½ per cent. (2s. 6d. - £1). Car registration 11 per cent (5s. - £1). Club affiliation 25 per cent. (2s. 6d. - £1 per head).

Favouring club delegates 56 per cent., regional 44 per cent.

Preference for slot 98 per cent., rail 2 per cent.

Scale choice: 1/24, 24 per cent.; 1/32, 51½ per cent.; 1/40, 1 per cent.; other scales 23½ per cent.

Most people are prepared to travel to a meeting, the average being about 50 miles.

Well, there is an initial breakdown. We have a sneaking feeling that a good many rail enthusiasts didn't bother to send in a form—certainly there were some names and clubs we looked for but didn't see. However, what further steps can be taken must now be examined—you'll be hearing in due course.

## 3 Laurie Cranshaw's Comments on the Feedback

This article was published in the November 1960 edition of Model Maker

### THE PROPOSED ELECTRIC CAR ASSOCIATION

#### Laurie Cranshaw puts forward definite proposals

**H**AVING just returned from a fortnight's holiday in a motor cruiser on the Norfolk Broads (I did take tools and models with me just in case!) and read the response to the proposed Electric Car Racing Association, I am prompted to put some definite proposals forward for your consideration and possible adoption.

I was very gratified at the response of the "slots" and rather sorry that the "rails", particularly some of the pioneers and the more experienced, did not bother. Frankly, I was hoping for much practical help and advice from these experienced folk. Incidentally, I don't like making a distinction between the "slots" and the "rails" as there is no reason why they should not live happily side by side and each learn and benefit from the other. My own club will, I hope, soon have both. However, the results of the poll give one a sneaking feeling that maybe the "slots" are more receptive of new ideas. I hope this is untrue, otherwise it might well herald a position of stagnation in the rail world. Look at your MODEL MAKER and see the proportion of advertisement devoted to goods for slot and rail and to the various scales and then imagine the position if the various manufacturers were able to channel their efforts into fewer well defined channels.

I would like to say, rather belatedly perhaps, that I have no personal aspirations in this matter. I am perfectly willing to do all I can to start the Association going and then to see it carried on and developed by more able hands.

First I would like to underline the comments made in the "M.M." last month that there is no question of "Thou shalt not — etc.", but merely a desire to see the sport flourish on a national, or even international, basis under the benevolent guidance of the majority.

From a study of the results of the poll it would seem that what is required and what is possible is a loose form of organisation based, as far as is possible, on a postal basis and the pages of MODEL MAKER

(I hope the Editor doesn't read that bit ! !). My proposal is therefore as follows:

1. An Electric Car Racing Association be formed on the basis of individual/club affiliation with an annual fee of 5/-. If a club decided to join then all its members would affiliate, but racers not belonging to clubs would be able to join on a personal basis.
2. This affiliation to be a requirement for all entrants in the "classic" events.
3. A start be made with 1/32nd scale, both rail and slot.
4. Agreement be reached on "scale" and "tolerance".
5. Racing classes are standardised; *i.e.*, G.P., sports, G.T., etc.
6. Method of running classic meetings is agreed.
7. An attempt be made to arrange a calendar of "classic" meetings with the possibility of a Drivers' Championship.

Once the organisation is in being it will be a simple matter to include other popular and supported scales for the ultimate benefit of all.

Now how do we make this reality?

I suggest that all 1/32nd scale enthusiasts write to MODEL MAKER on the following lines:

- (a) Indicating their support or otherwise.
- (b) Agreement to the suggested affiliation fee.
- (c) Stating "slot" or "rail".
- (d) A brief note of anything they think should be considered in the formation of the Association.

The answers to (a) and (b) can be "yes" or "no" and the answer to (c) can be one word. Any comment under (d), your name and address and name of club, and it would all go on a postcard. Surely not a lot to ask? These replies to be received within 14 days of the publication of this issue of MODEL MAKER.

Well, racing fans, the ball is squarely in your court. Do you want such an organisation with its attendant benefits or do you prefer to carry on in your own sweet way? It is entirely up to you.

## ELECTRIC CAR RACING ASSOCIATION

Firm proposals by Laurie Cranshaw

AFTER climbing out from under the deluge of replies on the proposed Association—6 from slot and 4 from rail—I have come to the conclusion that one half of you racers don't know what you want and can't write and the remainder just can't write. My sincere thanks to those few who did write and for the views expressed.

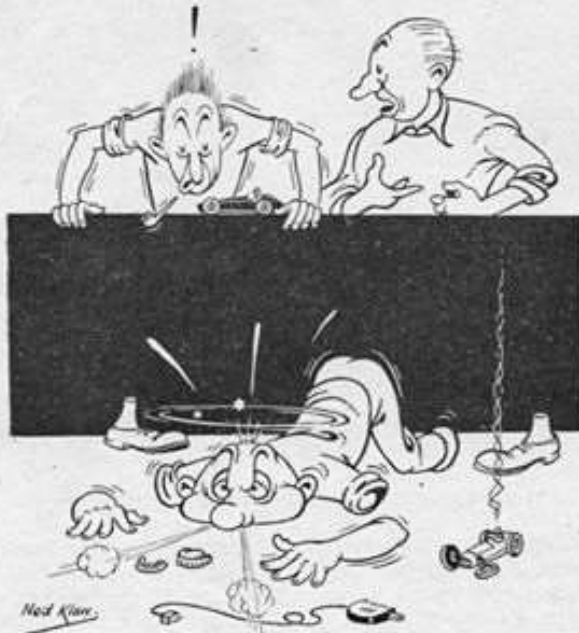
Following the good news that we are to have our own section in MODEL MAKER, it occurred to me that here was the answer. If the Editor could be persuaded to give a little space as and when required we would have the almost perfect method of publicity and even those of you who cannot write, can, I hope, read. I am therefore going to set out a basis for agreement on the theory that the British particularly, whilst slow to start anything, are quick to grumble.

Here are my suggested rules for both sides.

**Rail Racing.** The Southport Standards having stood the test of time be accepted with only slight modifications and these are now shown to refresh your memories.

### Southport Standards.

1. All models must be built to 1/32nd scale with a tolerance of 1/16in.
2. No car must exceed a maximum overall width of 2½ in.
3. No projections, capable of guiding the car, are allowed beneath the car other than the steering guide and contacts.
4. All cars must be scale models of full-size prototypes.
5. All cars must carry drivers.



"It's always the same—after the first ten laps he goes to pieces!"

6. All cars must bear official racing numbers clearly displayed on both sides, such numbers to be not less than ½ in. high.
7. The track guide rail, which also acts as the NEGATIVE rail is 3/16 in. high.
8. The track return rail, which acts as the POSITIVE rail, is ¼ in. away from the guide rail on the left-hand side and laid flat on the track surface.

You will see that I have omitted Southport's item 2 as the voltage is now standard and the reference to the type of motor seems somewhat superfluous.

**Slot Racing.** The Aintree club is at present putting the finishing touches to its slot track and later in the year, about June or July, will hold a full-scale slot meeting. This will be run under the following rules which could well form the basic standards for slot racing and which, for want of a better title, I have called the Aintree Standards.

### Aintree Standards.

1. Items 1-6 to be as per the Southport Standards.
7. Maximum length of guide, measured extreme front to extreme rear, must not exceed ¼ in.
8. The guide must not project more than ¼ in. below track level. (This will be checked by a simple jig having a slot ¼ in. deep. If the front wheels will turn then the guide depth must be reduced).
9. The slot width in the track surface must not exceed ¼ in.
10. The contact surfaces on each side of the slot must be at least ¼ in. wide.
11. Looking in the direction of travel the POSITIVE contact must be on the left of the slot, and the NEGATIVE on the right.

**Grand Prix Meetings.** For a meeting to use this title and therefore to classify as a "Classic", a standard form of organisation should be used so that intending competitors will know exactly what is expected of them, and the following is set out as a guide:

1. The event to be run in Heats and Finals with all races timed.
2. Heats to be set out before practice commences so that they will know against whom they are racing.
3. Heats to be a minimum of 20 laps.
4. The winners of the fastest heats qualify for the final.
5. Finals to be a minimum of: Sports, 100 laps; Racing, 150 laps.
6. Each competitor to be told the lane upon which he is racing in the heat so that he can obtain maximum effective practice.
7. In the event of two or more heat winners being on the same lane the tie be resolved as follows:
  - a. A member of the club on whose track the event is run automatically loses the tie.
  - b. Ties between the club members or visiting drivers be settled by heat times or by ballot.
  - c. A visiting driver losing a tie be given at least five minutes practice on his new lane.

I will now retire and dig myself a deep shelter to avoid the "possible" shower of brickbats and angry comments. However, before dipping your pen in vitriol, please remember that you slot people who use scales other than 1/32 can still use the "Aintree Standards" simply by altering item No. 1. Whatever we do let us make order out of chaos and perhaps the manufacturers will be encouraged to make us more "bits and pieces" which will benefit all.