



## Scale Model Technical Services

In the middle of May, your editor took a trip to the heartland of the British specialist model car making industry, the area around the seaside town of Hastings in East Sussex. First port of call (purely for geographical convenience) was **SMTS** where we met up with **Keith Williams**.

### FSW - When and how did you start modelling?

**KW** - I received a plastic kit of a Supermarine Spitfire for Christmas when I was six. I don't remember the make (possibly Lindberg or Monogram?) but the kit was moulded in blue and it was in the early 1960s. Partner in SMTS, John Allen, also started almost exactly the same way, with a 1:72nd Airfix Spitfire for which he still has the instructions!

I joined the IPMS and was making mostly military models, though I did also make cars as I liked them and I was one of the few IPMS members making cars. As a teenager I then got a part time job in a model shop and would make pretty much anything that I could get my hands on. I was building plastic kits the way that kids today play computer games and my Mum would be saying "Why aren't you out playing football with everyone else? You'll never get anywhere doing that stuff!"

Then before going to university I took a gap year and worked at a local garage (Caffyns) in the parts department. The accounts lady was married to Brian Garfield-Jones who ran Motorkits and he was also a partner in Western Models. Through this contact I was introduced to Mike Stevens at Western and my first 1:43rd models were samples which I built for them.

### FSW - When did you decide to make modelling your living?

**KW** - After university I went to work for Western full time, this was April 1977 and John had started there the previous year. While there I learned all about creating white metal kits and part of my job was to visit many of the Formula 1 teams to measure up the cars. In those days the teams were very helpful and things were far less secretive than they are now. It was through Mike and Western that we met Roger Taylor, who did all of the three view drawings in Scale Models magazine.

In 1982, John and I decided to go it alone and started planning to leave. In 1983 we started SMTS with a third partner, Steve Overy (now of Illustra) who brought along some much needed finance. We were very conscious of not treading on Mike's toes and to start with we concentrated on offering our casting services to other companies before launching our own range. People still sought us out for full projects and our first customer was Richard Briggs of Minimarque 43. 25 years later, we're still going, making our own range as well as casting and building for others.

### FSW - Do you have a favourite subject?

**KW** - The next project! I always enjoy the challenge of a new project, with the research and figuring out how to make things work and fit. A great challenge was a 1950s Vickers Vigor bulldozer which we recently created for one of our clients.

### FSW - Is there a particular model that you have been most proud of?

**KW** - There have been quite a few but a couple spring to mind. We made a 1:36th scale Boeing 777 as a promotional piece for Saudi Arabian Airways. The model had an 8 foot wing span and the side was clear to reveal all of the interior detail. To show it all off the interior lighting could be controlled with a TV remote control. Then there is the 1:12th Eagle Weslake. The model was initially made for the car's



owner but we have the possibility of releasing it as a full kit eventually.

### FSW - Do you collect yourself?

**KW** - I used to collect one of everything that we made but I was running out of space and had to stop. I also have a few themes which I do still add to occasionally, namely Aston Martin, Lotus and Jim Clark.

### FSW - What materials do you favour for creating models?

**KW** - The casting is nearly always white metal as we can do this in house, though there have been odd resin ones. For pattern making we tend to use tooling board and chemi wood, which I suspect is similar to most makers these days.

### FSW - How long does it take to create a new model and how much is research rather than hands on pattern making?

**KW** - Hard to give exact times as it varies. Most of the time is spent on research though. We don't have room for a reference library here (*the factory unit is absolutely packed - Ed*) but we have significant libraries at home and a lot of out of hours time is spent researching there. Things have changed a lot since I started model making. Then the teams were extremely helpful and I remember when I went to Williams for Western, I was there when Patrick Head and Frank Durney were fitting the bodywork

to the FW07 for the very first time. I can't imagine a random bloke with a camera, tape measure and note pad being allowed in on such a momentous occasion these days!

### FSW - What is a typical working day?

**KW** - Pretty much as you see now. Always lots of different projects going on. Roger is in the front office answering the phone and emails in between drawing new decal, instruction and photo-etch artwork. There are eleven of us here in total, pattern making, casting, painting, building, packing kits etc. The majority of the building is done in house, though demand dictates that some building work is done by external builders. Cars now account for approximately 1/3 of our business with growth in finished aircraft and construction equipment models. In an ideal world we would be 100% cars, but the bills need paying. We also do a fair amount of bespoke work.

### FSW - What's next?

**KW** - The next release should be the Brabham BT19 and close behind that the Lotus 48 Formula 2 car in Hill, Oliver and Clark versions. The latter is a decision that was made with a heavy heart as I have always been a Clark fan and this is the car that he died in. Also the March 731s of Purley, Williamson and Hunt. We really ought to do something to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. Maybe a reworking of SMTS' first release, the Arrows A3?



A glimpse of the busy factory. Two metal casting stations, stacked moulds & far left, the first stage assembly. Out of shot to the left is the paint area and behind the camera, the final assembly station where we see Keith seated at the top of the page.