



Ford E83W pick-up with Sear Models Elva on trailer from Corgi Gift Set 37.

The unsung heroes...

In the fast-moving, high-rolling world of motorsport, it's always the racing cars that get the media attention, but what about the trusty works support trucks and vans that follow the teams equipped with their every need? **David Wright** shows us a Selection of British Racing Team Support Vehicles in Miniature.

The books, films, DVDs and videos of historic British thoroughbred and sports car club racing are full of wonderful images of the men and their machines, battling against the weather, the track and, indeed, their own mechanical fallibility!

And so it was that the cars and their fearless drivers captured the limelight, while the vans, trailers and specially coachbuilt trucks, which ensured the cars and the mechanics all got to the trackside for the race, rarely got a mention. Yet, just occasionally, they were captured on film.

In the early days, those halcyon golden days of the 1950s and 1960s, transporters for racing cars began as humble standard issue

vans, towing a trailer, on which was mounted the single racing car.

One such example is the Ford E83W pick-up used by Elva during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Now no models exist of this vehicle, and therefore a chop was in order! The Ford E83W pick-up pictured here was originally a Matchbox Dinky Collection Radio Times van, with rear van body cut off, a new cab back formed, and a pick-up body made from a Corgi trailer. Note the towing hooks, which are also Corgi...

The accompanying photograph, (Kind permission of Roger Dunbar) shows the real pick-up towing a trailer with Elva on board. I used the trailer from the Corgi Gift set 37,

and the car is the resin handbuilt Elva from Geoff Sears of South Africa.

The Elva car company also ran its very own Morris Commercial PV support van, which takes us even further back as this vehicle was first introduced by Morris at the 1939 Commercial Vehicle Show. Although the original van has long gone to that great breakers in the sky, Roger Dunbar, who now owns the Elva name, and is promoting it well, found a similar van in Hull from the same year of manufacture, and had been fully restored. Roger bought it in 2006, and set about the cosmetic work of repainting it in the Elva team's colours. This work was undertaken expertly by David Cooper and Tony Brooks of Gerston Farm, Storrington. The van regular puts in appearances at the Goodwood Revival race meeting, and joins the 'Big Boys' in transporter line-ups at the Historic Motorsport Shows at Stoneleigh.

Fortunately I was able to track down a



Classic Commercials Morris PV van, a model of the vehicle restored to its former Elva glory by Roger Dunbar.



The originals outside the Elva works.



Above Vanguards Minivan 'John Cooper' – excellent signwriting.

Left Corgi Abingdon Set with Morris J van.

Below The Matchbox Dinky Ford E83W recreates the earlier John Cooper van with its trailer.



model of the Morris Commercial PV made in resin by Classic Commercials, and with the kind help of Roger Dunbar, the current driving force behind the Elva name, who had sets of transfers for a model project of his own, I have been able to create the model you see here.

The Morris J Type van succeeded the Morris PV in 1949, and the 'J' too had a very full and varied life serving many motoring businesses. Being manufactured by Morris, it was not surprising that it should have connections with the Abingdon-built MGs.

To recognise this close association, Corgi issued a really atmospheric set, No 97695, known as the Abingdon Set, commemorating the MG marque. It contained two racing MGAs and a unique Morris J van in British Racing Green, with signwriting declaring it to be from the Competitions Department at Abingdon. Worth about £30 now, this is an easy way to begin this fascinating theme for a collection.

John Cooper died on 24 December 2000, but his legacy of a phenomenal success rate in anything from Indianapolis 500 to Formula 1 and with tuned Mini Coopers will always be a household name. In miniature, this memory has been nicely kept alive by Vanguard, with a perfect starter model in this group of vehicles, the John Cooper Cars Minivan. Made in the days when it was able to proudly state on its baseplate that it was made in England, the model's British Racing Green livery and nostalgic precise lettering, in white with red shading for the Cooper name, stands it out as an important van as it goes about its business. With a registration number of 215 XPE, it's also an early pre-1963 vehicle.

Another Matchbox Dinky Toy Collection Ford E83W was commandeered to create the earlier Ford John Cooper van seen here, complete with its very own trailer. The van just needed a Plasticard header board across the roof, and a Corgi tow hook, but the trailer is a converted Corgi Pennyburn trailer, with

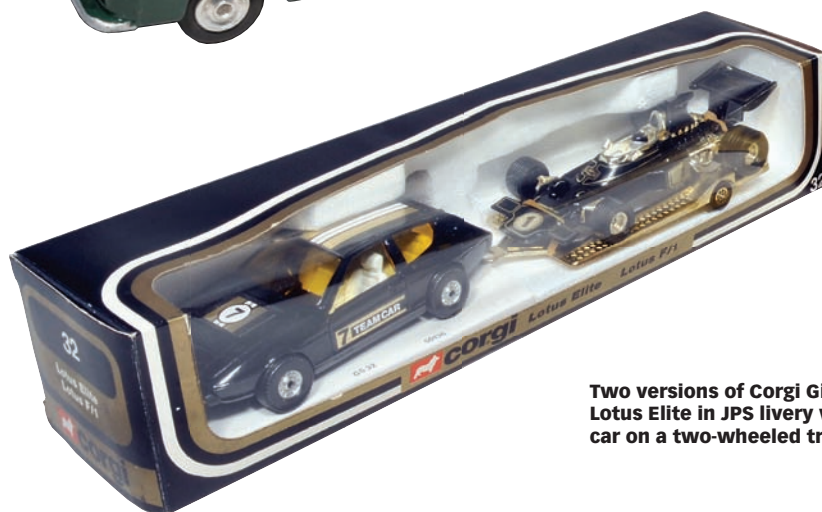
slab sides of Plasticard again, and a tarpaulin top created from an old handkerchief. However, it is as always the signwriting on commercial vehicles that brings them to life. Some patient research with the History of Advertising Trust in Norfolk and I had the colours required for the signwriting from my black and white photographs. I then sought the expertise of master transfer maker, Paul Robson to create the signs in miniature. I think the result is quite pleasing, and does the vehicles justice.

Lotus has used a wide variety of transporters through its long and illustrious history, some big and some small. We start the story in the early 1950s, when early Bedford OWB buses were being adapted for commercial use, and the transporter shown here was based on standard war-time Bedford OWB of Brown's Coaches of Darlington. The bus was modified by Cliff Allison of Team Lotus to carry two cars, spares and mechanics in 1954. The St

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Corgi-based Ford 400E with two-axle trailer as one of the Lotus Cars transporters.



Two versions of Corgi Gift Set 32, with the Lotus Elite in JPS livery with the 154 Lotus F1 car on a two-wheeled trailer.



Petersburg Tram Collection, a small cottage industry in Russia, which specialises in models of racing car transporters as well as buses and trams, has re-created this exceptional model in 1/43rd scale, using resin as the material throughout. These models are built to order, and the attention to detail is amazing. The stance and utilitarian image of this vehicle is captured perfectly.

From its early base in Cheshunt, Lotus also used a van and trailer to move its racing machinery, and one picture unearthed shows a Thames 400E van, pulling a substantial two-axle trailer, with an Indy car. These vans were made by Ford from 1957 to 1965, when they were finally superceded by the introduction of the legendary Ford Transit. Yet again, so

far, no model has been made of the 400E van and the nearest clone is the Corgi Ford Thames Airborne caravan.

This model was introduced in 1962, and withdrawn in 1966, after a whopping 902,000 had been sold. Not to be outdone, and armed with Milliput, a hacksaw and plasticard, I've tried to replicate the Lotus Cars van as best I can. The Thames caravan had its extended roof surgically removed and replaced with plasticard sheet, followed by filler. Next, the windows were filled in and the doors glued together, their windows also being filled.

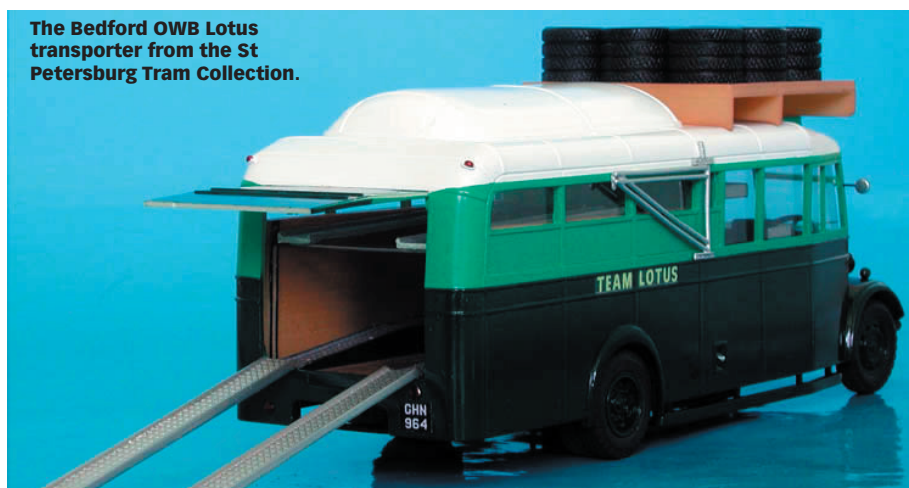
The model trailer used is a nicely detailed replica of a two-axle trailer, certainly capable of carrying a racing car, and very reminiscent of the trailer used by Lotus with the Thames van.

Cranking up yet another gear, the Spark model of the 1970 Gold Leaf Team Lotus Transporter captures the essence of the real giant very well. This transporter from the 1960s was based on the chassis of an AEC Reliance coach. Equipped with a workshop and store, it also had enough room for three cars, spare engines, gearboxes, tools and wheels. The standard of finish is as good as we expect from Spark, and with photo-etched windows, wipers and grille, and individually-moulded light clusters front and back. It really is a beauty; that iconic livery and signwriting is really the business.

In John Player Special Team Lotus days, a number of wonderfully liveried vehicles appeared – the first being The JPS Team Lotus Dodge Travco motorhome. Spark has reproduced it to the usual superlative standard, with one of the most detailed interiors I have seen. Cabinets, beds and plush seating are all clearly visible, the paint finish is wonderful and the gold transfers superb. The real vehicle was used for overnight sleeping quarters for the team during that fantastic 1973 season when Emerson Fittipaldi and Ronnie Peterson raced to glory for Colin Chapman's JPS Team Lotus.

Corgi was not slow to see the appeal of this livery and launched Gift Set 32 in 1976, comprising the 315 Lotus Elite in JPS livery as tow car, hauling a substantial, yet only two-wheeled trailer, carrying the 1973 released 154 Lotus F1 car. Two versions of this set

The Bedford OWB Lotus transporter from the St Petersburg Tram Collection.





Two versions of the AEC Reliance-based Lotus transporter from Spark.

exist, the variation being in the trailer, which appears in white in the standard black, yellow and red window box, or gold plated, with matching wheels, in a special black gift set box with gold and white lining. Both are pictured here.

When you look hard for a complete package in this field, you find Corgi's Gift Set 37, which helpfully contains two Lotus Elans, a VW pick up in the company's racing colours, plus the elusive trailer.

The Corgi Gift Set No 17 is quite a rare beast. Introduced in March 1963, a total of 456,000 were made, and it was finally withdrawn from sale in 1967. The set comprised the No 438 Land Rover together with the 154 Ferrari and trailer. Ferrari probably didn't use Land Rovers to pull their cars to the circuit, but it makes a nice pair...

Spark has been diversifying its range from just racing cars, and now include some lovely transporters, one of which is the Bedford VAL Team Lotus. Rather simple and slab-sided, it nevertheless is a superb model, and the colours used are really evocative.

In the 1950s, privateers abounded, thank goodness, which meant that sometimes single individuals would find intriguing solutions to their transporting challenges. Mike Anthony, who raced his own Lotus Eleven, was impressed with the Mercedes

streamlined single car high speed transporter, so he bought a

1949 Standard Vanguard for £150 and, in conjunction with a local firm of chassis experts, welded a crashed Vanguard van chassis on, using a piece of string to measure the length required!

Angle-iron reinforced the rear, and the whole vehicle was 19ft 6in long. To achieve sufficient power to run the loaded vehicle, the engine was upgraded to Triumph TR2 output. The cab was created using a Vauxhall Cresta window, but what of this vehicle now? From original pictures, it was later used by Ogle Engineering, but its later fate is unknown. Pete Kenna's range has for some time included this lovely Standard Transporter, produced from original pictures. A replica of the real thing is now being made

using a Standard Vanguard van chassis and body, using Pete's model as a guide!

One of the first multi-vehicle transporters was, of course, the now legendary Ecurie Ecosse Commer. After the famous Scottish Racing team finished first and second in the 1957 Le Mans 24 Hour Race with its D-type Jaguars the team's profile leapt, and there was a clamour for distinguished and fast transportation. Rootes provided the chassis and motive power, and Walter Alexander of Falkirk offered to have a one-off transporter designed and built at his factory, which specialised in truck and bus coachbuilding.

Other companies offered to help including British Aluminium, which offered the panelling, plus Dunlop, Joseph Lucas and Wilmot Breeden, and the final result of their efforts was commissioned in 1959 with additional funding coming from the Ecurie



The BMC Competitions Department's Mini transporter has not yet been modelled...



The 1973 JPS Team Lotus Dodge Travco motorhome from Spark.

Ecosse Association.

The transporter has a lower deck enclosed at the front with sleeping accommodation and space for one car. Hydraulic ramps then raise to give a further two cars access to the upper level.

The transporter was finished in time for the 1960 motor racing season and, wherever it travelled, the Ecurie Ecosse transporter was admired, until it was finally sold when the Scottish team was disbanded. It later passed through many hands and was finally discovered in a terrible condition in the 1980s.

It has since been restored by Dick Skipworth, to carry his ex-Ecurie Ecosse cars, and today it is as resplendent as it ever. It's nearly 50 years since it was commissioned, and still there's no full stop for this Commer...

Back in 1/43 land, there are now two models of this famous leviathan. Most recently issued is the glorious Spark example, which, although it has no working features, is correct in every visual detail. Corgi's 1126 Ecurie Ecosse transporter is perhaps one of the best-loved of the Corgi Major issues. First introduced in October 1961, no less than 145,000 were sold, with a further 90,000 sold in Gift Set 16, containing three racing cars as well, the Lotus XI, Vanwall and BRM. Of interest to the serious collector is the set that never was... GS17 was to be a Land Rover in Ecurie Ecosse livery, towing a BRM on a trailer. Although it never appeared, it is featured in Marcel Van Cleemput's book, and in due course Gift Set 17 became the Land Rover towing a Ferrari.

Illustrated here is one of BMC's coachbuilt Mini transporters, designed in Italy by Pininfarina and coachbuilt by Marshall's Aerospace of Cambridge. Surely at least as stylish as the Ecurie Ecosse vehicle, it originally transported Minis, and inside was a maintenance bay and driver's lounge all in one. Two of these leviathans went out to the USA to support the BMC profile there. Now, my question is: why oh why, hasn't any manufacturer of model cars made this beauty yet? Surely with its associations with the Mini, it is bound to be a surefire hit, and the colours and that rosette are truly iconic.

Back in the days of beautiful coachbuilt leviathans trekking across Europe, complete with their team cars, here's one that was



Above Spark's 1/43 scale version of the Ecurie Ecosse transporter.



Right The Corgi Ecurie Ecosse transporter is an iconic model in its own right.

commissioned by the British Racing Motors (BRM) Team. It was based on a left-hand drive export Leyland Royal Tiger Worldmaster LRT 3.1 chassis with 150 hp underfloor engine.

This shapely transporter was built in 1959 by Marshall Motor Bodies Ltd of Cambridge, to the design of the engine development division of Rubery Owen & Co Ltd, the builder of BRM racing cars. With a capacity for three racing cars, the transporter was constructed of hardwood with exterior panels of hand-beaten aluminum. Resin is the material that has created this gem of a model of this vehicle, thanks again to the workshops of the St Petersburg Collection of Russia.

Let's now look at one of our most popular manufacturers, Matchbox. The humble King Size, later Major Pack M6, racing car transporter was produced in its thousands, but once the perspex in the roof got cracked, and the tyres expanded and got lost, we really didn't rate it much did we? Well take

another look. It's a classic commercial vehicle, with neat transfers, and a loading ramp that can be lowered to drive one car onto the roof. Does any commercial vehicle enthusiast out there know which truck manufacturer the cab is meant to represent?

Dropping down in scale, the Matchbox Convoy Kenworth Cabover Transporter introduces us to the Arrows team. Now personally I don't know if such a vehicle as a Kenworth short wheelbase truck was indeed used to transport racing cars, but it says Arrows on the side... Can any reader help?

A little history of the team wouldn't go amiss here, as this team not the most well-known. The Arrows Grand Prix team has been competing in Formula 1 since 1978. It made its debut at the Brazilian GP with driver Ricardo Patrese, finishing second at Sweden, and the team completed the year ninth in the Constructors Championship. Patrese stayed with the team until the end of 1981 and, from then until 1988, other team members have included Jacques Villeneuve, Australian Alan Jones and Thierry Boutsen. Arrows pulled out of F1 in 1987, which was its best ever year, finishing sixth.

The Footwork Corporation purchased the Arrows Team in 1989 and, with drivers Derek

Pete Kenna's model of the Standard Vanguard transporter, now the basis of a full-size replica of the real thing...



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Above The Matchbox Kingsize/Major Pack transporter – what was it based on?



Probably not authentic, but this model from Matchbox in Arrows livery poses some interesting questions...



Right The St Petersburg model of the shapely BRM transporter.

Warwick and Eddie Cheever, took Footwork Arrows to seventh in that year's Constructors Championship. Some illustrious names continued the legend, with Michele Alboreto, Derek Warwick, and Christian Fittipaldi.

Tom Walkinshaw assumed control of the team in 1996, moved it to the TWR Group headquarters near Oxford, where it continued to prosper. With Yamaha engines by 1997, Damon Hill finished second in Hungary and teammate Pedro Diniz came fifth in Luxembourg, Arrows finishing the Constructors' Championship in eighth place. Arrows went into liquidation in 2002 and the cars and equipment were bought by Minardi.

To bring us right up-to-date, and right down to size, a recently-issued Code 3 new-shape Ford Transit van with trailer, loaded with a Ford Escort RS 1400 Cosworth caught my eye recently. They are both decorated in the livery of JRE Motorsport, which is based at Saltash, Cornwall, and specialises

in the preparation and support of rally cars. The model is sold with a limited edition certificate, stating it is one of 100 remodelled as a Code 3.

JRE currently supports one of its drivers, Steve Sproat who, with some sound and consistently reliable results, won the South Western Motor Club's overall championship for 2005 in this Escort RS 1400. The company also designs and builds off-road vehicles based on the Range Rover.

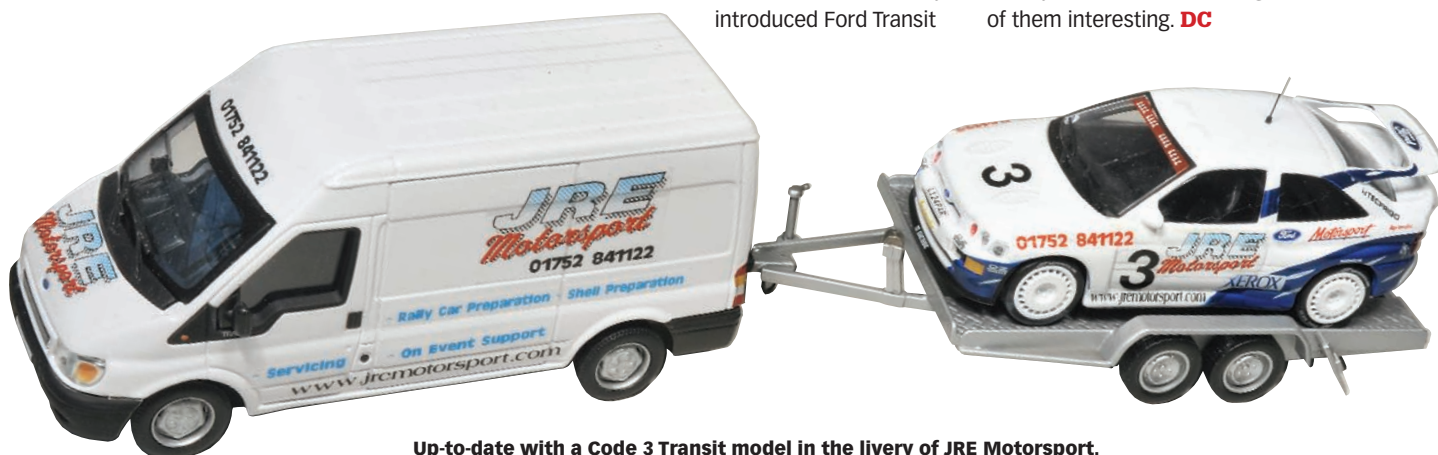
The model set is really well-detailed, with the transfers very clear and colourful. The trailer even has a moveable jockey wheel, and separate cast ramps for fitting to the trailer for unloading the car, an excellent addition to the collection.

Ford, of course, has had a Motorsport Division for many years, and its Escorts have an enviable reputation on dirt and track, but what about the support vehicles? Now there may be others, but the only one I have found so far is the recently introduced Ford Transit

van of 1979, seen here in the tell-tale Ford colours of blue and white. The blue oval appears discreetly on the side panels, and the beautifully made photo-etched roof rack is equipped with a complete set of four spare wheels for the racer of the moment. It's a typical Spark creation, with all the detail and accuracy we have come to expect from this range.

So, the evolution of the works support vehicles, from humble beginnings of pick-ups and trailers, through to massive coachbuilt leviathans, and onward to the anonymous trucks and Transit vans, has been a fascinating journey.

For the duration of this article at least, the 'back office' support vehicles that enable the exotic racing cars to take all the acclaim have become the stars themselves. Whether you collect commercial vehicles, have a racing theme, or have just found a new angle that your collection has not covered yet, I hope you've found the background to some of them interesting. **DC**



Up-to-date with a Code 3 Transit model in the livery of JRE Motorsport.