

CHARPENTO This is a French set to make structures, with Half-Trusses rather like the STEEL WORKER in 16/449, but smaller, 15cm long at most, and with parts for walls and roofs too. The name brought to mind charpentier, the French for carpenter, but the dictionary also has a closer word, charpente, meaning 'frame(work) or framing'. For these notes David Hobson kindly lent me his set, complete apart from the Screw-driver and one or two small parts. The material in MCS matches exactly part of a booklet & a leaflet found in this Set. A 'Box No.1' is mentioned in them but the box itself has no indication of set size & it isn't known if other sets were made. No precise date is known for CHARPENTO but it is said to be from the late 1920s, in which case it would have come before STEEL WORKER. A patent is claimed but no details are to hand.

Several of the main parts can be seen in the Garage above - one of the 5 lengths of (Braced Girder style) Beam (5 to 25cm), 4 of the 8 types of Half-Truss (2 RH & 2 LH), the Roof Slab, & the Wall Plate. The only major type of part not shown is the Flange (base) Plate. Most of the parts are shown in MCS but not all, and some details may not be clear.

The PARTS The holes are usually 2.5mm Ø but a few are up to 2.7mm. The basic pitch is 12.5mm but usually there are 2 or 3 holes at that spacing, separated by multiples of up to 75mm. However the spacing on the hypotenuse of the Half-Trusses is often irregular, with non-standard gaps between pairs of holes, and 5 holes at 6¼mm pitch on the 2.5cm Truss. I haven't discovered the rationale for all these variations. Another exception is the Stiffener (2*4h Plate), which is often used to join parts end to end, and has the crosswise holes at 6mm pitch.

The **Beams, Trusses** (I'll omit the 'Half-' from now on), & **Angle Irons** are of .35mm steel, but the **Stiffeners** are .5mm thick. All these parts are painted silver. The Beams & Trusses have 5mm flanges on all sides, and the Angle Irons are 5*5mm. The 10cm side Truss with 45° angles is wrongly shown as 15cm in the MCS List. The Beams are 25mm wide and the Stiffener measures 45*11mm.

The **Flange Plate** is 20cm long by 6.5cm wide and the long edges are formed over into the section opposite. I can't see the purpose of the 4 narrow 4mm long slots along the centre line of this part. The 4 holes at each end match those in the Connecting and End Plates, both of which are about 30mm wide, and neither have the bottom 3 mm wide flange. All these parts are painted grey.

The **Roof Slab** has 5 panels with an impressed diamond in the centre of each, not the 3 shown in MCS. It is 204*61mm o/a, painted red, and has one hole at each end to allow it to be bolted to a Truss. The 203mm long **Ridge** is also red & its section is shown left. It has a hole at each end & one in the middle, and is held to the Roof Slabs on either side by Bolts passing through it into 15mm long, red **Clamping Angles**, similar in section to the Ridge.

The **Wall Plate** is 100*200mm. Both sides are painted a dull yellow with speckles of red and black, and one face is decorated with grey blockwork along the bottom & sides, and 2 diamonds of red bricks. The outer 5 or 6mm at the top & ends of this face are painted silver but do not match the sides of the Trusses exactly and look rather untidy. The

"CHARPENTO"

28 holes are all near the edges, and are along the ends and at the top & bottom near the ends.

The M2 **N&B** are machined brass. The Nut is square, 5.0mm A/F & 1.9mm thick; the Bolts have 4mm Ø fillister heads and most are 4½mm u/h, with a few 12mm, threaded over 10mm. Along with what may well be the original blue and yellow **Cord**, there is some, rather thinner, in red, blue, & white. The **Insulating Pulley** is 10mm o.d., 5mm thick, & 2.8mm bore; it is hard & white and is perhaps made of porcelain.

The parts are generally well made and well finished.

The **SET** is packed in a 2 layer, wood framed, red box, 43*27*4cm. The 52 Beams & 40 Trusses are packed between 2 partitions in the tray, with most of the small parts on either side in yellow, end-opening card boxes. In the bottom a card tray at each end provides partitioning and the remaining parts were probably strung to red cards.

The **label** on the lid is a 15*31cm B&W photo showing a rail track, a 2-seat racing car on a road,

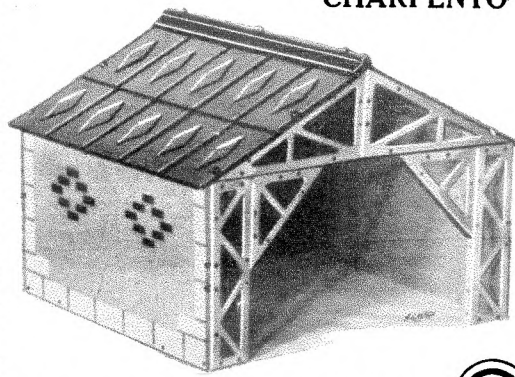
a smart, propeller driven launch on a river, a bridge, and other frameworks including part of four of the manual models. It's a rather unusual picture, and in the foreground, partly hiding the models, are 2 what look like huge fir trees, of at least 4 times the height of a Garage. It is signed A. CAYEUX, PARIS, and under that, on the white border is L. DANIEL, Lille. At top right is the maker's logo (above) and the initials are for Compagnie Industrielle de Jouets, give or take possible misspelling.

The **Booklet** already mentioned is in English and has 8 pages 135*212mm deep; it could once have had the plain looking cover shown in MCS. It starts with the Contents of Box No.1, followed, on pp6-8, by the parts needed & brief building instructions for each of Models Nos.1-9, starting with the Bench (right) and finishing with the 80cm long Road Bridge shown in MCS. Other models include a Table, a Farm Shed and a Railway Platform.

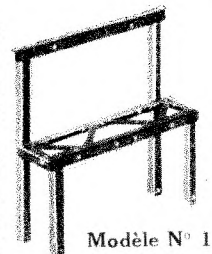
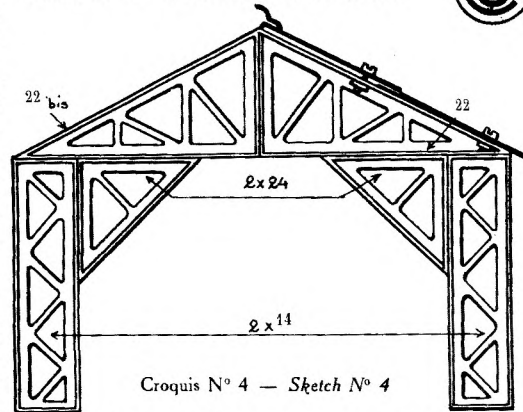
The **Leaflet** is 203*454mm, folded into four, and is in French with an English translation of most of the wording. It contains photos of some of the parts (without the PNs given in the Booklet), and photos of the 9 models, with additional sketches & notes explaining the construction.

Enough detail is given to be able to build the **models** in the mind, and with the parts in front of one it seems that most will bolt together satisfactorily, although in some cases adjacent parts can only be bolted together through a pair of holes at one end or in the middle. Extra holes, or perhaps some slotted holes would have been worthwhile. For example with the holes provided the back leg of the Bench has to be 3mm longer than the front. Notice that the Beams & top Trusses are wrongly shown in the sketch of the Garage. The Nuts are large enough to handle easily but the Bolts are a touch fiddly and holding the Nuts inside some of the structures can be difficult. No spanner is provided or needed when using the Beams & Trusses, because one edge of the Nut bears against the flange; in other cases one would be useful.

The only models with moving parts are 2 Swings. The 6 Pulleys are used in a Wireless Aerial, as insulators in the wires (actually Cord) slung between 2 square section masts, 45cm high.



Modèle N° 6 PETIT GARAGE



Modèle N° 1

ITEMS FROM LETTERS

1. On **STEELBUILDER** (20/562) David Lawrence has recently acquired a No.1 Set and wrote 'What I hadn't realized, because the manual doesn't mention it, is that the Strip's doubled edge has a pip on the inside at one end, so that you have to press it to snap it in.'

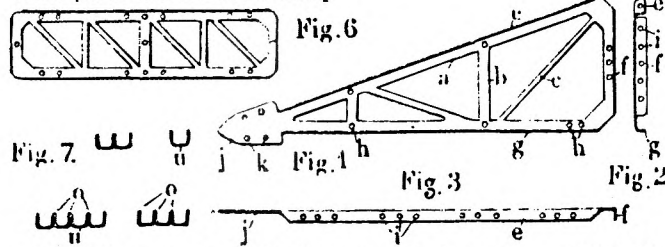
2. From Kendrick Bisset on the **Flanged Sector Plates in U.S. MECCANO** outfits, 'From what I have been able to gather the single row of holes version was used through at least 1927. I have seen two 1928 outfits with the three row variety, and they are shown clearly in contemporary illustrations. BUT later outfits reverted to the single row version. They are in my 1929 #20 & #30 outfits, and in the subsequent New Haven GILBERT-MECCANO outfits. [The history of the sets was given in 12/317.] Is it possible that Elizabeth was making the single row type, and had the tooling? Then when the new version came out [in the UK in 1927] perhaps they were made in England and shipped over until new tooling could be put in place - but this plan was interrupted when Gilbert bought U.S. Meccano?'

3. D. Courdoux wrote that production of **TEMSI** stopped for good in May 1999, and that in future no **MÄRKLIN** spares will be sold, only one or two 'theme' sets. Also that there is a question mark over **STOKYS** because letters to them remain unanswered.

4. Thomas Morzinck wrote that there was a good picture of a **STABA** set on the German ebay site. That's the STABA with the 'outline' Strips, see 8/194. The Set was a No.00 and the contents seem to correspond to those in MCS. The box is red and has 'STABA Constructor' on the lid; the manual doesn't seem to have a proper cover - the front page has just 'STABA' at the top, with '00' in the top right corner, and text underneath. The parts look like those described in OSN 8 except that the 21mm Pulleys are red instead of nickel.

On the **Korbuly patents** (see 22/623), the date of the Austrian one (with gearwheels, connecting rods, etc.) was 1st Nov. 1901 [thus predating Hornby's patent by nearly a month], & the German patent was granted on 14th Jan. '02.

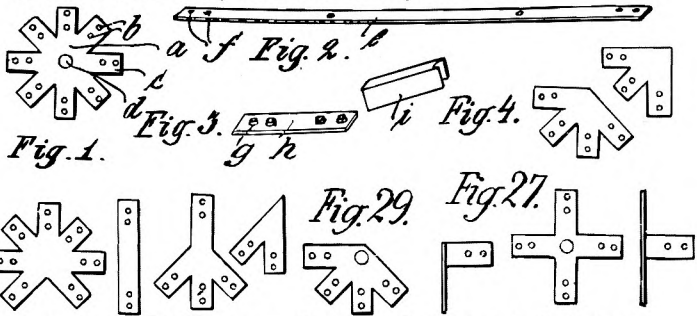
5. From Jeannot Buteux. • The French **CHARPENTO** patent (see 21/617) was No.589377 and a Roger Marie-Joseph Biard applied for it on 2 Feb. 1924. It was acquired by CIJ, who also produced a set for Citroën, and it bore the CITROËN name. Standard CHARPENTO parts were used but painted red & green, and various Garages could be made from the Set. It is extremely rare. [The Patent shows Trusses similar to CHARPENTO but an additional one with a spade end (Figs.1-3) is included, and the Beams have a different pattern of bracing (Fig.6). Various Wire Staples (Fig.7) were also proposed as an alternative to N&B. All these parts are shown below.]



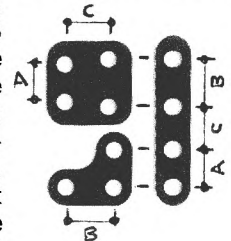
• **EIFFEL** parts (see 19/491) are red & green. • **CLIFFIX** (see 21/596) was patented in France in 1945. • On **STANDARD L.R.** (21/590), the French patent was not quite the same as the UK one. And the order in which the different coloured parts appeared still isn't known. • The name **PETIT GÉANT** (Little Giant, see 21/603) was used for a French system in the 1950s, but it had parts to make a variety of spring & electric motors. • On **MÉCANIC** (21/603), in each large set was a Plate in the bottom of the box, painted matt black, which could be used as a base for various models. It has now been established that its predecessor, **ÉCÉPÉ** (see 12/314) was marketed from 1913.

• The **Black Country Miniature** parts (21/619) really are small, a MECCA-MINI Strip will pass through a hole in a MECCANO Strip, and a BCM Strip will pass through a MECCA-MINI hole. • The contents of **Graham's patents** 125890 & 138824 (see 14/372) are all in one French patent, No. 520081, which was applied for in July, 1920.

Jeannot also sent a copy of a **Danish Richter Patent** Nr.20642, dated 1915. The original German version was from 1913. 28 parts are illustrated in the Danish one, including Figs.1-4, 27 & 29 below. The unlabeled 6 parts below are examples of the other 22 parts - they are like Fig.1 but without the centre hole and with various combinations of from 2 to 7 arms. I can't see how the parts hold together but the idea of hubs with strips attached is similar in principle to **IMPERATOR/ANCHOR ENGINEER** (see 17/486). As far as I know these parts were never produced.



6. From David Hobson. • Snooks's Toy Shop in Bath has a new stock of **CONSTRUCTION** sets: Nos 15, 20, 65, 67, & 77 (at £45,25,7,7,40). Nos.15 & 65 seem to be as described in 14/383 & 22/622 respectively. The others are: No.20 with 365 parts to make space models; No.67 with 214 parts for small space ships; and No.77 (460 parts) for various solar-powered models, and marked as 'new'. Another item is a Parts Pack '**C113 Adapterplatte**', price £3.99. It contains 8 each of the 3 parts right (50% full-size), and they are meant to allow 1/2" pitch parts to be used with those having the 10mm CONSTRUCTION spacing. The dimensions A, B, C are respectively 10, 12.7, & 11.5mm. The latter would be about half the width of 2 Strips, one 1/2" wide & one 10mm. On p151 of *Baukästen* it



is said that these parts were introduced in 1998 'to put more pressure on the MECCANO system in the marketplace' [My free translation]. • On the 'Matchbox' set **CLOU** (see 6/130, 13/345), Werner Sticht kindly provided a translation of a note about it in a March 1932 German toy magazine. It was made by Gebr. Schmid and had recently been introduced. The Discs which push on the wooden Rods were made from pressed sawdust; and the Set sold for 25 Pfennigs.

7. From Tony Press: • A copy of the front cover of a **MONTEX** model leaflet in Dutch, PR 7/632/12(IP), which Alex de Jong had put on the Spanner network. A Spanish system called MONTEX was described in 11/296, but in this case it is one of the names that was used for **BRITISH MODEL BUILDER**. The MONTEX cover of this type in MCS has the same layout as the Dutch one, with the 2 boys & Derrick Crane at the top, but it is in Spanish. MONTEX was no doubt a name that could be used in many different markets, and so perhaps leaflets in other languages were produced. Incidentally it may not be clear in all copies of MCS, but the MONTEX Leaflet there has a PR of 13/1035/2, and its price is in 'Argentina pts.'

• News of a 'new' system called **BIG-JOY**. It was a pre-war Australian made copy of **TRIX**. The parts seen seem to be nickel or chrome plated, but are rather inaccurately punched and have a somewhat ragged finish.

• 2 photos, courtesy Jack Little, of a made-up **GEOBRA** model (see 19/552, 22/631), and the set's box. The parts look to be as already described and are the same colours. The box is shown at the top of the next column, and is red with: *Geobra* in a circle top right; some parts in the panel