

ITEMS FROM LETTERS

1. From Gordon Finch. On the **STEEL TEC Enterprise** parts in 17/481: the 3 & 5h Strips are, in MECCANO parlance, formed and not curved; the 10h Strips are both curved and formed, but not quite to the extent shown in the manual, and at a glance they appear to be identical; the black Plates are of very thin, very flexible plastic; and the 7h Formed NS has kinks/creases across the holes. The electrical functions are operated by very neat, moulded push buttons, which aren't mentioned anywhere in the Manual.

2. • On the **Gilbert MECCANO #150 Set**, see 19/546, John Hanby noted that not all the parts needed for the models are included in the Set (or the Parts List), and there are insufficient of others.

• He also wondered if all the manual models for **CONSTRUMENTS** Sets 30 & 100 would actually cost £30/£100 (19/554). [Perhaps not because the claim wasn't used in any other known ads.]

3. From Werner Sticht. • On what was produced at **Schmerbach** (see 18/504 & 19/555), Karl Debit has asked some workers at Pfaffschwende, who had worked there for over 40 years, and they told him that there was never the machinery at Schmerbach to produce aluminium parts, and no-one knew of a connection with the **SONNEBERGER** system. A friend of Karl has also asked about **SONNEBERGER** in Sonneberg and in Steinach, and there too no-one knew of production at Schmerbach (or any connection with CONSTRUCTION either, see 17/489). So the Schmerbach phase of **SONNEBERGER**, arising only from the reference to it in *Eisenzeit*, is 'not proven'.

• The German mail order house **Quelle** (see 13/361) have sold **TRIX** and **CONSTRUCTION** in recent years, but in their Autumn/Winter 1998/99 catalogue the 3 sets offered appear to be repackaged **MEK-STRUCT**. They are identified by the numbers of parts in them, 300, 400, & 600, and the models on the lids look just like the small ones from known **MEK-STRUCT** outfits. The main name, **METALLBAUKASTEN**, on each lid, is stylised in a way unique to Quelle,

and the 'good play' logo (above) is in the top left corner of the 600 box below it. The two larger sets contain a Motor, and the 600 has the Sound/Light Unit. The sets are priced at DM 99.95, 69.95, & 49.95.

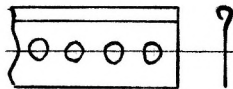
• A photo of a **STABILA** Outfit (see 13/343), with a strikingly bright and modern looking lid (below). It is orange and yellow with a large clear panel in the centre so the manual underneath can be seen. The name is on the diagonal band top left, with the slogan **TECHNIK FÜR Mädchen** (Engineering for Girls) on the right. 7 red circles probably show real life activities, with an aeroplane in the one clearly

visible, and what may be a girl using a microscope in another. I still find it hard to reconcile the image this creates with the woolly looking (literally) models in the manual.

4. From Thomas Morzinck. • A photo of a **STABILA No.1 Set**, courtesy Karl Debit. Apparently the cover described above was only used for the No.2; the No.1 is a much plainer affair with no illustrations on the lid and no clear panel, just brown wording on a mottled light brown or or-

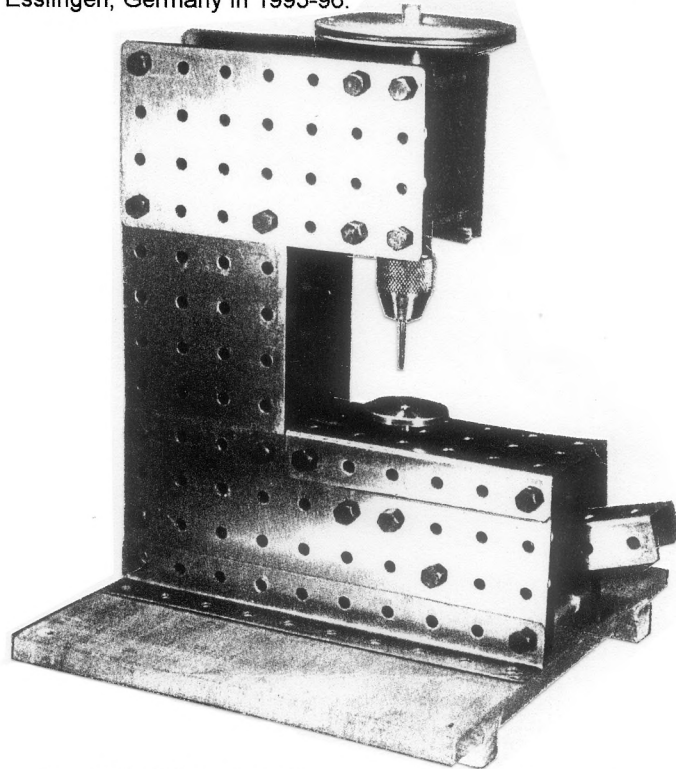
ange ground. The Wheel Discs have a brass look, and the 4 hanks of wool are white, blue, light green & orange.

• Karl also explained that the **WALTHER'S INGENIEUR** part called **Wulsteisen** (see 19/550), is a perforated strip with one edge formed over to stiffen it, as in the sketch opposite.



• **KOSMOS** (see 17/477) educational sets for children have been produced from 1930 to the present day, and have covered almost the full range of scientific topics: radio, chemistry, mechanics, electricity, optics/photography, biology, astronomy. The 'Mechanik' and 'Technikus' sets contained a lot of special parts to allow physical experiments with simple but working machines (including a steam engine). The only Set, apart from the 'Maschinen', that would really be called an 'mcs' was **TECHNOFIX** (15/419 & 17/477). In the late 1950s/early 1960s a similar set with plastic parts called **STECOFIX** was offered but it is a mystery because Franckh'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung of Stuttgart, who have produced and distributed **KOSMOS** sets since the beginning, have nothing in their archives about it. [An English language **KOSMOS** Set called **THE TECHNICAL KID** has strayed into MCS, and has 63 special parts including some for a steam engine. The manual was © 1952, and has on the cover '170 Experiments in elementary Physics, laying the foundation in Engineering, by W. Fröhlich'; W. Keller & Co. appears after the maker's name given above.]

Kosmos MASCHINEN was produced around 1930, and working models of a Lathe, Milling Machine, & the Drilling Machine below could be made, powered by a 110/220V motor. The model is on a wooden base, and the drill is held in what looks like a real chuck. This material has been taken from the catalogue of an exhibition of stone/metal/wooden sets belonging to Tobias Mey, that was held at Esslingen, Germany in 1995-96.



• The **METEOR** Windmill and Crane, (see 19/534) are very similar to the **MÄRKLIN** models Nr.1009-30 Windrad, and Nr.1010-30 Fahrbarer Drehkran, in Manual No.14910. [The 1009/1010 Sets appeared in 1957.]

• On **PONTIFEX** (19/527), the main parts are aluminium, and the basic pitch of the holes is 10mm. The holes are drilled by hand and are about 4mm Ø. The N&B found in the Set are not M4: the thread is near 5/32" BSW but slightly smaller in diameter and with a finer pitch. No doubt at that time whatever was available was used.