

## 'New' System - JR. ENGINEER

by Jacques Pitrat

The parts in this small American Set, with 26 different types in all, generally resemble MECCANO. Most though are aluminum, and the holes (at 1/2" pitch) are only 3.2mm diameter. My Set has never been used, the parts are still fixed to the 45\*30\*3cm cardboard box. It was made by Coledi Inc., New York 55, N.Y. The 'JR.' in the name are not initials but stand for 'JUNIOR' - on the lid & manual cover (above) the boy's head covers where the dot ought to be.

'4 1/2' appears twice on the edges of the lid, but not at all in the manual, which does not mention the existence of more than one set. The ERECTOR-style number is curious, given the MECCANO character of the system, and in any case the number of different parts, and the total number of parts, are more like those of a No.2 1/2 ERECTOR set than a No.4 1/2.

**The Parts** The names given in the manual (in brackets below) are often confusing. The parts are aluminum unless otherwise stated, and the numbers found in the Set are given in curly brackets.

• **Strips** with 23 holes (Long Girder), 11 holes (Short Girder) & 5 holes (5 Hole Strip) {8,6,6}. 7h Curved Strips (Curved Girders) {6}. 1\*5\*1h DAS (Right Angle Girders) {6}

• The 9\*5h **Flanged (Base) Plate** is steel, painted red, with the long sides flanged. The 5\*3h **Small Flanged (Base) Plate** has the 3h sides flanged, & is painted orange. The 9\*3h **Flat Plate** is fully perforated & painted red. {1,2,2}

• **Brackets.** The **Angle Brackets** (Right Angles) have one normal hole & one very long slotted hole {12}. Next a flat **T-Bracket** (Girder Brace) with 3 holes in the bar & one in the leg {4}, and 2 variants of it, but both with a slotted leg hole: an **Angled T-Bracket** (Tee Angle) with the leg at 90° to the bar, and a **Steering Bracket** (Double Right Angle) with the outer ends of the bar bent at 90° to form a 'U' {4,4}. These 3 parts, and the Wheel, can be seen in the insets below.

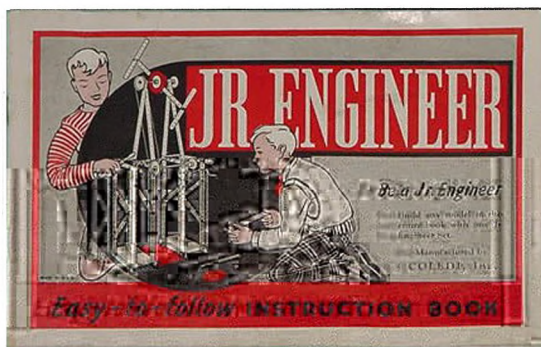
• **Wheels** of 8cm diameter with a blue plastic rim, a nicked steel disc, and an aluminium boss. 1 1/2" **Pulleys** with Set Screw and 8 holes, like M21. Nicked steel **Wheel (Utility) Discs** of 5.5cm Ø, with a ring of only 5 holes. {4,4,4}

• **Gears.** **Large** with 36 teeth, and **Small** with 24. Both are very thin, 1.8mm, and it would be difficult to run them together. The teeth are more like those of a Sprocket Wheel than a Gear {1,2}.

• The **Axles** are 10cm long, and are of 3mm steel, like the **Crank Handle** {2,1}. The two **Collars** have one Set Screw. The **Cord** is white.

• **N&B** The **thread** is 3.5mm Ø. The 14mm u/h **Bolt** (Screw) is cheeseheaded; the 25mm **Long Bolt** has a mushroom head. Both are black steel. The hex **Nuts** are nicked steel. {47,2,39} As the Bolt is also used as the Set Screw there is a problem because when in place it exceeds the diameter of the Small Gear, and even that of the Pulley, which is often used as a wheel. It is also impossible to have the shanks of two Bolts inside an Angle Bracket. In the manual, the N&B look like MECCANO. The diameter of the 2 steel **Washers** is 13 mm. The **Screwdriver** is ERECTOR-style.

The **Manual** has 24 pages including the covers, 210\*

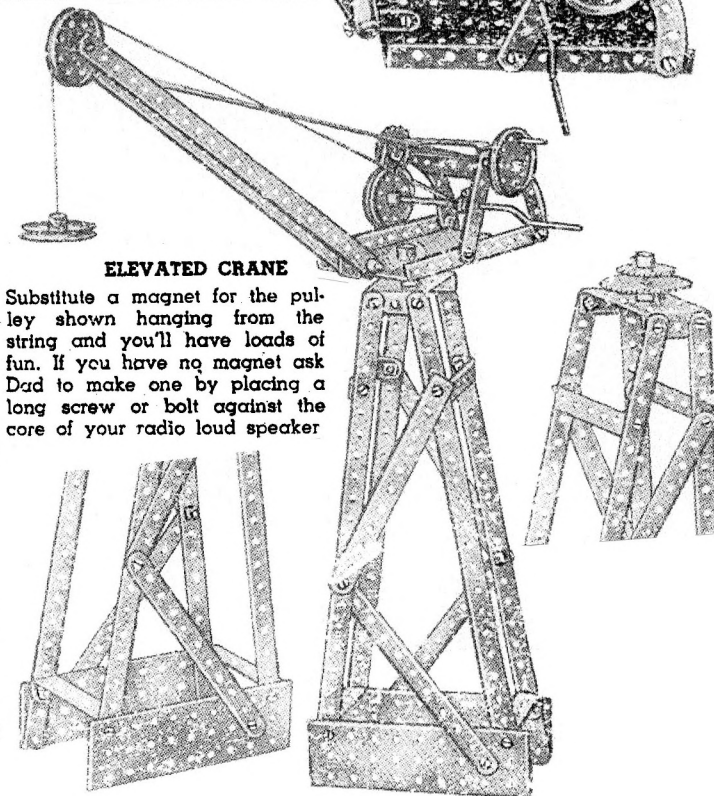


132mm deep. The system is presented on p2 and the parts are described on p3. Some 'basic assemblies' are described on pp 4 & 5, with some hints, such as how to use the Long Bolt. Then come many models, several on each page, and there is a short explanation for some of them. The contents of the set are not given. Most of the parts are used in the Crane below although they will be blurry. The 2 Gears can be seen

on the top of the tower, & a small one is on the far side of the luffing winch. Curved Strips are used at the back of the frame for the winches, and from their use in other models, 4 make a circle when overlapped by 1 hole.

There is nowhere an indication of **date**. However, with its aluminium parts and poor quality N&B, it was probably made just after WW2. It is clear that the manufacturer could not obtain the proper Bolts and was obliged to use whatever was available. This set was no doubt made at a time of steel shortage.

When making a hoist, fasten the end of your string to the hub screw of the wheel instead of the axle. It avoids slipping and makes a neat reel.



ELEVATED CRANE

Substitute a magnet for the pulley shown hanging from the string and you'll have loads of fun. If you have no magnet ask Dad to make one by placing a long screw or bolt against the core of your radio loud speaker

ELEVATED CRANE

### TO TEST YOUR ENGINEERING SKILL

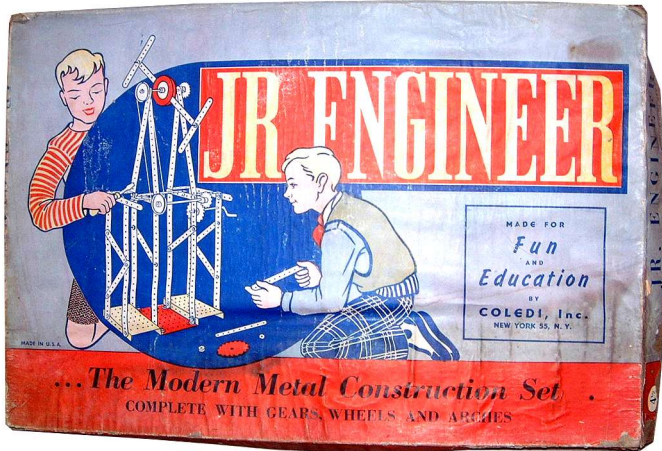
#### SMALL ADS

**WANTED** For inclusion in the forthcoming 'Canadian Radio Encyclopedia' - any information, literature or parts for the Meccano Crystal Set, or similar by Gilbert or others. Richard Symonds, Suite 101, 1675 Martin Dr., Surrey, B.C., V4A 6E2, Canada.

**FOR SALE** Collection of metal systems - over 50 items including MECABEL, EIFFEL, STABA, MINEX, TUBEPLAC, STANDARD L.R., etc, etc. Can be viewed in Normandy, France. Price list on request. Constructorama, 23, rue Thénard, 10800 Saint-Julien Les Villas, France.

**More on JR. ENGINEER** Since the account of Jacques Pitrat's '4½' set in 22/632, two lots of parts have come to hand, each with a manual. The first contains almost all the parts in the '4½', & the manual is the same too, with Copyright 1946 on C2. The second manual is from a Special outfit, & the parts with it, probably largely complete, don't include all the types in the '4½', but there are some new ones, & a C/W Motor. Also most of the parts are nicked steel instead of aluminium.

Before going on, some photos which Jacques kindly sent. Below the lid of his '4½'. The boys & model are like those on



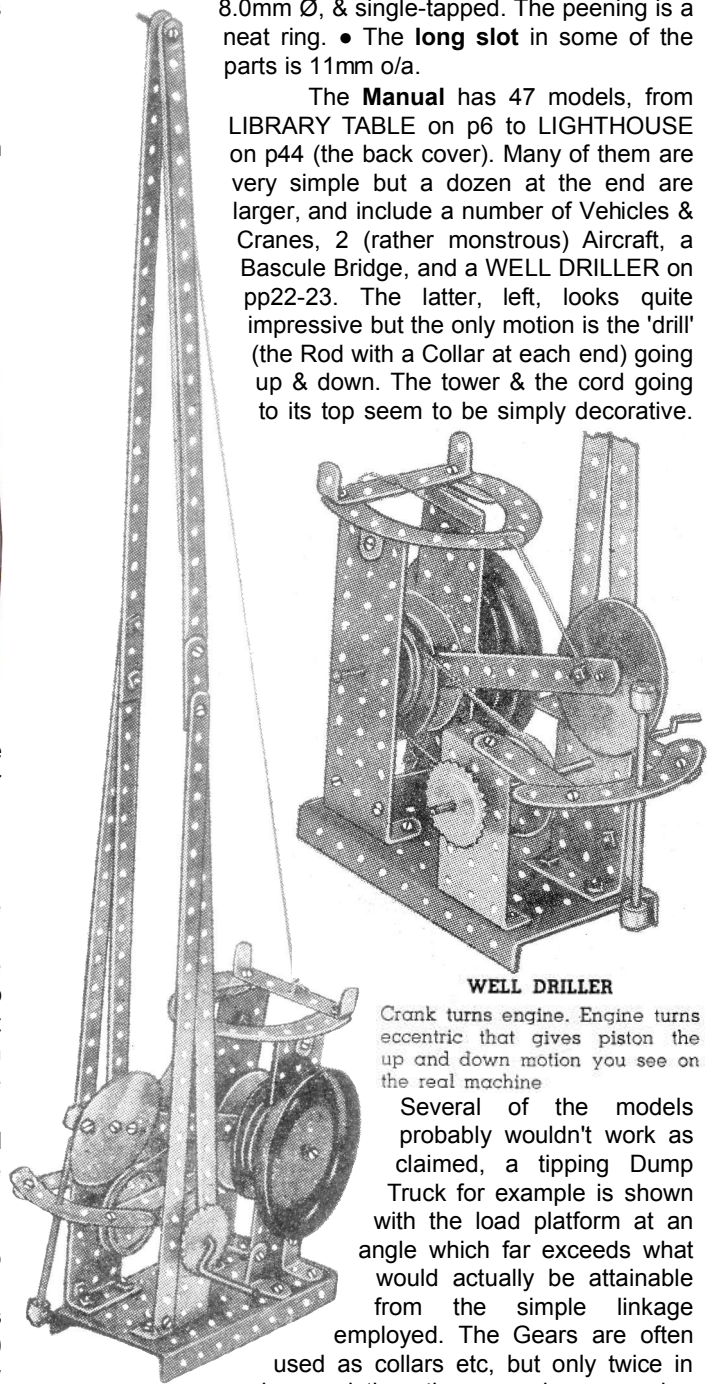
the Manual cover in OSN 22 but with a little more colour. The panel on the right has the maker's name, Coledi Inc. under Fun and Education. With the Set was a box of small parts, 10.2\*8.1\*2.1cm, that was sold separately, & has a similar lid but with CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIES in the bottom red panel.

**THE '4½' LOT** The different parts are shown at the bottom of the page; the only ones missing are the Washer and the Cord. The notes below give differences between the present parts and those in OSN 22, and in some cases add to the descriptions there. First thought to correct 2 errors that crept into OSN 22. • The **hole diameter** is 3.6mm (with from 3.5 to 3.7 in some parts). • The 5 holes in the **Wheel Disc** lie along a diameter.

- The blue main body of the **Road Wheel** is thin steel, and the disc over the centre, held by the boss, is aluminium. The **Wheel Disc** is .4mm thick tinplate & though the pitch of the 3 centre holes is 12.7mm, the outer ones are at about 11.3mm. A manufacturing error perhaps but more likely a bought-in job lot – unlike the other parts it has burr around the holes & rim.
- The **Axles & Crank Handle** are 3.17mm Ø. • The **Collar** is the boss used on the Wheels. • The **thread** seems to be 6-40 but though the Nuts run easily on the JR Bolts, they are very tight on other 6-40 bolts. The **Bolts** are ½" & 1" u/h with heads of 5.5 & 8.5mm Ø. The **Nut** is 7.7mm A/F. • The **Screwdriver** is made from 3.2mm steel wire. • **Bosses** are aluminium,

8.0mm Ø, & single-tapped. The peening is a neat ring. • The **long slot** in some of the parts is 11mm o/a.

The **Manual** has 47 models, from LIBRARY TABLE on p6 to LIGHTHOUSE on p44 (the back cover). Many of them are very simple but a dozen at the end are larger, and include a number of Vehicles & Cranes, 2 (rather monstrous) Aircraft, a Bascule Bridge, and a WELL DRILLER on pp22-23. The latter, left, looks quite impressive but the only motion is the 'drill' (the Rod with a Collar at each end) going up & down. The tower & the cord going to its top seem to be simply decorative.



**WELL DRILLER**

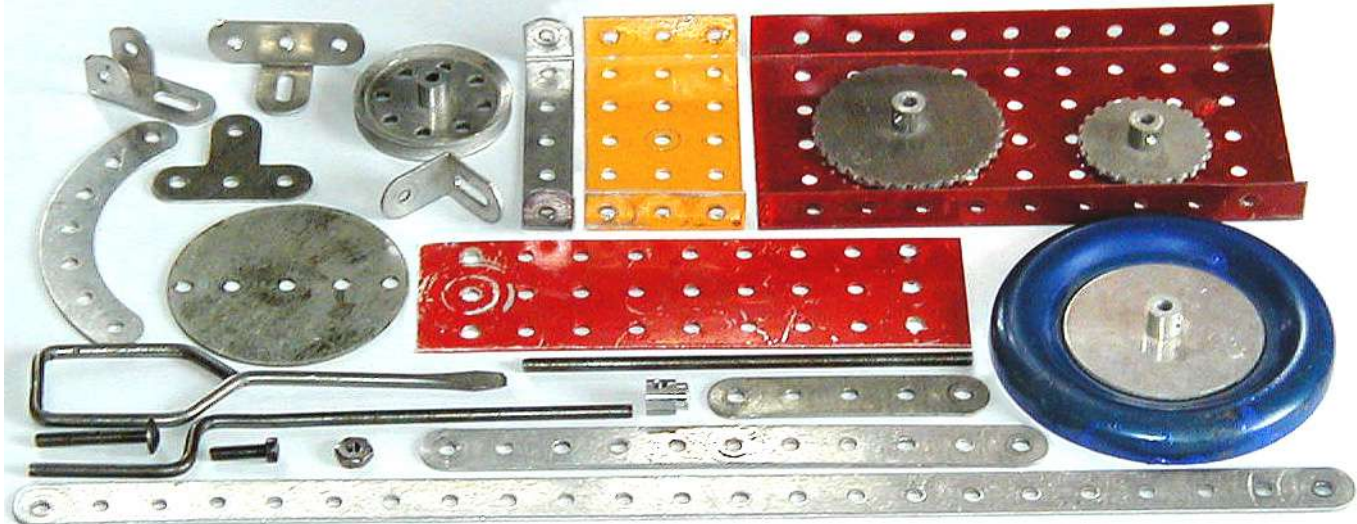
Crank turns engine. Engine turns eccentric that gives piston the up and down motion you see on the real machine

Several of the models probably wouldn't work as claimed, a tipping Dump Truck for example is shown

with the load platform at an angle which far exceeds what would actually be attainable from the simple linkage employed. The Gears are often

used as collars etc, but only twice in gearing, and then they are shown gearing

the motion up instead of the reduction which would have been more appropriate. The Tractor in the Extra Sheet (its front end is shown in OSN 22) is the only vehicle to have steering.

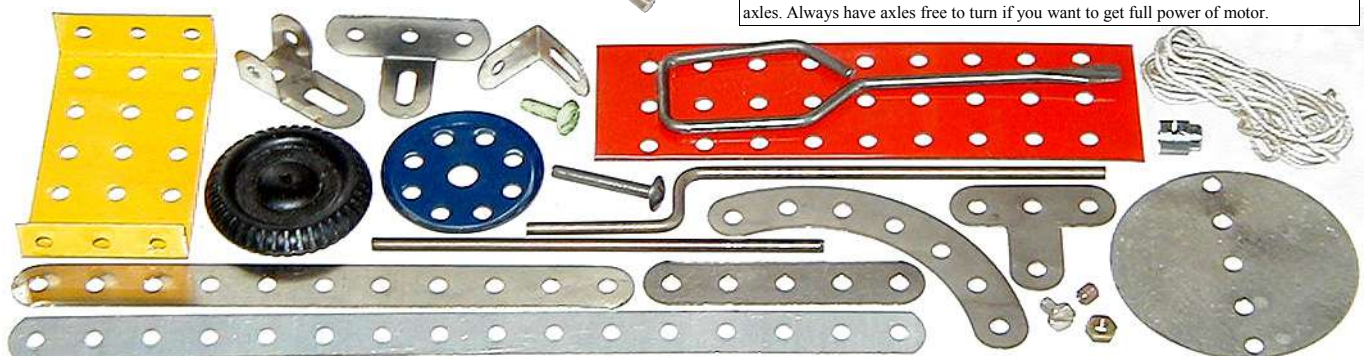


**The SPECIAL Set** To the right, the top of the front page of the manual. Notice the box at top right, still the 'Fun and Education' as on the '4½' lid, but no company name underneath – perhaps the Coledi company was no longer involved. There is no date in the Manual and no other sets are mentioned in it. The first sentence of the Introduction is rather curious: 'The Jr. Engineer SPECIAL is a carefully designed, Engineer Mascot'. The Intro continues, 'Many more pieces have been added, among these the sturdily constructed wind-up motor. There are over fifty precision made parts,' The different parts in the lot are shown at the bottom of the page, and they would allow all the manual models to be made. Not counting the threaded parts there are 18 of them against 22 in the '4½', but as can be seen the mix is different. The 'over fifty' might indicate other sets with other parts in them, but I suspect that it refers to the actual number of parts in the Special – excluding N&B there are 48 in my lot, and judging from the manual models at least 3 are missing. The '4½' has over 80.

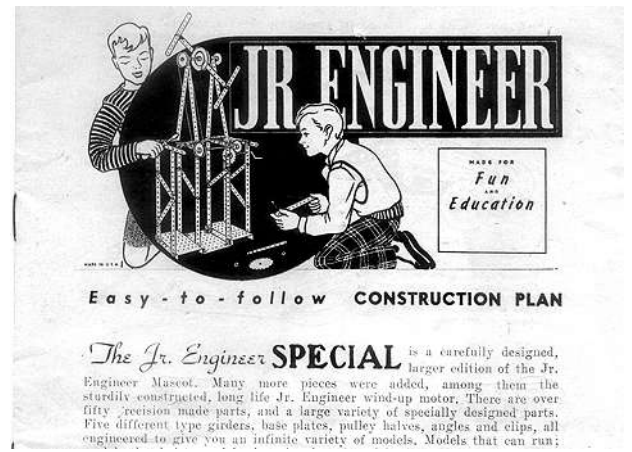
**The Parts** Apart from the 16h Strips & the Collars, all the parts are steel. The Strips & Brackets are nicked and the painted parts have a much better (hard smooth) finish than in the '4½'. The 5\*3h Flanged Plate is yellow instead of orange. Some of the parts were still wired to torn pieces of white card, and the N&B were in a blue box, 3½\*2¾\*2¼cm deep.

All the different parts will now be listed together with any comments, & with their quantities in curly brackets. • 5,11,16h Strips {2,8,2, but 4x 5h are needed for the manual models}. • **Curved Strip** {3, but 4 needed}. • **DAS** {4}. • **Brackets**. Angle, 'T', Angled 'T', Steering {6,2,2,1}. • **Plates**; 5\*3h Flanged {2}. 9\*3h Perforated {1} (In passing, this piece retains the extra metal outside the end holes, & one reason the A/B has a long slot is to allow the Plate to be joined at 90° to another part.) • **Wheels**. push-on, hard composition **Road Wheel** of 38½mm Ø {4}. 38mm **Pulley Disc** with a 6.3mm centre hole. This is the disc used in the '4½' Pulley, hence the (inconvenient) oversize centre hole {4}. **Disc**, still tinplate. {2}. • The **Axle & Crank Handle** are as in the '4½' (3.15mm Ø) but they have a brownish finish {1,1}. • The **Collar** is the boss as in the '4½' but is tapped 8-36 {4}. • **Threaded Parts**. The **Bolt** is nicked steel with a screwdriver slotted hex head, 6.6mm A/F & 6½mm u/h. The **Nut** is brass, 6.4mm A/F. (The lot contained 20 Nuts & 12 Bolts but at least 2 dozen of each would be needed). There are 2 **longer Bolts**, 25½mm u/h, as before, & 13mm. The latter has the same mushroom head but a pale green finish {4,2}. 4½mm long **Grub Screws** are provided for the Collars. • The **Screwdriver** is made from 3.2mm wire, again as the '4½'.

• **C/W Motor**. A photo of the unit is shown right. It has 2 stages of coarse gearing from the torsion spring to the standard axle, & an 8-tooth ratchet on the key side. All rather crude but effective enough. The frame is flimsy but once bolted to a Plate or Strip the sides can be bent to free any tendency to jam. • A 54" length of white **Cord** was found among

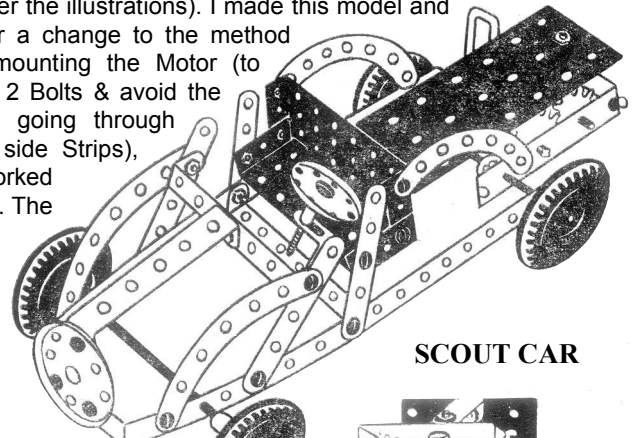


JR ENGINEER: S2



the parts.

**The Manual** It has 8 pages including covers, 195\*163mm wide, & the models are line drawings instead of the half-tones in the '4½' edition. The bottom part of the front page talks of no limit to the possible models and not to lose the parts. The other 7 pages are full of models, 29 in all, with one illustration of each plus a few auxiliary views & constructional hints. The first is RACING CAR & the last, MOTOR SHIP. Most are a fair selection of small designs, some quite attractive. Larger models comprise a couple of Cranes, & the final three which are powered by the Motor: a LARGE PASSENGER PLANE, a SCOUT CAR, & the MOTOR SHIP. They are 10-12" long and the best of them is the model below (the rather stilted instructions for it are too faint to copy so are typed into a box under the illustrations). I made this model and after a change to the method of mounting the Motor (to use 2 Bolts & avoid the axle going through the side Strips), it worked well. The



SCOUT CAR

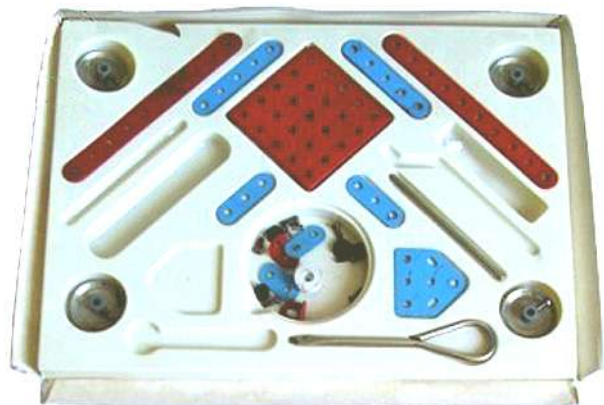
Motor spring looks rather puny but gave the model a run of over 25ft on a hard surface, and at a realistic speed, a little fast if anything.

This car has streamline design, and with its trim steering wheel, comfortable seats and powerful motor will give the impression of a real automobile. Be careful how you install motor and it will roll a long way. Use metal collars on front axle between wheels and girder.

The illustration shows how motor is mounted in scout car. Car is upside down to give you a better view. Note that motor is fastened through the central hole in motor housing. You may have to give a slight bend to angle-clip that holds motor to keep from wedging axles. Always have axles free to turn if you want to get full power of motor.

OSN 33/976

5. **Snippet. 'New' System: TIBI** This Hungarian system, was said to be from the 1970s, and it looks as if it may have been inspired by MERKUR. FÉMÉPÍTŐ on the cover of the manual probably means Metal Builder and mintafüzet, model book.



The main similarities to MERKUR are: • The 10h Strips, 5\*5h Flanged Plate, and the Flat Trunnion look identical. • All the parts in a 1960s MERKUR No.1 set would fit into the tray. The empty recesses would take a DAS & Crank Handle on the right, and an Axle, Flat Trunnion, & Spanner on the left. There is nothing obvious to go in the deep, long oval recess on the lefthand side though. Perhaps only the N&B were in the circular recess and the other small parts & the Cord were in the oval.

The differences are: • The colours - at the time MERKUR Flanged Plates were blue, 10h Strips orange or brown, 3 & 5h Strips nickel, Trunnions & Pulleys green. • Although the red A/B in the circular recess has a slotted hole and could be MERKUR pattern, the blue parts look to be 2h Strips and not the Flat Brackets that might be expected. • The Screwdriver in the MERKUR No.1 was the flat type - sets above No.3 had wire ones. • The white circular part in the circular recess - it might be a Loose Pulley but the MERKUR part was metal and was only included in Set 3 and upwards.

**TIBI: S1**

[38/1133]

6. **Snippet. A Small MEKNEX Set** MEKNEX sets (see 36/1078) have been less common on the Argentinian Ebay recently but the set right was seen late last year. With 71 parts to make the Avioneta on the lid it is smaller than the other known outfits. The box was said to be 16\*9cm and on the back is 'Articulo: K10', so perhaps there was a series of these smaller kits. If the model on the lid is to be believed the parts in the Set are all the same colour, and at least one of them, the 5h A/G used for the undercarriage skid, was not in the OSN 36 set.



**MEKNEX: S2**

[38/1133]

7. **Snippet. Another LIL'N-GINEER Maker** A model sheet giving the Chris Mfg. Co. as maker, and the Novelty Mfg. Co as representative, was shown in 27/782, and since then a box lid with these names in the bottom right corner has been seen. Otherwise it is identical to the Eagle lid in OSN 27. Another set, said to be from the 1950s has the same lid with Novelty again as the representative, but the maker's name is Seveness Co. A line under the name, the address no doubt, is illegible.

**LIL'N-GINEER S3**

[38/1133]

8. **Snippet. A JR ENGINEER Midget Set** Notes on the commonest (No.4½) JR set, and a Special set, smaller but with a C/W Motor and a different range of parts, were given in 33/975 & 976. Since then a jumble of parts plus manual, said to be from a Midget set, was offered on Ebay. The parts included several of those peculiar to the Special outfit and none of those peculiar to the '4½'. The main parts of the Special set that couldn't be seen are the Motor, the Disc, the DAS, & one or two of the 3 larger types of Brackets. However it's not certain that all the parts that could be seen were from the Midget because among them were 6 of the black Road Wheels, and one would not expect so many in what was presumably a small outfit. Probably the lot contained parts from more than one outfit.

The manual is printed on the same fawn paper as the Special, but only one corner of it could be seen and the simple model there was too blurry to be recognisable, except that it isn't one of the Special models. The models in the manual were given as: Table; Wheelbarrow; Picnic Bench; See Saw; Tank; Airplane; Railroad Engine; Ship; Lumber Wagon; Anti-Aircraft Gun; Railroad Crossing Gate; Cart, Crane, Truck. 7 of those names are used for models in the Special manual and if they were to be the same, all the different main parts in the Special would be needed except the Motor, the 16h Strip, the Disc, & the Road Wheel.

**JR ENGINEER S3**

[38/1133]

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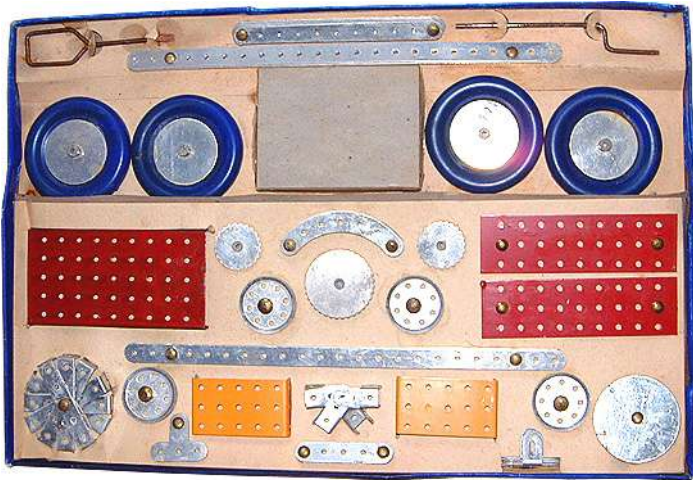
APRIL 2009

Email: [tony@osnl.co.uk](mailto:tony@osnl.co.uk)

**EDITORIAL** Several readers have asked if the Database on the OSN web site can be printed out. As far as I can tell it isn't possible to print the full width using Internet Explorer – several of the righthand columns plus the COMMENTS column aren't printed. And even then thick vertical lines appear which weren't in the original. By chance though I found that the Firefox Mozilla browser gives a more satisfactory result. If Landscape and Shrink To Fit Page Width are selected in Page Setup the result is that all columns are printed with a small but readable text size. The COMMENTS though are printed as several short lines instead of the original long one and this increases the number of A4 sides for the whole Database from 34 to 41 (with the default margins).

### Shorter NOTES, with thanks to all contributors.

1. **JR ENGINEER** Kendrick Bisset wrote that his No.4½ set is virtually the same as the one described in 22/632 & 33/975. The only differences are that it contains only four 5h Strips instead of 6 – still clipped down in each case, and 50, 4, & 40 of Bolts, Long Bolts, & Nuts. Also the lid on the box of small parts is the CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIES one mentioned in OSN 33 and not the plain card one in Jacques' set below.



The manual too is the same and has 'Copyright 1946, Coledi, Inc., New York' on the inside front cover (as in fact did the OSN 22 & 33 examples). Kendrick also has an identical manual except that it has a typewritten yellow sticker on the top of the front cover (above the 'JR EN' of JR ENGINEER), which reads 'MODELS, COPY and LAYOUT by / HARRY SNYDER / 138 E. 34 St. / N.Y. 16, N.Y.' At the top of the sticker are the remains of the last line, as if many labels were typed and cut or torn apart.

**JR ENGINEER: S4** [40/1196]

2. **HELLER'S STAHLBAU** Thomas Morzinck has found a review of this German 'DIY' system (see 36/1083) in the January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1937 issue of Die Sendung (a German Radio Times). It speaks of it as being new and no doubt it would have been in the shops for Xmas 1936.

**HELLER: S6** [40/1196]

3. **Snippets: Double-barrelled MERKUR** As can be seen

on the lid right (actually the top of a sleeve), the set is being sold under the name EBERT MERKUR. Ebert GmbH was the Munich firm that sold Czech-made EBS sets some years ago (see 22/643) but the present Ebert may not of course be the same company. Another set from the same Ebay seller features a 77 part Windmühle but the name at the bottom is WIFRA MERKUR. From Google a number of German firms have Wifra in their names.



For both sets the sleeve covers a wooden box, 16\*16\*5cm, with a sliding lid, an unusual and perhaps slightly extravagant touch for a set of this sort. An example can be seen below in another WIFRA MERKUR set, this time called Gärtner mit Zwei



Karren – Gardener with Two Barrows.

All the models come from the MERKUR range, and the parts too of course although I don't recall what appears to be a blue-handled Screwdriver in the open box.

**MERKUR [1] S6** [40/1196]

4. **STABIL** On the basis of 5 documented sets Werner Sticht has discovered that the N&B used during 1911-1914 were unusual in two respects. First, the Bolts were brass and the Nuts steel, and secondly, the thread was not the usual 5/32" BSW (as in MECCANO) with 32 tpi, but a similar thread with approximately 33 tpi. The two are of course incompatible and a 33 tpi Nut on a 32 tpi Bolt will jam after a few turns. The pitch of a 33 tpi thread is .77mm – not a likely metric standard and the reason for the change is at the moment a mystery.

**STABIL: S5** [40/1196]

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS SUPPLIED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS FOR THE PERSONAL USE OF THE RECIPIENT FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY

**EDITORIAL** Distribution of OSN pages by PDF seems to have gone well with no problems reported, and I'm glad to say that more than half OSN subscribers now use this method. So, if you were/are in two minds about it, give it a try, you can always revert to the printed version, and if you do your PDF sub will credited to you.

Several PDF subscribers have asked why the first 2 pages, 1452-3, of OSN 48 appeared last. I should have explained earlier that they would not be sent until the printed version was finalised. This to allow the printed & PDF versions to be the same, and to allow any late items to be included.

### Shorter NOTES, with thanks to all contributors.

1. **MÄRKLIN's Early Days** Urs Flammer sent a copy of a pink flyer that he found in a MÄRKLIN manual. Its date isn't certain, the manual was dated 21.3 but the logo on the flyer, right, is thought not to have been used until 1922. Urs' son Patrik kindly translated the flyer for me. It is headed 'MÄRKLIN instead of MECCANO' and starts by saying that the construction sets our company is currently producing under the trade name MECCANO will from now on be available as Metallbaukasten MÄRKLIN, and that all parts in the MÄRKLIN sets are compatible with Meccano parts and can be used in combination. It goes on to say that MÄRKLIN sets will contain a larger and better selection of parts and that is the reason for the change of name, 'to distinguish them from the old MECCANO sets'. Finally that Märklin vouches for the quality & versatility of new sets and that they are a purely German product with all the parts produced by 'German hands' in Märklin factories. And that all aspects of the product are Märklin's property and are covered by patents etc.



#### MÄRKLIN: S4

[48/1452]

2. **Snippet. 'New' System: LA MECCANICA APPLICATA.** The manual below, said to be from the 1930s, was offered on Italian Ebay. As can be seen it carries a logo, 'MOGO'. I suppose it is for Set 4-5, and the model looks to be made from MECCANO-style parts.



#### LA MECCANICA APPLICATA: S1

[48/1452]

3. **Snippet. Another JR ENGINEER Set.** Unlike other known JR sets (see 43/1293 & earlier) this one is packed in a cannister (right), 9" high & 2½" Ø. The different parts which were shown with it are as those in the Special outfit (described in 33/976) but do not include the C/W Motor, the Disc, the Wheel Disc, the Perforated Plate, the Crank Handle, the Collar, & the 13mm Bolt. The Flanged Plate is not painted. One other part looks as if it might be a small gear wheel on a small diameter spindle: it could be part of a C/W motor, but it doesn't match any of the parts in the Motor in the Special set (see 33/976).

The quantities of the main parts shown were 1 Flanged Plate, 6 each of 5 & 12h Strips, 2 DAS, 2 Curved Strips, 4 at least of the A/B, 1 at least of each of the other 3 types of Bracket, 4 Road Wheels, 2 Axles, & a Screwdriver.

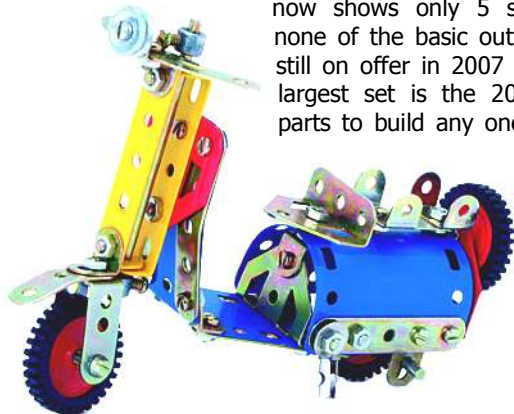
No manual was shown and the models on the cannister are not in either of the known manuals. The cannister itself was probably used in some of the models because it was said that 6 spots on it were marked 'punch here', and it could be seen that this had been done.

The maker of this set was Stratford Playthings Inc. and the 'indecipherable' name above 'Playthings Inc' of the front of the Special manual (see 43/1293) can now be seen to be 'Stratford'.

#### JR ENGINEER: S6

[48/1452]

4. **AMI-LAC Update** The firm's website, [www.lacgiocattoli.it](http://www.lacgiocattoli.it), now shows only 5 small sets with none of the basic outfits which were still on offer in 2007 (38/1151). The largest set is the 2000/1 with 219 parts to build any one of 5 vehicles, see 25/727.



Of the other sets, three, 107-109, were described in OSN 38, and the other, No. 106 with 127 parts, is for

another of the models that can be made from the 2000/1 outfit, the Scooter above. All 4 sets are packed in same type of plastic case shown right.

The same 3 models as in 2007 are shown as Novità but again with no indication as to whether there are sets for them.



#### AMI-LAC: S4

[48/1452]