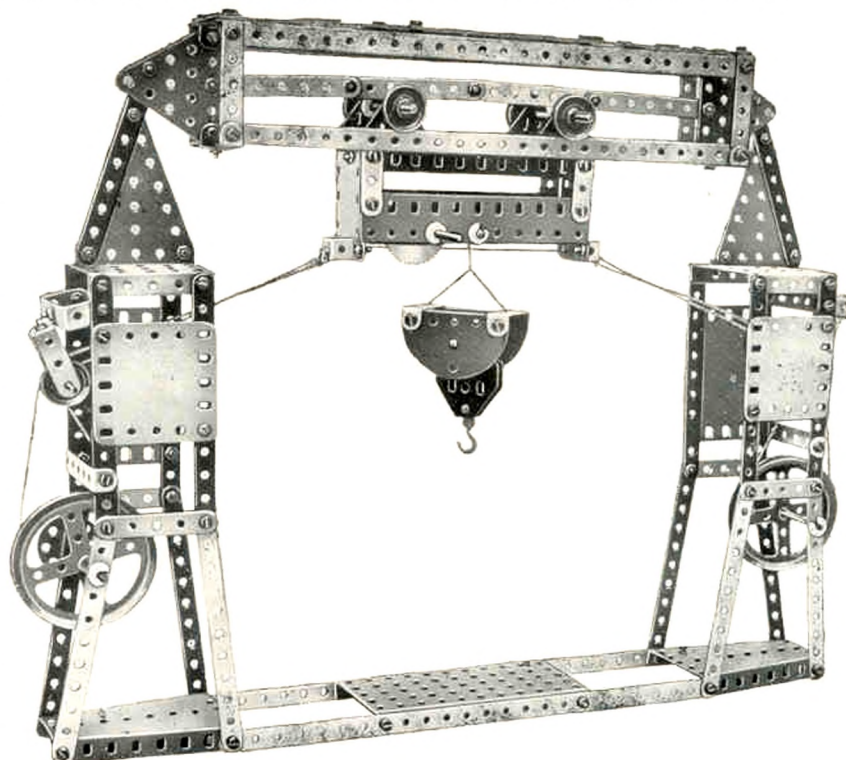


METALMEC OPSET. This Italian system is included in MCS but not many details are given. What follows is from a #5 Set (the largest in the shop), bought in Paris in about 1973. From the Manual it seems likely that OPSET is the name of the manufacturer, and METALMEC is the name of the set. METALMEC parts have $\frac{1}{2}$ " hole spacing and are generally similar to MECCANO. The #5 Set is slightly larger than a 1960s MECCANO #4, although the mix of parts is different, with more Strips in the METALMEC but many fewer Flexible Plates. The OPSET range of parts is smaller and a noticeable omission is Road Wheels, on the other hand there are 2 $5\frac{1}{2}$ " Flat and 2 $5\frac{1}{2}$ " Angle Girders in the Italian set. The Crane shown in MCS is included in the Manual but although the photo is identical the layout of the wording has been slightly rearranged and the heading refers to "No.5 METALMEC" and not the "MF METALMEC" in MCS. In fact it is likely that this model can be made from Set #1. Parts that vary from the MECCANO pattern are described below, together with other notes on the parts. There are no names or numbers given for the parts and so MECCANO names will be used.

- Trunnions have vertical slots instead of the MECCANO cutouts and their top corners are not rounded. The slots can be seen in the MCS model. Double Brackets are in 3 sizes, 1, 2 and 3 holes high.
- The 3" Pulley is the 4-spoke original MECCANO style, likewise the Flanged Sector Plate with a single centre row of 8 holes, and the 11x5 hole Flanged Plate with no end flanges. The corners of these Plates have radii of .20" and .13" respectively.
- There are no slots in the Reversed Angle Bracket. All slotted holes are BRAL pattern except those in the Trunnions, Curved Strips, and Angle and Flat Brackets, which have fully rounded ends. The Flat Brackets are 1.04" long overall.
- The Flexible Plates have .25"r corners and are about 22 thou thick, so they aren't at all flexible. All parts though are made of fairly soft steel and can be shaped by hand.
- The 1" Pulleys are about $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide and the 2 halves are spot welded together in 3 places; there are 2 types, the loose variety as just described, and the second type which has rubber between the halves around the hole: this grips an Axle reasonably well but there is generally some wobble.
- The centre hole of the Wheel Discs is $\frac{5}{16}$ " dia.
- Strips are slightly less than $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide at .48"; the ends of the $12\frac{1}{2}$ " have a .3" radius, all the others (and all other 'strip' parts) are fully radiused. The $12\frac{1}{2}$ " are .061" thick, the others are thinner down to .031" for the $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". The corners of the Girders have radii of about .20".
- Key dimensions: the holes in the Strips are 4.1mm dia; in the boss 4.12mm; the diameters of the Axles and the bosses are 4.00mm and 9.96mm. Bosses are brass and single tapped M4.
- The 30 and 45mm long Axles have a round head at one end, like a rivet. 'Spring Clips' are 3mm thick clear plastic washers with a tapered cutout to allow them to be pushed onto the Axle.
- N&B are M4; the hex Nuts are 8.0mm A/F, and the 7mm long Bolts have slightly tapered cheeseheads, 6.8mm dia. There are no longer Bolts or Washers. The '2-D' Hook is stamped from .020" thick brass.
- All parts are nickel plated except as follows. The $12\frac{1}{2}$ " and Curved Strips, the 3" and 1" fast Pulleys, the 7x5 hole Flexible Plates, and the $5\frac{1}{2}$ " Flat and Angle Girders are painted light blue. The Flanged Sector Plates are medium red; the 11x5 Flanged Plate and the 11x3 and 5x3 Flexible Plates are deep yellow. The N&B and all Axles are black metallic; Rubber Rings are white. The model on the front of the manual shows red, and a few nickel, Strips, and red, blue and nickel Plates.
- The parts are accurately made and quite well finished; some burr can be felt around the edges of parts but it isn't usually sharp. The paint is soft and not very glossy, and it comes off fairly easily.
- There are several parts shown in the models in the manual which were not in the set, nor did there seem any room for them within the packaging. They can be seen in the model opposite, 5x5 hole Flanged and Flexible Plates, 2 sizes of Triangular and Semi-circular Plates, and the Gear below the carriage.



Most of the models in the Manual seem to be original designs and one good photo of each is shown; this isn't really adequate for some of the larger models but perhaps the Italian text by each model would

help. In one such there is a reference to using bulbs from an electrical construction set called LETRIXMEC, made by the same firm.

SUMMARY OF MANUAL. #Name: METALMEC Scatola N.5. #Details of maker: OPSET. #Dates &/or Ref Nos: None. #Page size: 247x167mm deep. #No of pages: 56 inc covers, all unnumbered. #Language: Italian, Introduction also in English and French. #Printing: Halftone photos. Cover in colour with light brown background, boys with red and blue jumpers, and a mainly red model. #No Parts List or Set Contents. #Sets covered: 1-5. #No of models for each set: 1,16; 2,17; 3 or 4,8; 4 or 5,5; 5,6. #Name, Model No, Page No of first & last model of each set: 1: BILANCIA,7 [No Model Nos]; SEGA A NASTRO,15. 2: MOTOCARRO,16; JEEP,25. 3 or 4: TRANSATLANTICO,27; CATAPULTA,33. 4 or 5: SEGA PORTATILE NASTRO,35; MORTAIO SEMOVENTE. 5: GRU PER COSTRUZIONI EDILI,41; MOTOCARRO RIBALTABILE,51. #Other notes: the Manual is a little disorganised, models appearing twice have been ignored, and the first 16 models, said to be for Set #5 have been assumed to be Set #1 models.



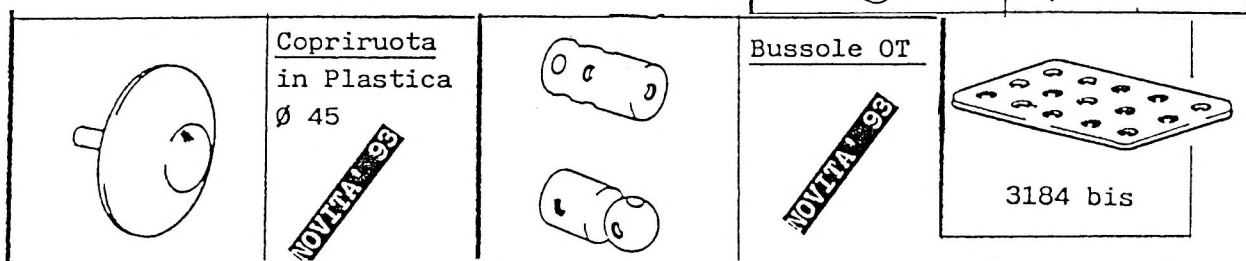
New MCS pages show two other #5 models, photocopies of the parts, and the contents found in Set #5.

BRAL NEWS. Tobias Haffter kindly sent some BRAL leaflets and dates for them. The sets described in OSN 7/142 were current into 1992 and were replaced by the MEKABRAL range (see 8/190) later in that year. The official Illustrated List of Parts for 1992-93 includes, with one or two minor differences, the extra parts noted in OSN 8, and there are other changes, mostly additions. Details are as follows:

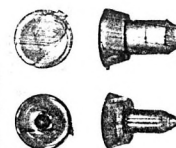
- The Boiler #3211 is shown without ends and the Boiler End, 3211A in 8/192, is now 3048 Tappi Caldaia; likewise the Plate 3185A becomes 3185 bis.
- Most of the new parts are shown below. 3184 bis is no doubt the 3184 (Channel Bearing) opened out; the others (New for '93) have no PNs and only one, Copriruota (Push-on Wheel?), has a description. The others, all made of brass (OT), are called Bussole (Bearings), and might be similar to MECCANO Parts 63c,64,136a,173a,179.
- New parts not illustrated are 3011 bis, Metallo c/bus (Wheel Disc maybe, 3011 is a Bush Wheel); and 3204 bis which is labelled twice, once as Plastica and below Plastica Traspar. - 3204 is the 11x5 hole Flanged Plate but a plastic, transparent version, it doesn't sound likely. Also the Flexible Plates 3186-91 are marked as being in two versions, plastic and metal, the latter have 'bis' after the PN.
- Two deletions, the 75mm Tyre 3016 and the Wire Screwdriver 3239.

The material from which some of the parts are made is shown: all 'brassware', all gears, Sprockets 3019-23, and the Pulleys 3002 and 3007 (15mm with boss and 38mm) are brass; the Flanged and Bush Wheels, the Sprockets 3017-18, all the remaining Pulleys less than 38mm dia, and the Chimney Adaptor are labelled ZAMA, which is I think the zinc based MAZAC alloy. The 77mm Spoked Wheels are cast aluminium.

Peter Kessler wrote that the small 'Kit' models are rather flimsy but can easily be improved by adding a few extra parts.



PRESS-FIX. I've never seen a PRESS-FIX Set so I was agog when Geoff Wright showed me a PRESS-FIX box recently. Unfortunately it wasn't the PRESS-FIX in MCS but a plastic set from the same company. But quite possibly the plastic Plugs and Sockets that are used instead of nuts and bolts are the same; they are shown opposite, the o/d of the Socket is .187" and that of the Plug, .128". Also the plastic Wheels look as if they might be the ones described in MCS, they are a push fit on the .172" dia steel Axles and two of them together form a Pulley. On the Instruction Sheet is Copyright 1959 so if the dates in MCS are correct the plastic PRESS-FIX came after the metal version.



Snippets: OPSET METALMEC

An account of a No.5 set bought in 1973 was given in 9/226. Recently 8 sets have been offered on Ebay & 4 of them show some changes to the boxes, the manual covers, & the colour of the parts.

The 'blue/yellow' Sets The painted parts in the OSN 9 No.5 outfit and 4 of the Ebay sets (2 No.2's & 2 No.3's) are mainly light blue or yellow. Each set has a manual with the OSN 9 cover, & each has a red lid with a label identical to said cover. Each has its parts in a red moulded tray.

The 'red/green' Sets The other 4 Ebay sets have their painted parts in red or green, and are thus probably earlier than the OSN 9 type. None of the sets are large enough to include the 25h Strip, 11h A/G, 5*7h Plate, or 3" Pulley, but of the other parts described in OSN 9, the Strips & Brackets are nickel as before, all the Plates & the 1" Pulley are red, the Curved Strip, Trunnions, Flat Girder, Bush Wheel, & 1" Loose Pulley are green, and the Rubber Ring is black. The largest box is shown in Fig.1.

All the sets include a manual with the Fig.2 cover. (Notice the green Strips and blue Plates.) All the sets have the parts in a moulded yellow tray, but there are 3 types of lid. Details will be given in the notes on the different sets below. For ease of reference I'll call the OSN 9 type sets 'b/y', and those with red & green parts, 'r/g'. As will appear, in the two cases where a direct comparison can be made, the layout of the parts in the sets is identical between the 2 'periods'.

The Sets in what might possibly be their chronological order:

A r/g set, 30*24½cm, said to be a No.1, has the Fig.3 lid, and the parts tray layout is the same as the b/y No.2. (The name apart, this lid is the same as the OPSET LETRIXMEC one in 26/759.)

A r/g set No.?, 40*31cm. The lid is again brown but the label is identical to the Fig.2 manual cover. The box, Fig.3,

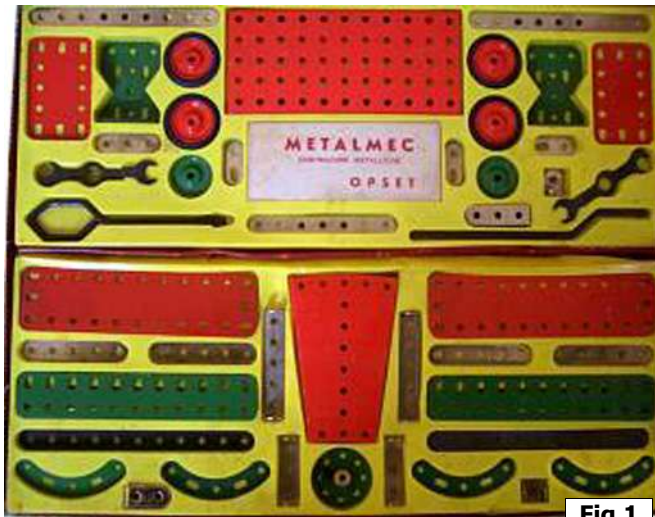


Fig.1



Fig.2

with Rubber Rings.

b/y No.4? & r/g No.? The additional parts are: a Flanged Sector Plate; 2x 11h Flat Girders, 2x Curved Strips, & a 1" Loose Pulley.

b/y No.5 The extra parts compared with the 'No.4' are 4x 25h Strips; 4 Curved Strips; 2x 2*5*2h & 6x 1*5*1h DAS, 2x 11h A/Gs; 2x 3" Pulleys; 2 Wheel Discs; a Flanged Sector Plate; 2 Trunnions & 6 Flat Trunnions (if there were 2 of each in the 'No.4'); 2 each of 3*5h, 3*11h (if there were 2 of each in the 'No.4'); & 2x 5*7h Plates.

The numbering of the r/g sets is unclear. The MCS MF model is in the No.5 manual and if No.MB equates to the No.3, what of Sets MC-ME? And one r/g set was described as a No.1.



Fig.3

OPSET METALMEC: S1

OSN 37/1108

Encyclopédie des Jeux de Construction métalliques (EJC) by Jean-Pierre Guibert

reviewed by David Hobson

This new work is essentially an illustrated survey, with basic technical details, of over 400 metal systems, arranged in alphabetical order. It is in 4 parts (tomes), A-D, E-L, M-N, O-Z; each with about 60 A4, plastic ring-bound pages. A further 23 systems are included on supplementary sheets (compléments) sent with the different parts. French systems are naturally well represented and a few are included which are not in MCS or OSNL, the French diecast SOLIDO vehicle constructional outfits for example.

EJC is well produced using modern technology, with attractive use of colour illustrations on most pages. The text is in French of course but the few passages of any length are not difficult to interpret by anyone

with even an elementary knowledge of the language.

The coverage for each system varies considerably, from one line simply giving the name, to 3 pages or so in some cases. EJC is not as comprehensive as MCS, and nor does it provide the same wealth of detail, but I found it interesting to peruse and it could be a welcome addition to the library of a constructional toy aficionado.

The parts costs €32 each individually, plus carriage, but the complete collection was recently offered at a reduced price, and a CD version is also available for even less. These items are offered on Ebay from time to time but otherwise contact Jean-Pierre Guilbert, 787 rue de la Pilette, 27300 Bernay, France, tel: 02 32 43 34 03. [jeanpierre1g@aol.com may find him - Ed.]

OSN 37/1108