

A UNIVERSAL Outfit UNIVERSAL was a Belgian system, most probably from soon after WW2, and is unusual in that almost all the parts have slotted rather than round holes. Some details are given in *MCS* but much more is now available courtesy Jean-Paul Meulemans who sent details of a set from Ebay.

The BOX measures 27*21*4½cm & its height suggests that it originally contained 2 layers of parts. The label right, about 15*11cm, is in the top left corner of the lid. It has 'R.C. Brux. 113971' in its bottom left corner and the wording stands for Régistre du Commerce Bruxelles, a register containing legally relevant facts about commercial firms. The number can indicate the starting date of the enterprise but this isn't currently known.

The PARTS Most are shown in Fig.2, but before describing them I'll list the Pièces Détachées [Separate Parts] taken from a leaflet in *MCS*, with my English names and comments.

• **Screwed Rods**, 5, 10, 15, 20cm.

• **Strips**, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12h.

• **Brackets**. Équerre followed by 'simple', 'double', 'en S'. Probably A/B, possibly D/B & Reversed A/B.

• **DAS**. Équerre followed by '3 trous', '5 trous', '7 trous', '9 trous'. It isn't clear if the lugs are included in the number of holes.

• **Square Plate**. • **Sector Plate**. • **Metal Wheel**.

• **Wooden Wheel**. • **Pulley, Large**. • **Pulley, Small**.

• **Hub Disc**, aluminium. • **Hub Disc**, coloured.

• **Packet** of Tyres & Wheels. • **Packet** of N&B.

The ACTUAL PARTS will now be listed with notes on them and quantities in curly brackets (though with the lack of balance between the numbers of Strips and the other parts, they may not reflect the contents of a set).

• **The metal parts**. The painted ones are steel, the rest are non-magnetic, probably zinc. But some loose unpainted parts to hand are a mix of zinc and steel. In both cases their colour ranges from light to dark grey, and all are quite soft metal and relatively easily bent.

• **The slots** are typically 7*4mm at 12.0mm pitch but all the dimensions vary a little, with for example the slots in some parts as large as 7½*4¼mm.

• **Screwed Rods**. 3 were found, all nominally 3.5mm Ø, but with two different



Fig.1

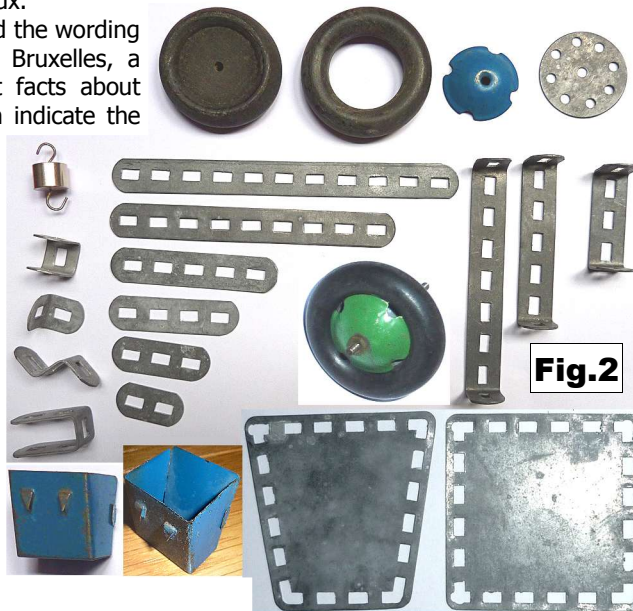


Fig.2

slide sideways off them. {4}

• **Hook**. Not in *MCS*. • **Dredger Bucket**. Again not in *MCS* but its two triangular hooks fit into adjacent slots and its blue painted the Wheel Hub Disc.

The MCS ENTRY includes two addresses. One is 34 rue d'Arenberg, Bruxelles on the lid label of a No.2 set. Said label is basically similar to Fig.1 but 'UNIVERSAL' is in a normal typeface. The second, UNIVERSAL, 55 Rue de Schaerbeek, Bruxelles, is on the leaflet as the address to send entries for a model building competition. The Leaflet also has a list of the range of sets: Nos.1-8, 10 & 11.

The MODELS shown in *MCS* are reproduced below (but only the top & a slice showing the first platform are shown of the 40cm or so high Eiffel Tower). Some parts not so far mentioned can be seen in them, though whether real or imagined I can't say.

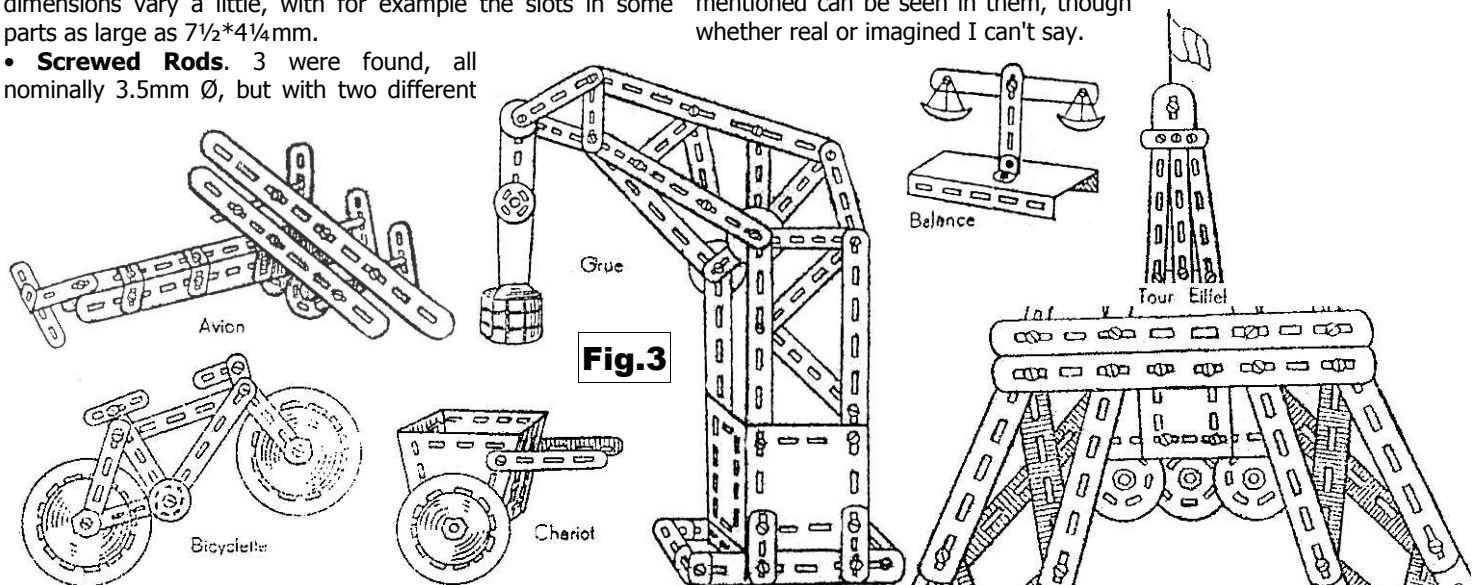


Fig.3