

April 2023

In this issue



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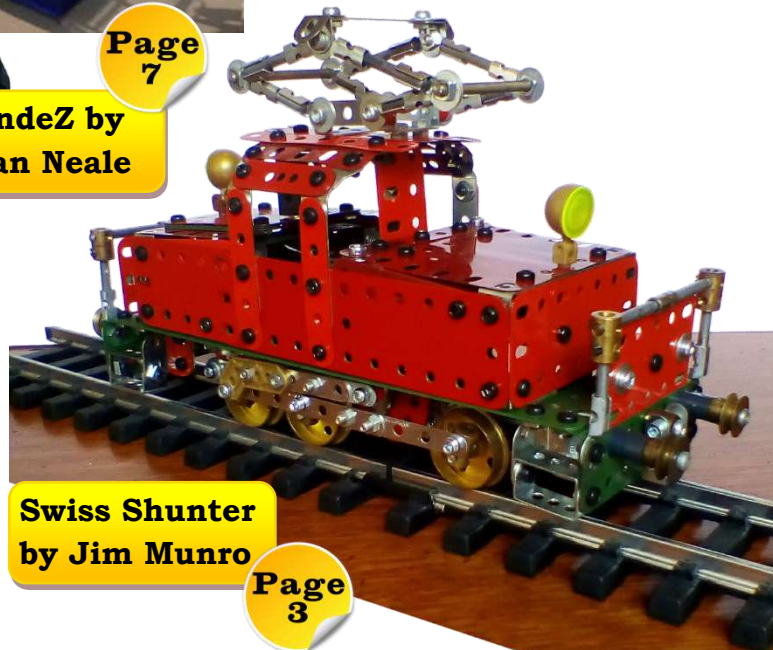
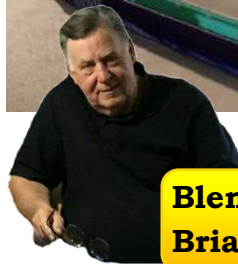
Build this!
Baba Yaga's Hut.
It really walks.

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BREAKING NEWS

MECCANO

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Spin Master to sell Calais Meccano factory.



Steve Butterworth



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Meccanoboy

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50 employees to be sacked!

GOOD IDEAS DEPT

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Page 1

This is the 3rd and final part of my condensed version of the NebulaZ Modelplan. The full version can be purchased in hard copy from Howard Somerville.

<http://www.hsomerville.com/mwmailorder/> or email MeccanoNews@gmail.com for an electronic copy.

Closeup of the redesigned end chair mounts. 

The 133a Corner Bracket must be as high as possible. If the Contrate still doesn't fit, you can raise the 3-hole Strip with Washers. See Fig. 15 to see the variations in Contrates. A 48 DAS doesn't fit neatly between the Corner Brackets and requires packing with Washers. The 3-hole Strip and Angle Brackets gives you more options for adjustment.

Bolt the Girders together with the 4 x 3-hole Strips then bolt on the 4 x Angle Brackets with a large plastic Spacer under each one. Now bolt the 95t Gear to the Angle Girders using large plastic Spacers. Bolt the doubled up 3-hole Strips on tightly using the slots to get them as high as possible. Put a long Rod through the 95t Gear and the Strips to get the holes lined up then tighten all the Angle Girder Bolts making sure it's square and the Rod is free to turn.

NebulaZ. Part 3. The Arms

Part No.	Description	Qty
6a	Strip 1½"	8
8	Angle Girder 12½"	2
12	Angle Bracket	10
15	Rod 5"	2
17	Rod 2"	2
26	Pinion 19t	4
27c	Gear Wheel 95t	1
29	Contrate 25t	3
38a	Plastic Spacer Large	12
46a	Double Angle Strip 1½" x 1"	2
51h	Double Obtuse Flanged Plate	4
59	Collar	2
109	Face Plate 2½"	2
133a	Corner Bracket 1"	4
	Meccanomen	4
	Rubber coated wire	

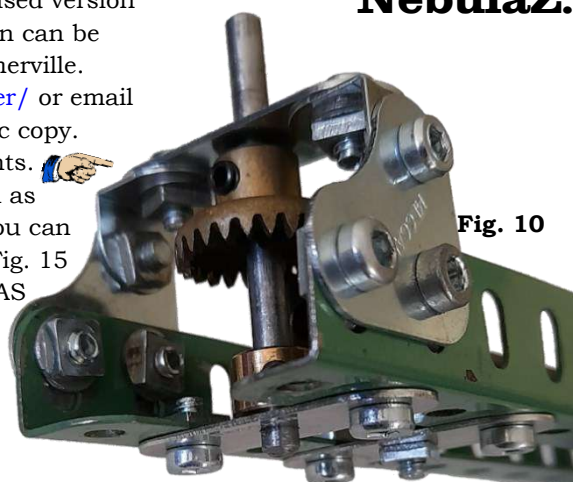


Fig. 10

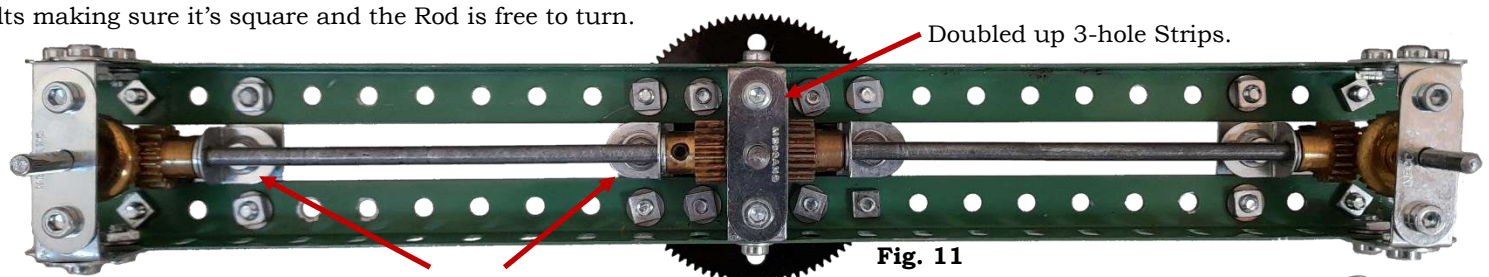


Fig. 11

Illusion. 
It's square.

Bolt the 4 Angle Brackets to the 3-hole Strips with a large plastic Spacer.

Now comes the tricky part. Get the small Contrate in with a thin washer under it. You must use a short Grub Screw, or it will hit the Angle Girders.

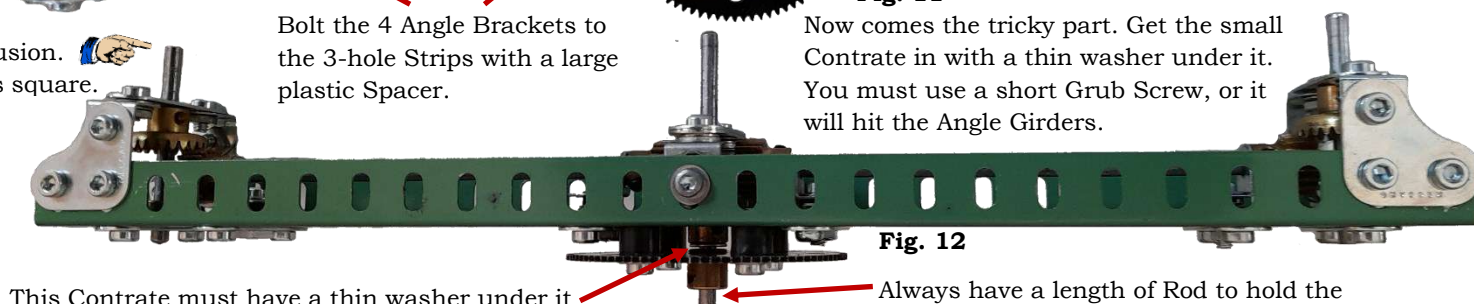


Fig. 12

This Contrate must have a thin washer under it to get it to mesh nicely with the Pinions.

Always have a length of Rod to hold the Contrate and its thin washer in place.

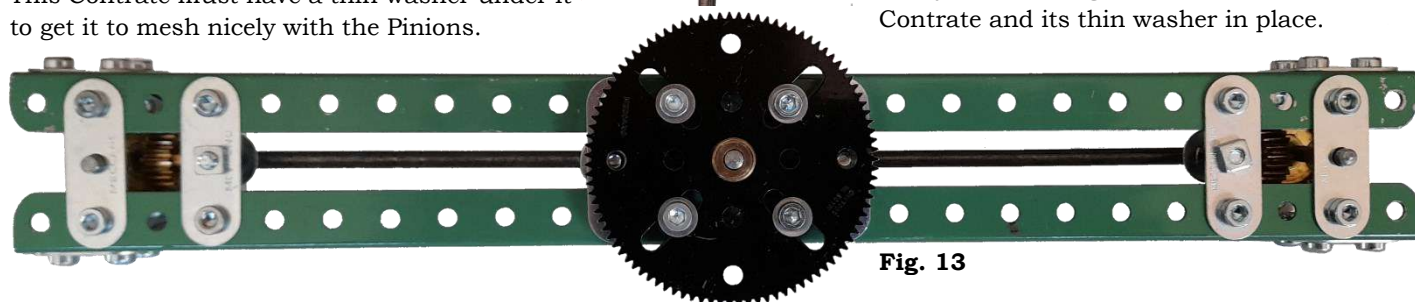


Fig. 13

Before you add the end Contrates, make sure the centre Contrate is turning freely on the Pinions. As these 25t Contrates vary in size, make sure you have the variety with the lower profile as shown in Fig. 14. The end Contrates are on 2" Rods journaled through 3-hole Strips. The top Strip is mounted on part 12 Angle Brackets to allow you to adjust it using the slots. This also allows you to raise the Strip with Washers if your Contrate is the larger variety. The Collar is adjusted to keep the Contrate from pushing too hard against the Pinion. The Contrates must be free to move up and down just a little bit or it will jam.

Important! To get the arms mounted on the tower you must loosen the grub screw in the centre Contrate, then touch the end of the temporary Rod in the 95t to the end of the fixed Rod in the tower and push the arm on letting the fixed Rod follow through. If you don't do it this way, the Contrate and the thin washer will fall out and you'll spend the next hour trying to fix it.



Fig. 14

The Meccanomen are held in with rubber coated wire, available at garden or pound shops.

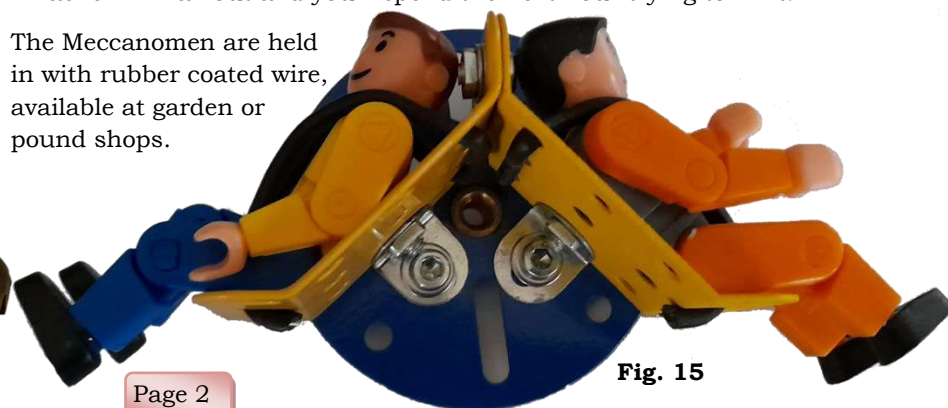


Fig. 15

SBB Swiss Railways Ee 3/3 Shunter

by Jim Munro - Oz

I wanted my Swiss Shunter to run on 1 gauge track and more importantly, to get its power from the rails.

Another consideration was ease of access, so I designed a removable body which is secured to the chassis with 2 bolts that screw into Threaded Couplings at each end, Fig. 2.

This presented the challenge of electrically isolating the left wheels from the right wheels.

(Or is it port and starboard?)

Not sure how it works with trains.



Fig. 1

The pantograph is built up from Rods and Rod-Strip Connectors and is purely cosmetic. It's mounted on 1½" Narrow Double Angle Strips and a 1" Narrow DAS packed out with a Plastic Spacer on each side. The latter is to allow centring on the cabin roof which is 4" wide because of its curved shape. The main roof skin is formed by two slightly curved 5½" x 5½" Flexible Plates overlapped by 4 holes and to which 4 x 3½" Strips are attached.

The power unit is a 3V/6V motor Part A770 with the 19:1 reduction gearbox Part A760. I run the Locomotive on 6V which gives a realistic shunting/switching speed. The motor wires are terminated under washers at the rear of the lower frame sides.

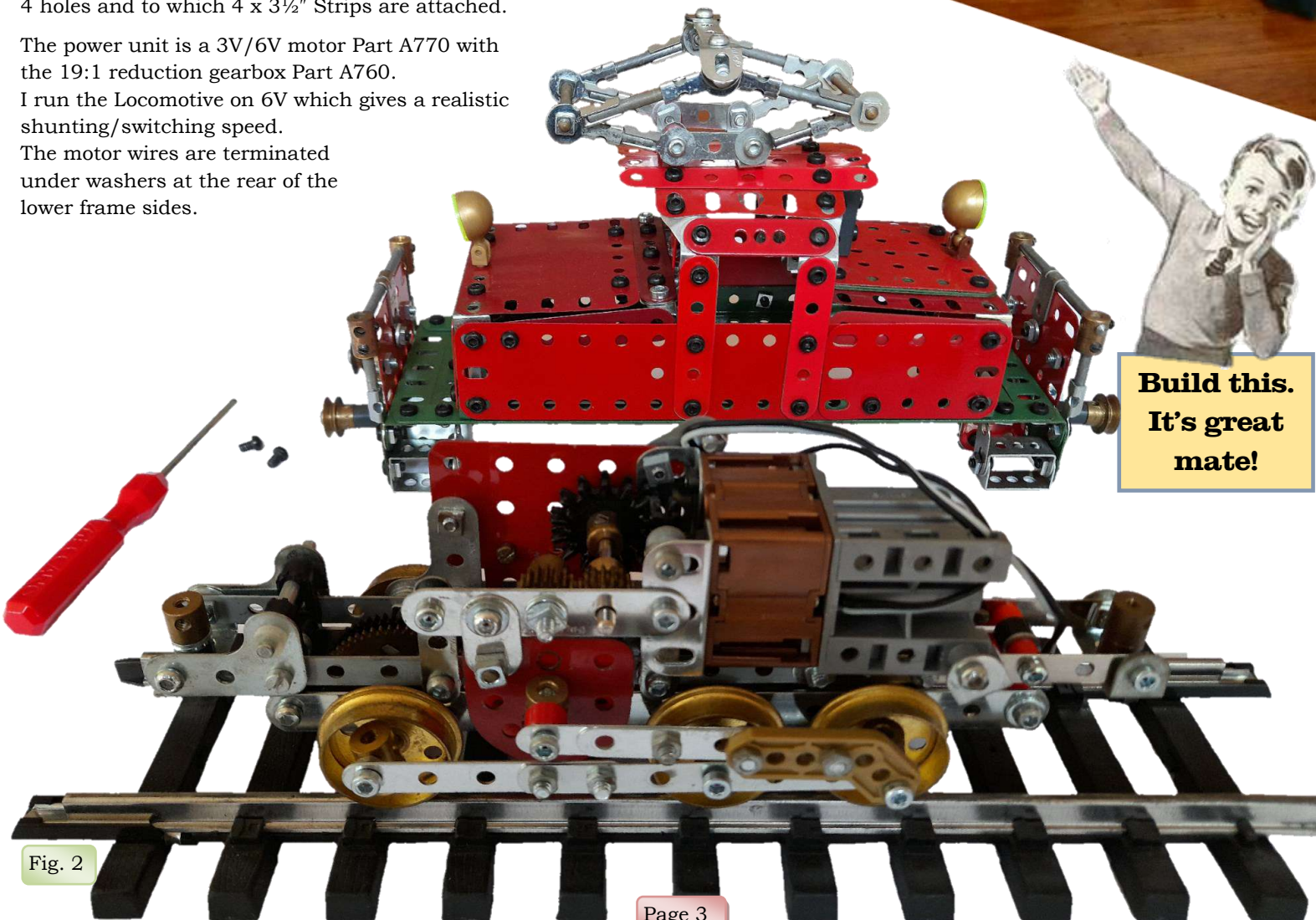


Fig. 2



**Build this.
It's great
mate!**

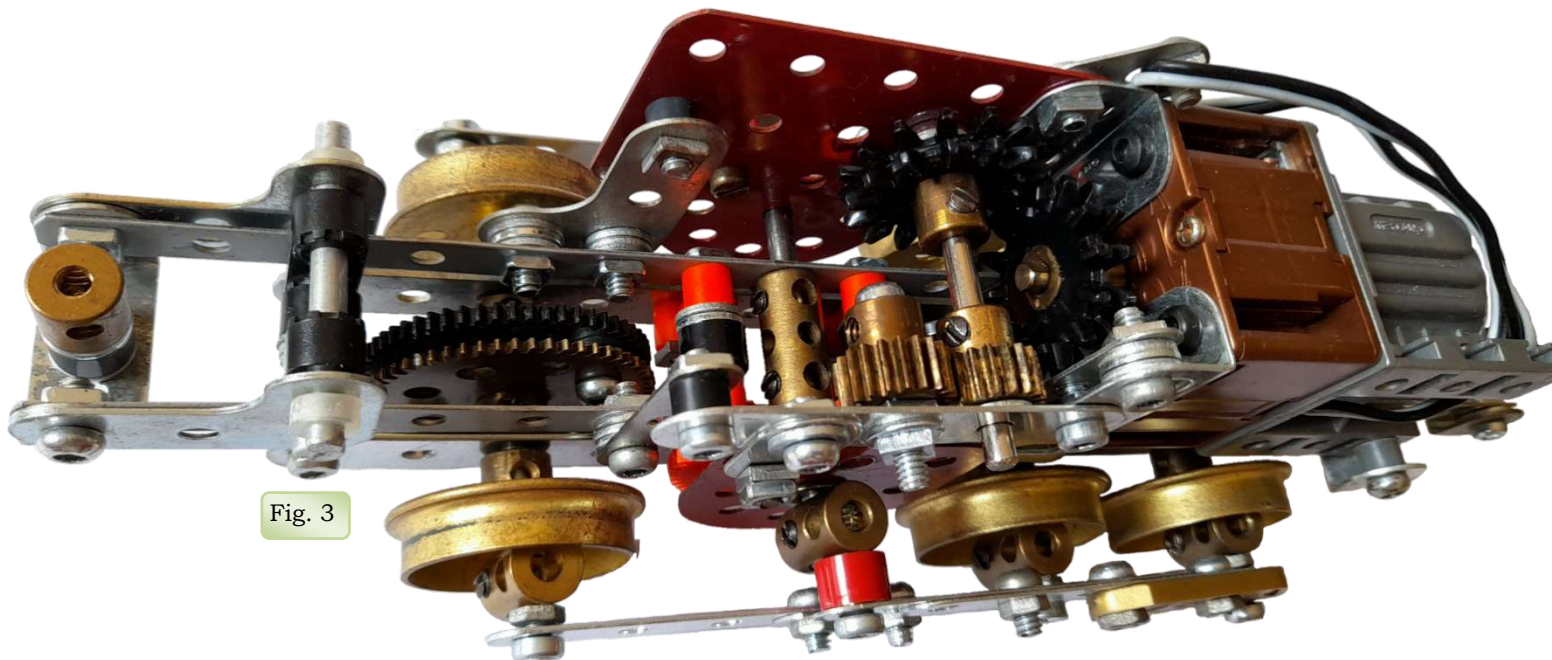


Fig. 3

The lower frame section through which the axles are journalled is made up of 7½" Strips which are attached to the Narrow Strip above on each side by three plastic steering arms Part 260f and a narrow plastic Spacer Part 260c, Fig. 5. Care must be taken that no metal parts of the lower frame touch side to side or on the frame above. The narrow plastic Spacers at the front of the frame are braced by Corner Brackets part 133b to prevent the upper and lower frames racking together, Figs 2 & 7.

The metal large Flanged Wheels pick up the traction current from the Bachmann track and must be separated side-to-side to prevent a short circuit. This is done by using two shorter Rods (1¼" to form each axle, kept apart slightly from each other and joined by a compound coupling composed of at least one brass-bossed plastic part. I used a combination of brass Bush Wheels and plastic Contrates, and brass and plastic Gearwheels based on parts availability. The side rods are made of a 3½" and a 2½" Narrow Strips overlapped by two holes and the driven cranks are Short Couplings Fig. 7.

The locomotive is made up of an upper and lower section, insulated from each other, and with each side of the lower section insulated from the other side. The upper section to which the motor and gear train are mounted is made up of a 7½" Narrow Strip (may be a replica part) overlapped three holes with a 3½" Narrow Strip – so 9½" overall. The two Strips are held apart at the ends by 1" Double Brackets. Narrow Strips are used to ensure a good air gap to the lower (live) frame.

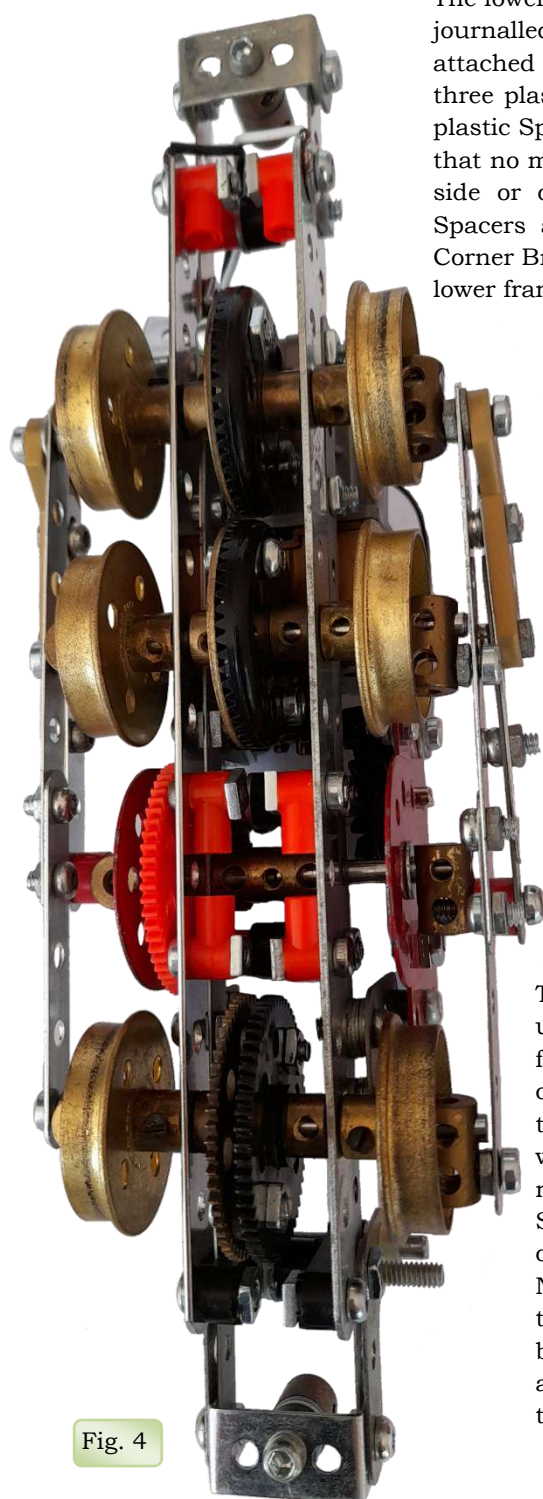


Fig. 4

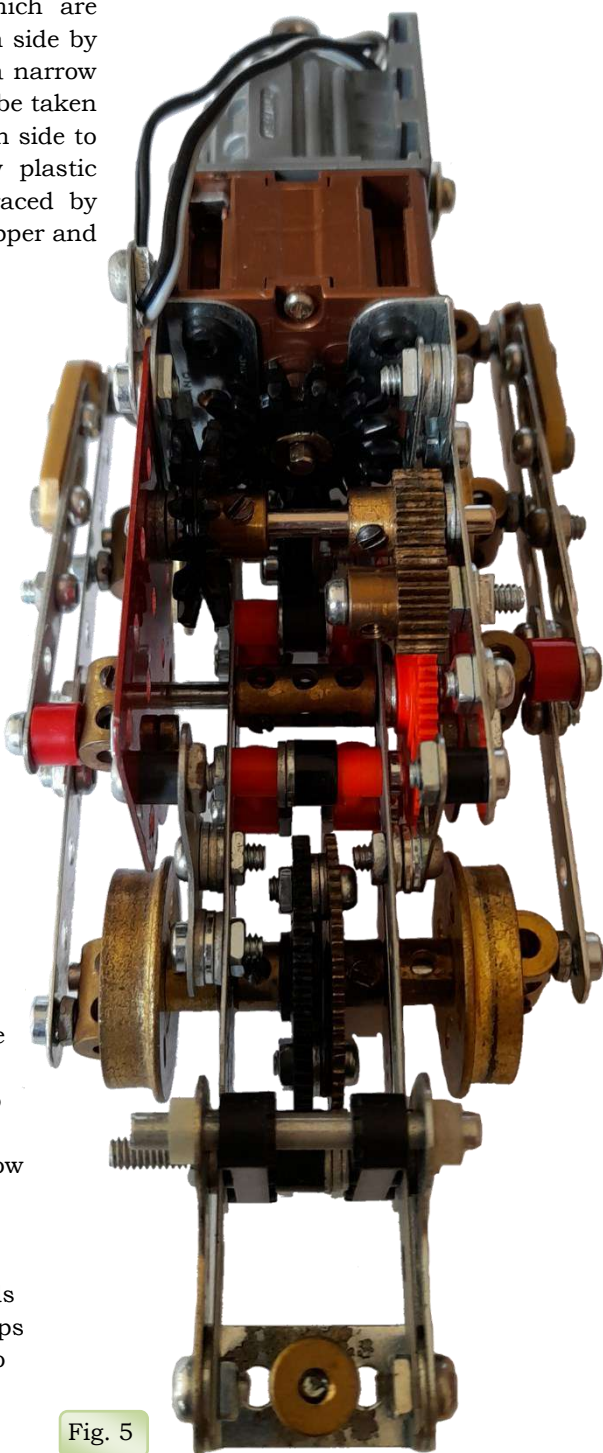


Fig. 5

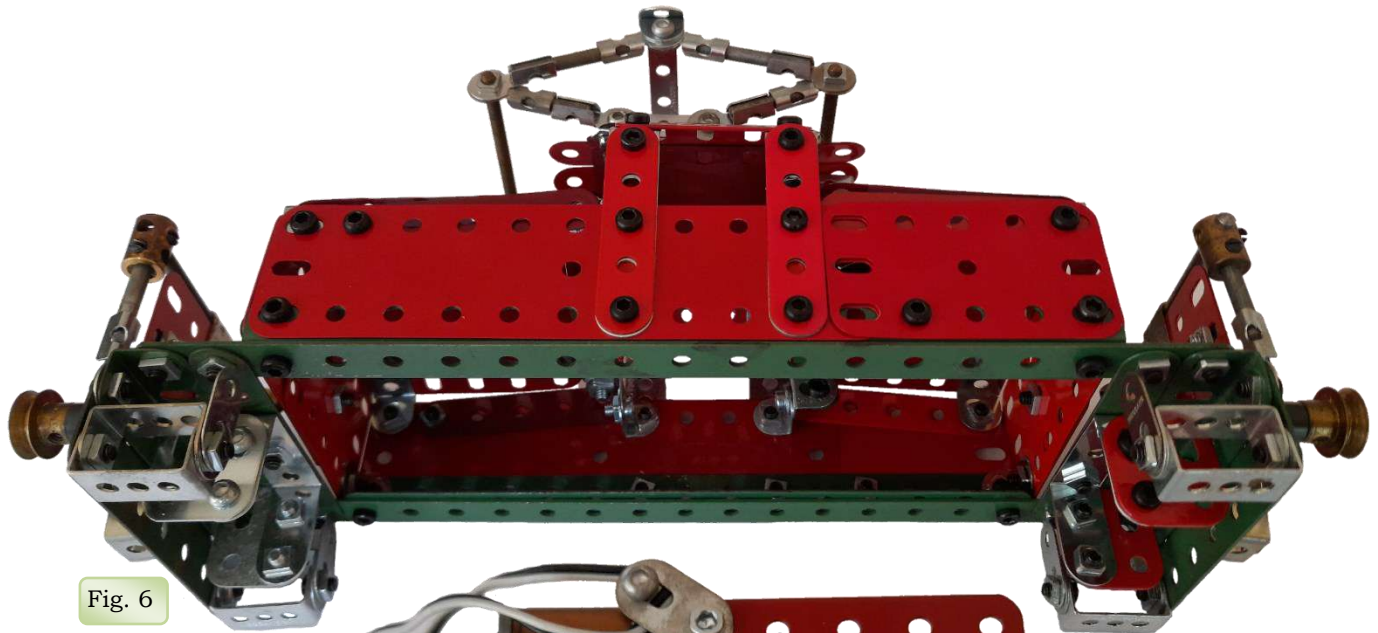


Fig. 6

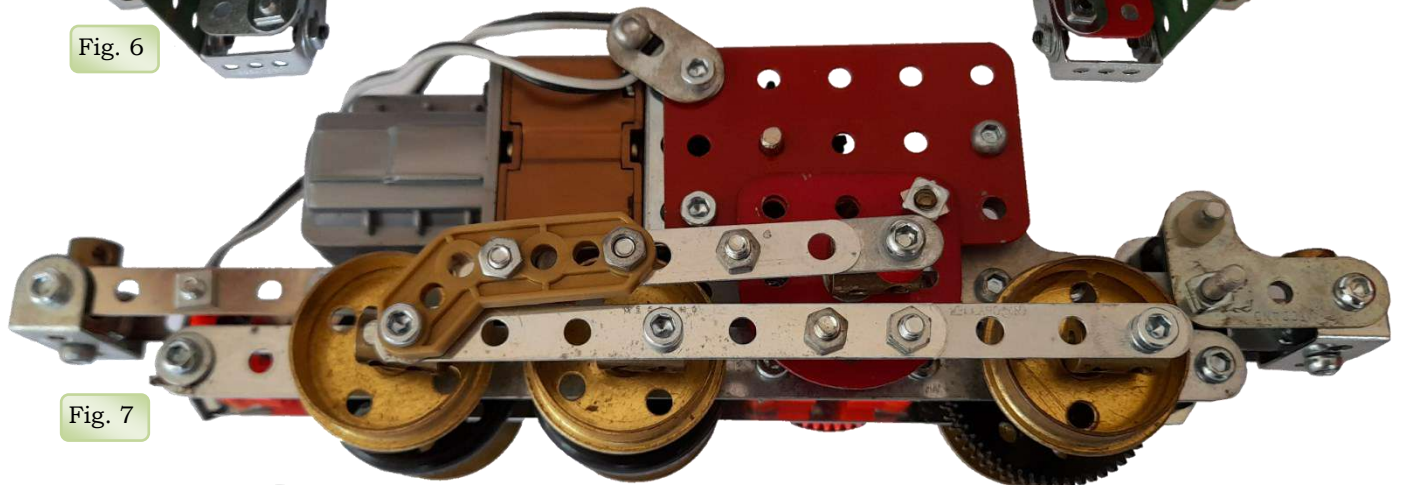


Fig. 7

The body frame, Fig. 6, comprises two $7\frac{1}{2}$ " Angle Girders centred on two $9\frac{1}{2}$ " Strips which extend to form the end platforms. The front and rear hoods rise slightly towards the central cabin, and the resulting gaps are filled by colour matched Strips. The rear electrical compartment hatch is represented by a $2\frac{1}{2}$ " x $2\frac{1}{2}$ " Flat Plate stood off by two Strips each side. The electrical riser between the rear hood and the roof is made from a small, Flanged Plate, part 51c topped by a Narrow Double Angle Bracket.

YouTube Watch it here!

<https://youtube.com/shorts/xs9hspAmFRI>

A 2" Flat Girder attached by a Coupling divides the front windscreen, Fig. 8. The lights are Parts A100, A101 and A424 from the Hudson Locomotive set held somewhat in place by silicon collars.



Drive is sent through a pair of multi-function Gears to a cross shaft and then through a 19T Gear to a 19T idler and then to a 57T tri-axle Gear on the driving crank, Fig. 4. The final drive gear is mounted outboard of the frame in order to clear the cross-bracing and lower frame mounts, Fig. 5. Note that the driving crank is journalled in the upper frame Narrow Strips not in the Buz Builder round topped flat trunnions which represent the outer motor casings. The trunnions are actually floating to prevent binding and are fastened by a slightly loose lock nutted Bolt to the $1\frac{1}{2}$ " x $2\frac{1}{2}$ " Flat Plate on the RHS and to a Fishplate on the $2\frac{1}{2}$ " Strip which forms the LHS of the gearbox. Once again, the cranks are Short Couplings.

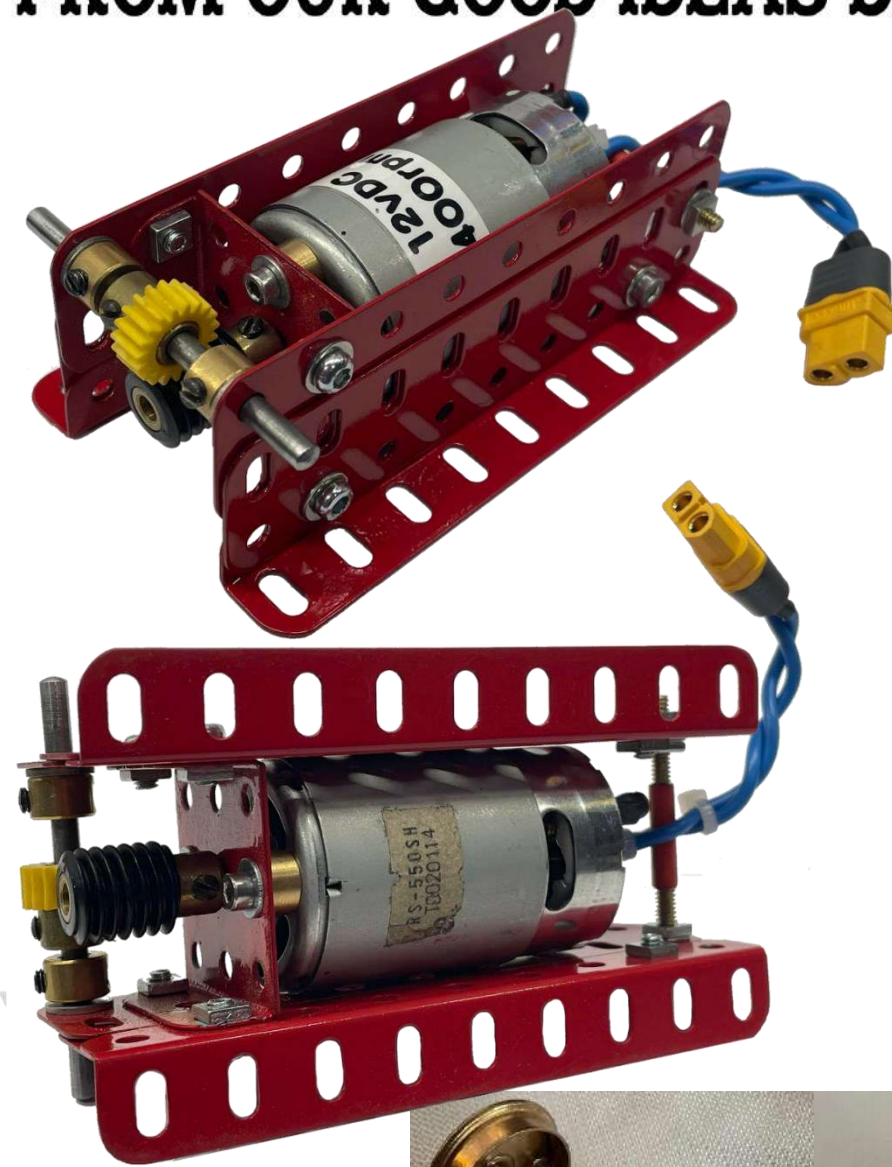
The drive unit is mounted to the upper frame by a Corner Bracket, part 133b, at the front of the Flat Plate, Fig. 3, and on the other side by a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " Narrow Strip with a 2" Narrow Strip on the Angle Girder at the front of the motor and a bracing Reverse Angle Bracket at the back of the motor, Fig. 2.

The drive rods must include a plastic part to complete the electrical isolation of the two sides of the model, and this is done using plastic cranked strips Part A260. The rest of the rod is made from two $2\frac{1}{2}$ " Narrow Slotted Strips, part B698, Fig. 7. These are needed as the spacing between the rear axle and the driving crank is non-standard due to them being vertically displaced by $\frac{1}{2}$ " and compounded by the geometry of the cranked strip. The method of setting the drive rod length is to take the Couplings off the rear axle and the driving crank, place the end holes of the rod over each axle and tighten up the two bolts that are in the slotted section of the Strips. Each side needs to be set separately in-situ as the spacing on each side may not match. Whilst 1 Gauge at 45mm is one of the larger model train gauges, this is a tight model so judicious and frequent use was made of washers thick and thin and close attention paid to fastener lengths in order to maintain alignments and prevent fouling of moving parts.



Fig. 8

FROM OUR GOOD IDEAS DEPARTMENT



From Rob Beeken – UK.

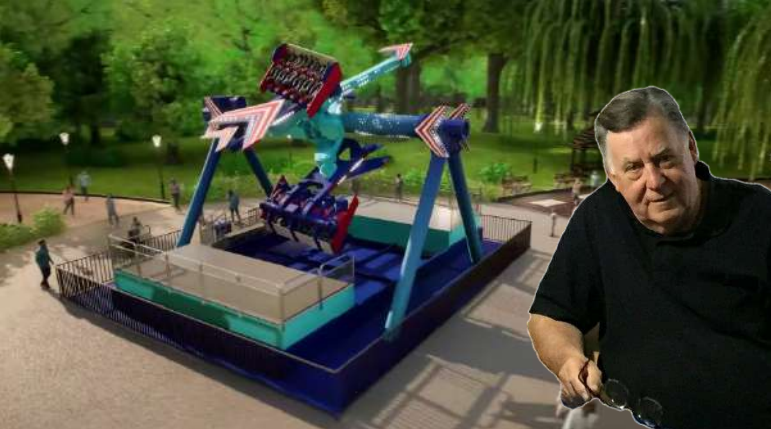
Bare motor received in an eBay job-lot. First thing was to make a Meccano sized sleeve for the motors 1/8" standard shaft.... A little awkward to say the least! Framework made up from a few Flat Girders & Angle Girders I had hanging around. Bare motor speed is an eye-watering 7600rpm, geared down as shown (19:1) gives an output speed of 400rpm. The plastic gears will be changed for brass ones at the first sign of any funny business!!



From Tim Gant – UK.
Some drawers have slots for dividers. For those that don't, Humbrol Liquid Poly to the rescue!



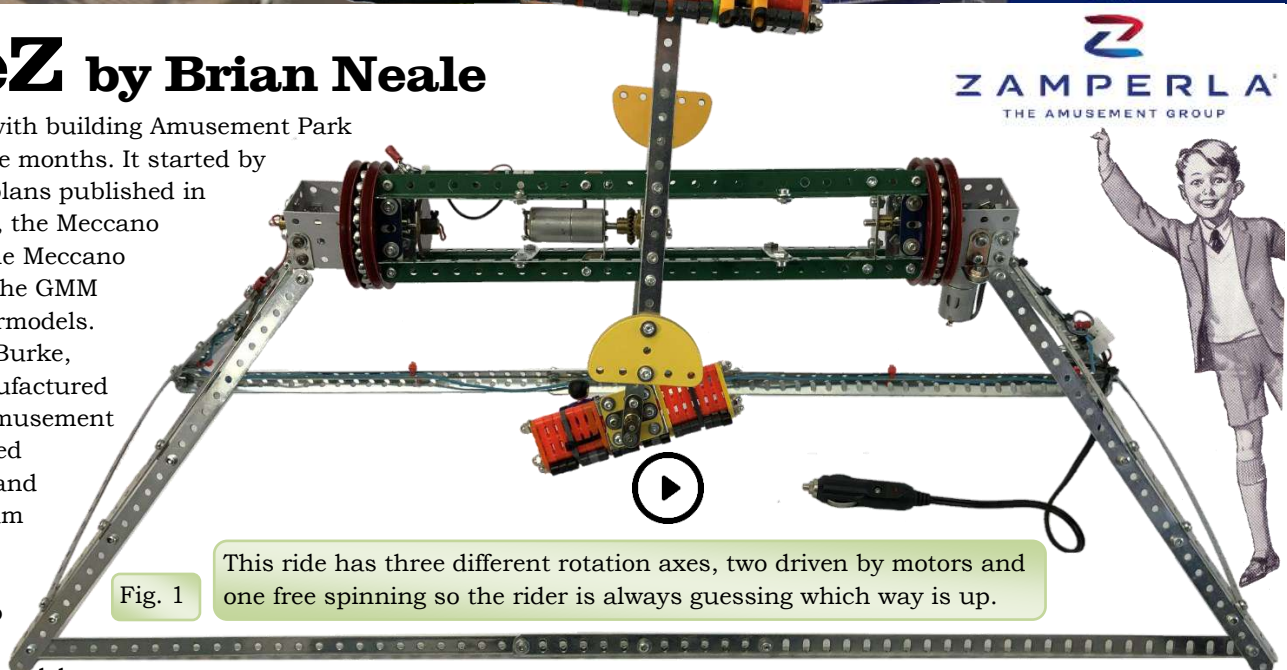
From Larry McEwan – Canada.
How to lock a gearwheel to a flanged wheel.



Max Height:
 10.7m 35.1ft
 Footprint:
 15.0m x 10.8m
 49.2ft x 35.4ft
 Center Rotation:
 6.0 rpm
 Arm Rotation:
 3.0 rpm
 Seat Rotation:
 Free
 Seats:
 12
 Capacity:
 240pph
 Cycles Per Hour:
 20
 Restraints Type:
 Over the shoulder
 Minimum Passengers Height:
 120cm / 48"
 Max Power Consumption:
 60kW

BlendeZ by Brian Neale

I've had a fascination with building Amusement Park rides for the past twelve months. It started by building models from plans published in the Meccano Magazine, the Meccano Supermodels Series, the Meccano Scrapbook Vol 6, and the GMM Series of Modern Supermodels. Then, thanks to John Burke, I discovered rides manufactured in Italy by Zamperla Amusement Group. John had started building the NebulaZ, and once I saw his Instagram post I had to make my own. From that point I was hooked and had to make more of the Zamperla designs. My models are not colour coordinated. I build purely for the engineering challenge.



ZAMPERLA
 THE AMUSEMENT GROUP



Fig. 1

This ride has three different rotation axes, two driven by motors and one free spinning so the rider is always guessing which way is up.

The rotating frame sits on four legs, these legs are made up of 8 x part 1 Strips held together in pairs by 3 x part 12c Obtuse Angle Brackets. At the long side of the base, the legs are bolted to 4 x part 7a Angle Girders which are overlapped by 13 holes. Across the width are 2 x part 1a Strips. The tops of the legs are bolted with 2 x part 12d Angle Brackets to a part 160g Cube. Fitted to the right-hand Cube is a 12V motor that rotates the ride via a part 26 Pinion fitted to the motor shaft. This Pinion meshes with a part 29 Contrate fitted to a part 16b Rod that is journaled into the Cube Fig. 4. Fitted to each end of the rotating frame are 4 x part 19b Pulleys. Two of these have a part 314 Wheel Flange attached. Part 168d Balls make a ball race so the rotating frame can rotate smoothly. Figs. 2 & 4.

Mounted inside the rotating frame is another 12V motor which drives the rotating arms. Figs. 3 & 5. This motor is fitted with a part 30b Bevel which is meshed with 2 x part 30b Bevels on the rotating arms. Power to the motor is fed via a wire passing through the ball race using a part 230 4" Keyway Rod.

Attached to the end of this Rod is a modified part 551 Elektrikit Commutator, Fig. 6, with the mounting holes and lugs removed.

Attached to the rotating frame is a part 531 Elektrikit Wiper fixed to a part 564 Insulated Spacer.

The rotating frame is made from 4 x part 8a Angle Girders held together by 4 x part 5 Strips. This assembly is bolted to the part 19b Pulley via 4 x part 9f Angle Girders. 4 x part 48 Double Angle Strips are mounted on the right-hand side along with a part 5 Perforated Strip fitted with a part 62b Double Arm Crank to make a bearing for the rotating frame's drive axle.

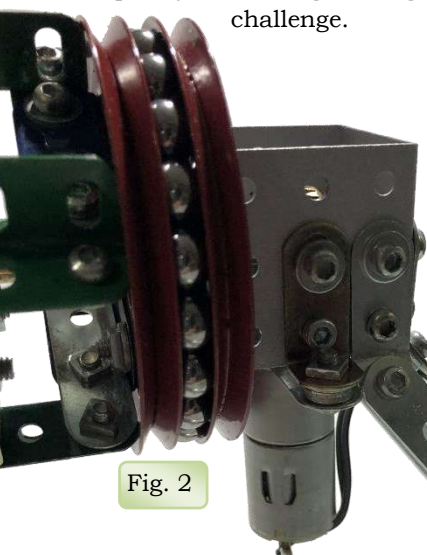


Fig. 2

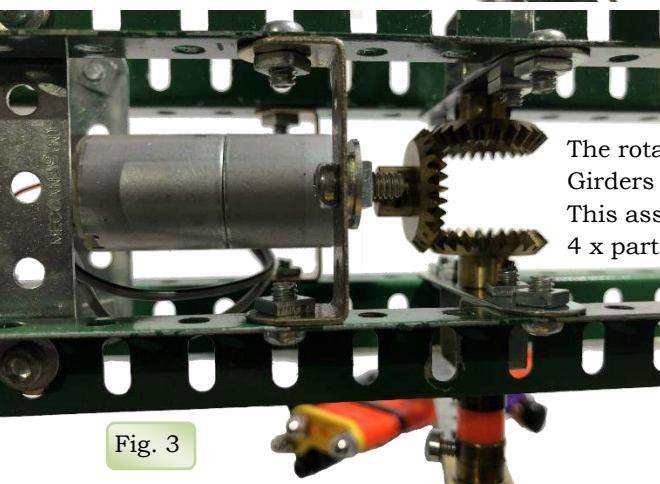


Fig. 3

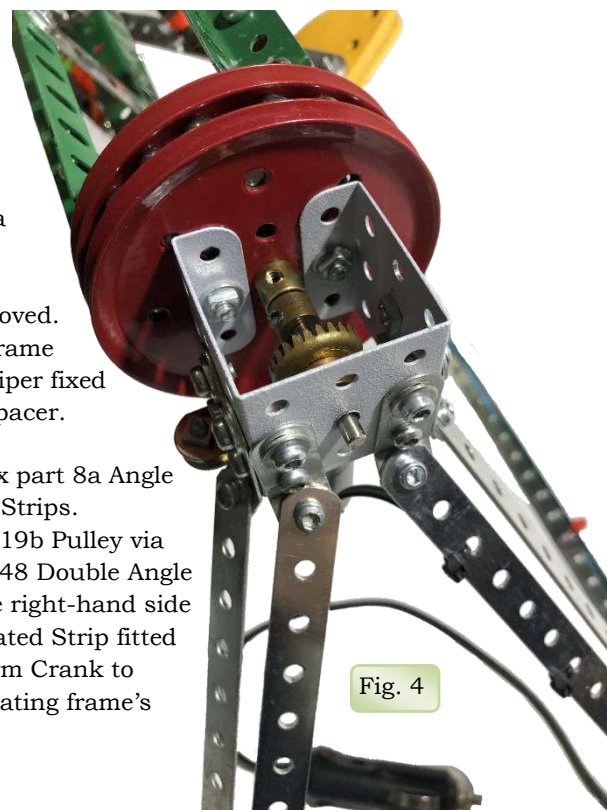


Fig. 4

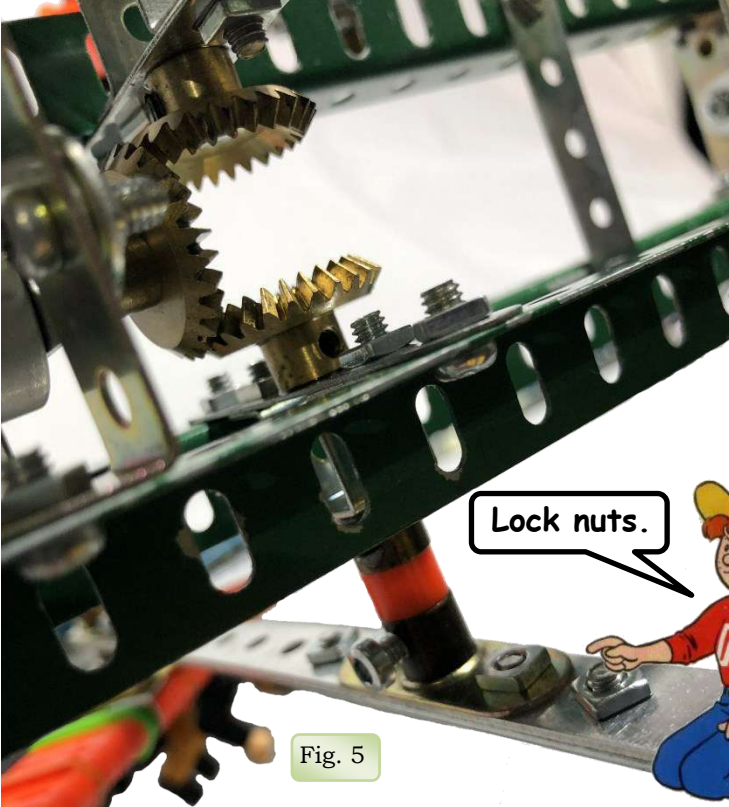


Fig. 5

Attached halfway along the rotating frame are two rotating arms. Figs. 5 & 8. Each arm is made up of 2 x part 1a Strips bolted together to make them rigid. Bolted on each side of the rotating frame are a part 5 Strip and a part 45 Double Bent Strip. These carry a part 17 Rod. On each of these is a part 30b Bevel. Holding the axle to the Double Bent Strip is a part 59 Collar. Added to the axle is a part 38a Plastic Washer for spacing. Finally, the axle is held in place by a part 62b Double Arm Crank which is bolted to the rotating arm.

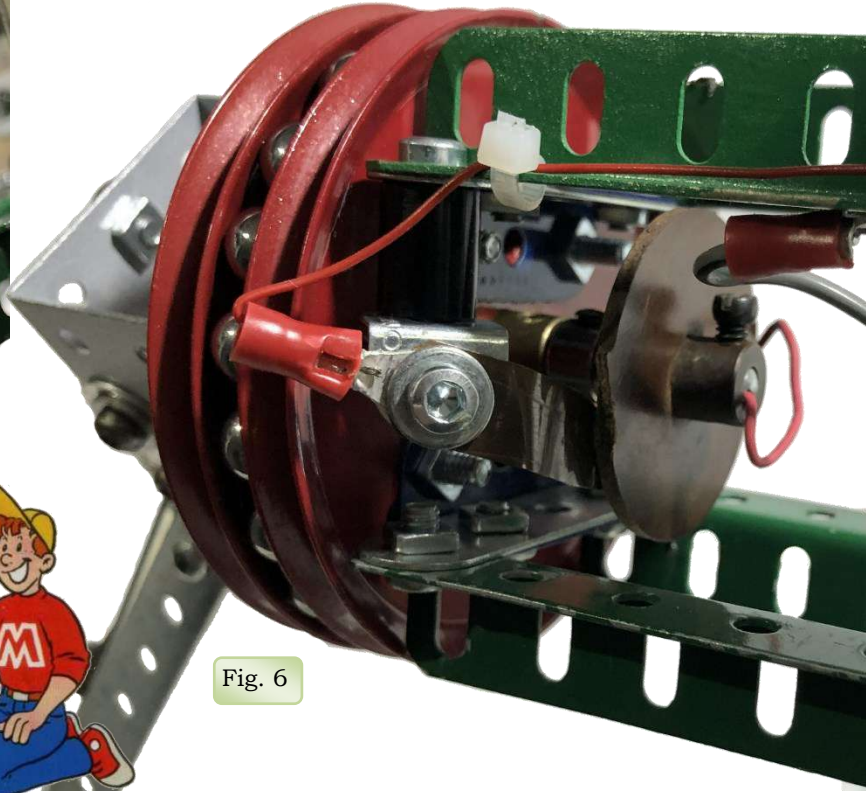
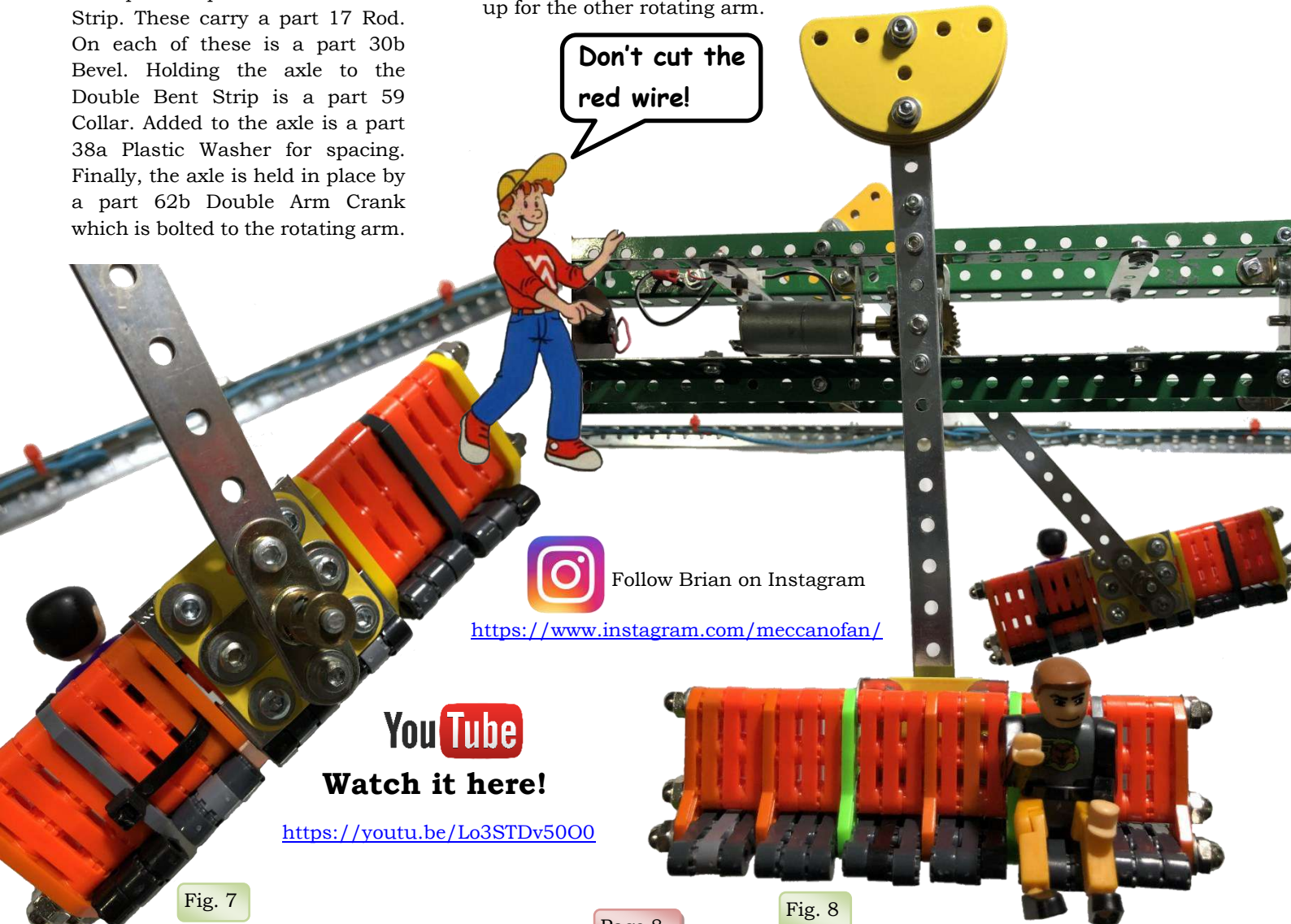


Fig. 6

On each of the rotating arms, a counterweight is fitted at the short end made up of 12 x part 214 Semi-Circular Plates. Fig. 8. At the seating end of the rotating arm is a part 62b Double Arm Crank with a part 18a Rod, part 59 Collar and a part 38a Plastic Washer that turns in another part 62b Double Arm Crank. This Double Arm Crank is attached to part 74 Flat Plate (on the back of the seats), Fig. 7 which in turn is attached by 4 x part 12b Angle Brackets to 2 x part 80 Screwed Rods. Along with a third Screwed Rod there are 18 x part 260c and 7 x part 260j fitted which make up six seats. Repeat this set up for the other rotating arm.



Don't cut the red wire!



Follow Brian on Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/meccanofan/>

YouTube

Watch it here!

<https://youtu.be/Lo3STDv5000>

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

BABA YAGA'S HUT



Baba Yaga depicted in Tales of the Russian People (published by V. A. Gatsuk in Moscow in 1894). In fairy tales Baba Yaga flies around in a mortar, wields a pestle, and dwells deep in the forest in a hut usually described as standing on chicken legs. Baba Yaga may help or hinder those that encounter or seek her out.

There are many stories featuring the Baba Yaga and the fable hut on chicken legs. The following is one by Alexander Afanasyev from The Maiden Tsar, written in the 19th century.

Ivan, a handsome merchant's son, makes his way to the home of one of three Baba Yagas. He journeyed onwards, straight ahead ... and finally came to a little hut; it stood in the open field, turning on chicken legs. He entered and found Baba Yaga the Bony-legged.

"Fie, fie," she said, "the Russian smell was never heard of nor caught sight of here, but it has come by itself. Are you here of your own free will or by compulsion, my good youth?" "Largely of my own free will, and twice as much by compulsion!"

Do you know, Baba Yaga, where lies the thrice tenth kingdom?"

"No, I do not," she said, and told him to go to her second sister; she might know.

Ivan walks for some time before encountering a small hut identical to the first.

This Baba Yaga makes the same comments and asks the same question as the first, and Ivan asks the same question.

This second Baba Yaga does not know either and directs him to the third but says that if she gets angry with him "and wants to devour you, take three horns from her and ask her permission to blow them; blow the first one softly, the second one louder and third still louder." Ivan thanks her and continues on his journey.

After walking for some time, Ivan eventually finds the chicken-legged hut of the youngest of the three sisters turning in an open field. This third and youngest of the Baba Yagas makes the same comment about "the Russian smell" before running to whet her teeth and consume Ivan. Ivan begs her to give him three horns and she does so. The first he blows softly, the second louder, and the third louder yet. This causes birds of all sorts to arrive and swarm the hut. One of the birds is the firebird, which tells him to hop on its back or Baba Yaga will eat him. He does so and the Baba Yaga rushes him and grabs the firebird by its tail. The firebird leaves with Ivan, leaving Baba Yaga behind with a fistful of firebird feathers.

Baba Yaga's Hut by Margaret Massingham.
Photo credit: Rob Mitchell.



Plastic flex Plates tend to warp but I think it adds to the character.

Front door secured at the bottom only.

Start by making the gearbox frame using 2 x Flat Girders joined with 4 x DAS. Journal the Rods through making sure you put the Contrate in. Make sure the Bush Wheels are aligned by putting a Rod through the outside holes and making sure it's parallel to the centre Rod. Now bolt the 4-hole Strips to the Bush Wheels at 90 degrees out of phase. Fig 2.

The 51c Flanged Plate is bolted onto these Strips. To prevent the bolt heads hitting the peened part of the Bush Wheel, do it exactly as shown in Fig 3. Use an 111c ½" Bolt secured with a Nut then a thin washer followed by a standard Washer. Then the Strip, another standard Washer and the locknuts. I used the flat square nuts to get as much thread as possible. If you don't do it like this you will need longer Bolts. Test that it spins freely then add the N20 motor. I bolted the motor to a Fishplate and adjusted the position using the slots in the Fishplate and the 12b Angle Bracket.

Listen to

Mussorgsky - Pictures at an Exhibition.
XIII. The Hut on Fowl's Legs. Baba Yaga.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsvpFU7KY7E&t=1410s>

You Tube
Watch it!

<https://youtube.com/shorts/aZG1AWlslg0>

Fishplate mount.

51c
Flanged
Plate

And for Emerson, Lake and Palmer fans....

The Hut and the Curse Baba Yaga

<https://youtu.be/xMdwIP9vRWs>

Part No.	Description	Qty
6	Strip 2"	3
10	Fishplate	1
12b	Angle Bracket 1" x ½"	1
16a	Rod 2½"	6
18c	Rod Triflat 1¼"	2
24	Bush Wheel 8 hole	4
26nd	Pinion 11t	1
28	Contrate 50t	1
35	Spring Clip	12
38	Plastic Spacer	2
48	Double Angle Strip 1½" x ½"	4
51c	Flanged Plate 2 x 1 hole	2
59	Collar	1
103	Flat Girder 3"	2
120b	Compression Spring 1"	2
125	Reverse Angle Bracket	1
190	Plastic Plate 2½" x 2½"	4
190a	Plastic Plate 3½" x 2½"	2
191	Plastic Plate 4½" x 2½"	2
235g	Narrow Strip 3 hole	4
247c	QI Narrow Strip 3 hole	2
260b	Suspension Outer Bracket	2
260c	Plastic Spacer Strip 5 hole	2
260d	Plastic Track Rod End Pin	1
812b	Narrow Angle Bracket 2x1	20
812d	Narrow Obtuse Angle Bracket	1
825	Narrow Obtuse Rev A Bracket	1
C769	QI Narrow Strip 7 hole	2
C777	QI Narrow Curved Strip	9
	N20 geared motor 60rpm	1

Fig. 1

Push the 2½" Rods through the 51c Flanged Plates. Note: they will be very tight as the ends of the Bolts touch them. Just push hard! They will go through. Then secure them with 4 x Spring Clips although they will probably be tight without them. Better safe than sorry.

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Slide the Spacer, Compression Spring and 260b Suspension Outer Bracket onto the Rods and lock in place with a Collar.

Attach the 260c plastic Spacer Strip with a 260d plastic Pin. If you don't have the Pin, a Bolt will be fine.

The 9V battery holder is a 4-hole Strip and a Reverse Angle Bracket spaced with two Washers.

Build the chicken feet with 4 x Narrow QI Curved Strips. Bolt the Obtuse Narrow Angle Brackets onto the outside Curved Strips first. Now bolt the middle Curved Strips together with only 1 hole overlap. Tighten it VERY tight while keeping the arc symmetrical.

Switch mounted on Fishplate.

Fig. 4

You Tube See the base walking without the hut.
<https://youtu.be/qktftvoCGuU>

Now bolt the outside Curved Strips and the Obtuse Brackets on with one Bolt only in the 4th hole from the end. Then bolt a Narrow Angle Bracket on and adjust it so it's vertical. Fig 6. Finally, bolt 2 x Narrow Angle Brackets onto the vertical Angle Bracket and journal through the yellow plastic Spacer Strip with a 1 1/4" Triflat Rod. Secure with Spring Clips, Fig 5. The QI 3-hole Narrow Strip is to stop it leaning too far.

Fig. 6

To limit travel

2 x 812b

Fig. 5

The hut really must be made from plastic Plates as this model is top heavy and I think it's likely to overbalance with the exaggerated swagger. It's most difficult to tighten the Bolts on the Plate without distorting them so be careful.

Fig. 7

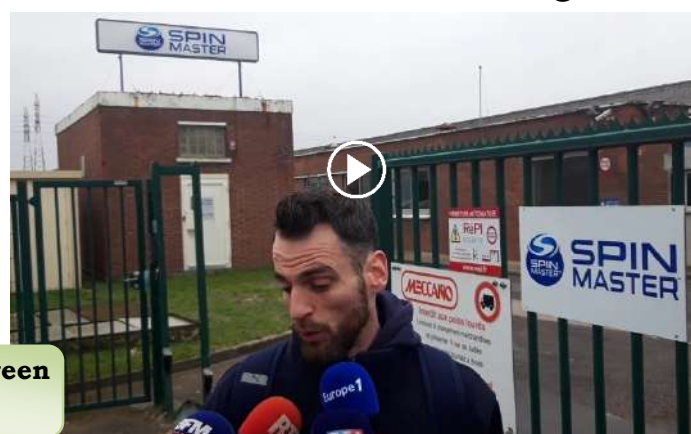
No, I didn't forget the Bolt. There is no hole there.

Fig. 8

Spin Master closing Calais factory



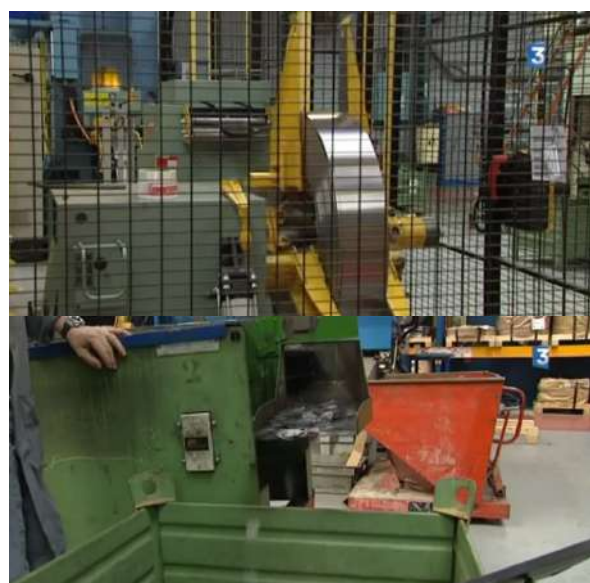
Spin Master employees in between a rock and a hard place.



Editorial. The Calais factory was opened in 1959 and is to be closed in Jan 2024 with 50 employees sacked. That means the Calais factory will have been in operation for 65 years. Binns Rd, Liverpool was opened in Autumn 1914 and closed on Fri 30th November 1979. Also 65 years! Opinions are like navels, everybody has one (I cleaned that one up), but in my opinion this didn't have to happen. Spin Master, which bought the brand in 2013, said Meccano toys would continue to be produced by its "network of partners in Europe, Asia and Latin America". That sounds like spin for "We will get parts made wherever we get the cheapest quote". Spin Master's press release ended with "Finally, it will naturally remain open to all proposals from a possible buyer." So maybe there is hope. Maybe Meccano will be taken over by a company that understands the true meaning of Meccano. When Spin Master bought the brand, they not only bought the name, but they also bought the Meccano System which is a lot more than a name. It's a well thought out collection of parts that have evolved over the last century to interact with each other in a way that Meccano modellers and engineers fully understand and appreciate. Spin Master didn't appreciate it. They saw it as just another toy and they tried to make something new that wasn't within the Meccano System. Their first attempt was the disastrous Meccanoid which was nothing more than an expensive plastic robot that had no Meccano parts other than the long Pivot Bolts. I wrote to Spin Master in Jan 2015 and asking them what they were thinking. Lawrence Rabie replied *"...the bottom line is this is a product that will lead our classic Meccano SKUs into stores. We need the Walmarts and Toys R Us's of this world to stock old Meccano and to do that we need a showstopper – this is that stopper – at the price point we are selling it at, we don't expect it to sell 1million units – but we do expect it to create the excitement we need to sell all other Meccano products – this is about branding too. This is the re-birth of Meccano and by the way it won last gadget standing at CES and has generated crazy buzz"*.

Obviously, an expensive mistake, but they continued on with a "Ten Set" consisting of 3 drawers of plastic parts and servos. Another failure. Then Spin Master seemed to lose interest altogether. Such a shame when they started off with some good outfits like the Eiffel Tower with the ¼" narrow strips, the Tower Crane (although it had some faulty angle girders) and the Thunderbird 2 outfit which was totally excellent. If only they had stayed on the path of traditional Meccano.

Here's hoping the brand is sold to a new owner that appreciates the difference between a brand name and a system. – Ed.



The Calais factory is not just a packaging facility. Many parts are manufactured on site. From the top, a roll of steel sheet, stamping machine, trunnions and hanging the parts for painting.

YouTube <https://youtu.be/qO0D37LcYME>

In mid-September 2022, my partner Lisa and I were enroute to the Isle of Wight. As we were approaching the Ferry port in Southampton, I spotted the BMW's registration in front and grasped the opportunity to take a snapshot while the traffic was at a standstill. I prayed that he was heading for the ferry too, and that by some small miracle we might find ourselves parked side by side so I could take a photo. Alas, he turned off heading in another direction, so I counted myself lucky to have got a decent image of his registration at all. I later took a composed photo of my own car and photo-shopped it in to create the slightly artificial image attached. – Pete Wood.



This Month's Meccanoboy

When and where were you born?

I was born in Blackburn, Lancashire in England in the late 1970s. Blackburn is situated in the West Pennines which has some of the world's most spectacular scenery when it is visible on the approximate 3 days of the year that it's not drizzling, showering, chucking it down, raining cats and dogs, raining horizontally or just plain wet. January is the driest month of the year when it's more freezing than wet. These are all great environmental conditions for textile fabrics hence the historic textile weaving industry that grew there massively during the industrial revolution. Local historic heroes were typically engineering machinery inventors from those times. The last editor of the Meccano Magazine, Michael Walker is also from Blackburn and I found out more recently that he lived on the next street to us although that was possibly before I was born.



Work, work work.

What was your first job after graduating?

I worked as an Avionics Engineer at British Aerospace. This has brought me a wide variety of interesting work with many opportunities including travelling extensively in Europe and then working in USA and later in Australia.

What prompted you to immigrate to Australia?

In 2010 my employer offered to relocate me from England to Australia. Years ago, you had to commit a crime in order to get this privilege so this was clearly too good an opportunity to turn down so we jumped on the plane here. My oldest son was 4 months old at the time; before this he was required to go to Australia House in London for an interview in order to get his first passport. This consisted of putting a 3 month old baby on top of the counter for the official to stare at with a somewhat gawkish bemused expression before agreeing that he did actually exist and issuing the passport; I can say that was the biggest waste of a 700km round trip I've ever done.

Are you a true-blue Aussie now?

Yes, I can now say that I am a well-balanced Australian; I have a chip on both of my shoulders.

Steve Butterworth



Where did you go to school?

I attended the local primary and secondary school (which had a decent amount of Meccano in the technology lab) in Blackburn and went to Clitheroe Royal Grammar School for sixth form (former NMMG President, the late Geoff Brown also attended this school many years earlier).

What was your first job?

I was a Paperboy starting from when I was about 12 or 13; it was distributing the free local newspaper that was 90% adverts, this had to go to every house on the round plus an extra ½ pence per additional advertising leaflet per house. The newspapers had many pages, and they weighed a ton and as anyone who's been to Blackburn will know, the streets are very steep and with the aforementioned weather it all made for good character-building experience. Unlike in Australia, where we have mailboxes out on the street we had to haul the newspapers up each garden path and then post them through a letterbox flap in the front door of the house where in many cases a dog would be lying quietly in the porch waiting to transform into a vicious snarling beast when an unsuspecting paperboy's fingers tried to push the flap up against a hurricane-resistant spring and gale-force blocking bristles prior ramming the contents in (I soon learnt to do this quickly with the tip of my fingers and feed the paper to the dog). Still, the pay was ok and the generous Christmas tips certainly helped the Meccano purchasing.



Are you married? Any kids?

I met my future wife Esther in London through a mutual friend over 20 years ago. She was an Australian ex-pat working as a temp. We now have two school age children. I frequently get admonished for telling too many Dad jokes and for having high levels of optimism (an essential trait for building with Meccano).

Do any of your kids share your interest in Meccano?

Yes, both of my sons showed some interest. My younger son in particular has a very enquiring mind and has been exploring Binns Rd era instructions and trying to come up with his own inventions.

How much Meccano do you have?

To misquote Bilbo Baggins: half of my Meccano is half as much as I need, and I need less than half of my Meccano half as much as I had thought.



Oldest son with his rocket



Melbourne Expo 2022



Youngest son with his exploding ship



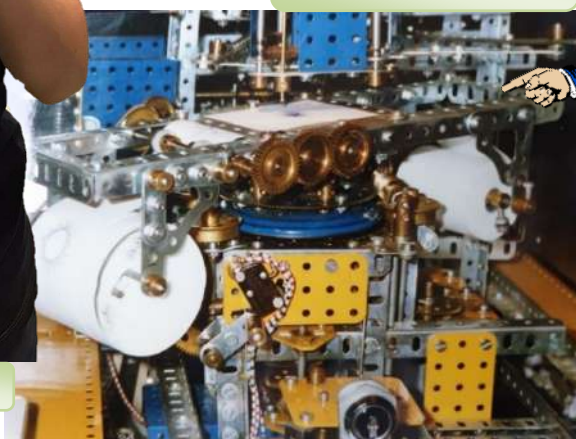
What Meccano clubs are you in?
Melbourne, Sheffield, North Midlands, South Africa.

See the exploding ship on YouTube.

YouTube <https://youtube.com/shorts/XpJVvNXAcY>

Steve selfie in his Melbourne Meccano Club polo shirt.

Evoluon museum in Eindhoven, Netherlands



What was your best model?

I actually don't know. Any model I completed means I liked it enough to persist. All of my models have features I like but equally elements that I wish I had done better. My favourite model is the Boerdijk Meccanograph which I remember gazing at it in the Evuon museum in Eindhoven, Netherlands as an awestruck 14-year-old watching it continuously operate unattended automatically advancing its paper roll and changing its patterns. I was pleased to be able to eventually build this model myself based on the instructions in the Modelplan 182 and add some extra features to it.

What type of Meccano models do you favour?

Scale models, animated models, automated models. I like models that are in proportion, and I appreciate detail particularly where this is achieved through choice of parts rather than excessive parts. I have built several small models; the size is not really the relevant point but if I made them of a larger scale then I would expect to justify this by adding considerably extra detail and complexity which I don't necessarily have the inclination or time to do. Whatever the subject, I like the challenge of solving problems within the constraints of the system whether fitting parts into a small space, getting a mechanism to work or just making it look right. I believe that no problem is too large if we really put our mind to it. Most types of models interest me except for stationary steam engines which I find a bit *meh*, this makes me feel somewhat guilty as I know they take huge effort to get the flywheel running true and the crankshaft straight, but this is probably the only type of model not on my bucket list to build.

Do you visit other Meccano people?

I've been fortunate to visit John Burke in Victoria more than once, he was extremely hospitable and gave us some amazing yum cha. Also, Paul Dale when he lived in Brisbane and Graham Jost in Melbourne plus several in England.

Have you been to many Meccano Expos?

I've been to Skegex a couple of times which is a fantastic exhibition and quite overwhelming for the sheer number and quality of models, the Henley gathering, the Kew Bridge Steam Museum (amazing setting for Meccano models) and the annual Melbourne Exhibition about 8 times not including the time I turned up one week early (clearly my enthusiasm got the better of me).

Have you travelled much?

I've driven completely across 4 continents. Besides driving to the west and east coasts of Australia I've covered many countries in Europe including driving to North Cape at top of Norway and seeing the midnight sun (absolutely magical). I also lived in USA for a couple of years and got to do several road trips around the USA; from my experience the best place for driving long distances (great roads, amazing scenery and few traffic delays), the Columbia River Gorge was probably one of the standout drives of our trip. We also had a week in Mexico, but the less that is mentioned about that trip and the state of my innards, probably the better.

When I was much younger, I drove with some mates across Africa in a couple of Land Rovers which was a great experience although with many unplanned bush mechanic moments (would Toyotas have been any better?). A slightly surreal episode occurred when crossing the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia to find the border in front had been locked for the day and upon turning back we found that had also been locked as we came through; so we camped in no-man's land compound for the night and idly speculated if we happened to be caught in the cross-fire of an AK-47 round from one of the sets of soldiers marching either side of us then which nation would take responsibility for notifying our next of kin?



My Mini Cooper

Do you have any advice for kids today?

Persist with what you are doing and when it gets tough, don't give up without a fight.



At Mt Rushmore



With Esther at Fish River Canyon, Namibia



Ever been to Binns Rd?

Only in recent times did I go past it and saw the giant Meccano Liver bird erected in the shopping centre carpark. I was scarcely knee-high to a grasshopper when the factory closed so I can't imagine what it was like in its heyday.

My Liver Bird inspired by the sculpture at Edge Lane near the now demolished Binns Rd Meccano factory.

Melbourne Expo 2019



We are John & Johnny. A father and son team who like Meccano. We're nothing to do with Spin Master who own the brand. Contact us at MeccanoNews@gmail.com

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<https://nelmc.org.uk>
<https://nmmg.org.uk>
<https://www.selmec.org.uk>
<https://southwestmeccano.org.uk>
<https://londonmeccanoclub.org.uk>
<http://www.hsomerville.com/wlms>
<http://www.northwestmeccano.co.uk>
<https://northeasternmeccano.org.uk>
<https://www.meccanoscotland.org.uk>
<http://www.corlustmeccanoclub.co.uk>
<https://runnymedemeccanoguild.org.uk>
<http://www.midlandsmeccanoguild.com>

Other Countries

<http://club-amis-meccano.org/>
<http://www.meccaninfos.com.ar/>
<http://www.meccanogilde.nl>
<http://meccano.free-bb.fr/>
<https://www.aceam.org/es/>
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<http://www.amsclub.ch/>
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USA and Canada

https://www.spinmaster.com/brand.php?brand=cat_meccano
<https://www.usmeccano.com>
<http://www.meccano.com>
<http://www.cmamas.ca>
<http://www.bcmeccanomodelers.com/meccano-in-canada.html>
<http://www.meccanoquebec.org/index2ang.html>
<http://www.melright.com/meccanosales/>

New Zealand

<http://www.nzmeccano.com>
<http://www.nzfmn.co.nz>
<https://www.facebook.com/MWT-Meccano-Club-1476153515979522/>

Australia

<http://www.mmci.com.au>
<http://www.sydneymeccanomodelers.org.au>
<http://www.webjournalist.com.au/maylands/index.html>

South Africa

<http://www.mecworld.co.za/cmrrp/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Meccano-Club-of-South-Africa-464753870326296>

Personal pages

<https://neilsmeccanoandstuff.jimdofree.com/neil-s-meccano-models>
<http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/dms/meccano>
<http://www.dalefield.com/meccano/index.html>

<https://www.alansmeccano.org>
<https://www.meccanoindex.co.uk>
<http://www.meccanokinematics.net>
<https://meccanocreations.in>
<http://www.meccano.us>
<https://mecca-clocks.fr/>



Meccano suppliers

<http://www.meccanohobby.co.uk>
<https://www.meccanoshop.co.uk>
<http://meccanoman.co.uk/catalog>
<https://www.meccanospares.com>
<https://ralphsshop.com>
<http://www.meerlu.com.au/>
<https://tinyurl.com/AshokBanerjee>
<http://www.hsomerville.com/mwmailorder>
<http://www.metalconstructiontoys.com>

Dear JMM,

My husband is a Meccanoman which keeps him busy in his Meccano room and out of my hair although he rarely helps with the housework. However, yesterday he thought he saw a cockroach in the kitchen. He cleaned everything thoroughly. It looks amazing! Tomorrow I'm putting the cockroach in the bathroom. - Yours sincerely, Beleaguered Meccanowife.

What is the definition of an engineer?

Someone who solves a problem you didn't know you had in a way you don't understand.

Meccgear Jeff Clark New Zealand
sales@meccgear.co.nz No website yet but a pricelist with photos can be downloaded here
<http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-151916>
Bespoke parts from Corlust Meccano Club
Ian Wilson bespokecraftshack@gmail.com
Mike Rhoades. Link to price list below.
<https://www.nzmeccano.com/image-165106>

Well? Was it worth the price of a cup of coffee?



Buy me a coffee

Beware of the latest eBay scam. I ordered flowers and jewellery for my wife's Christmas present and all they sent was this lousy box of old Meccano.



A young man named Dave was dating a girl who volunteered for the SPCA. She had just rescued a parrot and gave the bird to Dave since his cat had just passed away. Unfortunately, the parrot had a bad attitude and a terrible vocabulary. His previous owners must have cursed a lot because every word the bird spoke was profane and rude.

Dave constantly tried to have a positive influence on the bird, only speaking in gentle tones and with polite, kind words around the house. Dave tried this approach for a week to no avail. Finally, Dave got so annoyed that he yelled at the parrot. The parrot yelled back, only getting louder and more obnoxious by the second. Not knowing what else to do to quiet the bird, Dave grabbed him and put him in the freezer. For about five minutes the parrot kicked up a stink, squawking loudly and causing a huge ruckus. Then all of the sudden, he went quiet.

For about two minutes, all Dave heard was absolute silence coming from the freezer. So, he walked over and opened the freezer door. The parrot tranquilly stepped onto Dave's forearm and spoke, "I want to sincerely apologize for offending you with my inappropriate language and bad behaviour. I did not mean to upset you, and I promise to clean up my act from here on out". Dave was stunned and completely taken aback by the bird's change of demeanour, wondering what possibly could have caused it when the parrot continued, "May I ask what the turkey did?"

What's the difference between Mechanical Engineers and Civil Engineers?

Mechanical Engineers build weapons; Civil Engineers build targets.

