



BOOK OF MODELS
VORLESUNG ÜBER MODELLS
LIBRO DEI MODELLI
MODELLBUCH
LIBRO DE MODELOS
LIBRO DE MODELOS
MODELLBUCH

August 2021

In this issue

Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/johnnymeccano>

Build Stephenson's Rocket Stan Knight from Idaho USA gives us step by step details.

This is entirely up to you but if you think this magazine was worth the price of a cup of coffee and you would like to contribute, click on the yellow 'Buy me a coffee' button above and it will take you to the website that gives you options.

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Plus so much more!

Marble Maze



Hmmm, let me think about this for a while....

Deep Thought

Diyode Magazine had a Makers Project to build a Marble Maze. The concept was fairly straightforward with an Arduino Uno, breadboard, 2 servos and a joystick. They used lightweight foam-core cardboard. Building it in Meccano proved a challenge. The first step is to get the servos working on a breadboard. As my other hobby is tinkering with electronics, I soldered up a Vero board and got it working but it was unreliable. Too many dodgy connections. It's quite annoying when a jiggle makes things change!



YouTube <https://youtu.be/vz5O9DiHiCc>

The home-made board was relegated to the failed projects tub (which is getting rather full now) and I used an expansion board instead. These have the advantage of providing 3-way header pins for each input and output pin on the Arduino. They are labelled SVG which I assume is Signal, Voltage, Ground so if a servo is connected to digital out 9 then you simply plug the 3-way header socket on the servo into the 3-way header pins labelled 9 on the expansion board. They can go in the wrong way so make sure you line up Orange with S for Signal. There is a DC socket on the expansion board and you can use a plugpack to supply power from 6V to 12V DC.



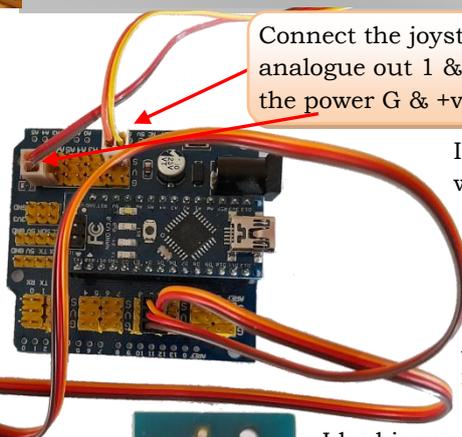
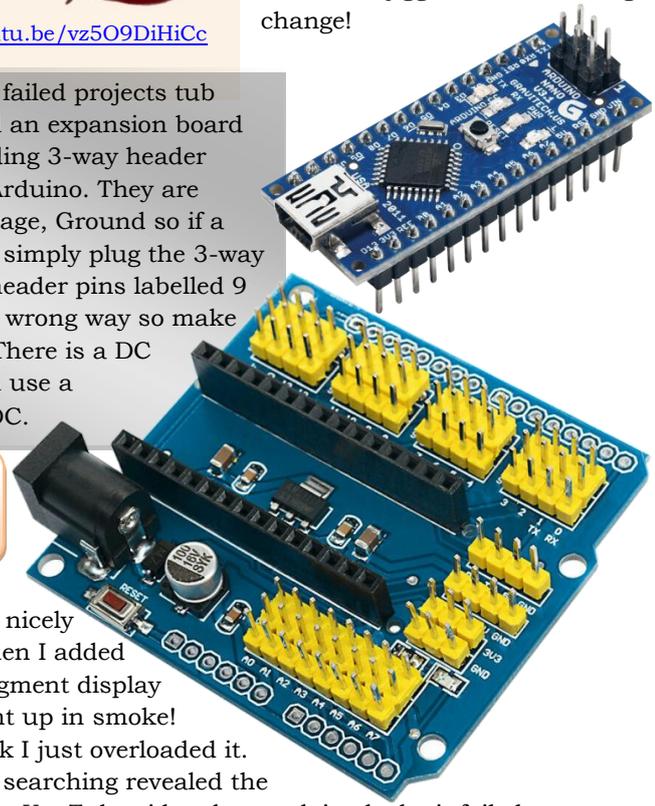
Arduino & MECCANO

Connect the joystick to analogue out 1 & 2 and the power G & +ve.

I had it working nicely but when I added a 7 segment display it went up in smoke! I think I just overloaded it. A bit of searching revealed the following YouTube video that explained why it failed.

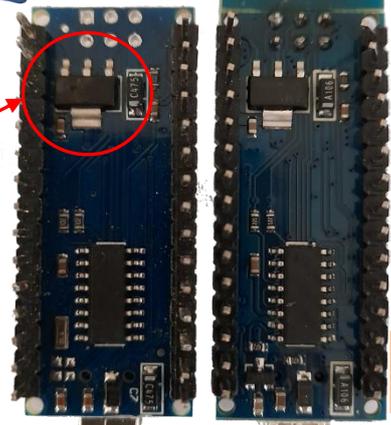
YouTube <https://youtu.be/4QD800tV3MI>

I had incorrectly assumed that the DC socket on the expansion board was supplying the input voltage directly to the Ground and Voltage pins for the servos. Wrong! The pins are connected to the Nano which has its own onboard voltage regulator and while it can provide enough power for normal servo use as in the Diyode project, it overloads with the addition of a 7 segment display, (that probably didn't have a high enough current limiting resistor) coupled with the fact I hadn't adjusted the servo positions causing them to jam when the Meccano hit the table. Visual inspection of the Nano confirmed the voltage regulator was blistered. I bought a new Nano from Altronics but the J5 86 on the Altronics board didn't mean anything to me. A few Arduino forums said it was an AMS1117 +5V so I've ordered a few in case it happens again. Yep, "It happens".



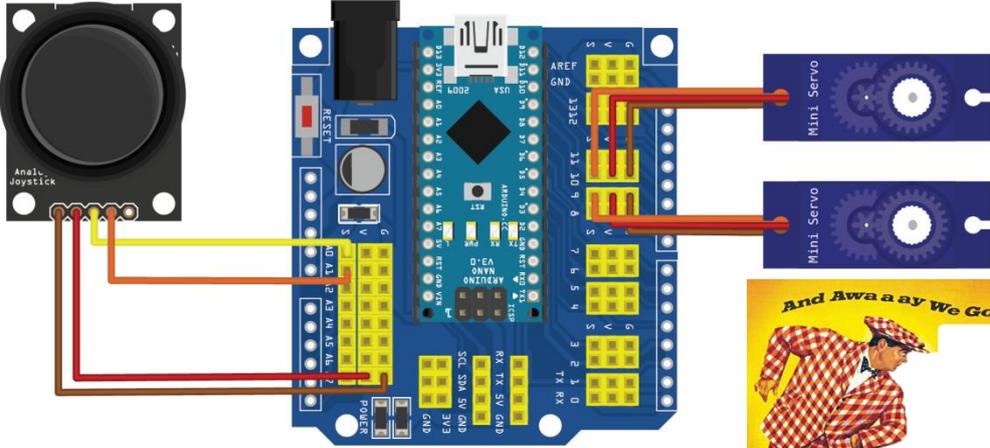
Connect the servos to digital out 9 & 10

Bad regulator

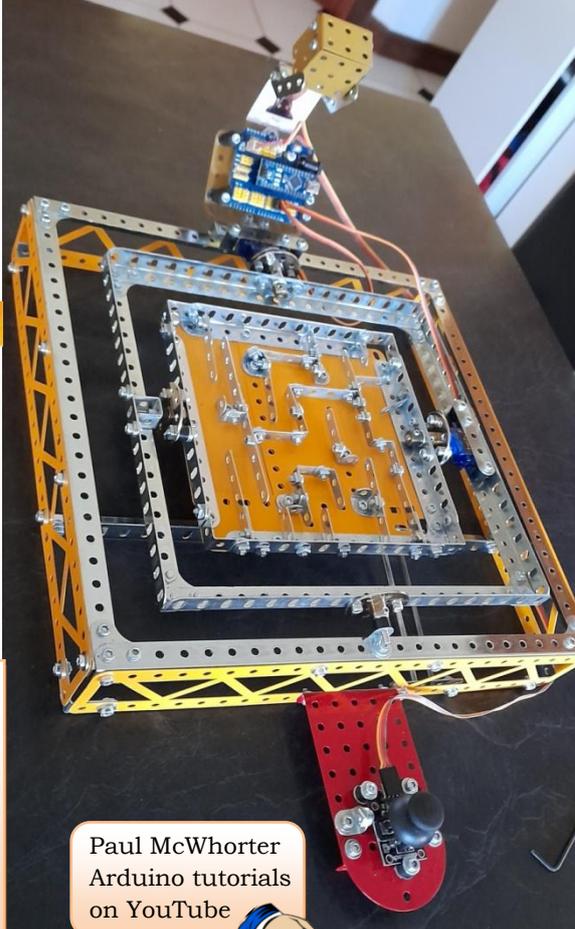


Good regulator

Under a magnifying glass I could just make out AMS1117. The new Nano from Altronics is on the right.



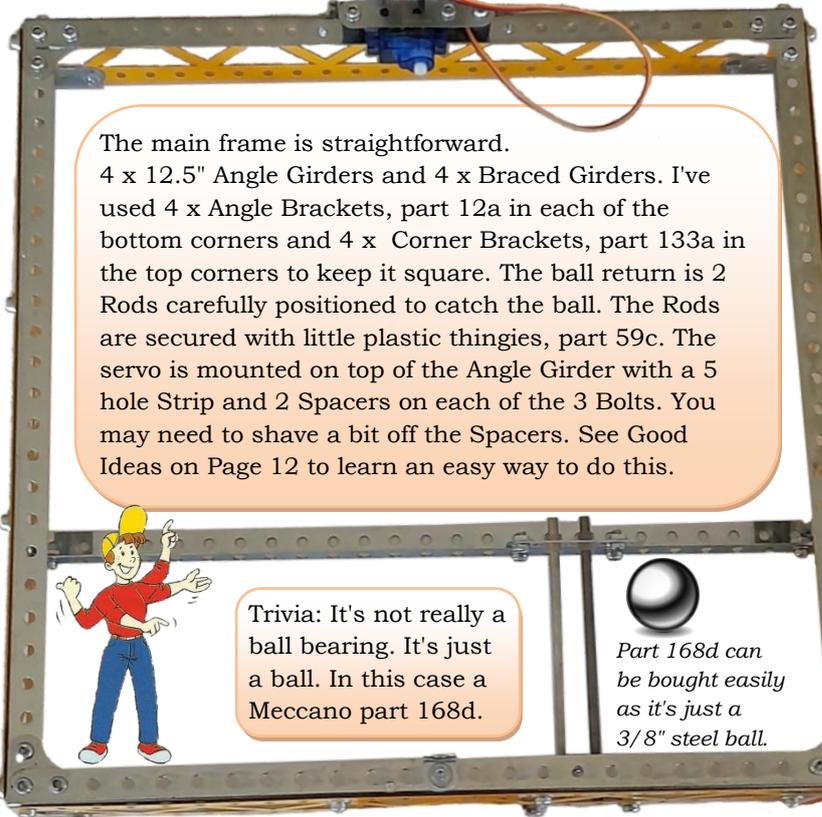
Skip over all these Arduino details if you want. Just get the supplied code onto the Nano and away you go.



Paul McWhorter Arduino tutorials on YouTube

Fritzing diagram from [DIYODE Magazine](http://www.diyode.com) I used a Nano and they kindly drew it up.

The software. In Arduino land this is called the sketch. You don't really need to know how to write the code as nearly everything you might want to do has already been done somewhere so it's just a matter of copy/pasting existing code. The code for this project is available for free download from <http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-159592> To build this project you really only need to plug the servos and the joystick into the expansion board with the Nano on top. You don't have to understand the code but if you want to learn, Paul McWhorter has an excellent series of tutorials on YouTube.



The main frame is straightforward. 4 x 12.5" Angle Girders and 4 x Braced Girders. I've used 4 x Angle Brackets, part 12a in each of the bottom corners and 4 x Corner Brackets, part 133a in the top corners to keep it square. The ball return is 2 Rods carefully positioned to catch the ball. The Rods are secured with little plastic thingies, part 59c. The servo is mounted on top of the Angle Girder with a 5 hole Strip and 2 Spacers on each of the 3 Bolts. You may need to shave a bit off the Spacers. See Good Ideas on Page 12 to learn an easy way to do this.



Trivia: It's not really a ball bearing. It's just a ball. In this case a Meccano part 168d.

Part 168d can be bought easily as it's just a 3/8" steel ball.

The standard Arduino code to control two servos with a joystick didn't work very well. There were two problems. Firstly the weight of the Meccano meant the inertia was playing havoc with the servos.

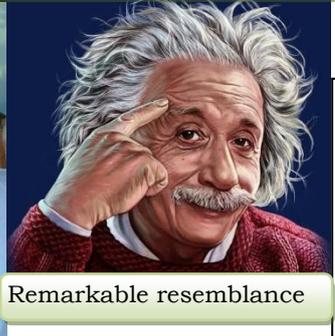


If you changed direction suddenly there were grinding noises and clicks as the internal plastic servo gears were being destroyed. This was fixed by adding a wait command in the loop to make the movement sluggish. I settled on maxstep=1 and delay=30.

YouTube <https://youtu.be/fJWR7dBuc18>

The second problem was every now and again it would lose its place and the tray would forget where centre was and get stuck at 10 degrees when the joystick was in the centre position. Fellow Meccano Club member, Dr Paul Dale, helped me fix this with the constrain command. Now I don't pretend to understand this, but as I've said, you don't really need to. The code has been written for you. You only need to understand how to download the code into your Arduino Nano and once that's done it's easy to plug the servos and joystick into the expansion board.

See Paul Dale's gallery here <http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-11134>



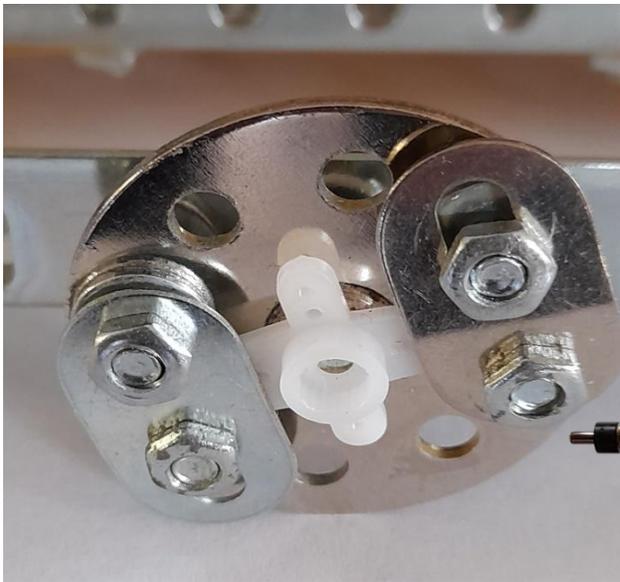
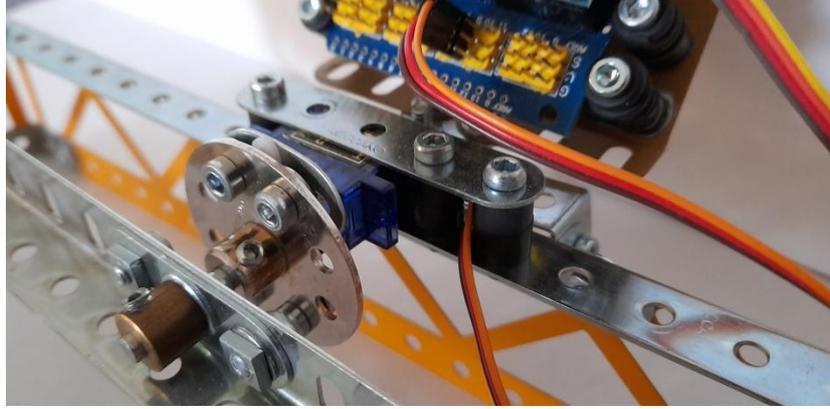
Remarkable resemblance

This is just the loop section of the code. The complete code is downloadable for free from nzmeccano <http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-159592>

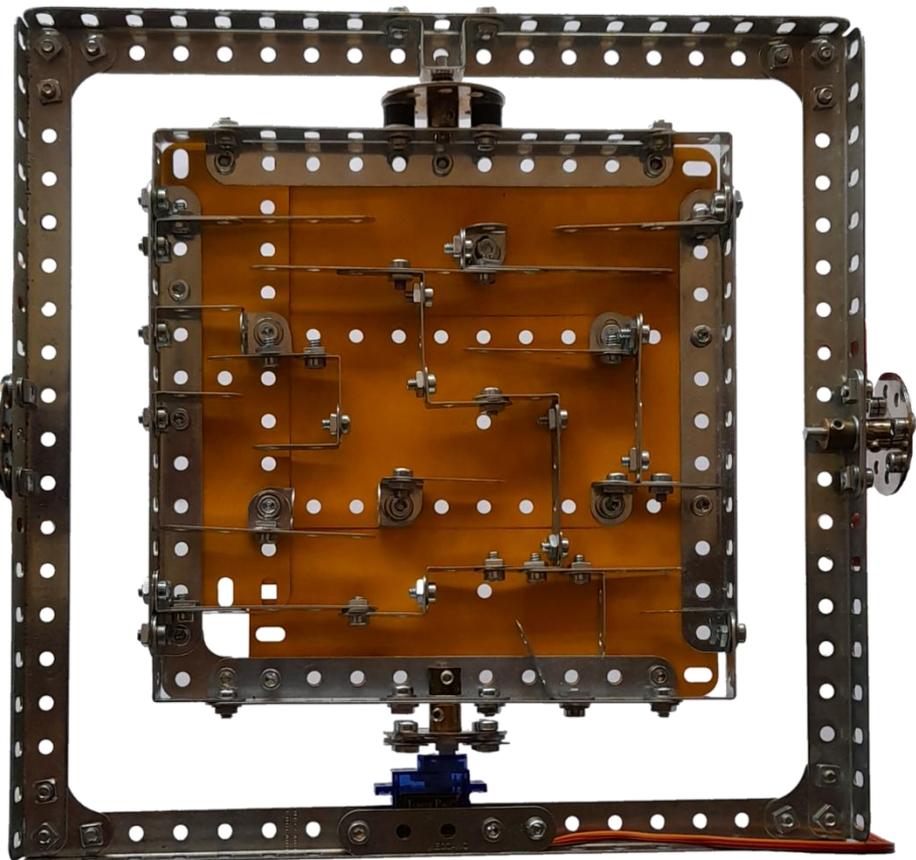
```
void loop() {
  int xnew = map(constrain(analogRead(xpot), 0, 1023), 0, 1023, 65, 115);
  int ynew = map(constrain(analogRead(ypot), 0, 1023), 0, 1023, 115, 65);
  //Controls the servo limits. Reverse to change direction
  int maxstep = 1; // Change this to change the speed limit
  xvalue = constrain(xnew, xvalue - maxstep, xvalue + maxstep);
  yvalue = constrain(ynew, yvalue - maxstep, yvalue + maxstep);
  xaxis.write(xvalue);
  yaxis.write(yvalue);
  delay(30); //Increase this to make it more sluggish
}
```

Dr Paul Dale

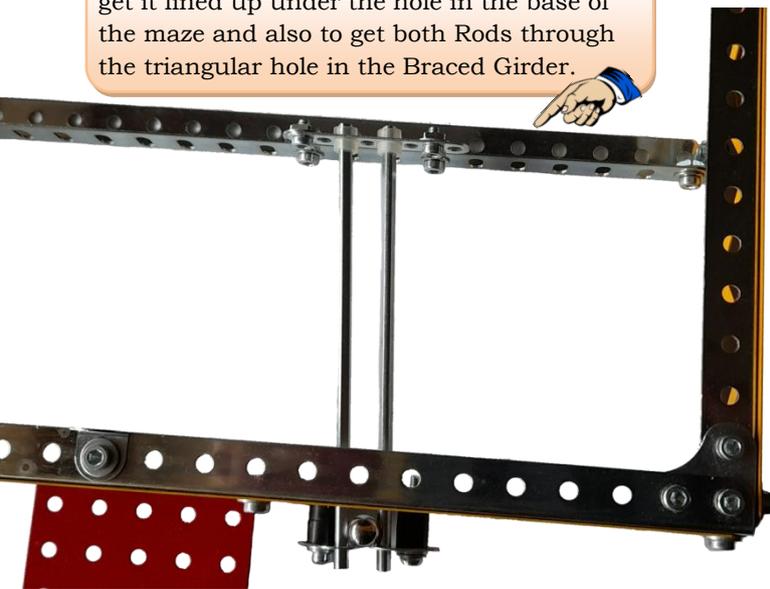
The servo needs to be mounted on top of the Angle Girder to allow enough room beneath the moving frames for the ball return. These servos never seem to be exactly centred. They have a splined shaft and I've found that if it's leaning to one side, moving the white plastic lever (horn) to the next position results in it leaning too far the other way. Most frustrating! To make this easier I mounted the horn onto a Bush Wheel using 2 Fishplates and used a Crank on the frame. This allows a Rod to be used and makes it easy to adjust the angle by loosening the Grub Screw. You don't have to use a Crank either as they are not all that common. 2 x Bush Wheels will do.



With the outer frame being 12.5", the middle frame needs to be 9.5" to allow for the Bush Wheel and part of the servo body to fit comfortably so use 4 x 19 hole Angle Girders part 8a. Use 4 x Corner Brackets, part 133a to keep it square. It's a good idea to square it up on the corner of the kitchen bench before tightening the Nuts.



The Ball return Rods are on a slight angle to get it lined up under the hole in the base of the maze and also to get both Rods through the triangular hole in the Braced Girder.



Mounting the inner frame is a repeat of mounting the middle frame. Bolt the servos on in the same way using 5 hole Strips and 2 Plastic Spacers on each Bolt. You can see in the photo above that I mounted the freewheeling Bush Wheel with the boss on the inside and 2 x Plastic Spacers plus 4 x Washers. This was just to get both Bush Wheels symmetrical. It really doesn't matter much. You could probably get away with just a Pivot Bolt if you were short on parts. The inner frame is 6.5" by 6.5" but as Meccano don't have a 6.5" Angle Girder, I've used 4 x 5.5" Angle Girders, part 9, with 1" Angle Brackets, part 12a, in each corner. A Corner Bracket, part 133a is in the corner where the exit hole is. The base of the maze is 3 x 5.5" x 2.5" Flexible Plates, part 192, and 1 x 5.5" x 1.5" Flexible Plate, part 189. The maze can be fashioned in many ways. I've used various sized Narrow Strips and standard Angle Brackets. You may have to fiddle around with it to prevent the Ball getting stuck but really, it adds to the overall challenge.

If you don't want to use Arduino you could use these servo motor controllers. You will lose the ability to make the motion sluggish but it should still work.



 3 bucks on eBay.

You will also need 2 knobs (one for each servo) rather than a joystick



Actual size (based on A4 page)

Breaking News! New Zealand. Daryl Anderson retires

Daryl Anderson and his lovely wife Rose have finally taken the plunge and retired from the headstone business. The long time denizens of that thriving metropolis, Hawera, have sold the house in the big smoke and purchased a semi rural farmland retreat on the outskirts of town.



The Taranaki Times



Of course that necessitated the relocation of Daryl's beloved Meccano. Being a humble, unpretentious chap, Daryl only admits to owning a modest amount of Meccano but I am reliably informed by his partner in crime, Robin Rye, that it's measured in tons. Fortunately there were plenty of banana boxes at hand so the Headstone Warehouse vehicle was commissioned for its last post and loaded up for the arduous task of moving the beloved Meccano to its final resting place. The local newspaper was contacted and Daryl was allocated the entirety of page 6 with many a shameless plug for the business that was for sale. Now that Daryl has gone bush he's been feeling a bit like Robinson Crusoe and has accordingly grown a beard. He also has to eat all those bananas that came in the packing boxes so the transformation from big city mogul to retired beach bum is happening. Rose is actually thinking of a grass skirt.



Fully loaded while the bugle played the last post



Banana boxes



Robin Rye. Paid in liquid refreshments



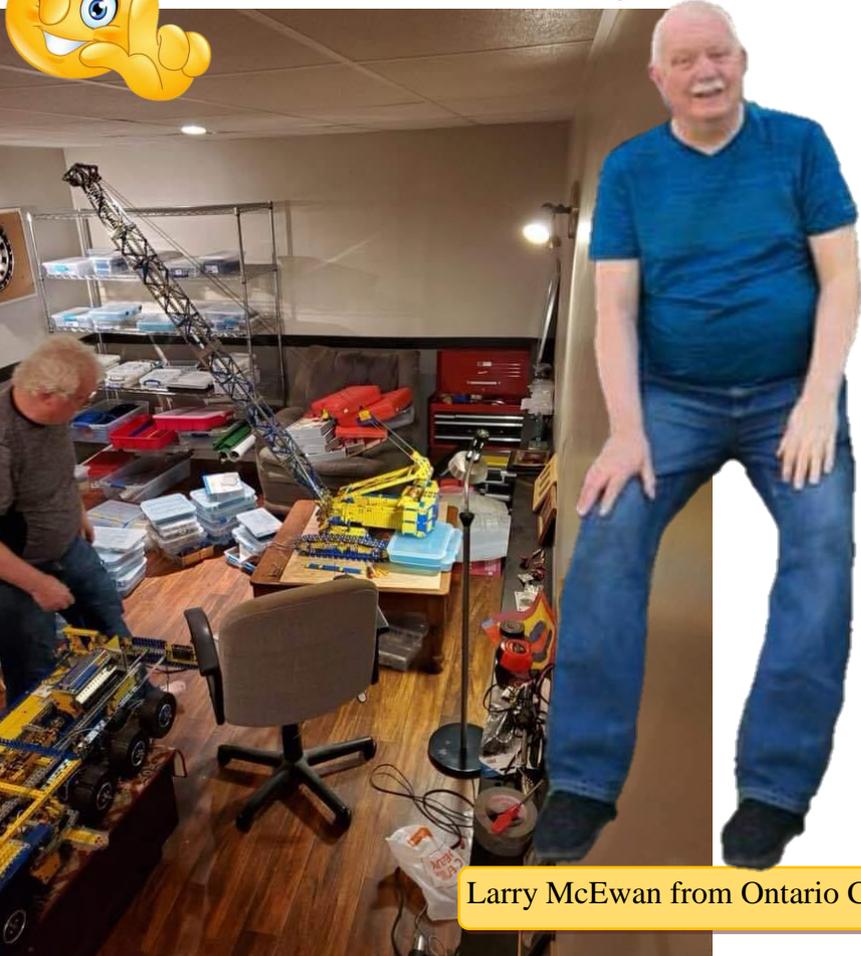
"Softly the evening came with the sunset." – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Robin's hair bleached by the hot NZ sun.



Show us your Meccano room



Larry McEwan from Ontario Canada



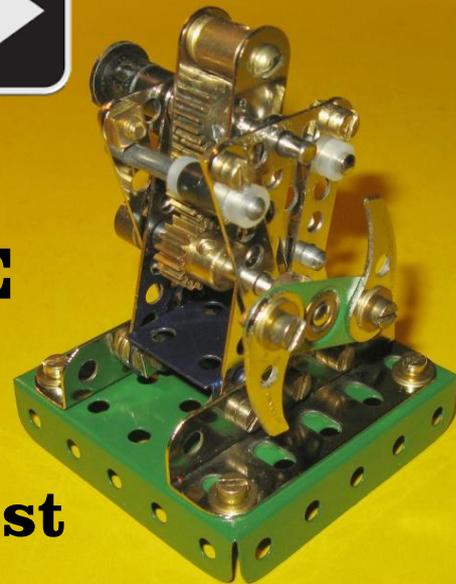
Michael Molden.
Master builder
from the UK.



Want to be blown away?
Check this out!
<https://youtu.be/o1NsDEng9M>



ONE WAY



DRIVE

Graham Jost
Australia

Since posting my write-up of Tony's Darrah's very ingenious device in this Magazine, some questions have arisen concerning its fine tuning. These concerns are legitimate, but it has to be said that once dealt with, Tony's drive remains supremely effective.

Nevertheless, I have recently taken another look at it and recast it to eliminate those earlier concerns. They were two: first, the drive from the rocking cradle to the output Pinions relied on careful setting up. Secondly, the precise setting of the limit stops (1" Corner Brackets) could not always be set easily to achieve correct meshing of the outer cradle Pinion with either of the output Pinions. Each of these concerns is addressed below, for which a new framework is crucial. That uses 9-hole 1/4"-spaced Narrow Strips arranged as shown, with 5-hole Narrow Strips bridging across the top. The base is a 1 1/2" x 1" Flanged Plate, the attachments to the "Buz" base being regular 2 1/2" Angle Girders. The rocking cradle comprises 1 1/2" regular Strips spaced by and fastened to a Threaded Boss at one end, and holding an output Pinion at the other on a shortened Axle Rod; this latter is a little under 3/4" long. The central drive Pinion fills the central space, its Axle being fitted with a Märklin Crank Handle here.

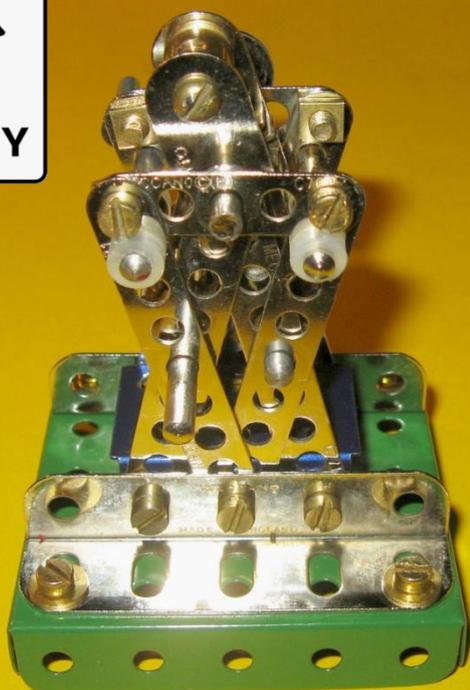
The input drive is journalled in the upper central holes of the framework and the output drives are journalled in the central holes of the Narrow Strips 1" down from the input drive Pinion; they are also exactly 1/2" apart and in mesh with each other. The drive from the input Pinion to either output Pinion via the outer cradle Pinion is thus precise, fixed and as required.

Limit stops for the rocking cradle are necessary and provided, one on each side, one hole down from the top. There, 1 1/2" Axle Rods each hold two Small Plastic Spacers on the boss side of the Pinions, held in place by modern Plastic Grips. In each extreme position, the adjacent 1 1/2" Strip of the cradle bears against the Small Plastic Spacers to locate the two cradle Pinions exactly in line with either output Pinion, precisely, as required.

The unit works perfectly and quite as well as the original. Those of a precise turn of mind may find it even more satisfying. 😊

See the video here **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/5F9DGiAKhOQ>

↑
ONLY



↶
ONLY

WRONG
WAY
GO BACK



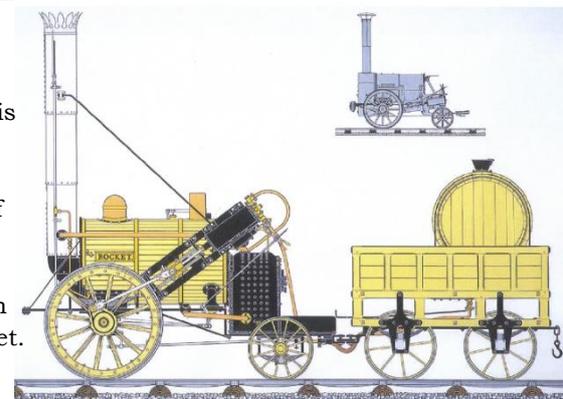
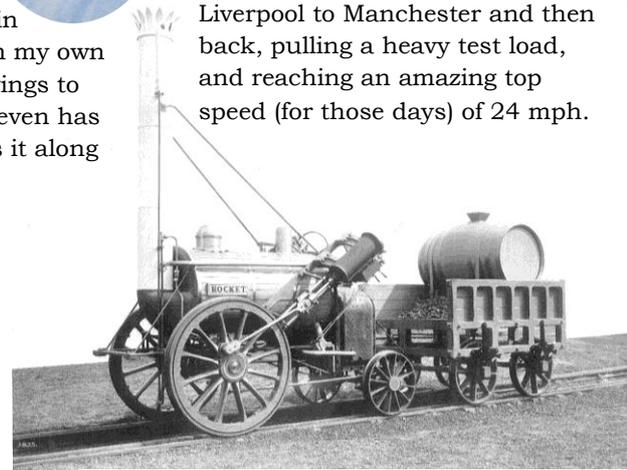
Stephenson's Rocket

This is my own self-generated Meccano model of Stephenson's Rocket. For some inexplicable reason I have had a fascination with the Rocket since I was a lad. I have seen the replica in the National Railway Museum in York, and taken my own photos of it, and I have some other detailed drawings to work from. I am quite pleased with the result. It even has a neat drive, hidden in the firebox, which pushes it along smoothly if sedately!



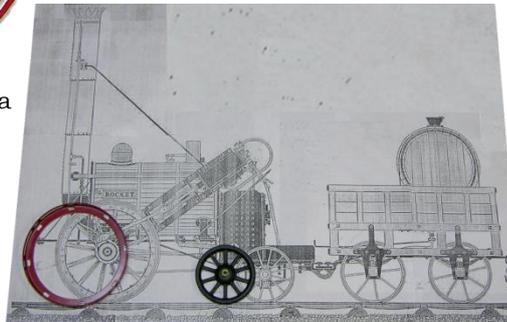
Stan Knight Idaho

The original 'Rocket', of course, won the Rainhill Trials in October 1829 travelling the 35 miles from Liverpool to Manchester and then back, pulling a heavy test load, and reaching an amazing top speed (for those days) of 24 mph.



I found this excellent elevation drawing of the 1935 replica 'Rocket' on the internet.

I enlarged that drawing to match the size of the driving wheel to a 5 1/4 inch Circular Girder. At that scale, as a bonus, the trailing wheels also match Spoked Wheels, part 19a. The elevation provided other clear guidance for proportions, with the resultant scale of approx one inch to one foot.

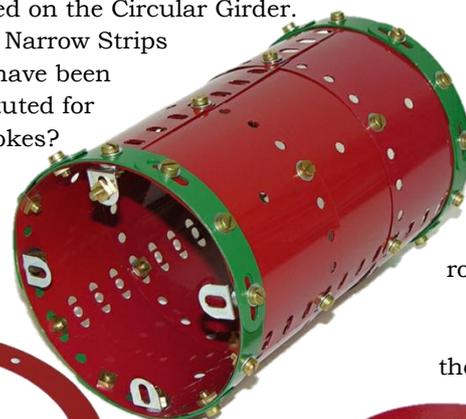


As well as the elevation drawing and photos of the Replica in the National Railway Museum in York for reference I found an actual Haynes' 'Owner's Manual' for 'Rocket'! I began by building separate components of the model.

To form flanges for the driving wheels, I had some custom circular strips laser cut at a local welding shop. Unfortunately, they were not very precisely done. I suppose they could have been omitted, but the Rod and Strip Connectors, part 212 protrude beyond the edge of the Circular Girder, so they would all have to be ground down to ensure a smooth ride.



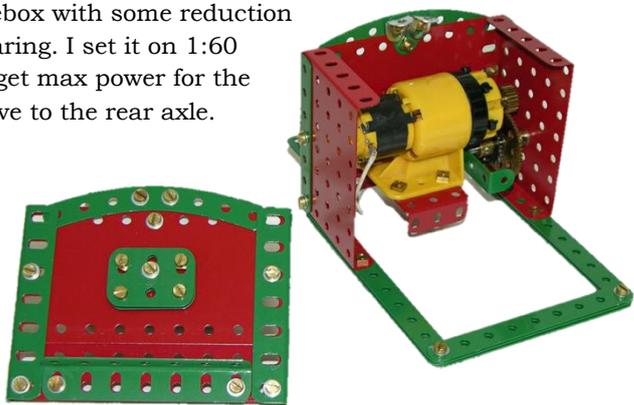
Rather than using Hub Discs for the driving wheels I decided to build-up the spokes on a Circular Girder. Not a great idea. It is very, very difficult to ensure that the Bush Wheel is perfectly centered on the Circular Girder. Maybe Narrow Strips could have been substituted for the spokes?



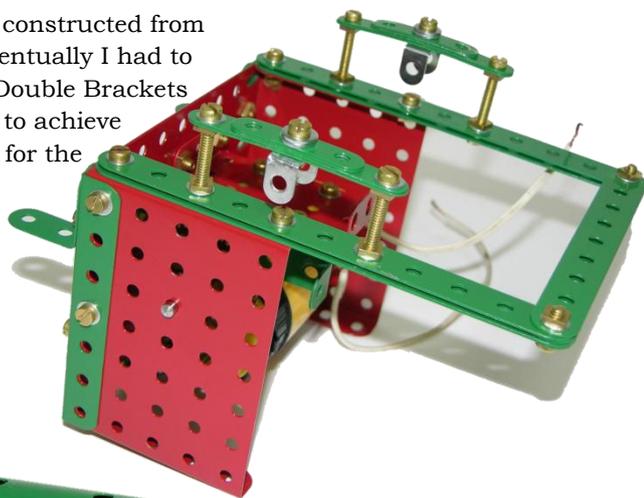
Flex Plates were rolled for the boiler using a 4 inch Circular Plate as the template for the curve.



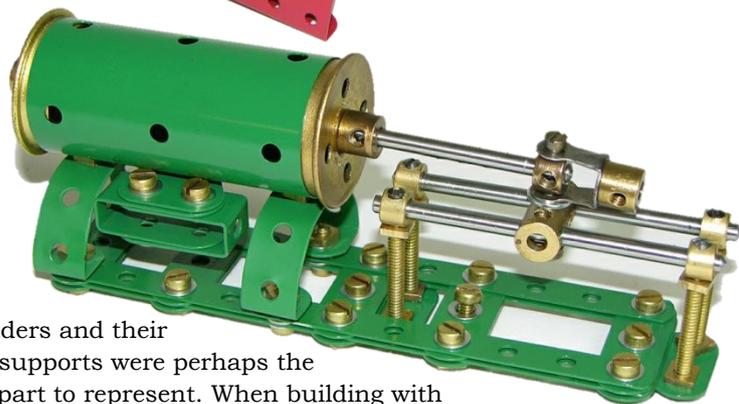
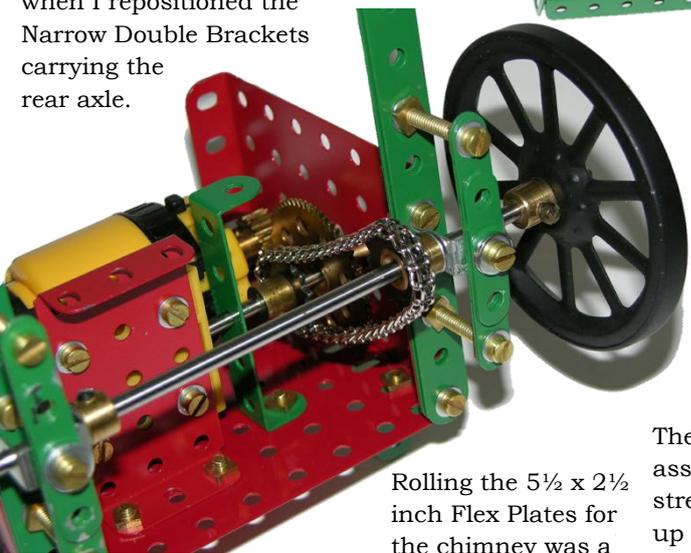
A PDU just fits inside the firebox with some reduction gearing. I set it on 1:60 to get max power for the drive to the rear axle.



Leaf springs were constructed from Narrow Strips. Eventually I had to re-fit the Narrow Double Brackets below the springs to achieve the correct height for the rear wheels.



The Sprocket Chain drive to the rear axle had to also be lengthened when I repositioned the Narrow Double Brackets carrying the rear axle.



The cylinders and their complex supports were perhaps the trickiest part to represent. When building with standard Meccano parts there's sometimes a conflict between prototypical accuracy and actual functionality!! This often means accepting a compromise.

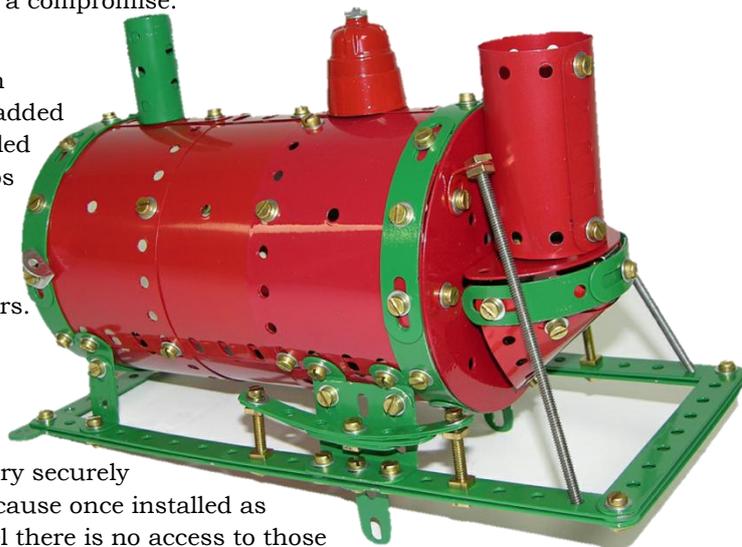
Rolling the 5½ x 2½ inch Flex Plates for the chimney was a challenge.



I had to reconfigure my plate roller in order to roll these Plates so tightly. At this scale I needed a nine-hole circumference.

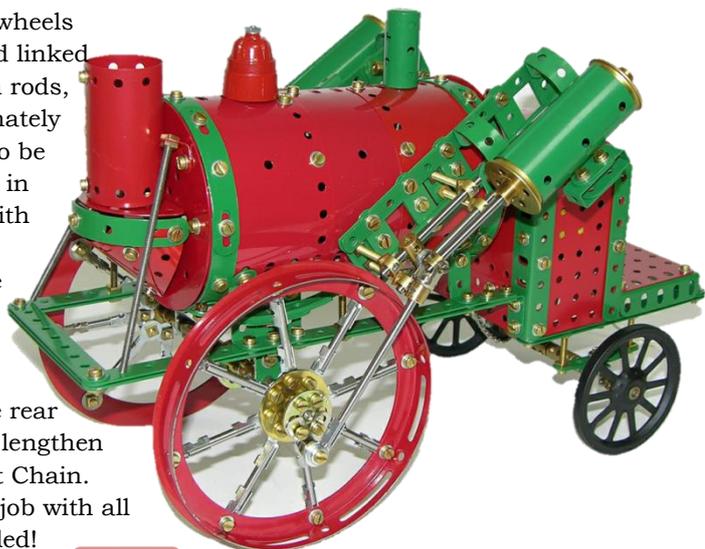
The front section assembled. For added strength, I doubled up the Perf Strips of the 'chassis' frame and tripled the front and rear members.

The first section of the chimney needed to be bolted to the Circular Plate very securely at this stage, because once installed as part of the model there is no access to those fasteners. The dome boiler cap is made up of a hub of the 1978 three-part Road Wheel (p/n 187c) and a Dome (p/n B090) both sprayed red just for this model. The Screwed Rod supports at the front were cut to custom length.



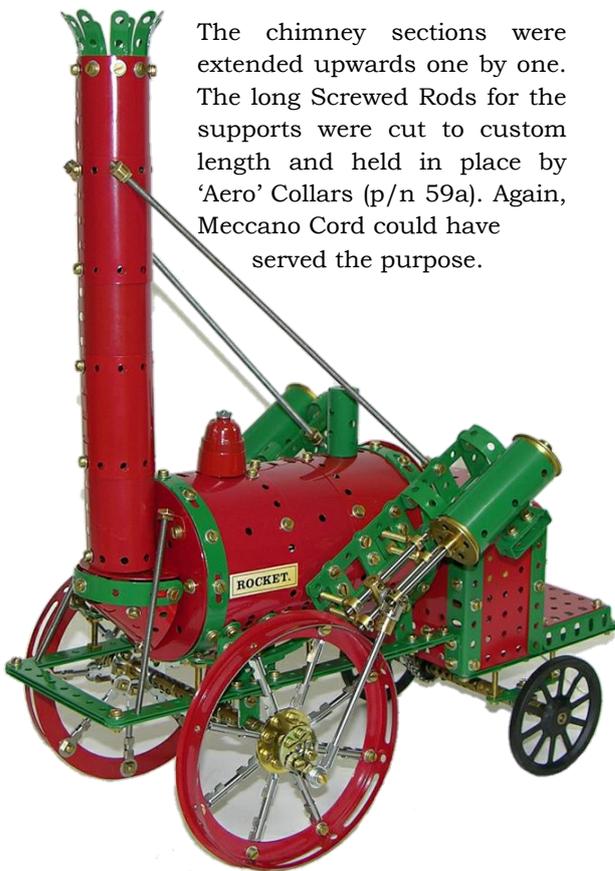
Meccano Cord could have been used instead.

The driving wheels attached and linked to the piston rods, which fortunately turned out to be pretty much in alignment with each other. This was the stage that I needed to adjust the height of the rear wheels, and lengthen the Sprocket Chain. Not an easy job with all this assembled!



The cylinder assemblies could only be fastened to the boiler by a single bolt so I added an Angle Bracket to each side to help support it. I reversed the bolts on the Angle Brackets at the rear end of the boiler so that I could more easily close it up with a second 4 inch Circular Plate.

The chimney sections were extended upwards one by one. The long Screwed Rods for the supports were cut to custom length and held in place by 'Aero' Collars (p/n 59a). Again, Meccano Cord could have served the purpose.

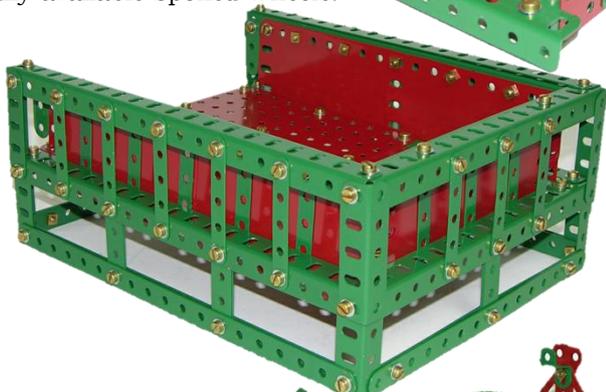
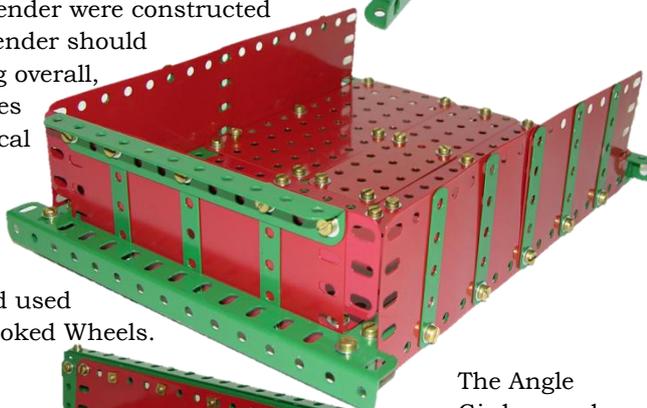
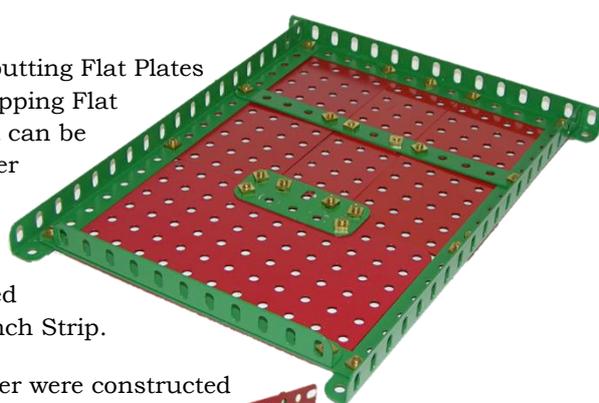


The Tender.

The tender was begun by butting Flat Plates together. I don't like overlapping Flat Plates or Angle Girders if it can be avoided. A short Flat Girder and a Strip supports them on the underside.

A couple of shorter Strips could have been substituted for the non-standard 6½ inch Strip.

The inner walls of the tender were constructed first. At this scale the tender should have been 9 inches long overall, and its wheels 3¼ inches diameter, but prototypical accuracy was just not possible in this case in Meccano! I extended the tender to the more practical 9½ inches and used the readily-available Spoked Wheels.

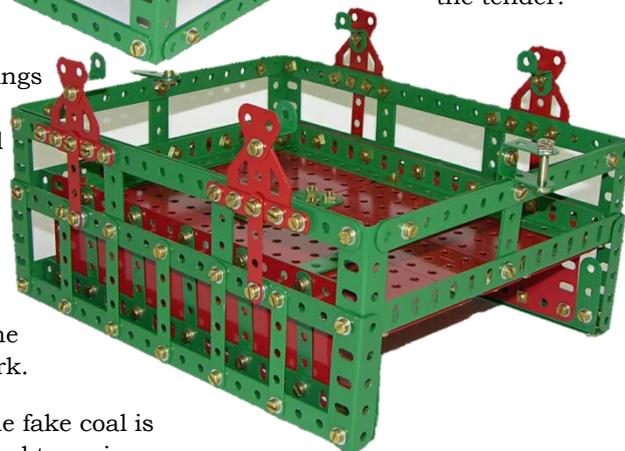


The Angle Girders and Narrow Strips were added to give the impression of the 'heft' of the framed side panels of the tender.

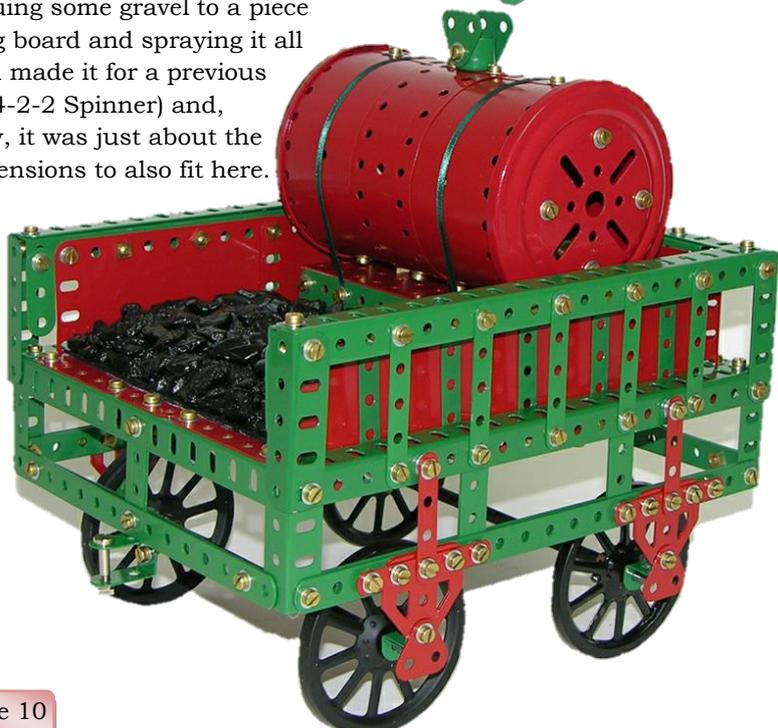
The Flex Plates were rolled to form the cylindrical barrel, using a Flanged Disc, part 168a as the template for the curve. Narrow Angle Brackets and Threaded Bosses provided the Bolt fixing points for the end Discs.



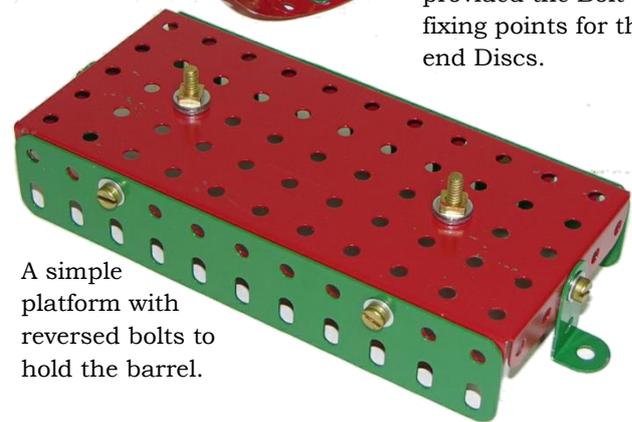
The wheel bearings for the tender were re-sprayed in red just for the sake of visual contrast. In the York replica they are black against the yellow framework.



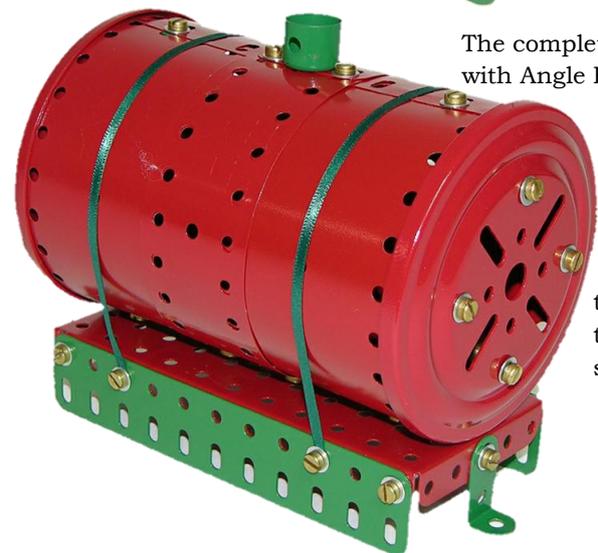
The completed tender. The fake coal is made by gluing some gravel to a piece of mounting board and spraying it all black. I had made it for a previous model (my 4-2-2 Spinner) and, surprisingly, it was just about the correct dimensions to also fit here.



A simple platform with reversed bolts to hold the barrel.



The completed barrel with Angle Brackets at the ends to fix it to the base of the tender. Ribbon was used to simulate the holding straps.



Meccano France History by Peter Sullivan - Switzerland

During the period after WW2, production at the Meccano France Bobigny Paris site followed roughly what was happening in Liverpool. While the UK returned to a red-green colour scheme, France remained faithful to the previous gold/blue/red colours right up to 1970 when Lines Brothers rationalised production and both organisations starting turning out the new zinc-plated/blue/yellow scheme. In addition, all sets were 'downgraded' from 1970.



[Click on any photo to enlarge or download](#)

For example a new style outfit 5 would contain only the previous outfit 4 parts and so on. Fortunately for enthusiasts, the 10 set continued to be sold in an attractive wooden cabinet unaltered in contents!

French production from Bobigny during the 1960s fell into two periods:

1962-1966 M series boxes with the gold M logo on a blue perforated background. The parts are packed in light blue plastic vacuum formed trays. Both main and accessory outfits have red buckram covered lower box trays. Outfits 9, 9A and 10 continue to be produced on strung cards.

1967-1969 themed series boxes with detailed colourful graphics printed on the boxes. The parts are packed in white plastic vacuum formed trays. For the main outfit cartons only, the underside of the blue coloured box tray was illustrated with a selection of models that could be made, while the accessory outfits continued in plain red. Again, outfits 9, 9A and 10 on strung cards.

Meccano France never produced a themed version of the outfit 9 and continued to sell the M style version (still on strung cards) in what must have been a difficult and declining market up to the end of the 1960s when the outfit 9 was axed and replaced by the previous outfit 8 disguised as its bigger brother! My initial collection interest was in the older outfits from the 1920s and 1930s, but in last few years I had the idea to try collecting the complete range of the Meccano France M and themed products from the 60s which resonated with my childhood memories of the UK light red-green sets from the same epoch. Unlike the real vintage stuff this was a project I could achieve relatively easily, having a foothold in France and without having to re-mortgage the house!

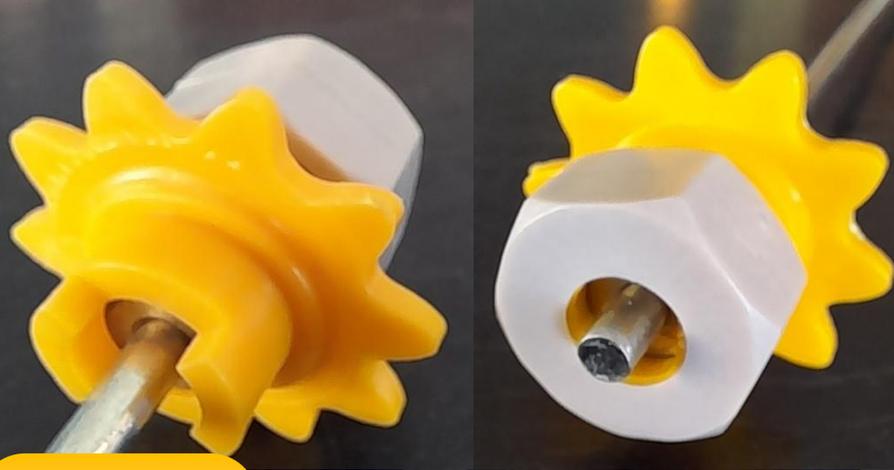
In terms of numbers there are 19 outfits in the M range and 15 from the themed era. The 10 set cabinet remained a separate classic product line. I decided it didn't really fit in either of the two collection themes, fortunately for my pocket! Apart from a couple of M series outfits acquired in 2002 via an ad in a gardening magazine, the bulk of the collection was found by patiently scouring eBay France for reasonable bargains! Based on previous experiences, I didn't expect to find outfits with all the original parts still intact after 50+ years, (despite the seller's claims!) and frequently found parts and packing had been muddled up between random outfits of different ages. Providing you're prepared to have some scrap outfits from the same period to raid for better looking parts and trays, you can repopulate degraded outfits with authentic parts from the French Uni-Blue period to restore them to their original look. Another point frequently encountered in 50s & 60s French outfits is the substitution of missing blue flanged and flat plates by those from the Calais factory manufactured much later in the 20th century and which have a much more saturated blue colour than the parts from the Bobigny factory. The M and themed sets used a greyish blue, similar to RAL5017.



Among my collection is a unique 9 set created by an unknown Meccano hero who has gone to a lot of trouble to devise this special outfit with two formed trays neatly held in a very nice wooden case, all in the same sized volume as a normal 8 set. The bottom tray is in fact the lower tray of an M series 8 set, but the top tray is a one-off custom tray finished to look like the M blue formed trays, and ingeniously fashioned to hold the remainder of the parts of a 9 set. The photographs give a better impression than I can describe in words! [Click here](#). Since the return to numbered sets from lettered outfits, the official Meccano 9 set was always sold strung onto three card layers and was never mass produced using the 1960s style of vacuum formed trays.



FROM OUR GOOD IDEAS DEPARTMENT

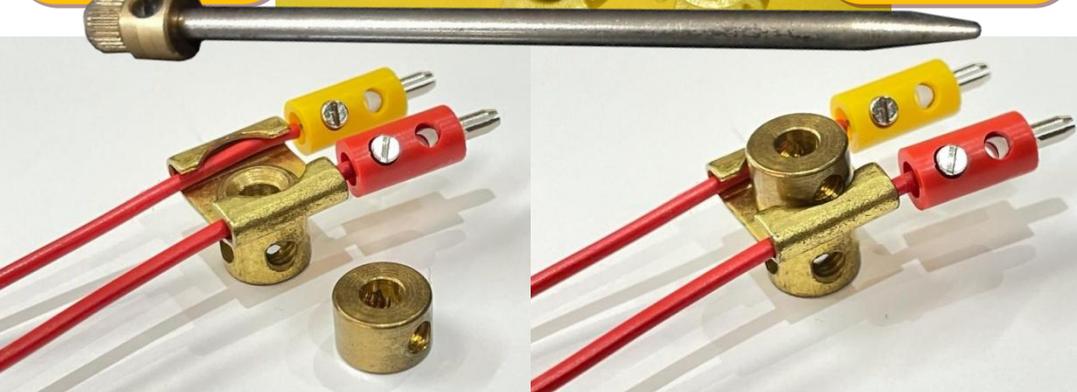


The plastic Nut on these plastic Sprockets allows you to secure a part 63 Coupling quite tightly. The only caveat is you must use a short Grub Screw and secure the Rod before you tighten the Sprocket onto the Coupling. If you want to use a Bolt to lock into the castellated side you will need a longer Coupling.

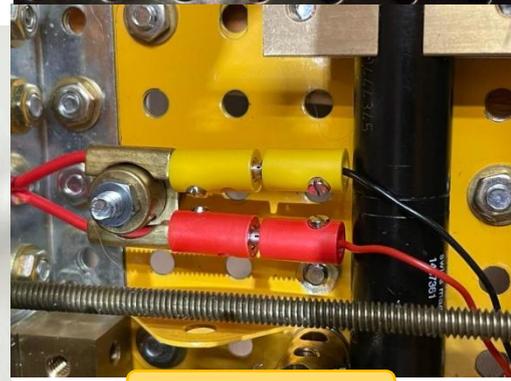
There was a large batch of plastic Pinions that had a fault where the plastic cracked. Don't throw them away. The boss is still useful as a Collar or added to a part 36c Drift.



John Bader from the UK sent some plastic Sprockets and 8 x Worm gears to Rob Mitchell from the Sheffield Meccano Guild and this was the result.

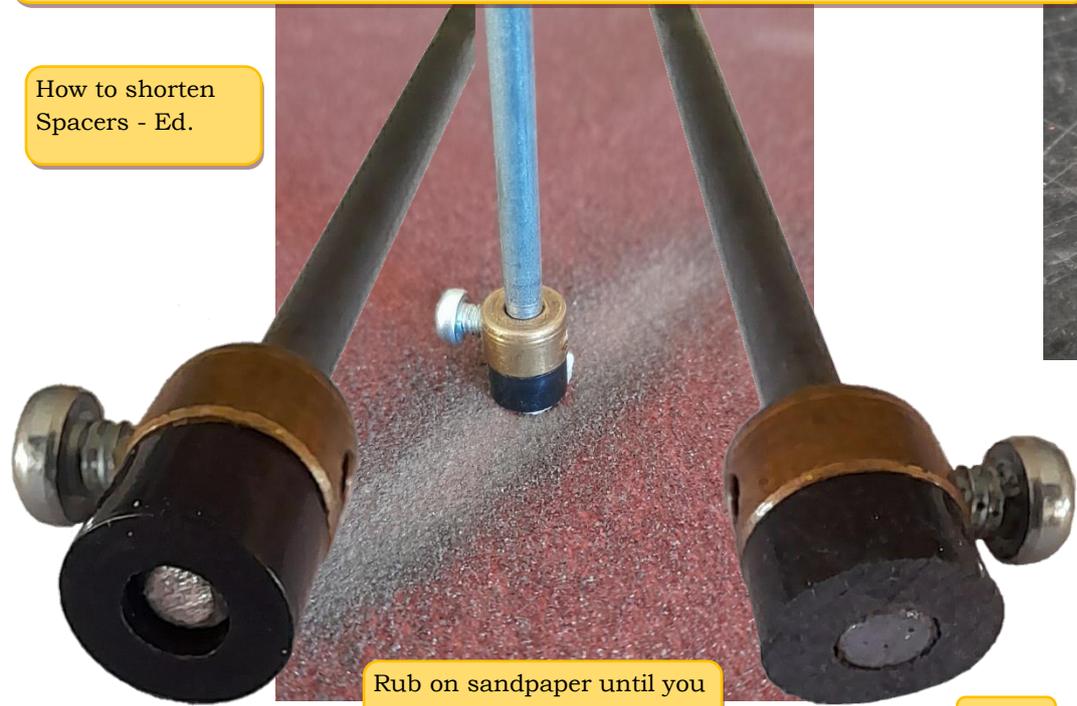


From Tim Gant - UK. A simple wire guide to keep things tidy. Just bolt it to the model any which way that suits. The collar traps the wires after they've been put in place. No need to thread anything through anything else - a process which can be very annoying.



Snapped in the wild.

How to shorten Spacers - Ed.



Before.

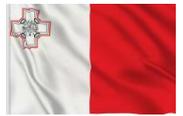
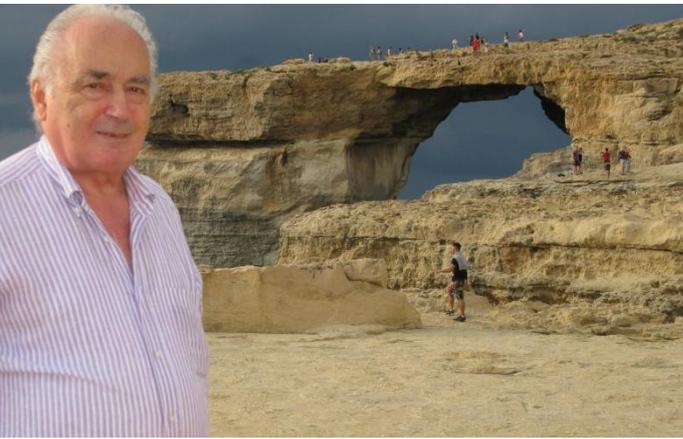
Rub on sandpaper until you hear the metal Rod touch.

After.



Mick Berg - USA. I found that by using a heat gun, a part can be heated up enough to melt solder. I hadn't thought to try this before. So now I think this must be the most reliable way to fix a loose boss. The excess solder can be trimmed off in a lathe or similar device so it's quite a neat fix. It works on steel or brass. I was glad to be able to fix one of my very valuable 60-tooth gears!

This Month's Meccanoboy is Joe Attard MALTA



When and where were you born?

I was born on July 15th 1940 in war torn Malta.

Where did you go to school?

After primary school, I attended the Lyceum, which at the time was the best secondary school. Only a small percentage of those sitting for the entrance exam got through. The Lyceum produced many of Malta's leading citizens, including a leading Meccanoman! Later, I got my "A" levels through correspondence with a London University. Regretfully, I did not finish my BSc. course. By then, family and work bore heavily on my time.

Did you have Meccano as a boy?

I must have been about six years old when I received the remnants of a small Meccano set from an uncle, together with a few wartime Meccano magazines. As I showed immediate interest, my father started buying me new sets, culminating in a no 7. All red and green. From then on, I built my collection to well beyond the fabled ten set, till my marriage when I was 22 years old.

What's life like in Malta?

I could fill a book with that! So I will keep just to the present, and I will leave politics out of it. Malta is now an overcrowded Island. Our 122 square miles are crammed with over 500,000 persons and 400,000 cars. Pre-pandemic, we have been hosting yearly over two million tourists. Over the last few years, there has been an intentional governmental decision to expand our financial services, our e-gaming industry and other sectors. The consequence was that many skilled foreign workers were attracted to work here. This further fuelled the boom in the construction industry, which in turn attracted myriads of unskilled cheap foreign labour. Now the island is awash with ugly flats to accommodate these persons, and the frenzy keeps going on. Moreover, the price of property has skyrocketed, leaving many youngsters unable to obtain their first home. A massive road building programme has also been undertaken. Much greenery, arable land, hitherto pleasant areas have been destroyed. All in the name of Mammon. The other side of the picture is that Malta is basically a very pleasant Island, with mild winters and bearable summers. The sea is always a stone throw's away. We have many historical buildings, a lot dating from the 15th century (I don't think you have those down under). We have megalithic temples which predate the Pyramids. And there are still many unspoiled pleasant areas to live in. I am lucky to live in such an area.

What did you do for a living?

When I left school in 1957, I became a Primary School teacher for three years. Then I had a short stint as a civilian Meteorological Officer with the local British Air Force. By that time, my father was ready to retire from his Engineering Works. So, I took over the family business. Soon I wound up the engineering venture, with its wartime obsolete machinery, and converted it to a machinery and tools import/export organization. I visited trade fairs and factories all over Europe to source our imports. We also imported from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA, etc. We finished up representing over a hundred manufacturers, and importing from scores of others. By the time I decided to retire around 2000, we had developed a highly successful business, which we later sold to third parties.



Joe's YouTube channel



YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/jna740>



Wife and kids?

I married Margaret in 1962. She was a school teacher like myself. We had a son and two daughters. Unfortunately, our son Stephen (who would have been destined to take over my business years later), suffered a severe car accident way back in 1984. He's been physically and mentally disabled since then and has been in our constant care. Our daughters Catherine and Michelle both went on to obtain Masters Degrees in different UK universities, and now hold responsible good jobs.

Did you always build with Meccano or was there the usual cars, girls, party hiatus in your teenage years?

I kept on building with Meccano till my marriage in 1962, when I was 22 years old, despite a short string of other girlfriends (Shhhh!). No cars, couldn't afford one. But I did have a racing bicycle, with which I won various local competitions. Then it was family, job/s, and further study. My Meccano was stored in a self built three tier box, not to be seriously opened again before 1994. That year, I met in Malta the then Chairman of the ISM, Adrian Williams. My interest was instantly rekindled; I went on a shopping spree, which I could now afford, locally and from UK dealers, finishing up with the equivalent of about 28 Ten Sets, according to my Meccano inventory. The rest is history.



1957 Lyceum Football Team. That's me, far left.

Did your interest in Meccano influence your job? Not, not really. Maybe, being the son of an ex HM Dockyard mechanical engineer, my interest was a natural follow up.

What was your first model?

I remember, as a six or seven year old child, hauling a small meccano car on a string behind me, when my mother used to take me for long walks. I have a vague memory of having to carry the car most of the way, as a wheel had come off on the rough pavement!

What was your best model?

Undoubtedly, it is my 9'4", 156 lbs. Level Luffing Crane, for which the International Society of Meccanomen awarded me first prize in 2004. Having said that, there are various other models which come a close second. Most can be seen on the NZ Meccano Users Gallery. <http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-37043>

What Meccano Club are you in?

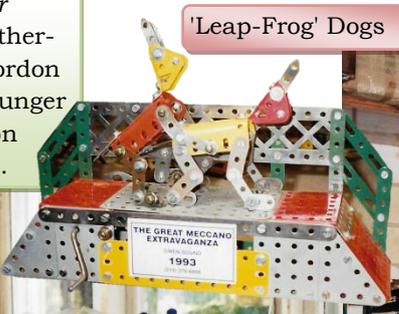
None. None exist locally, and I see no point in becoming a member of a club in another country, when I know that I cannot participate actively.

Have you ever traveled far to Meccano Expos? Not really far, just next door to the UK! I have been to Skegex twice and to the Kew Steam Museum exhibition once. There, I made some good Meccano acquaintances, which last to this day.

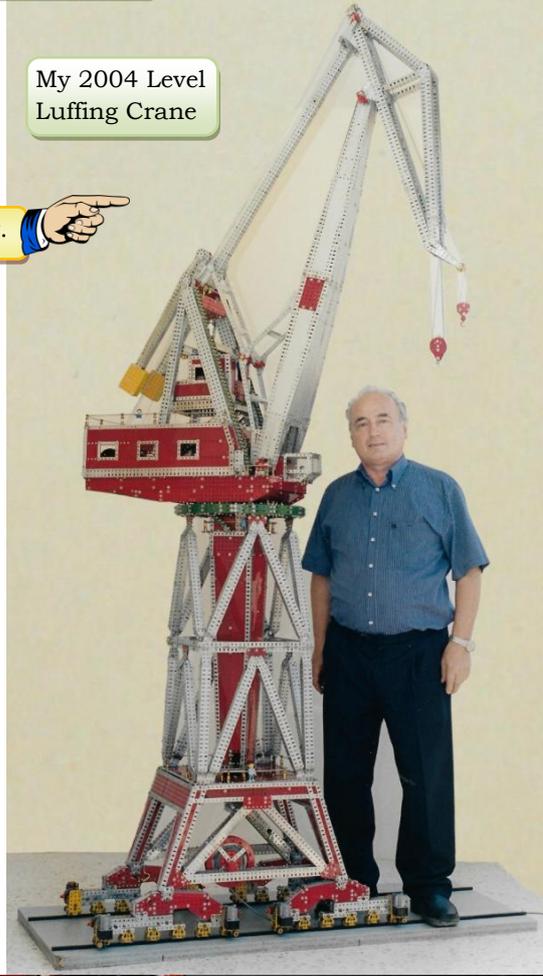
Did you catch up with any Australian Meccanoboy? I visited Australia with my wife and son for two months in the summer of 1996/7. That was an adventure in itself, when we motored from Melbourne to Adelaide and back, and then to Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, and back via the interior. I had only returned to the hobby just two years previously, and I did not know about the many famous Meccanomen that I know now. However, I did ask a UK friend for names, and he gave me those of Ken Gordon in Melbourne and of Malcolm Booker in Sydney. I was hosted by both to their respective dens, and I was left wide eyed by their great achievements. Sadly, they are now both gone. Many other famous Aussie Meccanomen have since told me that I should have looked them up beforehand.

I still rue the missed opportunity.

Has anything funny happened in your Meccano life? The reaction of my mother-in-law when I showed her the Ken Gordon naughty dogs model in action. My younger daughter wanted one, and it is now on permanent display in her living room.



'Leap-Frog' Dogs



My 2004 Level Luffing Crane



In Australia with Malcolm Booker



In Australia with Ken Gordon

Where else have you travelled? We love travelling. When the family was young, we would take month long motoring holidays all over Europe. Concurrently, my business travels took me to many European cities. I have visited all the European countries, from Crete to Norway, from Portugal to Turkey. Later, my wife and I started venturing further afield. In alphabetical order, we have been to Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Canaries, Caribbean, Chile, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Falklands, Guatemala, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Israel, Jamaica, Madeira, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Paraguay, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Tunis, U.A.E., Ukraine, USA, Uruguay, Zambia, Zimbabwe, etc. My regret is that we never got round to visiting New Zealand, India, Japan, Peru. We reckon we have been to about sixty countries on the 6 continents. I doubt if we will ever visit the seventh continent, Antarctica, though we did go round Cape Horn.

Have any Meccanoboy visited you in Malta? Plenty. Besides hosting about two dozen UK Meccanomen, I have had visits from Canada, USA, France, Holland, and even one from an Aussie, a certain Mr. Mike Maloney. Conversely, apart from the Australians, I have visited famous Meccanomen in California, Buenos Aires in Argentina, in Johannesburg and in Cape Town.

What other interests do you have? Reading has always been high on my list. Anything from good paperback, to more serious stuff: engineering, science, world events, etc. Woodworking and servicing my cars were included, till about a decade ago. Lately, I have taken to cooking: so far I have not poisoned anyone.

What was your crowning achievement? A few highlights: Being happily married with my wife for 59 years. Propelling our business to the forefront of similar Maltese enterprises. Being elected as the President of the Malta International Trade Fair Corporation. Being elected Zone Chairman for all the Maltese Lions Clubs. And doing not so badly as a Meccanoboy!



With Enrique Ferrand in Buenos Aires



Mike Maloney from Oz visited me in Malta

How has meccano helped you in life? Socially, it was right up my street.

Despite an outer show to the contrary, I am essentially an introvert. Many are the happy lonely hours I have spent, insulated from all else, just concentrating on some new Meccano contraption, both as a youngster, and later as an adult. It has served me as a buffer in some difficult moments in life.

How do you connect with your fellow Meccanoboy? I am practically Meccano isolated here. There is only one other Meccanoman of note on the Island, and he is mainly a collector. We exchange the occasional visit, and I wonder at his many Meccano publications in French, Dutch, German, Spanish, etc, as he is a good linguist. Otherwise, it is mainly Spanner for me, with an occasional visit to the NZ Meccano site. However, over the last 26 years, I have corresponded privately with dozens of Meccanomen all over the world.

My Meccano room



With Peter Mathews, left and Andries Botha in Johannesburg

What are your plans for the future? Is Skegex on the Horizon? Alas, no. My health does not permit travel on my own now. On our last two motoring holidays, one in Switzerland and one in Sardinia, we were respectively driven and cosseted all the way by our daughters. But I did get to drive a little, even though I had not driven on the wrong side of the road for ages! As regards model building, I think that my days of building very large models are also over. I shall have to be content with normal sized ones!



What is your advice for young people today? Who am I to advise them? They will take as much notice of me as I did of my elders in my time. Having said that, I wish more of them would take an interest in mechanical engineering, besides the all consuming digital world.

With Colin Cohen in Cape Town



How do you look on your life? Any regrets? Who hasn't? I regret that I never got a proper engineering qualification. I regret not travelling more. I regret not going to more meccano exhibitions abroad. I regret missing a lot of investment opportunities, especially in property, which would have made me a multi millionaire by now. BUT, all these are nothing compared to my satisfaction with my life. I thank God that I have a lovely and loving family. I have had a full, eventful and satisfying life, which far outweighs my disappointments.



Camel riding in Cairo

A few of my favourite things.



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 Follow Johnny Meccano on



New Zealand

<http://www.nzmeccano.com>

<http://www.nzfmm.co.nz>

<https://www.facebook.com/MWT-Meccano-Club-1476153515979522/>

Australia

<http://www.mmci.com.au>

<http://www.sydneymeccanomodellers.org.au>

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

South Africa

<https://www.facebook.com/Meccano-Club-of-South-Africa-464753870326296>

<http://www.mecworld.co.za/cmpr/>

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.bcmeccanomodellers.com/meccano-in-canada.html>

<http://www.meccanoquebec.org/index2ang.html>

Personal pages

<https://neilsmeccanoandstuff.jimdofree.com/neil-s-meccano-models>

<https://www.alansmeccano.org>

<http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/dms/meccano>

<http://www.dalefield.com/meccano/index.html>

<http://www.meccano.us>

<https://www.meccanoindex.co.uk>

<http://www.meccanokinematics.net>

UK

<http://www.internationalmeccanomen.org.uk>

<https://londonmeccanoclub.org.uk>

<https://tims.org.uk>

<http://hsme.org.uk>

<https://nelmc.org.uk>

<https://runnymedemeccanoguild.org.uk>

<https://www.selmec.org.uk>

<http://www.hsomerville.com/wlms>

<http://www.midlandsmeccanoguild.com>

<https://southwestmeccano.org.uk>

<http://www.northwestmeccano.co.uk>

<https://northeasternmeccano.org.uk>

<https://www.meccanoscotland.org.uk>

<http://www.corlustmeccanoclub.co.uk>

<https://nmmg.org.uk>

Other Countries

<http://club-amis-meccano.net/>

<http://www.meccaninfos.com.ar/>

<http://www.meccanogilde.nl>

<http://meccano.free-bb.fr/>

<https://www.aceam.org/es/>

<http://www.la-roue-tourne.fr/index.php/le-meccano/notices-et-plans>

<https://www.metallbaukasten-forum.de/>

Meccano suppliers

<http://www.meccanohobby.co.uk>

<https://www.meccanoshop.co.uk>

<http://meccanomaniac.co.uk/catalog>

<https://www.meccanospare.com>

<https://ralphsshop.com>

<http://www.hsomerville.com/mwmailorder>

<http://www.metalconstructiontoys.com>

<http://www.meerlu.com.au/>

<https://tinyurl.com/AshokBanerjee>

Meccgear Jeff Clark New Zealand

sales@meccgear.co.nz No website yet but a

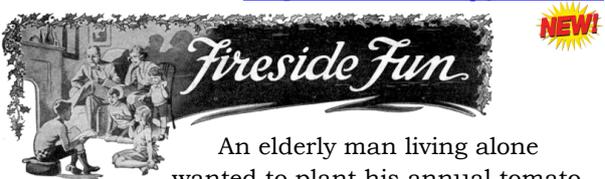
pricelist with photos can be downloaded here

<http://www.nzmeccano.com/image-151916>



CMC CAT TRACK. From Ian Wilson. Corlust Meccano Club. Designed for a Meccano compatible system. We have done most of the work in design and testing allowing for a great trouble free operation. Pack contains: 66 track pads 66 s/s track links 4 s/s drive wheels and 4 s/s idlers 2mm With 2 1/2" wheels £260, 1 pack available. With 3 1/2" wheels £275, 1 pack available. Extra links and track pads available to make longer tracks.

Note: Does not include Bolts, Rods or Collars. Contact Ian Wilson bespokecraftshack@gmail.com



Fireside Fun

An elderly man living alone wanted to plant his annual tomato

garden, but it was very difficult work, since the ground was hard. His only son, Paul, who used to help him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament.

"Dear Paul, I am feeling pretty sad, because it looks like I won't be able to plant my tomato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would be over. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me, like in the old days. Love, Dad."

A few days later he received a letter from his son.

"Dear Dad, Don't dig up that garden. That's where the bodies are buried. Love, Paul."

At 4 a.m. the next morning the local police arrived and dug up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

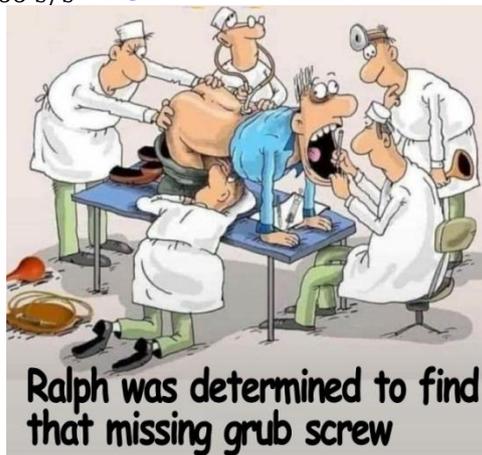
"Dear Dad, Go ahead and plant the tomatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances. Love Paul."

I just took a leaflet out of my mailbox, informing me that I can have sex at 73. I'm so happy because I live at number 71. So it's not too far to walk home afterwards. And it's the same side of the street. I don't even have to cross the road!

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you. – Stephen J

Doctor! How can I stop my nose from running?

Stick your foot out and trip it up! - Riot Machine MK4



Ralph was determined to find that missing grub screw