

ITEMS FROM LETTERS

1. Ashok Banerjee has been in touch with the firm who used to manufacture PLANO who said that there might be some old stock left but it would be of very poor quality and finish, because the dies, after 30 years of use, had worn out. But it was hoped to bring out a new series of metal construction outfits in a couple of months using new tooling. [Ashok wrote in February and will send more details when they become available.] From a later letter "I visited Calcutta recently and the Australian set in the toy shop there was a BUILD-A-KIT Outfit No 4. It was in a dark red MECCANO-like cardboard box, about the size of a MECCANO No 2 of the fifties. The parts were similar to MECCANO strips, plates, trunnions, DA strips, and flanged sector plates. The box was in poor shape, and the parts badly affected by rust, though still strung. Unfortunately I didn't have your list with me, so seeing the condition of the set, I didn't buy it. But now I realise that I should have because it is not listed in MCS!"

2. From Don Redmond, "I hope someone will tackle the identity of the producers of those Korean and (mainland) Chinese systems.

Re STRUCTATOR joint pieces, if they are zinc-based the breakage is almost surely due to alloy deterioration, triggered to an open break by mechanical stress. It's very common in old cast toys.

In the summary presentation of the MCS Database LEICHMETAL is almost certainly misspelled. Leiche means corpse/funeral, whereas 'leicht' means light, and Leichtmetall, light alloy, i.e. aluminium and the like. [The name was taken (accurately) from a MCS list, NZ I think, of MCS known by name but for which no details were available. I shall change the entry to LEICHTMETALL until something more definite turns up.]

I wish someone would attack the matter of strip lengths, and odd-number-of-holes vs. even number, as mentioned in regard to META BUILD, and characteristic of STOKYS. Also re META BUILD, I wonder how they got away with using 'Tinker toys', even as two words; TINKERTOY has been a recognized trade name at least in N. America for more years than I've been around.

Matchbox sets (OSN 6, p130-1): I had one as a child before WW2, probably in the USA, but I don't remember what name or label it had. Note that the cover design of boy, train and gun is identical in all. It seems likely to me that MACON came not from Spain but from Latin America (Mexico?); cf, the reference to Texas and 'Toyland Mechanic'; Spanish is common in SW USA. The CLOU set was probably made in Germany for export, with both 'D.R.P.a' (German patent applied for) and 'U.S.A.pend' (US patent pending) on it.

YESTERDAZE TOYS ceased publication about Nov 1991; The parent publication DAZE deals only with china and glass collecting."

3. Gaston Marette: "For the system presented on pp134-135 of OSN 6, the name BUCO derives from Bucherer & Compagnie. BUCO-INGENIEUR must be relatively recent as the page size of the manual is A4. About the countries in the list of systems, please replace HO Holland by NL The Netherlands." [Delete HO, insert NL, will do. There is more on BUCO dates in this Issue but it's interesting about A4, when was it introduced on the Continent? From memory it was not in common use in the UK until the mid 1960s.]

And "Continental TRIX bolts are very similar to MECCANO [dome headed] bolts. However their shank diameter is slightly lower and their length is slightly longer. In a lot of replated MECCANO 'dome' headed bolts from Arthur Clapp (Warminster, Wilts), I discovered a shining TRIX bolt!"

4. Ed Furness kindly sent a photocopy of the Instruction Manual (English/French/German text) for the RIGI Cable Car, a rather attractive looking LEHMANN toy made in 1981. Its probably outside the scope of this Newsletter but I can send details to anyone who is interested. In similar vein I have a couple of Manuals from plastic constructional sets. One is called BOLT 'N BUILD and shows models made from perforated strips and plates; the other is JUNIOR ENGINEER and contains some quite elaborate motorised models using parts that look rather like PLASTIC MECCANO.

MÄRKLIN 1957 SERIES SETS. In OSN 5, p99, no details could be given of the add-on sets 1035 and 1036; the Contents Lists of some manuals now to hand solve the puzzle. The earliest dated April 1959 (#171b) shows both the old and the new set numbering, and that the sets 99-105 were replaced by 1009 to 1015. There was no mention of a Set 1015 in the MÄRKLIN history. 1034 was the conversion set from 1014 to 1015, but it could also be bought in two bites, 1035 and 1036. The equivalent obsolete numbers for these sets were 104A/1 and 104A/2, the two together making 104A of course. No mention anywhere of the 105A Set.

The next manual of June 1959 (#14920) shows exactly the same except that the old numbers aren't given. The third manual (#14930/A) from 1965 lists the 1009-1014 sets, and the 1034, but not the 1015, nor the 1035 and 1036.

white over a grey centre with red panels top & bottom. The first of its 6 pages gives General, & Particular Advice, and then the Illustrated Parts and the Set Contents occupy a page each. Finally 13 models from 1-3 (Swing) to 13-3, with a good photo of each and a list of parts for all except 3-13.

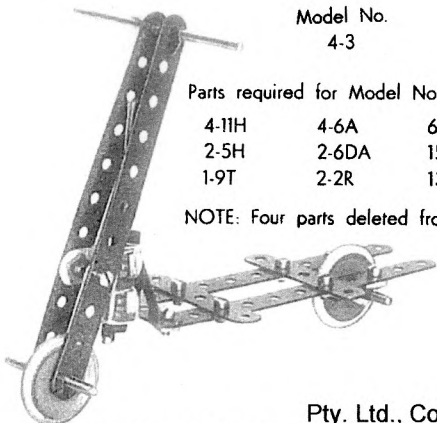
SCOOTER

Model No.
4-3

Parts required for Model No. 4-3

4-11H	4-6A	6-10C
2-5H	2-6DA	15-12B
1-9T	2-2R	13-13U

NOTE: Four parts deleted from list.



Pty. Ltd., Color Printers, Melbourne.

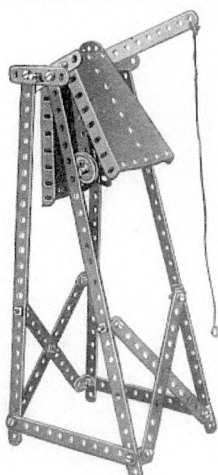
The No. 1 & No.2 manuals are smaller at 6*7" deep, and in each the introduction is followed by a page with the Set Contents under the illustration of the parts in the Set. Photos of 6 models are shown in the No.1 manual, and 12 in the No.2, not numbered but provided with parts lists.

MORE from AUSTRALIA The following notes from Jack Little, and the photocopies he kindly sent, add to those in 19/540 & 22/636. On the general scene: 'As most of the parts from EZY-BILT (1936-41), TOY TOWN, BILD-A-KIT (see below), & CONSTRUCTO are very similar, and as all originated in Melbourne, one or two engineering companies could have made all the parts. Some companies had their own workshops, and those that are known for sure are EZY-BILT in Adelaide (from 1944), BETTAFIT in Melbourne, and BUZ & MODEL-IT in Sydney. All these companies were also making other products at the same time.'

BETTAFIT & YOUNG ENGINEER'S SET The name BETTAFIT is also found spelt BETTA-FIT. No known BET sets had the Flanged Plate with a slot. The 'U' Piece in both BET & YES manuals (shown in 22/639) is only found in YES outfits; in BET it is the normal 5-hole part. YES, 1937-42, was probably not made in-house. By Dec. 1944 Janda Trading had been authorised to start production but had not yet done so. (By that date R.K.Morgan had been granted a permit to make BETTAFIT.) From 1947 to 1950 an engineering & die casting company was involved; in 1950 Robilt Engineers took over the parts, assembled some sets, painted unpainted pieces, and sold them off as job lots. BETTAFIT is thought to have continued into the 1950s.

'New' System: BILD-A-KIT A Model Sheet is known for this system and a tin accessory box. The Sheet is headed

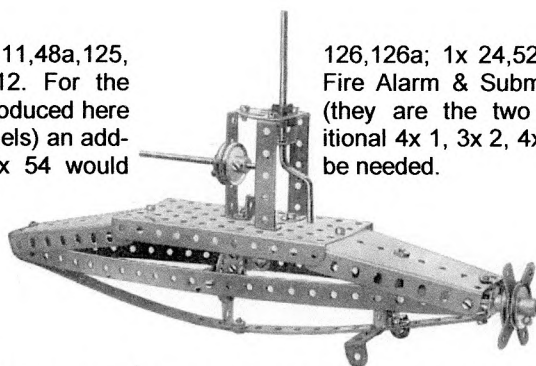
BILD-A-KIT Construction Sets



& the only indication of the maker is Box 2662, G.P.O., Melbourne, at the end. Sets 1, 3, & 5 were advertised in an early post-WW2 wholesaler's catalogue at almost the same price as the equivalent EZY-BILT sets. The Model Sheet, 4 sides 10*13", has 138 models, with no reference to any particular set. The models have no names or numbers and there is a half-tone for each – identical to those in late 1920s MECCANO manuals, with most from the 00 or 0 pages, but with a couple of No.1's, all mixed up together. The main parts that can be seen in the 0/00 ones are 4x 2,5,22,90a;

2x 11,48a,125, 8x 12. For the reproduced here models) an add- & 2x 54 would

126,126a; 1x 24,52, and Fire Alarm & Submarine (they are the two No.1 itional 4x 1, 3x 2, 4x 48a, be needed.



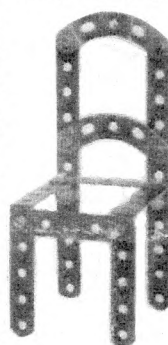
There was a No.4 Australian BUILD-A-KIT mentioned in 7/170 - the same system, I wonder.

CONSTRUCTO Another small MECCANO-like system, known only by its Model Leaflet (as used in MCS). But it was printed by 'Reporter' (a local newspaper) Print of Box Hill, a Melbourne suburb, so no doubt it was a Melbourne system.

HANDY SET Another 'new' system or just a set from one of the Australian manufacturers? The only evidence for this Set is a Model Sheet 9 1/8*12 1/8", printed on one side only. The name (below) is at the top with underneath, 'This set The Better Toy for Boys! has been produced for boys

to take with them on holidays or anywhere desired.' Then a possible clue to the maker: 'This set can be used together with all other 'Bettabilt' sets. So is BETTABILT another Australian system yet to be discovered? Or was Bettabilt a name intended to bring BETTAFIT or EZY-BILT to mind, without actually using either name? Two other possible clues. First, the Set Contents are given on the Sheet and the PNs are the same as BETTAFIT, so did the copywriter get confused and put Bettabilt instead of Bettafit? Secondly, the slogan above the name - 'The Better Toy for Boys!' – but I don't remember it from anywhere else.

The contents of the Set are given on the Model Sheet: using MECCANO PNs, 1x 36,52; 2x 2,12,16,22a,48a,90a, 126; 4x 5; 6x 35,37. The parts in the models look just like MECCANO except that the Trunnions are the 7-hole type and the 1" Loose Pulleys have no face holes. The 5*11h Flanged Plate is flanged all round and has the 1/2" cross slot in some models but not in others. The ends of the Curved Strip are blurry in most of the models but in at least one, the Chair below, they appear to be stepped.



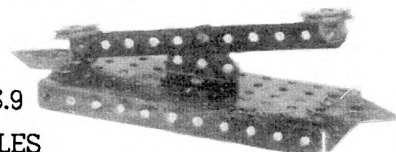
The 15 simple models shown, apparently original, go from H.S.1 GARDEN SEAT to H.S.15 MOTOR LAUNCH, with a half-tone of each. Several need more than the 6 N&B in the Set, and some like the Scales below include Flat Trunnions – two in that case plus an ordinary one.

H.S.2

CHAIR

H.S.9

SCALES



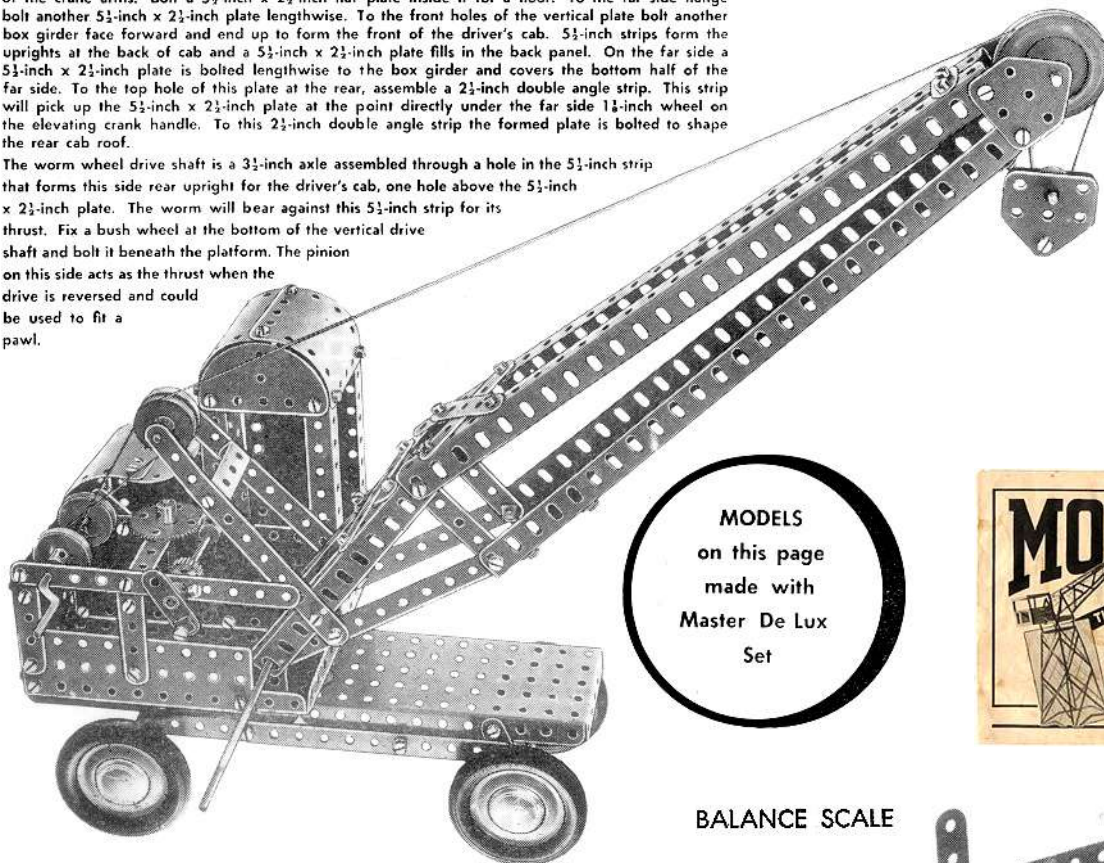
MODEL-IT The range of sets are as given in MCS. Possible dates are 1944 to around 1955.

MYSTERY PART No.45 More from Don about the 1 1/2" Gear with the square centre hole for the boss. The disc is almost identical in diameter, and has the same tooth form, as a MECCANO 56t Gear with a similar, thin disc. Two of the 'square' ones have now been found in an American No.5X MECCANO set from c1920, and so it seems possible that the part was a wartime Meccano expedient, with the square hole for fear that a zinc boss would slip under load. As far as is known no 1 1/2" Gears with any sort of zinc boss have ever been found in the UK, so how such parts got to be in an American set remains to be explained.

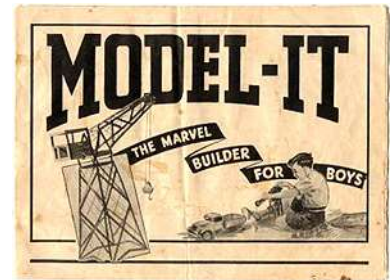
MOBILE SWIVEL CRANE

Turn a MODEL-IT Box Girder upside down for the floor of the swivelling cab, located at the bottom of the crane arms. Bolt a 5½-inch x 2½-inch flat plate inside it for a floor. To the far side flange bolt another 5½-inch x 2½-inch plate lengthwise. To the front holes of the vertical plate bolt another box girder face forward and end up to form the front of the driver's cab. 5½-inch strips form the uprights at the back of cab and a 5½-inch x 2½-inch plate fills in the back panel. On the far side a 5½-inch x 2½-inch plate is bolted lengthwise to the box girder and covers the bottom half of the far side. To the top hole of this plate at the rear, assemble a 2½-inch double angle strip. This strip will pick up the 5½-inch x 2½-inch plate at the point directly under the far side 1½-inch wheel on the elevating crank handle. To this 2½-inch double angle strip the formed plate is bolted to shape the rear cab roof.

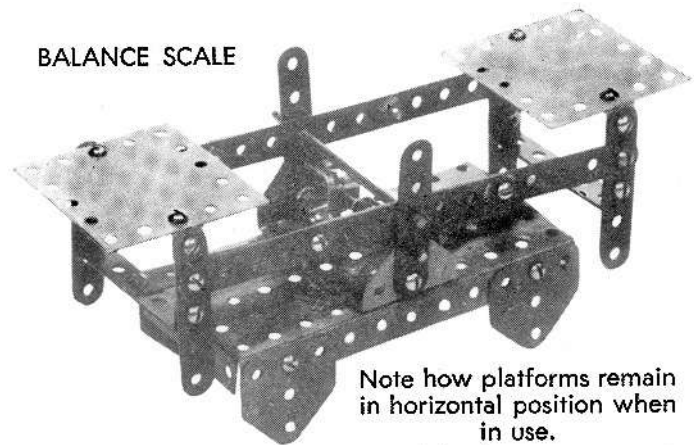
The worm wheel drive shaft is a 3½-inch axle assembled through a hole in the 5½-inch strip that forms this side rear upright for the driver's cab, one hole above the 5½-inch x 2½-inch plate. The worm will bear against this 5½-inch strip for its thrust. Fix a bush wheel at the bottom of the vertical drive shaft and bolt it beneath the platform. The pinion on this side acts as the thrust when the drive is reversed and could be used to fit a pawl.



10 pages & 34 models, has a cover (below) similar to the yellow one but is B&W (the coloured stains on it indicate that it is B&W, not just the photo). It does not though have REG. after the MODEL-IT name, or ENGINEERING SET below it, nor the small print at the bottom, nor the logo in the bottom left corner. It was said to have 'Manufact-



BALANCE SCALE



with some building instructions for the larger ones. Most are fairly run-of-the mill but the 4 for the largest set are good looking, though their 'mechanics' are quite simple, & a touch suspect in places. The Super Wheels look well on a Fire Engine & Semi-Trailer Lorry but the Crane above is my favourite, even if it hasn't a hook. Hoisting is clearly from the rear Crank Handle, but the function of the Axle next along with the Double Arm Crank on its end isn't immediately obvious. A Worm on it engages the Gear (the Pinion is just to locate the Axle) so it looks as if it may be the slewing drive, but what then of the luffing, & what does the forward Crank Handle do?

In many of the models for the sets through Senior, several variations of the parts can be seen. In most cases the top of the Flanged Plate is pierced with only the edge and centre rows of holes; the Trunnions are often shown as '5 hole'; and most of the Flexible Plates have squarish corners. These earlier (?) parts can be seen in the Scales above right.

Another manual on Ebay, described as 240*180mm, with

ured by G.E.Rose, Australian representatives Lawrence Distributing Co., 326 Edgecliff Rd., Woollahra, Sydney' on its back cover. So it may well be that this manual was before the Lawdex one, and in that case could the 'simpler' parts have been from the same era?

MODEL-IT: S2

OSN 31/912

A BILD-A-KIT Manual A BILD-A-KIT Model Sheet was described in 26/753, but now Jack has sent a copy of a manual, and he also wrote that he has been told that the system's name was registered by William Kerr, Henry Lawson, & Violet Amy White. Also that the company was Radio Electrical Hardware, 25 Queen St., Melbourne 1946, but no trace of it has yet to be found in directories, etc.

The manual is for Sets 1-5, has 16 pages, 6¾*4½", plus covers (the back cover is thought to be missing). The front one is shown right; the number on the set lid can't be seen clearly but may be a 5. The words left of the name on the lid are '10001 TOYS'. C2 is blank; p1 has an intro and an ad for the 5 sets which includes 'BILD-A-KIT is strongly made in Australia of pressed and cast metal parts, in complete sets in 5 sizes.'

36 models are shown on pp 2-15 with a single photo, often rather small, of each. They are generally much too dark too



BILD-A-KIT: S1

OSN 31/912

BILD-A-KIT SETS and SPARE PARTS

Set No. 1	5/6 each
" " 2	8/7 "
" " 3	12/9 "
" " 4	19/11 "
" " 5	27/9 "

Part No.	Description	
1	Perforated Strip, 2½"	1/2 doz.
2	" " 5½"	2/6 "
3	" " 7½"	2/6 "
4	" " 3½"	1/10 "
5	Curved Crank Strips	1/8 "
6	Double Angle Strip, 2½"	2/- "
7	" " 1½"	1/8 "
8	Crank Bent Strip	1/10 "
9	Angle Brackets	-7½ "
10	Flat Brackets	-4½ "
11	Double Angle Brackets	-8 "
12	Reversed Angle Brackets	1/- "
13	Angle Trunnions	2/1 "
14	Flat Trunnions	1/8 "

15	Pulley Wheel, 1" diameter	2/4 "
16	" " " " "	
	with Boss without Grub Screw	-7½ each
17	Grooved Wheel, ½"	-1½ "
18	Perforated Bush Wheel, 1½"	-7½ "
19	Base Plate	-8½ "
20	Crank Handle, 5½"	1/1 doz.
21	Axle, 2"	-6½ "
22	" 3½"	-7 "
23	" 6½"	-10 "
24	Axle Clips (50 per box)	1/4 box 50
25	Hexagon Nuts, ⅝"	1/4 "
26	Screws, ⅝" x ¼"	1/4 "
28	Train Wheel, 1"	-3 each
29	" " 1½"	-3½ "
30	" " 2"	-4 "
31	Hooks	1/1 doz.
33	Sector Plate Flange Angle	-7 each
35	19-Tooth Pinion Wheel	-4½ "
36	50-Tooth Gear Wheel	-8 "
42	Grub Screws	1/4 box 50
43	Perforated Strip, 12½"	3/9½ doz.

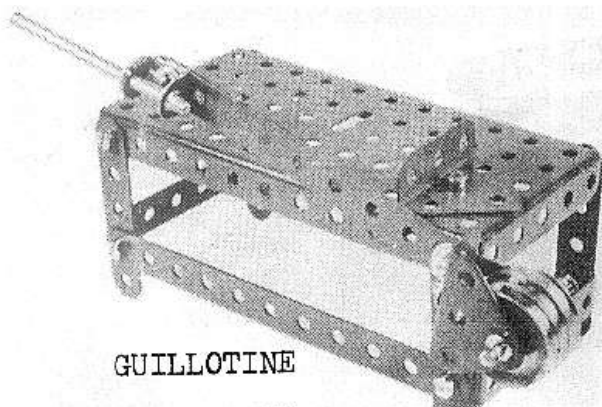
but the originals may have been better. The first is called SIGNALS and the last, MECHANICAL EXCAVATOR. Each of the pages has 'Bild-A-Kit Model Suggestion Book' at the top. No indication is given of which models can be made with which sets.

p16 has the Price List of sets & parts shown above. The prices of the parts are typically 30-50% higher than those in a Jan. 1941 Ezy-Bilt price list, so the present manual is likely to have been post-WW2. By 1958, the date of the next E-B list to hand, comparable parts are 2-3 times as high as in 1941.

In contrast to the OSN 26 Model Sheet, none of the models in this Manual are copied from MECCANO, or anywhere else as far as I know. A few of them catch the eye but mostly they are quite simple or not that realistic. The 3 above, about 120% natural size, are among the better ones, though they were chosen to show as many as possible of the different parts.

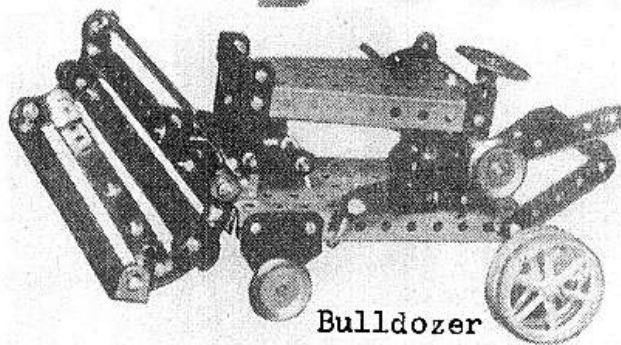
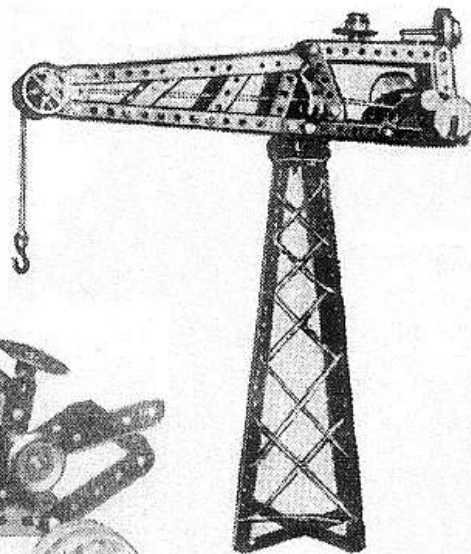
Many of the parts look much like MECCANO; the exceptions and other points of interest are noted below.

- The Trunnions are the 7 hole type.
- The Loose Pulley has no face holes and may have a very short bush.
- The 5*11h Flanged (Base) Plate is always shown with flanges on all sides, and often with the ½" long cross slot, but never with a slit for a Saw Blade.
- The Axle Clips are probably short lengths of rubber tubing.



GUILLOTINE

Swivelling Quay-side Crane



Bulldozer

- The Bolt heads are cheese-shaped; the Nuts, listed as hexagon, can only be seen as a blur about the same size as the MECCANO equivalent.
- The Train Wheels (#21-23) are no doubt castings and each size has 6 spokes. Despite the name, no flange can be seen. In some models these Wheels look like discs with rim & spokes raised on them. The rear wheel of the Bulldozer appears to be a pair of 2" Ø.
- The Flanged Sector Plate is 9h long.
- The best view of the Pinion & 50t Gear Wheel is at the back of the Crane, and as might be expected the Gear has no face holes. To mate it with a 19t Pinion implies either a non-2h mesh, or a non-MECCANO DP of about 35 (or a non-½" hole pitch, but that's perhaps unlikely).
- The Screwdriver isn't listed but can be seen in the box on the manual cover. No Spanner is evident lock-nutting is mentioned in the Intro.

box is darkish green and the yellow banding outside each side of the label extends out to the edges of the box. The parts match in the two cases; the N&B in the cardboard set are in a brass looking tin, about 2½" square.



Also from the Melbourne period, two plain cardboard boxes, 11*5½*4" deep & 2½*2½*1" deep, with the label left on them. The small lettering reads Part No. & Quantity. It is probable that these boxes were used to send spare parts to shops & wholesalers.

The Colton, Palmer & Preston Time More has been found out about the 8 sets mentioned in 31/908. The company advertising claimed that all the sets would be packed in metal boxes but no actual No.5 or 6 sets so boxed have been found so far. Metal boxes for Sets 1-3 are very rare and are smaller than those used for the larger sets. Also they had holes punched in them to allow their use in models, and these can be seen in the sides of the lid and base parts below (with the top of the lid above



them). Atop the next column is a label found stuck to an Illustrated Parts List of the period and there is an additional hole in the end wall. The metal packaging for the small sets was most probably a marketing failure, and Jack has been given some tops and sides from the lids which, it is said, were used in shop and exhibition display material. The metal boxes for Sets 6-8 were a success and were used into the 1960s.

A No.6 box made from heavy waxed cardboard is also known and is the same size as the corresponding metal version. Its lid design is the same as the metal No.7 shown in 28/837.

OSN 34/1031

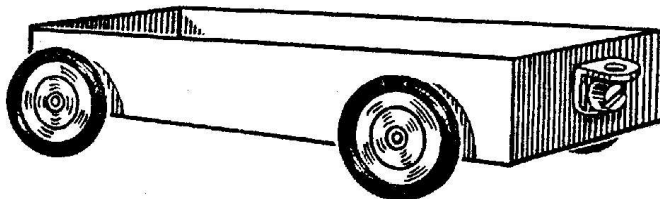
BILD-A-KIT Further to the notes in 31/912 the system's name was listed as an Accepted Application in the 23 January 1947 issue of the Official Journal of Patents, Trade Marks & Designs - the logo left appeared above '85,717. Toys. William Kerr, Henry Lawson White, & Violet Amy White (trading as Rec Radio & Electrical Hardware Company), of 25 Queen-street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, manufacturers. - 9th January 1946. Address for service in Australia - C/o Herman & Colman, 456 Little Collins-street, Melbourne, Victoria.'

OSN 34/1031

EZY-BILT

This is your new EZY-BILT in an up to date streamlined handy size package, so that you can keep your parts safely in a strong metal box. The new package contains just as many parts as in the big cardboard box of the same set number.

You can use the parts of the box to make extra toys.



Photos of an unused No.8 show its metal box to be as expected with the parts strung to 5 cards with yellow cord. The 'halves' of two of these above give a general impression, and the only difference in any of them that can be seen, compared to the notes in OSN 22 & 28, is the shape of the Screwdriver. The Set contains 2 of the Assembly Parts boxes and two hanks of red Cord.

EZY-BILT: S5

Another reference to the company is its advert in the September 1949 *The Retailer* for solid drawn containers used to send small portions of wedding cake to distant friends. The address given is 419 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Phone: FJ 5553.

The back cover of the Manual described in OSN 31 has been found. C3 is blank; C4 matches C1 in colour and has a short plug for the System, plus 'Printed by Sampsons Enterprises Pty. Ltd. 481 Kent St., Sydney for the Bild-A-Kit Co.' So if the company was called Bild-A-Kit at that point, was the Rec company still involved?

BILD-A-KIT: S3