

BOB (BEST OF BEST) First a couple of items that throw some light on the history of BOB. Jean-Louis Figureau sent a copy of a letter dated 10 Dec 1988 that Dr Georges Perinel, son of the proprietor of French BOB, had sent him in reply to a request for information. My translation is as follows:

"The patent for BOB was bought in 1939 by my father Jean Perinel (who was a qualified civil engineer, educated at the Mining College of St Etienne), from Monsieur Baumgartner, an industrialist living in Geneva.

The principle of this constructional toy was inspired by the metal tube scaffolding which at that time was starting to replace the old wooden type.

The name BOB was given to the toy by M. Baumgartner - one day while waiting in a queue at a transport depot he noticed a stack of crates which had come from the Near East. They contained dried figs and dates, and on each there was stencilled in English: Best of Best. He used the initial letters of these three words and thus christened his toy BOB, an easy name to remember commercially and one bringing to mind the English diminutive form of Robert.

BOB was not marketed in France until 1942/43 because of difficulties in obtaining supplies of metal during the war (all metal requisitioned by the Germans) and the need for vouchers...[bons de monnaie-matiere].

The parts came from different sources, the rods were supplied cut to length by the wire-mill at Bourg (Ain), the pulleys, generally of boxwood, came from the Nantua region (Ain), etc. All the parts were brought together at Annemasse (Haute Savoie), and were packed into the cartons, with the manual, by outworkers.

BOB enjoyed instant success but it didn't last for very long. The return of genuine MECCANO and the appearance on the market of other toys of different sorts brought strong competition, and production ceased around 1951/52.

My father and M. Baumgartner died more than 25 years ago."

The second translation (rather free but I hope the sense is right) is from the introductory page of a French BOB manual:

"BOB the metal, patented constructional toy, directly derived from tubular scaffolding, with easily varied adjustment, was marketed in Switzerland by its inventor M.H C Baumgartner at the beginning of the last war.

It was in Oflag II D, in Pomerania, that a group of prisoners, engineers and architects, fascinated by the wide scope that BOB offered to both art and science, made the first models of the range, ever growing and in principle unlimited, that the French licence of the BOB patents permitted from the end of 1942."

I had always thought, though I'm not sure why, that BOB originated in France but it is clear from the above that it first saw the light of day in Switzerland, and then in France, and finally, presumably not until after the war, in England. There is a photo of M. Baumgartner on the back of the French BOB manual.

SWISS BOB There is a list of parts in MCS but not much on the sets. Erwin Wyss has sent some details of a No 3 Set that he owns. The Parts List in the manual is as in MCS but there are also pictures of the sets (reproduced opposite) and two A4 pages showing the parts needed for the 82 models that are listed for Sets 1 to 5. There isn't room to include them but I can supply copies if necessary. One of the largest models, the Big Wheel shown in MCS requires 429 Joints and over 250 Rods. Also shown are ways of using the Joints to attach Plates and Wheels.

The Rods, Wheels and Plates in the set are of aluminium and the Plates are finished (anodised?) in various shades of pale to mid green.

The box lid has a light blue panel on the left with BOB on it (vertically and horizontally with a common O), and two kids with a small model. The centre panel has a black and white photo of a larger model, I'm not sure what it is, and the righthand orange panel has the Set No., the number of parts in the set, the maker's name (FRABA), 'FABRICATION SUISSE' (all the other information is in both French and German), and another name in script with a number after it, neither of which I can read.

Thomas Keel sent a photocopy of a No 2 set box lid, it is of similar design but with a different model (of a Railway Signal) in the centre panel. The script name looks like Papyria and the number that follows it on this lid is 907. Thomas also sent the set contents, see the French version opposite.

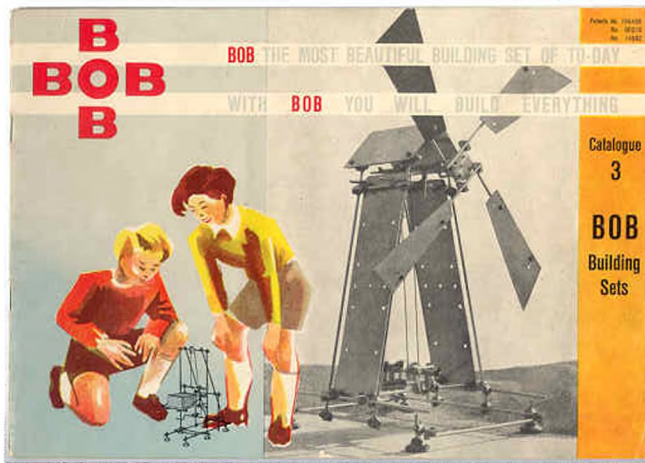
Two Swiss BOB Outfits

Some brief notes on Swiss BOB were given in 6/121, and now Peter Kessler has very generously sent over a No.2 Set, and David Hobson has kindly lent me a No.5. The latter is the largest in the range, & is unusual in being an English language version. Both sets are substantially complete but the No.2 is without its manual. Before going into details, two firms involved in Swiss BOB are given in *Baukästen*. In the 1950s it was Fraba of Geneva, and they were succeeded, possibly following a take-over, and still in the 1950s, by Papyria AG of Zürich. Both names are on the box lid of the No.2, and on those of the Nos.2 & 3 discussed in OSN 6, but the No.5 has only Papyria.

The pale green **No.2 box** is 310*235*21mm; the grey **No.5**, 300*425*22mm. Each lid has a 33*21cm label, similar to the No.3 of OSN 6 except for the B&W model - a Railway Signal for the No.2, & a Windmill for the No.5, like the one on the manual cover above. (Since OSN 6 I've discovered that the model on the No.3 is a Drawbridge.) The No.5 label is in English of course, and has in fact been stuck over another, in French & German no doubt. The Item No. on the No.2 is 907 (as on the OSN 6 lid), and on the No.5 it is 910. The **Set Contents** are pasted inside the lids and the No.5 includes 185 Rods, 47 Plates, & 130 Joints. I'd be grateful for copies of the Contents of Nos.1, 3, & 4 if anyone has them, to make up a page for MCS.

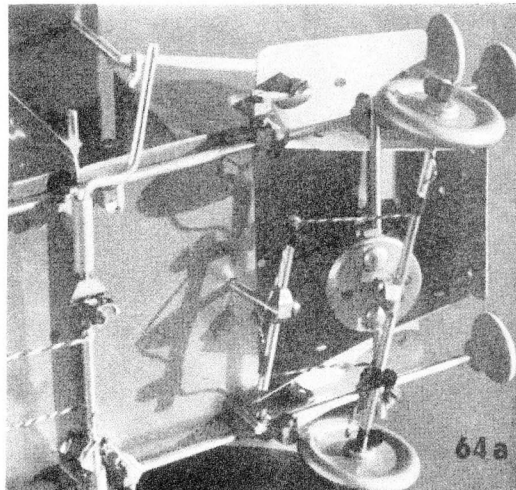
The **layout of the Sets** looks just like the illustrations in OSN 6. In the No.2 the Rods & small parts are in clear packets, stapled to a red backing card, while the Plates & Wheels are clipped to it. The No.5 box is subdivided by light green card trays, and as found the parts were loose in them.

In the notes on the **parts** below some comparisons are made with the UK parts described in 9/233. • **Rods** are aluminium, 2.95mm Ø. • The **Plates** are as shown in MCS with 3.1mm holes at a basic pitch of 40mm. They are .5mm thick and are anodised a yellowy-green. The two largest are 95*135mm & 55*214mm, while the Circular Plate is 93mm Ø. None are the same as the UK ones, and the latter, in plain aluminium, look rather less attractive. • The **Wheels** are virtually the size shown in MCS, and are a nice running fit on the Rods, with a bore of about 3.05mm. The 35mm **Road Wheel** is a symmetrical casting; the **Pulleys** are turned and differ in detail from the UK parts. The large one is 28mm Ø and #53 is recessed on one face only; one of the two 18mm Pulleys is the only part with a boss - 7.0mm Ø, single-tapped to take the M3 Screw used in the Joint. All are a little thicker than the comparable UK parts. • The **Joint** is just

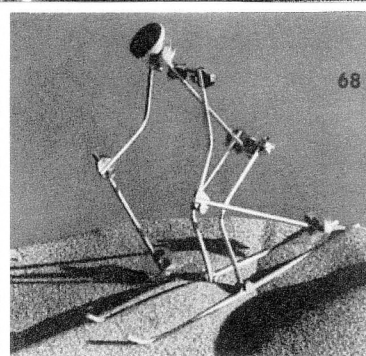


tapped M3. All the bores in these parts are too large to grip the Rods. • The **Spring Clip & Rivet** are similar to the UK parts. The **Crank Handles** are 110 & 165mm o/a with near 90° bends and 25mm handles. The 21mm Ø **Foot**, #43, is wood, nicely turned & varnished, and is a push fit on the Rods. The remnants of **Cord** left in the No.5 are blue.

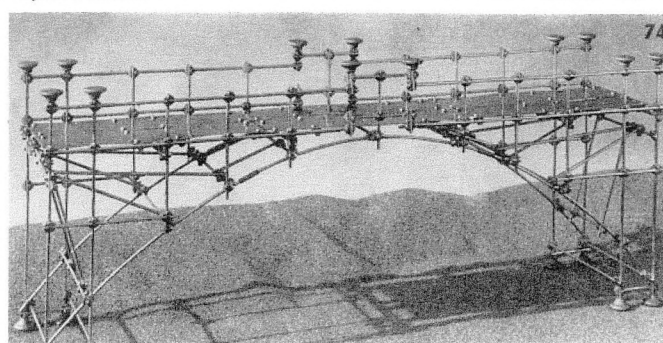
The **manual** with the No.5 has 20 pages 287*204mm, plus covers, and contains 82 models. For each is a B&W photo, with extra views of the larger models, and a Table of the parts needed for all the models is given on p20 & the inside back cover. There is a lot of shadow in many of the photos and constructional details are often far from clear. Models for Sets 1-5 are included in no particular order, but



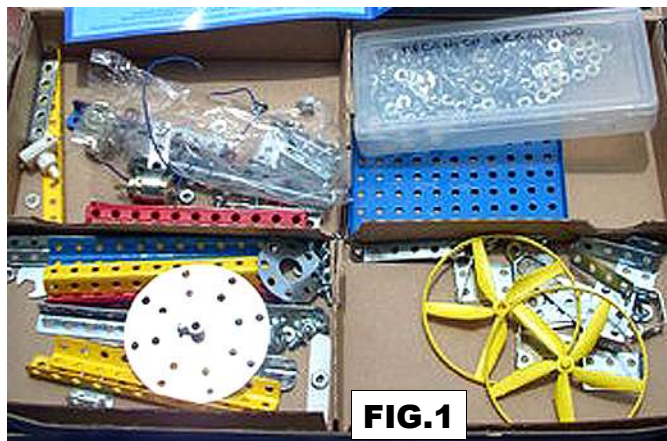
the Set No. is given in the Table. The first model is 1, Fork, on p2, and the last 81, Aircraft, on p18. (No.82 is the Windmill on the cover, and is listed as such in the Table.) The models are the usual style for a system of this type, perhaps a little above average, and somewhat improved by the Plates. The Road Wheels & Feet can be seen in the view of a Tipping Lorry's centre pivot steering left. One or two models are novel like the Skier below left, and some are fairly ambitious - a 3-stage Fire Escape for instance, and a Transporter Bridge with a trolley that has another trolley running on top of it. The upper one has the gondola attached to it, and runs along at twice the speed of the lower one. It's all done by Pulleys, but why? The Bridge below is rather nice I thought. It needs extra Joints not in the No.5, as do all the large models, 100 in this case, and 300 for the Transporter Bridge.



This manual has 'Catalogue 3' on the cover and so perhaps there were others, earlier editions maybe. (The one with the No.3 Set in OSN 6 had Katalog 3 on its cover, and the pages I have from it are the same as in this one, apart from the



language.) Also on the front are 3 Patent Nos: 194488, 90216, 14982. On the back cover is 'PAPYRIA LTD. ZÜRICH (Switzerland)', and 'Photos: E.A.Heiniger, Zurich'. One other small point, the manual with the No.3 doesn't have the 2 light horizontal bands which are at the top of the cover of this manual, and on all the boxes.



even if there was a cord drive to the head it's hard to see how



the necessary reduction would be achieved.

EL MECANICO ARGENTINO: S2

OSN 41/1234

A Swiss BOB Theme Set Urs Flammer kindly sent details of a rare set, the BOB Fahrzeug-Baukasten (Vehicle Set), or Boîte de Construction Roulantes in French. Its box is brown, 43*29*4cm, and below the lid label. It is in the usual Swiss BOB style and bottom right is FRABA, the maker, and the set number, Nr.905.

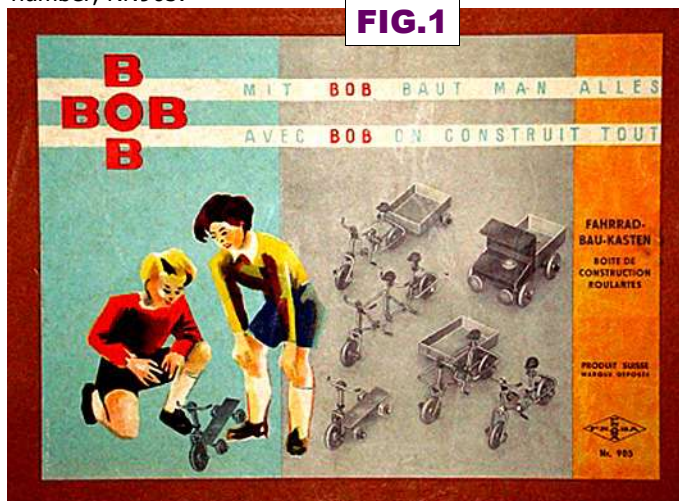


FIG.1



FIG.3

in the box they are the Load Platform, Bonnet, & Cab.

The Model Leaflet is an A4 sheet, folded into four, and printed on both sides in German & French. Above (Fig.3) the front panel; the back panel has '„FRABA“ Nr.905' on it.

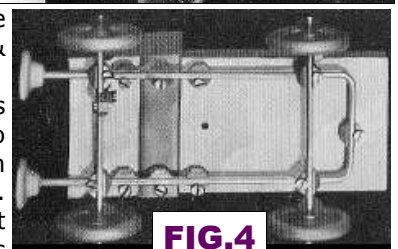


FIG.4

8 models are shown: a Scooter, a Tractor, a Lorry, a Hand Cart which can also be attached to the Tractor, & 4 Bicycles – a Man's, a Man's with Trailer, a Woman's, & a Tandem. All but the Tractor are on the lid, though the Handcart (alongside the Man's Bicycle, and possibly attached to it) doesn't look quite the same. The instructions comprise one or two photos of each, with a few words of building instructions for most. Shown here are the underside of the Lorry on the front panel, and a Bicycle with Trailer. The body parts are attached to a chassis in the usual way by a Bolt screwed into a Joint (as in Fig.4). The pedals on the Bicycles are represented by a fixed double-cranked Rod which for realism looks as if it ought to be much nearer the bottom bracket. The Tractor is simply the Bonnet mounted on a chassis and doesn't really look the part; the Scooter is unusual in having a Road Wheel at the front between the forks, & 4 Pulleys as wheels under the foot board.

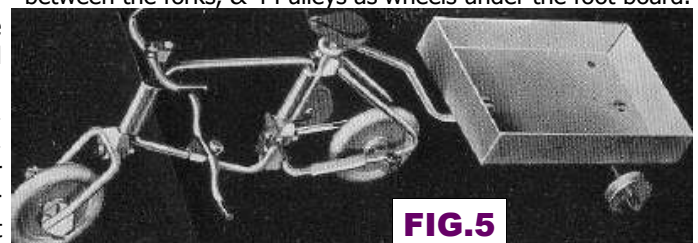


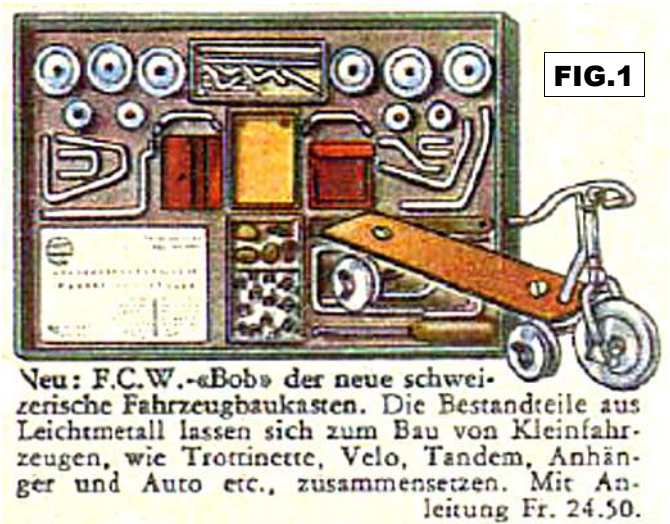
FIG.5



FIG.2

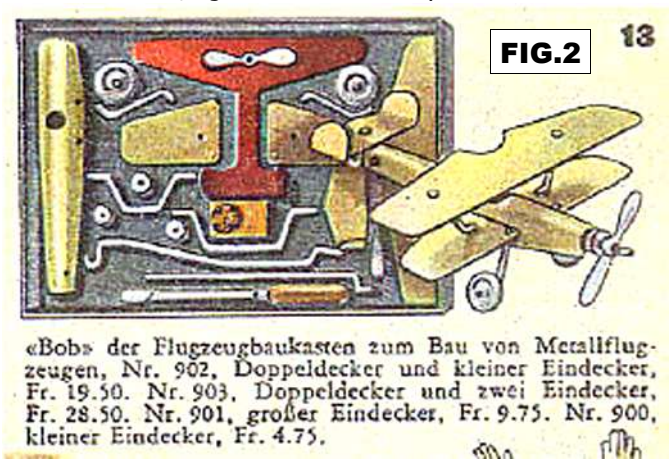
Above the box's base with all the the parts loose in it. As usual with Swiss BOB nearly all are aluminium. The wheels are the standard 18mm Pulley & 35mm Road Wheel (see 26/757), the Rods are mostly formed-to-shape specials. The small box contains the wooden, varnished Feet, the black, cast zinc Saddles, the die-cast Joints used to join the Rods, Spring Clips, Rod Connectors, etc. The narrow rectangular Plate is used as a footplate in a Scooter model, the 3 other Plates can be seen in the Lorry in Figs.4 & 5: from left to right

4. **Snippets. The Swiss BOB Theme Sets.** Details from Urs Flammer of the Fahrzeug-Baukasten were given in 41/1234 and now Urs has found the illustration below of the Set in a



1944/45 Franz Carl Weber catalogue. It is described there as being a new Swiss set, and it cost Fr.24.50. Its set number isn't given but the OSN 41 set was No.905. The standard Swiss BOB sets were introduced in 1943.

Also in the catalogue the previously unrecorded Flugzeugbaukasten below, again said to be newly introduced. In fact 4



sets 900-903 are listed for: a Small Monoplane; a Large Monoplane; a Biplane & a Small Monoplane; &, at Fr.28.50, a Biplane & 2 Monoplanes. Perhaps the illustration is of the No.902 & if so it seems that with the 2 wire Undercarriage Legs, & the 2 long Formed Rods under said Legs, both models could be made at the same time. That assumes that the basis of the Small Monoplane is the brown wing cum fuselage cum tail part top centre. The long Formed Rods would run the length of the fuselage with the Prop at the right end and the curly part of the longer one as a tail skid of the Biplane. More information on these sets very welcome. And was there ever a Set No.904?

BOB [3]: S2 [41/1421]

5. **Snippet. TECHNICAL TRAINER.** It was said in 19/529 that from May 27, 1946 the maker was Farmingdale Aircraftsmen Mfg. Corp. & that distribution was by Herman M. Kruse & Associates, St. Louis. An 11/46 Popular Mechanics ad on Ebay recently had a photo which looked like a Set A and was offered at \$8.95. The ad was from Dynamic Electronics, New York,

Inc., 37W. 57th Street, N.Y. | 2 Park Avenue, N.Y. | Broadway at 65th ST. The mail order address was 1976 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y., though the '1976' is blurry.

TECHNICAL TRAINER: S3 [47/1421]

6. **Snippet. 'New' System, BURSCHI.** Below the Ebay photo of the set which it was said was made in the DDR by a company called Burschi in the period 1945-50. Under the name on the lid is 'der bunte (the colourful) METALLBAUKASTEN'.

The parts have a MÄRKLIN look to them, though with only round holes in what



Flanged Disc Pulley (if indeed that part has a pulley groove). The Flanged Sector Plate is probably 8h long, as would be expected, and the long Strips & A/Gs probably 25h. Nothing really can be seen of the Brackets but some of the parts in the bottom right compartment are a puzzle. One looks to be a 1*6*1h DAS, and another a 1*7h SAS, but neither are clear enough to be sure. There is a double-ended Spanner in the bottom centre bay.

Of the 4 models that can be seen I spotted 3 in a late 1930s MÄRKLIN manual. The one on the lid is the Set 2 Dieselmotor mit Schnellbohrmaschine, and the first 2 of the 3 on the tattered manual page are both No.1 models: Lastaufzug (Goods Lift) & Hauptsignal (Railway Signal).

BURSCHI: S1 [47/1421]

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Two Swiss BOB Aero Sets Thank you to Urs Flammer for these notes. Sets 900-903 were mentioned in 41/1421 and a No.902 was shown; now details of the 900 & 903 outfits. **The 900** Below the set with the underside of an actual model

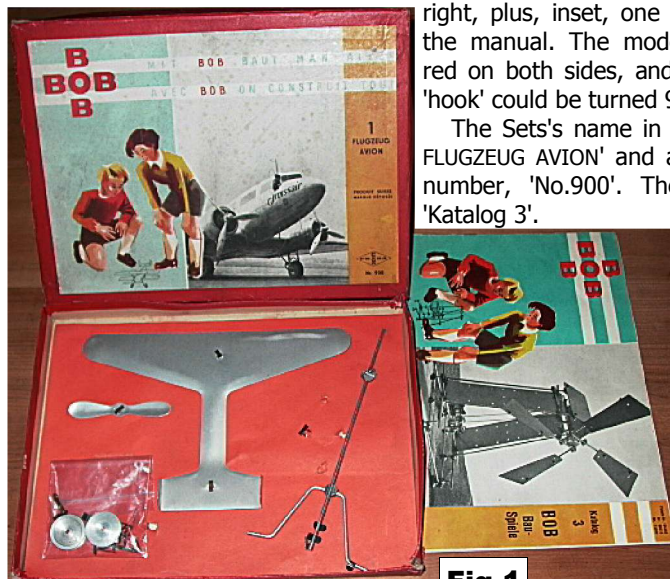


Fig.1

right, plus, inset, one of the 2 figures from the manual. The model's Body is anodised red on both sides, and the Spine Rod's end 'hook' could be turned 90° to form a tailskid.

The Sets's name in the RH lid panel is '1 FLUGZEUG AVION' and at the bottom the set number, 'No.900'. The manual is entitled 'Katalog 3'.

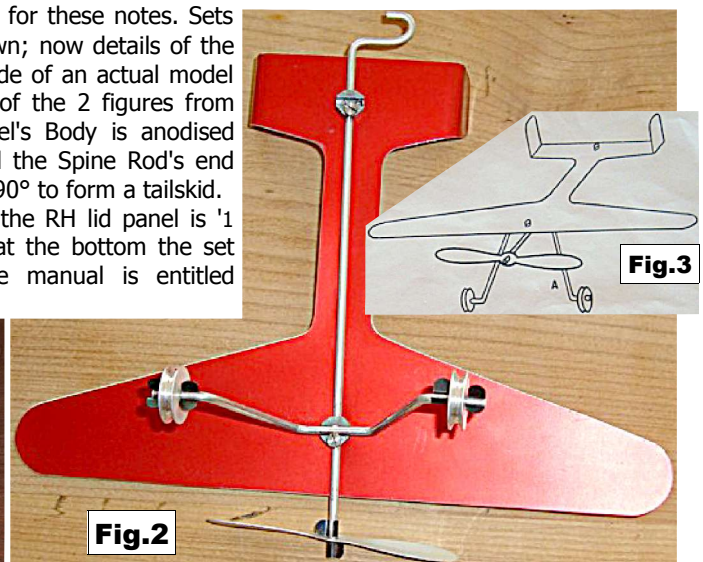


Fig.2

Fig.3

It is said in the manual that there are already 3 Aero sets in the shops and that other BOB sets will be available at the beginning of 1945.

The 903's lid is the same as the 900 apart from '3 FLUGZUGE

AVIONS' & 'No.903' in the panel. The main parts are shown in the box below. The manual cover is probably as in the No.100 and presumably has models for all the Aero sets. One of the models is the Biplane in OSN 41, and another is shown below. No doubt the third includes the Formed Rod which is in the box between the Undercarriage & Interplane Struts, but its role isn't obvious.

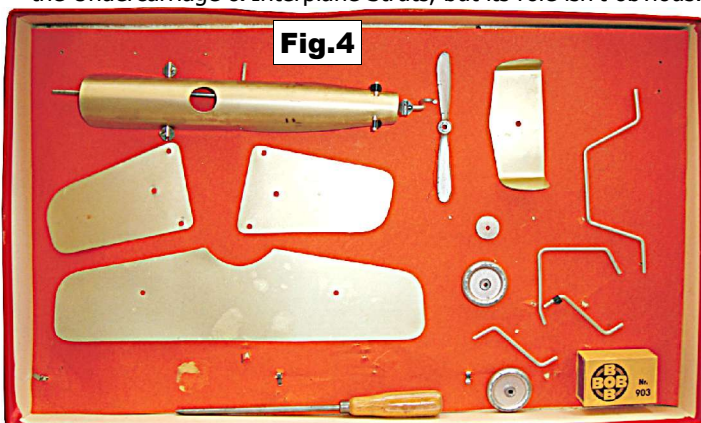


Fig.4

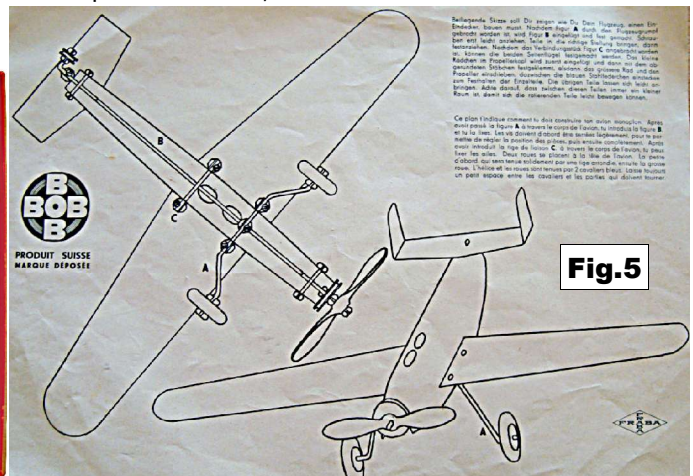


Fig.5

BOB3: S3

OSN 52/1592

A Mystery Chassis Jean-Pierre Guibert hopes that someone will be able to put a name to this Chassis. It's French, no doubt from the

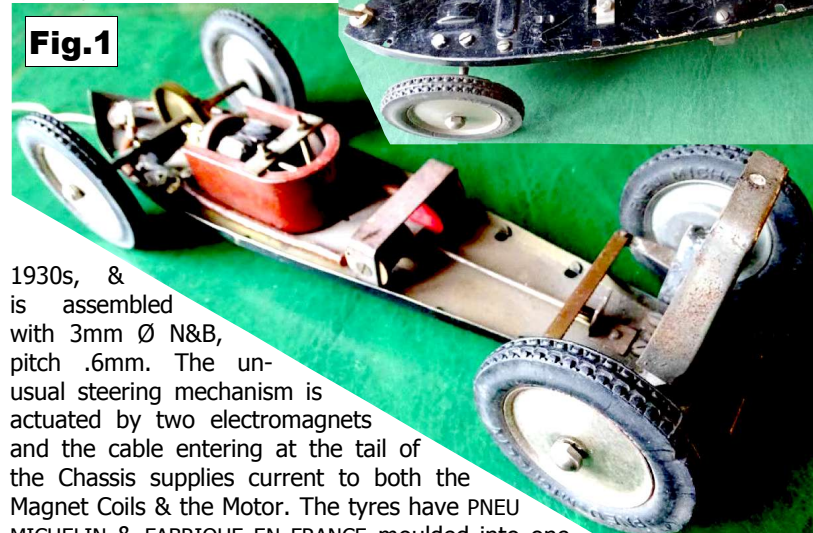


Fig.1

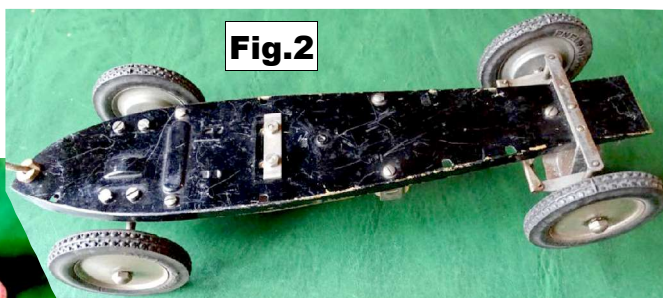


Fig.2



Fig.3

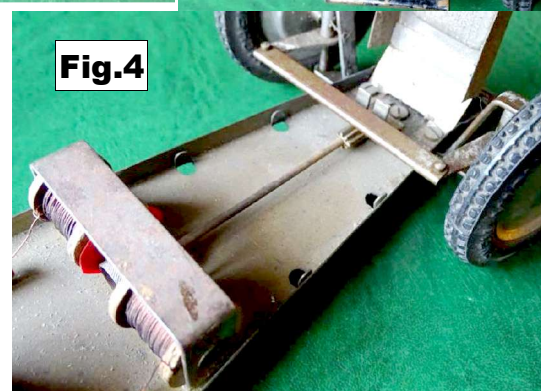


Fig.4

1930s, & is assembled with 3mm Ø N&B, pitch .6mm. The unusual steering mechanism is actuated by two electromagnets and the cable entering at the tail of the Chassis supplies current to both the Magnet Coils & the Motor. The tyres have PNEU MICHELIN & FABRIQUE EN FRANCE moulded into one sidewall & just PNEU MICHELIN in the other. The wheels are about the same diameter as a Tyre on a MECCANO 1½" Pulley.

MYSTERY PARTS No.54: S1

OSN 52/1592