

When Märklin made MECCANO Parts David Hobson told me about a Dutch website, www.famoustoys.com. It is run by Henk Brouwer, a MECCANO enthusiast, and as well as items for sale, it has numerous photos of sets under the 'Collection' button, with brief details of them in English. Included are sets for the German market and a note about them which has points of interest. What follows is a paraphrase of it, with my comments in square brackets. The details of the manuals mentioned are taken from Henk's German Manuals page in the Meccano-Märklin section at www.nzmeccano.com/image-41457&page=, & Henk kindly gave permission to reproduce Figs.1-4.

Up until 1911 MECCANO for European markets was handled by Weimar Brothers, a Rotterdam wholesaler. This ended over a dispute about patent rights for a system similar to MECCANO then being sold by Weimar [no doubt DER JUNGE MECHANIKER, see 20/568]. [A 1911 French Märklin catalogue from Maerklin Frères et Cie, 416 rue St. Honoré, Paris, included all the MECCANO sets of the time including HSMD, & extra parts #1-55.]

1912 to 1916 In 1912 Hornby opened a German distribution company called Meccano GmbH at Bürohaus Borse, Burgstrasse 28, Berlin C.2. Sets exported from Liverpool to mainland Europe had black finished parts, to differentiate them from STABIL's nickel. Fig.2 is a 1913-16 manual cover [with no mention of Märklin]; the same cover was used in 1912-13 but the model at the top was the Windmill & the price was 0.75 Pfg. These manuals were printed in the UK but a 1916 edition, price Mk. 1.50, was printed in Berlin. Manuals after 1916 all had the same style of cover but the text below the main MECCANO name varied. Lid labels were as Fig.1 but without the Märklin logo at the bottom of the Tower. [The Paris office was also set up in 1912 and as far as I know French sets had nickelled parts. On the black parts in the German sets, most sources suggest that they were made by Märklin for Meccano, but Henk is adamant that this is incorrect. Between 1912 & WW1 Märklin were supplying Meccano with C/W Motors, some 60000 all told it's said.]

After about 1916 the black parts were painted instead of chemically treated, and due to shortages during the war bronze painted steel replaced brass parts. Also a small box label with just MECCANO on it (Fig.5) was used from about the same time, and the N&B box had a plain label with a red dot on it. Such a set can be seen in Eisenzeit, Tafel 28. However it is suggested that these sets were sold through Märklin dealers [with sets for Meccano dealers as before?]. The firm in the text on a 1918 cover (Fig.3) is Märklin, Department Meccano, with wholesaling & distribution from what had been Meccano's Berlin address, & production & management at Göppingen (Märklin's factory). [Presumably Märklin were making these sets, after prewar stock from Liverpool was exhausted. Imports via say the Netherlands, neutral during WW1, would have been unlikely, certainly after 1916.] In 1917 Märklin obtained rights to the Meccano brand in Germany. A manual with Oct. 1918 printed in it has the same text as Fig.3 except that the wholesaling & distribution is now also from Göppingen. [At the outbreak of WW1 the German government confiscated enemy assets, including Meccano's, and presumably Märklin had at least the right to carry on Meccano's business from then on.]

From October 1918 [the armistice was not until November] **to August 1919** there were joint Meccano-Märklin outfits. Softer steel was used for the Strips & they were a different purplish-black colour. The larger cut from a manual in Fig.4 has MÄRKLIN immediately beneath MECCANO, & has the Märklin logo as well as the usual Meccano ones [as in Fig.2]. It is dated 1919 from an Aug. 1919 PL stuck in it. [Some parts, perhaps from this period are stamped with the Märklin logo as well as MECCANO (Fig.6). I have 4 such, a DAS, and Strips with 6, 7, & 11 holes: 2 could be said to look somewhat purplish, the other a not very intense black. They are not of very good quality, the hole pitch of the 11h is 12.6mm.]

MÄRKLIN sets were introduced in August 1919, at first using MECCANO boxes with green interiors and a red-edged label over the MECCANO one. At the end of 1919 the interior colour was changed to red and there was a change to the numbering system.

In 1928 after a legal dispute between the companies was settled, Meccano open a new sales office at Alte Jakobstrasse 20-22, Berlin SW.68. [My pet theory, with nothing at all to back it up, is that soon after the war ended the companies agreed that for 10 years MECCANO would not be sold in Germany and Märklin would leave the small model railway market in England to Hornby.]

[A Curiosity] Leaving Henk's material, a German Ebay item showed 2 sets, a No.1 in a black box with the Fig.5 label, & the No.2 in Fig.7. Apart from the Set No. roundel, probably stuck on, & its language, the label is that of a 1-model set sold here in about 1913, see CQ36, p40. The English slogan 'You Make It Yourself' became 'Man Baut Alles Selbst' (You Build Everything Yourself). So presumably the 1-model set was sold in Germany at about the same time as here, & left over labels were used towards the end of the war. Fig.7 also shows the bottom of the original label & Henk suggested that it might well be from an HSMD Set A – the partitioning doesn't quite match the illustration on p46 of The Meccano System, but it does contain a bay large enough to take the HSMD 19*11h Flanged Plate. The Strips, Plates, etc in both boxes were black, but whether they were painted or chemically treated couldn't be seen. That there were labels & boxes left over in Germany seems to me to point to some sets at least being, at a minimum, assembled in Germany rather than being imported ready-made.]



Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7

MECCANO becomes MÄRKLIN An account of the years 1911-19 appeared in 47/1447, now Werner Sticht has prepared a detailed history of the period based on reliable information from all available sources. An English version can be seen at [www.metallbaukasten-wiki.de/From Hornby%27s Meccano in Germany to the First Sets of the Metallbaukasten Märklin](http://www.metallbaukasten-wiki.de/From_Hornby%27s_Meccano_in_Germany_to_the_First_Sets_of_the_Metallbaukasten_Märklin,_or_at_the_end_of_www.nzmeccano.com/forum/showthread.php?tid=296), or at the end of www.nzmeccano.com/forum/showthread.php?tid=296. The article is too long to even summarise fully here but what follows lists the main events, and mentions some of the particular points of interest. But best to read the original as well, with all the 'ifs, buts, & maybes'. All the Figures mentioned are those in OSN 47.

1908-11. MECCANO first appeared on the German market in 1908. At the time Weimer Brothers of Rotterdam were Meccano's European agent, but that arrangement ceased, perhaps in 1910, but more likely during 1911.

1911. Märklin are known to have been Meccano's agent for France in 1911, and presumably for Germany too, and perhaps for all of Europe.

1912-14. In 1912 Meccano established French & German subsidiaries to distribute parts & sets. The German office was in Berlin. At about the same time the finish of steel parts sent to Germany was changed from nickel plating to chemical blackening. Why did Meccano make the change? Not known but possibly to differentiate it from the nickel parts of its main competitor in Germany, STABIL, launched in 1911.

1914-17. With the start of World War I in August 1914 the German Meccano subsidiary was considered enemy property and was therefore subject to forced administration. (The 'take-over' of enemy firms was common practice at the time, the Krupp company in England for example.) Sales of MECCANO sets etc continued, and by February 1915 at the latest Martin Hirschfeldt had been appointed as administrator of the Berlin office. He kept the brand alive by continuing to sell existing sets, and then having sets made up, ordering parts locally as the stock of Liverpool ones ran out.

Locally supplied parts were not stamped with a name and included Strips & Plates painted black, Wheels made from steel painted bronze, and Gears made of zinc or aluminium. The 50t Gear retained the same type of boss fixing (an impressed ring in the gear face around the boss) and because this needed special machinery it has been suggested that Märklin may have produced this part.

The labels on the prewar sets gave 'Meccano Liverpool' as the maker; manuals were printed in England but showed the Berlin address on the cover. Immediately after the war started the 'Meccano Liverpool' on the lid had a strip pasted over it with 'Meccano G.m.b.H.' and the Berlin address on it. Sometime between 1915 & 1917 lids had only the simple red label shown in Fig.5 and manuals were as Fig.2, printed in Germany.

The only connections between Meccano & Märklin between

1910 & 1917 were: (1) Märklin as Meccano's agent in 1911, as already mentioned; (2) Märklin supplied clockwork motors to Meccano in England between 1910 & 1914; (3) Märklin supplied Motors to Meccano in Berlin from 1914 until they acquired the German company in 1917, and may also have supplied certain parts, the Gear #27 for example as explained above.

1917-19. On 15th August 1917 the Märklin company acquired the stocks, protective rights & the Meccano trademark from the German government. Why the government decided to sell off the Meccano operation isn't clear but it may have been that it was losing money. This was perhaps because demand for sets with a name known to be English was low (sets from the 1914-17 period are rarely found). No doubt there were few potential buyers for the company but Märklin, having seen that prewar constructional toys were becoming popular, could have envisaged the possibilities of a ready developed system sold under its name in the postwar world.

Initially Märklin operated through the Berlin address but the office was closed in 1918 and Meccano affairs were handled from Märklin's head office in Göppingen. Advertising at the time spoke of MECCANO as 'formerly English, now German' and 'now made by Märklin'.

The main change to the sets was that from the outset the lid label was reinstated in a form based on the 1914 design but with a different model which included a small Märklin logo, and no reference to Liverpool (see Fig.1). Any MECCANO set with a reference to Märklin on the label was a Märklin product from the years 1917-19. The parts in the sets varied from prewar stock, parts bought in, and parts that Märklin had started to make themselves. The latter were of varying quality as methods of producing them were developed. Many Strips were stamped with MECCANO & the Märklin logo, as in Fig.6. Märklin still had Motors stamped MECCANO from earlier production and now the name was removed by stamping out the appropriate area of the sideplates.

Mid 1919 onwards The last known ad featuring MECCANO appeared on June 11, 1919, & METALLBAUKASTEN MÄRKLIN is known from an ad on the 19th of that month (ads at the time sometimes added 'formerly Meccano'). Initially the range of parts (up to #65) continued unchanged & the models were Meccano's of 1913. But by late 1919 or early 1920, sets were being introduced which included new parts (initially the large & small Flanged Disc Pulleys, #66 & #67, parts actually listed since the beginning of 1919). And the manuals included some new models.

Werner's account continues with more on MÄRKLIN in the 1920s with new parts & a number of special sets.

Myths? Next a detailed examination of the various arguably misleading and/or incorrect statements which have been made about the Meccano/Märklin relationship, notably by the Märklin company and in the The Meccano System by Love & Gamble.

Finally a list of the numerous References etc.

MECCANO-MÄRKLIN: S2

OSN 52/1608

Snippet. Another METAAL BOUWDOOS Set Following the account of this Dutch system in 51/1574 the set right was offered on Marktplaats. Its lid & box partitioning are identical to the OSN 51 outfit. The parts common between the sets are the 2 Flanged Plates (though differing in colour), the 8h Strip, & the Loose Pulley which scales at 20mm Ø or a little more. The other parts in the new set which look genuine are the 4 & 18h Strips, the Fast Pulley of 30mm Ø or a little more, & the Road Wheels of about the same diameter. The green DAS & 2*2h A/B (they look greener in the original) appear to be MECCANO and the DAS's hole pitch matches the M B parts. The Crank Handle doesn't look like MECCANO. Two different types of N&B can be seen: RH Bolts & large square Nuts in the 4h Strips attached to the Sector Plate, and CH Bolts with hex Nuts near the DAS. Neither match those in the OSN 51 outfit.



METAAL BOUEDOOS: S2

OSN 52/1608