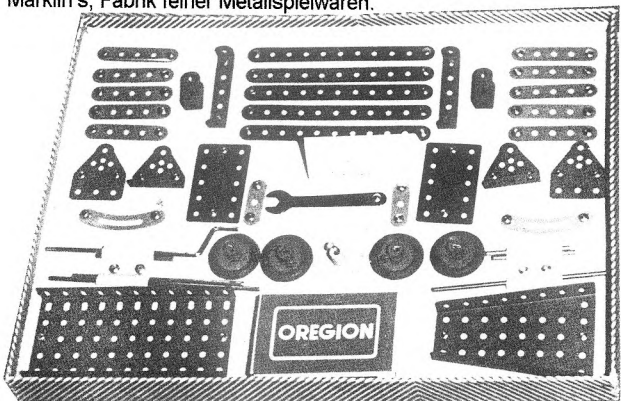


the 1940s.

**MINITECH** There is an entry in MCS for this French system which was made by Joma, and dates from the 1950 to 1960 period. No details are given except that the holes are 2mm Ø, at 9.5mm pitch, and the only part shown is a Flat Girder with 2 rows of staggered round holes. The manual cover above shows Plates with staggered holes but with no indication of how the braced structure is made.

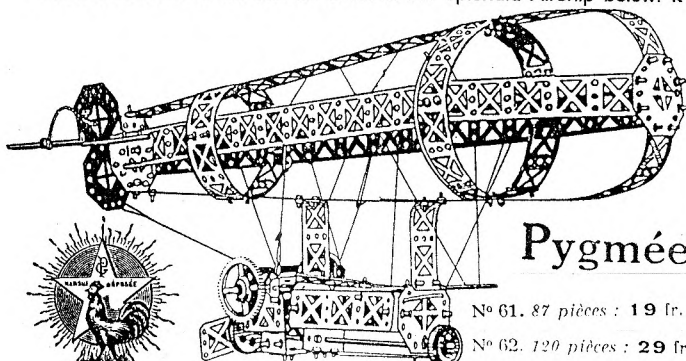


**OREGION** This system is believed to be Canadian but nothing is known of its history. A No.99 set, and the label on its lid, are shown below. Many aspects of the set remind one of MÄRKLIN, the layout of the label for example is quite like some prewar Märklin ones, and the boy is the same or very similar. Oddly, the text is partly in French and partly in English, and the English part (which contains 2 spelling mistakes) mentions that 47 'types' can be made from boxes 99-104. Those set numbers were used by Märklin from after WW2 until 1957. The slogan, Manufacture de jouets fins en métal, is the equivalent of Märklin's, Fabrik feiner Metallspielwaren.



Many of the parts too have a MÄRKLIN look to them but there are some differences - I don't recognise the Spanner; there's no large centre cutout in the Trunnions; the holes in the 5\*3h Plate aren't MÄRKLIN pattern; nor are the Tyres, and nor is the shape of the ends of the Sector Plate. The contents don't correspond to any MÄRKLIN set either, - in general they are nearer to a MÄRKLIN 100 than a 99, but both of those contain Flexible Plates larger than 5\*3h. Incidentally the boss that may be visible in the middle of the Pulleys/Tyres belongs to an 8h Bush Wheel.

**PYGMÉE** A model from this French system is included in MCS but a little more detail can be seen in the splendid Airship below. It



Pygmée

N° 61. 87 pièces : 19 fr.

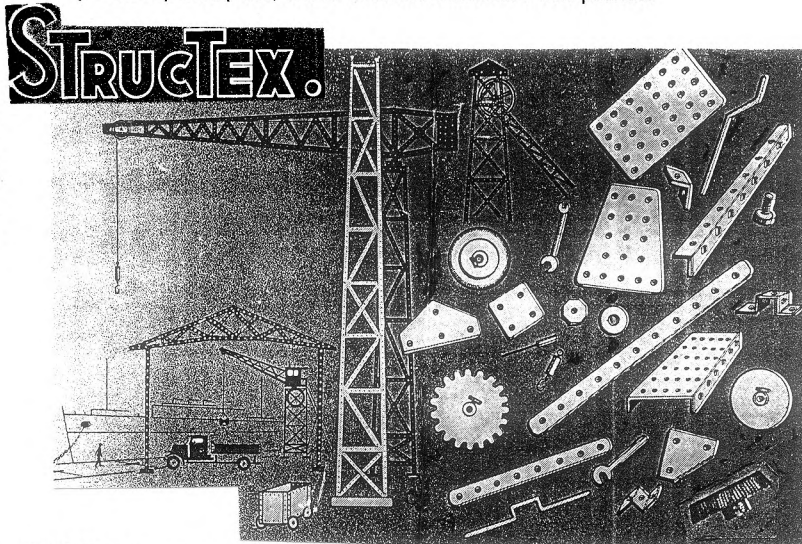
N° 62. 120 pièces : 29 fr.

N° 63. 148 pièces : 49 fr.

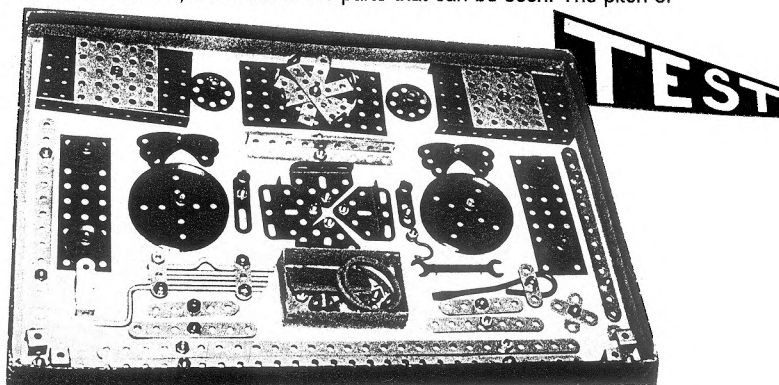
comes from a 1920 ad leaflet and the main parts are various lengths of Braced Girder and the Octagonal Plates, which can be joined at right-angles by 3h long A/Gs. And that's it really apart from the Wheels and that 4-spoke Gear, though I can't quite see what its function is.

3 sets are listed, Nos.61, 62 & 63, and they were packed in enamelled steel boxes. The ad in MCS shows Nos.51, 52 & 53, in the same packaging, at the same prices, and with the same number of parts, 87 in the 51/61 to 148 in the largest set.

**STRUCTEX** This quite large Belgian system from the 1950s was mentioned in 15/426. Some of the parts are shown below, notice the Bevel at bottom right, which may not be very clear, and what is that small octagonal part under the Sector Plate? A Nut? The part of the model at the top includes a 5-spoke Wheel, if it can be seen, possibly built up from separate parts, and its diameter scales at 6 hole pitches.



**TEST** This was a French system from the 1950s and below a photo of the known set, and a list of the parts that can be seen. The pitch of



the holes isn't known but is probably at least a little less than 1/2". The corners of the Plates and A/Gs look to have sharp corners but those of the other parts appear well rounded. The only slotted holes are in the Trunnions and the Slotted Cranks.

- Strips 3,5,7,13 & 27h long. Curved Strips probably about 5h long but with only the centre and end holes. 1\*5\*1 DAS. Angle Brackets. Double Bent Strips. What may be a 3\*1\*3 Double Bracket (below the LH 9\*3 Plate).
- 9h A/Gs. 9\*5h Flanged Plates flanged on the long sides. Perforated Plates with 9\*5, 9\*3 & 5\*5 holes. Trunnions and Flat Trunnions with side and 3 slotted holes.
- 8h Bush Wheels. Pulleys like M22 (on the 9\*3h Plates), and M19b but without the slots.
- Wire Screwdriver, Spanner, Axles. A Crank Handle with 90° bends. A Crankshaft. Largish hex Nuts (holding the parts in place). What look like Slotted Cranks, 3 & 4h long with the outer 2 holes slotted together. A Wire Hook. Also in the small box are 2 rubber? Rings which wouldn't fit the Pulleys and look too small to be Driving Bands.

**STEEL TEC at The Entertainer** Since before Xmas, Salisbury's branch of The Entertainer has had a good selection of STEEL TEC sets at reasonable prices. Some examples: a Harley-Davidson set with motor (#950712, 545 parts) at £16.99; USS Enterprise with sound & lights (#950992, 410 parts) at £19.99; Road Wreckers (262 parts including motor, #950682) at £12.99; Speedster sets at £4.99 (6 sets, all #700502, with from 58 to 79 parts); & the Power Wrench at £4.99.



MCS has a brief entry for this French system, a short note about it appeared in 16/448, and there is a useful photo of a No.2 set in JCM. These notes are based on a mint No.3 set & its manual.

MINITECH was made by Joma, a manufacturer of very good quality toys at the end of the 1950s & in the '60s. For instance, it began to make slot cars, called 'Electro-Route' almost simultaneously with

Scalectrix, and in 1958 it won second price at the 'Oscar du Jouet' for them. There is no information on the box or in the manual on the period of production of MINITECH but from the parts, the picture on the lid, & the data known on Joma, circa 1960, as given in OSN seems likely.

**THE SETS** Photos of four sets numbered 1 to 4 are in the manual. Also one of its pages has models for a No.0 set, so there must have been 5 different sets. No connecting sets are mentioned, but the manual indicates that separate parts could be bought. The sets are in cardboard boxes, with one layer of parts in Set 1, 2 in Sets 2 & 3, and 3 in Set 4. Sets 3 & 4 also have a side compartment for the Motor, the small parts boxes, and some other parts such as the Tools & the Angle Brackets.

**THE No.3** box measures 427\*305\*45mm, and its lid, base with insert, and upper insert are shown in Figs.1-3 – in Figs.2 & 3 the parts on the inserts are symmetrical left/right. The inserts sit directly on top of one another (there is no tray for the upper one) with a sheet of paper between to protect the parts. In fact, at a glance it is not obvious that there is a lower layer of parts at all (the Ebay seller of the No.3 hadn't realised this until it was pointed out to him!). The Axles were originally on the upper tray, between the Wheels & the long blue Strips, held by four bits of sticky tape. But the tape has lost its grip and the Axles & tape are now in the side compartment (the eight marks the tape made can still be seen on the insert).

**FIG.1**



**THE PARTS** The system is presented as a 'jeu de construction miniature', and indeed, it is possible to build small models. The manual indicates that it is particularly adapted for building bridges which match the 1:86 scale of the electric trains popular in France at the time. The **holes** are at a pitch of 9.5mm and have a diameter of 2.5mm. The parts are well made in painted steel except that the Gears & one Pulley are moulded in high resistance plastic. The quality of all the parts is very good, and

they still look as new. Most of the parts can be seen in Figs.2 & 3 but below a list of them with some explanatory notes and the quantities in Set 3 in brackets.

**Strips.** The blue ones are 9.6mm wide and the two rows of staggered holes have: 31-30h (6), 16-15h (6), 11-10h (10), 6-5h (6), 4-3h (6). The yellow **Narrow Strips** are 5.0mm wide with just one row of 11 holes (16).

**A/G.** Blue with 31-30h (6), 16-15h (6), 11-10h (6), 6-5h (6).

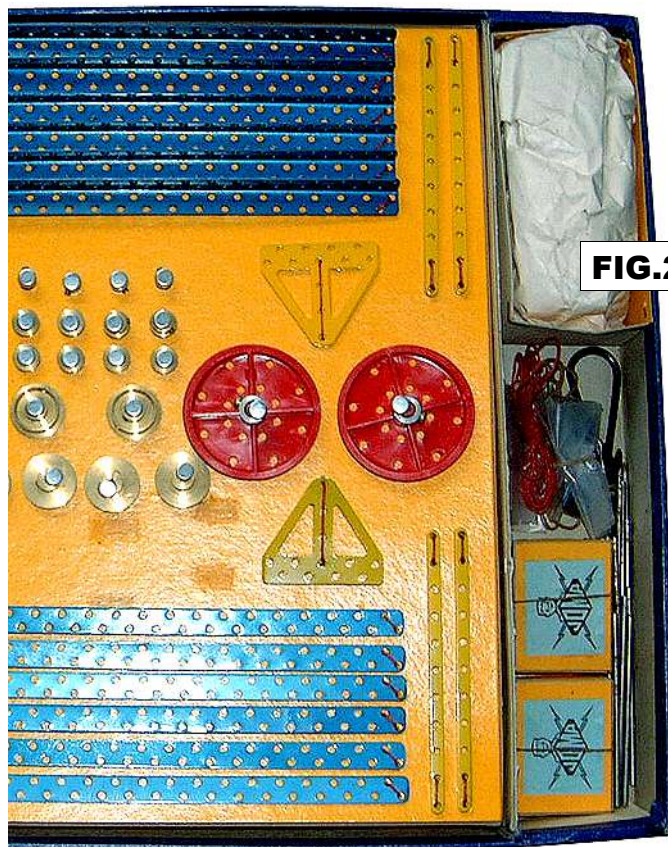
**A/B.** Blue, the same width as the Strips, and they look as if made from a 2-2h strip bent in the middle: that's to say two holes diagonally opposed in each face (8).

**Flat Trunnion.** Yellow with 5-4h holes along the base and 3 holes vertically above these. (8).

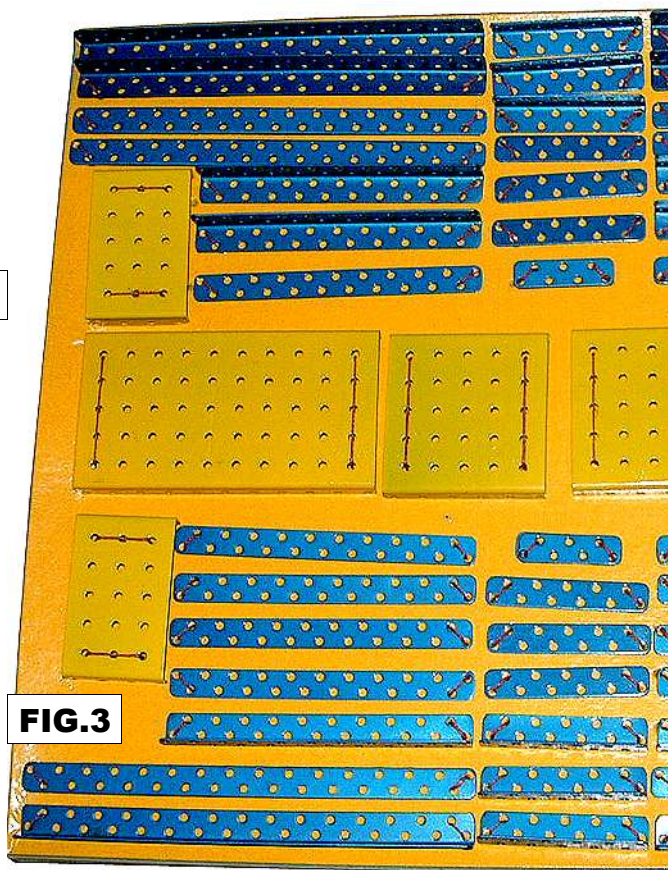
**Base Plates.** Yellow, with each of their two flanges having one row of holes which are staggered relative to the rows on the top & with one extra hole: 10\*5h (2); 5\*5h (2); 5x3h (4).

**Wheels & Pulleys.** Except where stated all are brass with a brass boss, double-tapped with the same thread as the N&B. **Plastic Pulley**, 50mm Ø (4). **Pulley**, 25mm Ø (6). **Flanged Wheel**, 20mm Ø (4). The boss is inside the flange, and two holes are made in the flange so that the Screwdriver can reach the Grub Screw. **Pulley**, 10 mm Ø (4+1 on the Motor). **Pulley without boss**, 10mm Ø (12).

**FIG.2**



**FIG.3**





**Brass Collar** (8).

**Axles**, 2.5mm Ø. 122mm (4); 72mm (6); 26mm (4).

**Crank Handle**, 80mm (1).

**Hank of Cord**, red (1).

**Bolts**, 2.5mm Ø, cheeseheaded: brass 9mm long (17), and brassed steel 6mm long (70).

**Nuts**, hexagonal, 4.2mm A/F, thickness 2.0mm (89). Curiously enough, although all of them look alike, some are brass and others are brassed steel!!

**Screwdriver**, black Meccano-style, made from 3.0mm diameter wire so that it can go through the holes in the flanges of the Flanged Wheels (1).

**Spanner**, black, single-ended, length 55 mm. (1).

**Geared Motor** (right) which can be supplied by a 4.5V battery or a Joma transformer. It has 5 output axles with speeds of 3000, 1000, 333, 111, & 37rpm.

**Set 4** has a few different parts: a Worm, 2 Gears, & an 'engrenage d'angle'. This last could describe a contrate wheel or a bevel gear and it is not easy to decide which from the blurry picture of Set 4 in the manual. The Gears can just be seen at the left end of Fig.7 – one seems to have the same diameter as the 50mm Pulley, & the smaller one would be a little larger than the 25mm Pulley. The 'engrenage d'angle' does not explicitly appear in any of the Set 4 models, although it is likely to be hidden behind Plates in some of them. It seems that Set 4 also contains a Coupling (one can be seen on the long rod in Fig.7), and other lengths of Axles. And it has a Remote Control which can be used for changing the speed of the motor.

**THE MANUAL** has 16 pages 211\*135mm printed on good quality paper, plus the covers. The front cover is shown in Fig.5, inside it has general information on the system; the inside back cover has the photos of Sets 1 to 4, and on its outside publicity for Wonder, a battery manufacturer. Its batteries appear in the Set 3 models, for Set 4 they are inside the Remote Control unit. There is neither an illustration of the different parts, nor a list of contents. 6 models are shown for Set 1, 5 for Set 2, 4 for

**FIG.5**

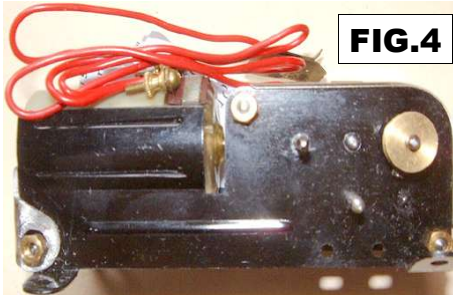


Set 3 & also 4 for Set 4. All the Set 3 & 4 models are powered & go from 301 Ascenseur de mine to 316, the Bridge below, and 404 Grue géante sur rails à flèche pivotante (Block-setting Crane) to 422 Excavateur télé-comandé. The other models are two more Cranes, a Giant Swing, & the Lathe in Fig.7. It

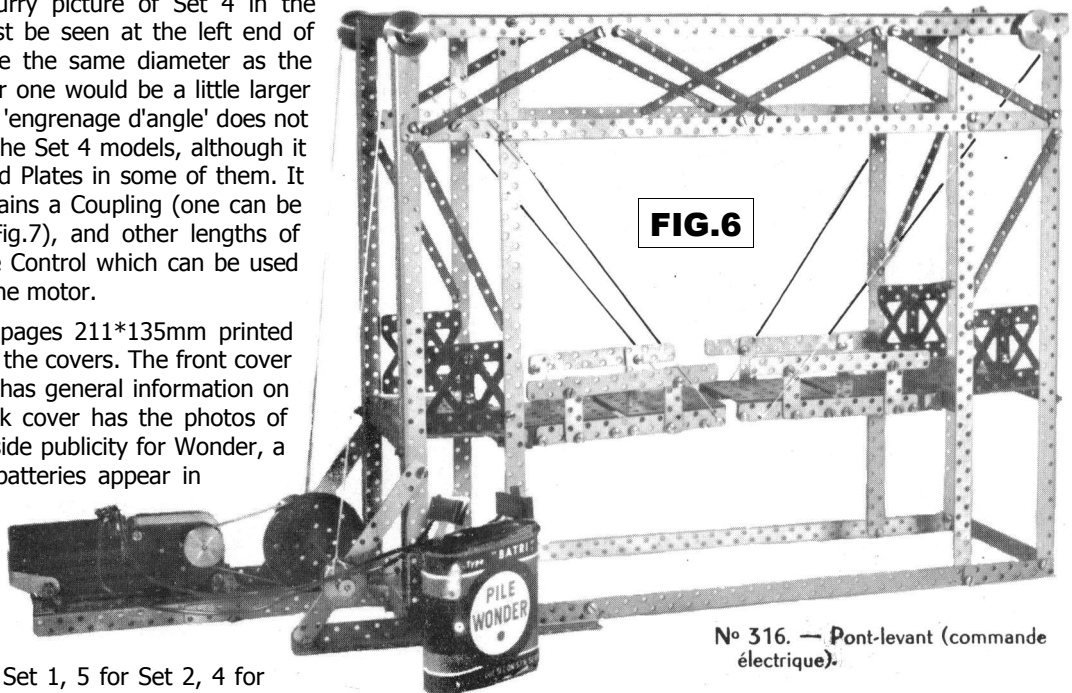
is difficult to see the details of the models from the photos, and there is only one photo for each (except one model for Set 4 which has two, one for each side); moreover, there are neither detailed views of difficult subassemblies, nor instructions. For example, it would be interesting to see the mechanisms of the Lathe, most of them are hidden under Plates. I doubt that the users could easily build the Set 4 models.

The numbering of the models is curious. Three numbers are used, the first represents the set: 302 is a model for Set 3. But the last two numbers do not follow the sequence of models, for instance the four models for Set 4 are numbered 404, 408, 420, and 422. And the last two numbers do not indicate a numbering of the models independently of their set since there are a 015, a 115, & a 315. Does that indicate that there were many other models, and that this manual only displays a small part of them? The highest numbers for each set are: 022, 133, 230, 316, and 422.

**FIG.4**



**FIG.6**

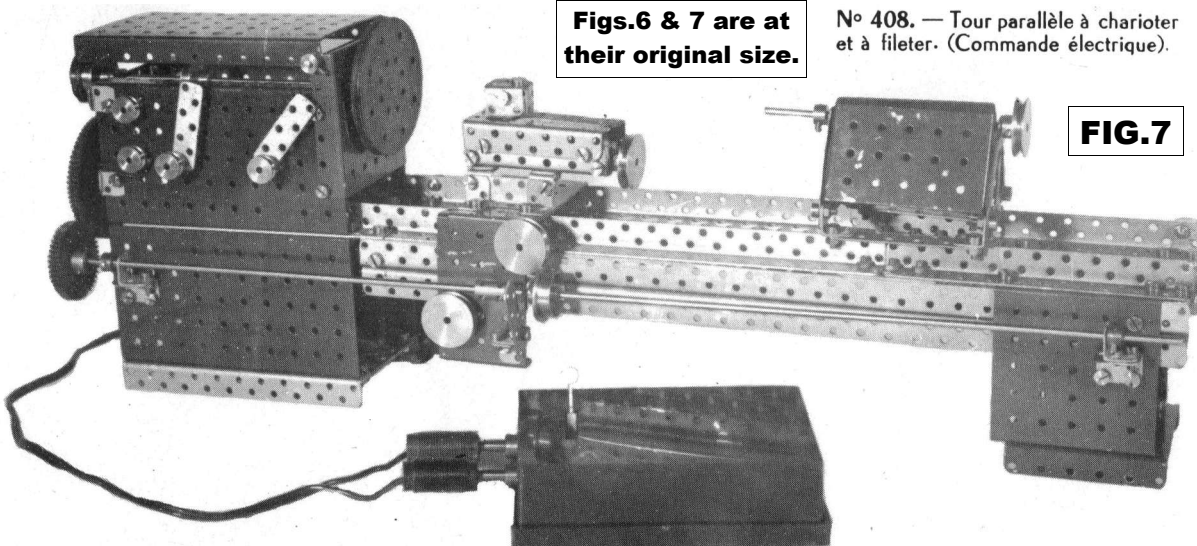


N° 316. — Pont-levant (commande électrique).

**Figs.6 & 7 are at their original size.**

N° 408. — Tour parallèle à chariot et à fileter. (Commande électrique).

**FIG.7**



#### COMMENTS

MINITECH has very good quality parts, and a good supply of them. Unfortunately, the manual models are rather disappointing: it would be possible to make more interesting models, and to provide better instructions. The contents of the manual have certainly not the quality of the sets, which probably explains why these sets are so rare.