

THE CHINESE TRIAD. That's to say WISDOM, CONSTRUCTION MODELS and CONSTRUCT-O-STEEL, and I'll shorten then to WIS, CM and COS for this account. These sets are still available and most at least have been on sale since about 1978. They are included in MCS but more details are available, in particular on the colours of the parts and the contents of the various sets. I am grateful for information from Jean-Louis Figureau, Don Redmond, and Ed Barclay, and I have also drawn on an article in INFOS JOUETS #11. Before starting it is worth saying that although there are differences between the 3 systems in terms of colour, packaging, and to a limited extent, set contents, the parts are very probably identical. Don pointed out that small variations may well arise from differences between batches rather than between the 3 systems. The Names of the systems are also sometimes mixed up in the Instruction Leaflets, for example the Introduction in a CM one I have here is headed CONSTRUCTION MODELS WISDOM; the Chinese version of the Name though is the same 4 Chinese characters no matter which English version it is. To further confuse matters, common Ref Nos also occur, the WIS Manual in MCS has MM193 on it and the same number is used to describe a COS Set (MCS/FB p7). In French markets WIS is also sold under the name SAGESSE (= wisdom).

SETS and CONTENTS. Sets 0-6 are known for WIS, and 0-4 for CM and COS, - MCS says 1-3 for COS but the FB p7 shows 5 Sets with Ref Nos. MM190-194 and these are believed to be Outfits 0-4. Sets 0-4 are (with the odd exception that may come from errors) progressive in terms of contents but not #5 or 6. Set 5 is essentially a #2 plus a Clockwork Motor, and #6 is a special Lorry Set including a Friction Motor and a special Cab, on the same lines as the one in MECCANO Multikits. The Contents of Sets 0-6 are included in an Extra MCS Sheet. Most readers will have seen something of these Sets, the largest has less than 100 N&B, and all have a fairly well balanced selection from the 40+ parts in the system, but there are no Strips longer than 11-hole and no A/Gs or large diameter Wheels. The #2 is not dissimilar to a MECCANO #2 of the 1960s. The wheels in the sets are unusual, there are the expected Pulleys (28mm) and Rubber Rings, but also plastic Hubs, with nickel Hub Caps and 1½" o/d Tyres, which are a push-fit on 2.6mm axles, and these run in the normal sized holes in the parts. This is the more surprising because with one or two exceptions the parts are nicely made and finished. In INFOS there is a comparison between #2 and 4 WIS and #2 and 4 CM sets bought in Hong Kong in 1982. The WIS was more elegantly packed than the CM: expanded plastic and a transparent box lid v. parts strung to a card. But the contents were identical except that both CMs had two 2.6x40mm Axles not included in the WISs; the models shown were different though and the WIS #2 cost nearly twice as much as the CM.

THE PARTS. These are generally MECCANO-like though with quite a few exceptions:

- Hole pitch is 12.5mm and hole diameter is 4.4mm. Strips are 12.2mm wide with fully radiused ends. The end holes of DAS are elongated, as are the 4 outer holes in the 90a style Curved Strip.
- Flanged Plates all have 2 flanges with slotted holes, and as well as the 5x11 and 3x5-hole sizes, there are 5x5 rectangular and 7-hole long Flanged Sector Plates. Trunnions are the 7-holes type with no cutouts. All Flexible Plates are plastic with round end holes.
- Bosses are made of steel, 9.0mm dia, single tapped M4, and are clumsy looking at nearly 12mm long. The centre hole of the 8-hole Wheel Disc is about 6½mm dia.
- The N&B are steel M4: the 6mm Bolts have round crossheads, 6.8mm dia (earlier they may have been cheeseheaded); the hex Nuts are 6.9mm A/F and 3.1mm thick. Some threads found have been tight. The Spring Clips are smaller than usual with 5mm wings. The Hook is flat, similar to the MÄRKLIN pattern.
- Strips, Brackets, and N&B are always nickel plated. The colours of other parts vary, in one Leaflet, probably an early one, metal parts are red with green Plastic Plates, assuming flexible plates were plastic then. In another CM #2 Leaflet those colours are used for a model on the cover but those inside have blue steel/yellow plastic parts. In the UK the most common colours seen are metallic red for steel and yellow plastic. The remains of a COS Set I have is in these colours. The standard metal parts in the 1982 INFOS outfits were red for the CM and C/W #5 Sets, metallic red for WIS #2 and 4, and blue for the Lorry Set; the colour of the plastic parts isn't given. A #5 and a #6 WIS that Jean-Louis bought in Egypt in 1990 were red metallic and blue metallic respectively, with yellow plastic in both. Don found the same colour scheme in a #6 Set bought in Canada recently, while a #4 was metallic red/yellow, but he also noted that various reds and blues could be found among 'Chinese' parts. All agree that both the nickel and the paintwork are excellent but that the plastic parts are rather brittle and may break if curved too far.
- The special parts in Sets 5 and 6 have not been seen. The general shape of the special Cab can be seen opposite in one of the models from the Manual; it is in 3 parts with a Chassis at the bottom which also carries the Motor. From a photo Don sent, the main metal body is red with a nickel bumper and radiator grille/headlights; the top is white plastic with a clip-in windscreen. Parts not in MCS are shown on the new Sheet though some are rather blurry.
- Part Nos are not consistent between sets, a single part can have as many as 5 numbers.

MANUALS. Sets 0-2 have folded Instruction Leaflets, the larger Sets proper Manuals. In the INFOS Sets the CM models are line drawings and the WIS, photos. But there are many more of the former, 45 for Set 4 against 20 for WIS. Don's 4,5 and 6 Manuals are in English, French, Arabic and Chinese. Details

of the two leaflets I have are given below, the models in them seem to me to be quite attractive and to make good use of the parts.

LATE EXTRA. Karst Quast very kindly sent me a WISDOM #0 Set and the parts in it were just what would be expected except that the push-on Road Wheels (for the 2.6mm Axles) were a smaller type not noted before. They were $1\frac{1}{8}$ " dia instead of the normal $1\frac{1}{2}$ " and the Hub, Hub Cap and Tyre were all smaller in proportion.

AMENDMENTS TO MCS (as necessary, depending on version): NAMES: CONSTRUCTION MODELS and CONSTRUCT-O-STEEL. HOLE DIAMETER: 4.4mm. HOLE SPACING: 12.5mm. SETS: 0,1,2,3,4. PARTS: 36. COLOUR: Nickel Strips, Brackets; other metal parts red or possibly blue (C M), metallic red (COS); yellow plastic Plates (may be green in early C M sets). COMMENTS: WISDOM, CONSTRUCTION MODELS, CONSTRUCT-O-STEEL parts are very probably identical. See WISDOM for full Set Contents.

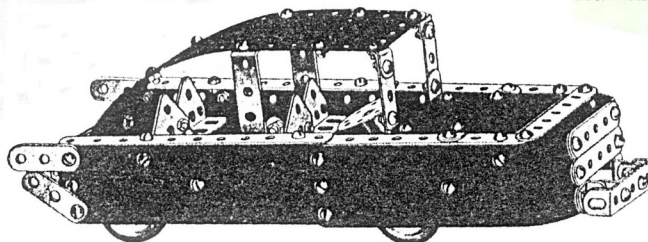
NAME: WISDOM. HOLE DIAMETER: 4.4mm. HOLE SPACING: 12.5mm. SETS: 0,1,2,3,4,5,6. PARTS: 41. COLOUR: Nickel Strips, Brackets; other metal parts metallic red or red for #5, and blue or metallic blue for #6; yellow plastic Plates. MOTOR: Clockwork in #5; Friction in #6. COMMENTS: Also sold under name SAGESSE for French markets. WISDOM, CONSTRUCTION MODELS, CONSTRUCT-O-STEEL parts are very probably identical.

AMENDMENTS TO INDEX IN OSN 6: Add THREAD: M4. [for CM and WIS]

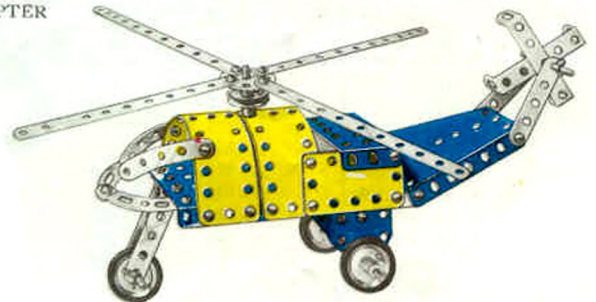
SUMMARY OF MANUAL. #Name: CONSTRUCTION MODELS. #Details of maker: None. #Dates &/or Ref Nos: None. #Page size: 414x376mm deep sheet folded into 12. #Language: English, Chinese. #Printing: Halftone colour. Models are red, green & bright Strips. 'Cover' has boy/model against brown ground. #Highest PN in Parts List/Set Contents: 026 in both. #Sets covered: #2. #No of models: 20. #Name, Model No. of first & last model: MICROSCOPE,1; SEED-PLANTING MACHINE,20. #Other notes: CONSTRUCTION MODELS WISDOM referred to in text.

SUMMARY OF MANUAL. #Name: CONSTRUCTION MODELS. #Details of maker: None. #Dates &/or Ref Nos: ART.NO.MM092 on cover. #Page size: 490x379mm deep sheet folded into 4. #Language: English. #Printing: Colour 'cover' with halftone boy with red/green/silver model against solid blue ground. Models in solid blue/yellow/light grey. #Highest PN in Parts List/Set Contents: 027 in both. #Sets covered: #2. #No of models: 26. #Name, Model No of first & last model of each set: SEED PLANTING MACHINE,2.1; PROJECTOR,2.27. #Other notes: There is no Model 2.20. In text it is said that Sets 1 to 4 available.

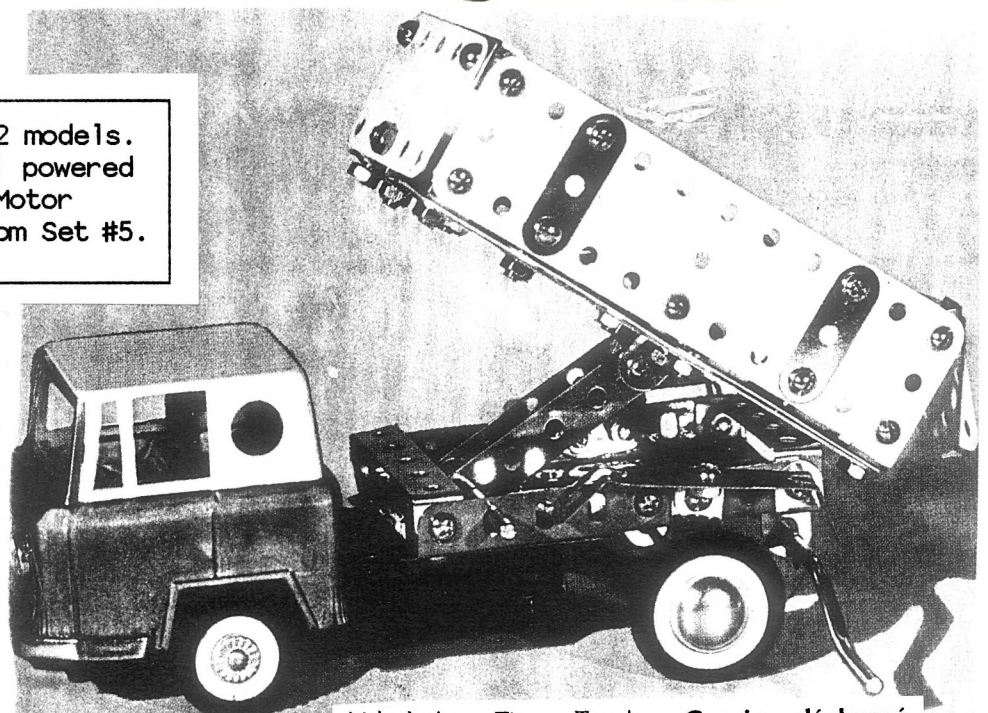
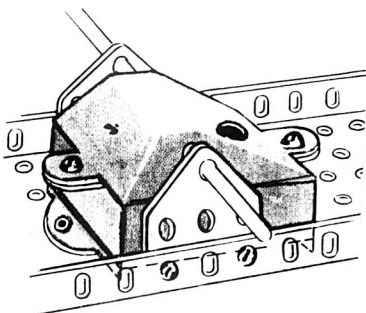
2.8 HELICOPTER



4.38 轿车 Sedan



Above: Set #4 and #2 models.
Right: #6 Set model powered
by Friction Motor
Below: C/W Motor from Set #5.



倾卸卡车 Titter Truck Camion déchargé

Correction The transliterated name BOENNAYA in 25/717 & 718 should read VOENNAYA (my thanks to Don Redmond). This set in question is no doubt similar to the one mentioned in 24/714, though some details are not identical.

ITEMS FROM LETTERS

1. From Thomas Morzinck. • On the **ANKER Metal Parts** (25/730) The set with the 1897 parts offered by Richter in that year cost (a very expensive) 60 Marks. One year later it was deleted. Tobias Mey mentioned in his book *Zum Bauspiel*, that the Keller brothers - former employees in Richter's factory - sold their own Bridge Set from 1897 using preformed metal parts. In their advertising literature the Keller brothers called Richter's 1895 Bridge Set 'a screwed idea'. ('eine verschraubte Idee' in German). [The Keller Set may be even earlier. A UK patent No.5781 in the names of Georg & Paul Keller is dated 1890, and the parts in it (owned by David Hobson) correspond to those believed to be from a Set which was awarded a prize at a London exhibition in 1891, and also to those in a photo of a Bridge made from the 1897 Set above. The main elements are Straight & Curved T-section Girders, joined by Flat Strips which push into the double wall web of the Girders to represent uprights & bracing. A George Wetzel sales list sent by Don Redmond has an illustration of a Keller Bridge Set called **DIAMOND BRIDGE BUILDER**, with 4 children ('one Chinese, one American Indian, one white, & one Ethiopian') looking at a Church made from blocks, and a Bridge with block piers and a span of the metal parts.]

• Tobias mentioned that the early **DUX** parts (c1938) look like the Julius Weiss parts from 1892.

2. From Don Redmond. • More on **NECOBO**. The parts mentioned in 24/714 were from a lot which are probably a large part of an early No.4 Set, plus some later parts, and some which may or may not be NECOBO. The manual with them covers Set 0-4 and its parts list goes up to only PN 99, so is earlier than either of the MCS lists, and fits between the 1st & 2nd manuals described in 4/57. The 11 & 25h Strips have large-radius ends but there are also 11h, and 3 & 5h, with half-round ends. There are 2 sets of 1" Pulleys: 3 have red painted steel discs and very fine (small, round) peening on the brass boss; the other 4 have aluminium discs and steel boss with very deep conical peening. The aluminium Pulleys had a set of fat white soft Rubber Rings of 5mm circular form, 35mm o.d. The red ones had black rubber Tyres with a tread of 5 circumferential raised lines & radial raised bars on one sidewall. There was also one Tyre about 7mm thick, 38mm o.d., with NECOBO in raised lettering on one side. The aluminium Pulleys are suspect since there were also red Loose Pulleys. All the Gears are Mod.1 and the 60t is the early unperforated type. The Flanged & Triangular Plates, and the Face Plate are red. The Flexible Plates are aluminium painted dark blue. Under a red & ivory daub of enamel the Windows (#126) seem to have been painted silver. Strips, A/Gs, & Railings are dark green, darker than the early MECCANO dark shade. The red is quite light, between Meccano's light & medium. The parts have a surprising range of thickness. 25h Strips are 1.38mm; 11h Strips 1.0mm; Railings .84mm; 5*4h Triangular Plates 1.18mm; Windows .81mm; but Trunnions are only .67mm. Two types of Collar were found, both tapped 5/32" BSW. One is 10mm Ø, 7mm thick, double-tapped, and the other 8.5mm Ø, 6.5mm thick, & single-tapped. Two later parts are the Cone Pulley, #176, machined from brass with a concave rear (boss) face, and the Eccentric, #180, which has a brass arm/loop held between two red steel discs by a brass boss and a matching brass stub, both peened with a very deep, conical bottomed recess. [A small lot of later Strips, Girders, & Trunnions (up to PN 195C but none more than 9h long) are also the very dark green - the Girders are about .8mm thick, the Strips 1.05mm, and the Trunnions

.85mm.]

In a later letter Don pointed out that the Hook #90 hasn't been seen, and isn't illustrated in any parts list, but in the manual models is shown as the wire type right. Also it seems likely that the Faceplate #83 with the 2 rings of 8 holes (see 24/714) is an early part because the 6cm Disc, #82 (a Faceplate without a boss), appears thus in several of the manual models. Later, as shown in 4/59, both had the pattern with radial slots.

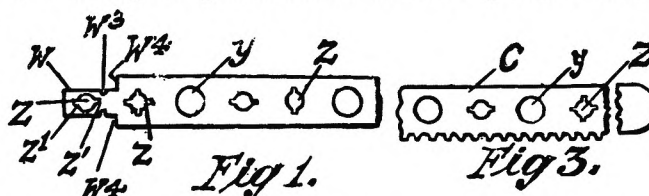
• On **STEEL ENGINEERING** (see 23/666), the wings of the formed Collar, X37, are near circular in shape, as opposed to the ERECTOR rectangle.

• In response to a question to Don about **WISDOM** (to include also CONSTRUCT-O-STEEL & CONSTRUCTION MODELS), he wrote that there are two patterns of slotted holes in Trunnions & 5*11h Flanged Plates. Most have rounded ends but some have large-radius 'BRAL' ends. The length o/a is 6.4mm for both. All the slots in known examples of the other sizes of Flanged Plates have rounded ends. Note that the Flat Trunnion is not made from the same blank as the Trunnion, and has no slotted holes. On colours, the 5*11h Flanged Plate is known in light, medium, & dark* blue, and medium, & dark* red; the Trunnion in medium, & dark* blue, and in two shades of dark red*. The asterisks denote a lacquered finish, with a metallic look.

3. From Tim Edwards. On Chinese **MECHANIX** (see 24/710), there is also a 001 Set with 68 parts, price £3.50. [A 002 Set with 108 parts has also now been seen.]

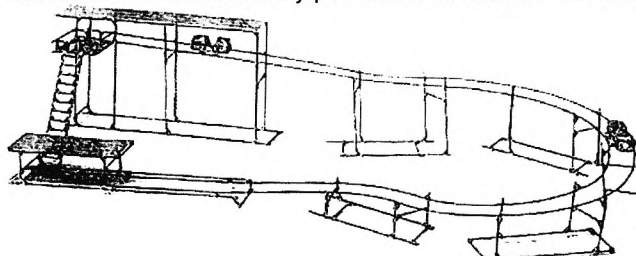
4. Josep Bernal wrote that **BRAL** is no longer being made. [The BRAL web site, www.bralsystem.com has just a home page with 'stiamo ritornando' on it - we will return? Let's hope so.]

5. From Jack Little. • On the **Day patent** (22/637), Jack sent a copy of the original Australian patent (No.6000/22, accepted 27th Nov. 1922), with added changes to the figures arising from an Application for Amendment on 5th August, 1924. The text is similar to the UK version but not identical and the original figures differ too in detail. Fig.1 below shows



a different pattern of holes for example, and the Strip in Fig.3 has a serrated edge & rounded end. The purpose of these features isn't explained. The changes made to the figures in 1924 took the form of overwriting some with a large cross and writing Cancelled & 18/11/24 alongside. 3 of the 4 cancellations are of the parts shown in Figs.8, 9, & the righthand end of Fig.4, in OSN 22. The parts in question are made in the same way as the EZY-BILT Clips (22/636) but whether that had a bearing on the matter isn't known. The fourth change was to delete the slitted end of the Fig.2 Strip, though similar ends with a slit with centre hole remain unaltered.

• Also from Jack, the cutting below from the Nov. 1947 *Sportsgoods, Toy & Canvas "Retailer"*, which confirms that CLIRO (described elsewhere in this Issue) was sold in Australia. It is: unfortunately p31 hasn't been found and so it



A Scenic Railway made from the Schofield Model Building Set. Further details of this set appear on Page 31.

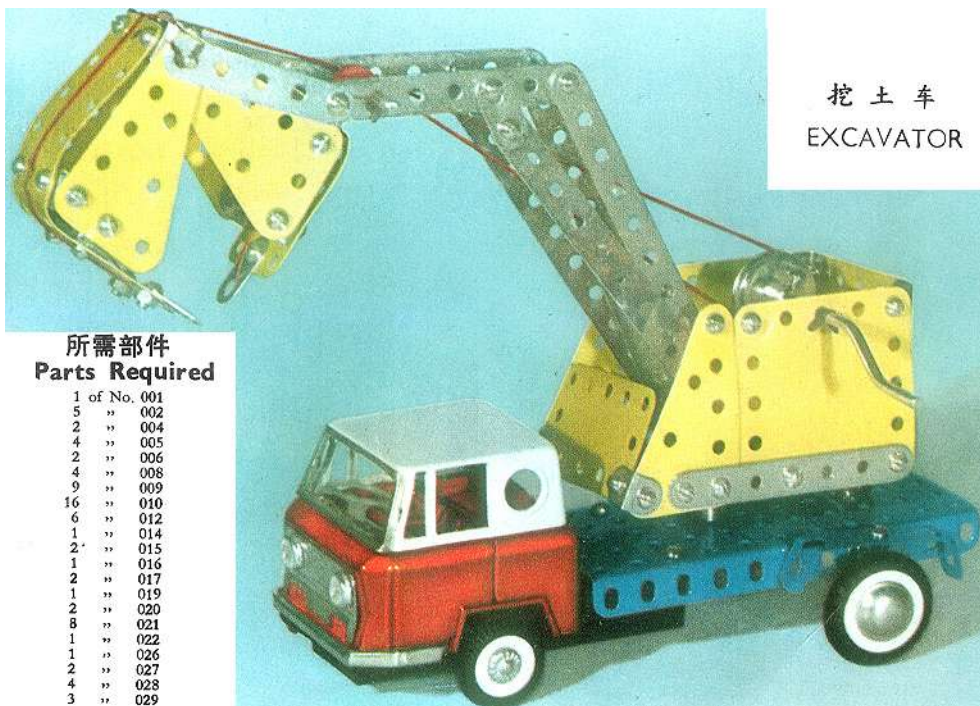
A No.6 WISDOM Outfit This is the Lorry outfit with a realistic Cab & a Friction Motor. David Hobson kindly lent me his still strung example, complete except for some N&B missing from a split plastic bag. The notes below amplify those in 10/238-9.

The box measures 38½*28¼*4½cm and the lid is in the usual WISDOM style with, in this case, the aprons and 4cm wide borders around the transparent centre in light red. The yellow and black wording is: MM 196 CONSTRUCTION MODEL WISDOM/ MADE IN CHINA, plus the equivalents in French and Chinese. Most parts are strung with white cord to a white moulded plastic tray, with the small parts and N&B in small clear plastic bags, and the Top & Bottom Cab parts a push-fit in their compartments. The contents are as given in the MCS Extra Sheet with, where relevant, the number of parts after the '/'. The Manual actually lists 2x ½" Pulleys 'with Boss' but that should read 'without Boss'. [In passing, the No.0 contents in MCS should show 4x 1⅛" Rubber-tyred Wheels instead of 4x 1½", see 10/239.]

The Parts The windscreen & circular lights of the Cab Top are glazed, and the Bottom has rudimentary seats & a translucent steering wheel (LHD) on an imitation yellow facia. The nickel grille at the front has plastic headlamps with plastic inserts lower down (turn indicators?) – they are yellow & green respectively but are shown clear & red in the Manual. The Cab parts & the Chassis are assembled by pushing tabs into slots, and the result is perfectly rigid without needing to bend any of the tabs. The assembled Cab is smaller than I'd expected, about 7*7cm in plan and 6cm high, giving only a little over half the volume of the MECCANO version. The smaller size only allows the 1⅛" Wheel to be used and both the Cab & the Wheel look too small in many of the models. Perhaps the Cab was originally used as part of a non-constructional toy. The 1⅛" Wheel is just like that in the No.0 except that the hub cap has an impressed pattern around its circumference – it can just be seen in the model top right. This Wheel is supposed to push onto the output shaft of the friction motor but this would be very difficult because its bore is unchanged from the standard meant to push onto 2.6mm Ø Axle, and the 3.0mm Ø motor shaft is appreciably bigger. The Mudguard, called a Slotted Bent Strip in MCS, can be seen over the rear Wheel in the model, it's like an M215 but flat in the centre with quite sharp bends near the beginning of the slotted holes.

As can be seen the Cab Top is white, the Bottom metallic red, and the Chassis has a black crackle finish. The standard parts comprise nickel Strips, Brackets, Pulleys, etc, as usual, with the other metal parts light blue (not the shade in the manual model), and the Plastic Flexible Plates yellow. The Cord is white, and the ½" Pulley red plastic.

The Manual has 28 unnumbered pages, 175*112mm, plus covers, all plain except the front, shown right. The name WISDOM is used in the Intro on page 4. The text is in English & Chinese except for MODELE DE CONSTRUCTION on p1. p2 is blank, the intro is on pp3-4, the set contents on pp5-7, & the illustrated parts in colour on p8. Then 20 models, one to a page, with one colour photo and a list of parts for each. The first one is CRANE (as on the MCS Extra Sheet) and the last Watering Vehicle. The Titter Truck in OSN 10 is among the



other models and they are a fair selection, apart from the size of the Cab already mentioned. The Excavator above, full-size, is a fair example.

Other Sets Two sets seen on Ebay have similar boxes but with darkish red lids, and the blue parts in them are more the colour in the Manual. In one case a different manual cover, right, is shown; in the other the manual is open with a model on each page, identical to ones in David's manual, but on different pages.

Two forms of the Cab Top are known. In the present set it is a metal pressing with the glazing held by tabs in a narrow nickel frame, and this frame has a tab on each side which push into a slot in each front Cab pillar. It is most likely that all the pieces were assembled in the factory. The other type can be seen in photos kindly sent by Don Redmond. The Cab Top is a white plastic moulding, and the Screen is a separate part, a shaped clear panel with 2 lugs on the top edge & one on the bottom. The bottom lug is pushed into a slot in the Cab Bottom and then the Screen is held by the top lugs engaging slots in the roof of the Cab Top, as it is put in place. These 3 slots are not in David's parts. One other detail, Don's headlamps & turn indicators are clear & red as in the Manual models.

