

S H E F F I E L D M E C C A N O G R O U P

N E W S L E T T E R

Number 1 November 1981

Chairman: Richard Bingham

Treasurer: Dave Penney

Assistant secretary: Mike Beadman

Secretary: Peter Mason

This being the first newsletter produced by the Sheffield Meccano Group, a little history might be a good idea. This will, however, be difficult for me as I have only been involved in the Meccano club scene for a few months, so I will leave that side of things to our chairman.

A meeting of the group was held on Saturday 24th October and a good number of enthusiasts attended from the Midlands and North of England. A report of the models on show will be found inside. At the end of the afternoon a short business meeting was held at which we decided

- 1) There appears to be a worthwhile amount of support for meetings held in Sheffield and so another meeting will be arranged for the Spring.
- 2) Officers of the club, as listed above, were elected (without having to fight off a rush of volunteers!)
- 3) A meeting fee was collected by the brand new treasurer.

Many thanks to all who attended, and I look forward to seeing you again in the Spring.

Peter Mason

A BRUSH WITH 'WISDOM'

As briefly mentioned in the latest Meccanoman's Newsmag, a new construction system called 'Wisdom' has appeared in the shops. Made in China and called 'Construct-o-Steel' on the box, it bears a remarkable resemblance to Meccano. But beware! The hole spacing is 12.5mm as opposed to Meccano's 12.7mm, so any parts larger than about 5 holes are not compatible. Having inspected one of the sets, however, I find Wisdom an interesting comparison.

The parts are shown below. In the set I looked at, the plastic flexible plates were light yellow, similar to Meccano France, and the flanged plates a garish scarlet. The metal finish parts were quite nice, similar in shade to nickel finish parts, though I hesitate to say that these are nickel plated. The axles were plated and polished, but were poorly finished at the ends.

Wheels are cheaply made but plentiful. One set of four 'road wheels' included seem to have been taken directly from toy cars, with boss holes too small to fit the axles.

Nuts and bolts are in the same finish as the strips, with metric thread and domed heads with stars, not slots.

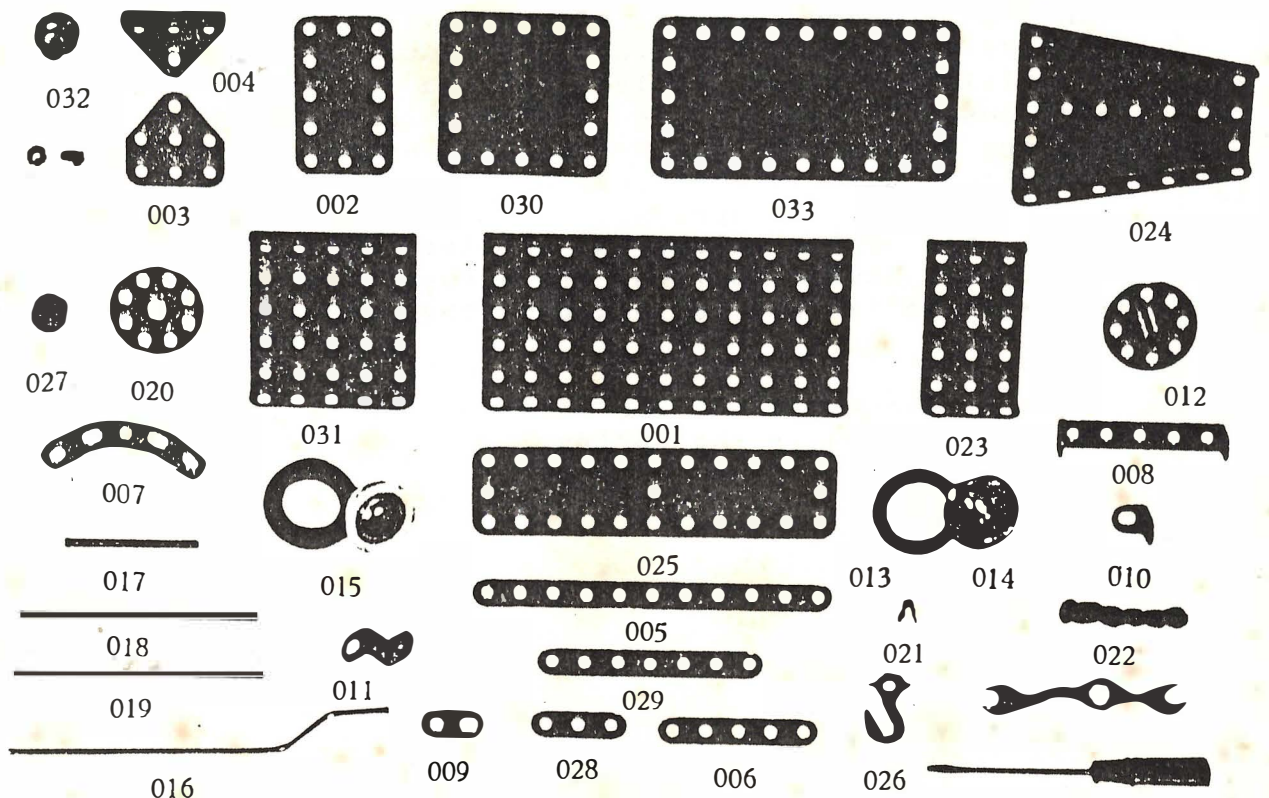
A small instruction book is included, showing coloured pictures of twenty models (for the set 3.) The models are at least up to Meccano standards, with one or two oddities.

The price for the larger sets is not known, there being 6 sets, but the set 3 (somewhere in size between the early seventies Meccano sets 3 and 4) costs five pounds - good value for stocking fillers and the like!

I think the last word should be left to the instruction book which says " 'Wisdom' ...trains the awakening mind and the delicate hands and develops infantile genius."

Mike Beadman

WISDOM PARTS LIST



Chairman's Page

My own interest in Meccano stretches right back to the Summer of 1978, when almost by accident I acquired an early sixties No. 10 set for 40 pounds. Most of the parts were in poor condition or missing, so I spent the rest of the year refurbishing the existing and chasing the missing parts. By the beginning of 1979 I was the proud owner of a not quite complete No. 10 set in red and green. Having struggled to get together my marvellous construction set I decided to contact Meccano Ltd., Binns Road, Liverpool for guidance, and they put me in touch with M.W. Models, Henley-on-Thames. M.W. Models supplied the few remaining parts needed, and also suggested that I was not alone in my obsession with things Meccano; there were other people in my area interested in Meccano as a hobby. They gave me the address of the secretary of the Pennine Meccano Guild, and I made contact and attended their Spring meeting in Huddersfield.

During 1979 I went to as many meetings and exhibitions as possible, and by the Summer of 1980 I had become acquainted with several enthusiasts from the Sheffield area. At little friendly gatherings it was suggested that we start a small local group, and a meeting was arranged at the YMCA for an evening in October. Seven people turned up and it was so enjoyable that another meeting was arranged for April 1981. This again was a good meeting with lots of models, the only grievance being that there didn't seem to be enough time.

There then followed another Summer season of Meccano events and exhibitions and the time came to arrange an Autumn meeting for the Sheffield group, so a list of possible invites was drawn up and discussed. By the time we had finished, because of the wider interest shown by people hearing of our activities in Sheffield, it was obvious that it was going to be a Saturday afternoon affair - which was the meeting on 24th October. Everyone I have spoken to since then has said how much they enjoyed the meeting.

Now that we have a Treasurer, Secretary and Assistant Secretary to look after the group, the Spring meeting planned for early April next year should be even more successful. A suggestion I would like to make is that we follow the practice of some other groups and present a shield for the most popular model of the day, as decided by the members present, this shield to be held for one year and awarded at Spring meetings. Please forward your thoughts on this idea to Peter Mason so action can be taken in time for the next meeting.

In the meantime, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Richard

Nice - but not easy!

Have you ever marvelled at those magnificent level-luffing cranes at exhibitions and wondered how they do it? Now find out for yourself.

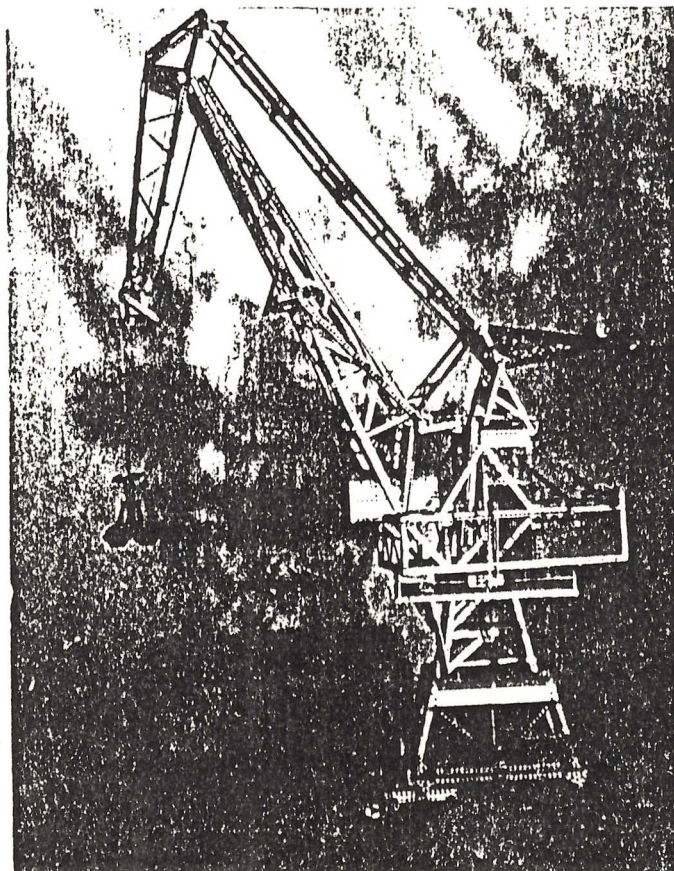
The sketch shows the general outlines of one which really worked as a level luffer, which I showed at North-West Meccano Guild about six years ago. Enough of it to cover a postage stamp appears on the cover of the MMQ for April 1976 and if these critical dimensions are followed, or are suitably scaled up or down, a successful model should result. Mine was over eight feet high when luffed in - rather too high for any Building Society windows.

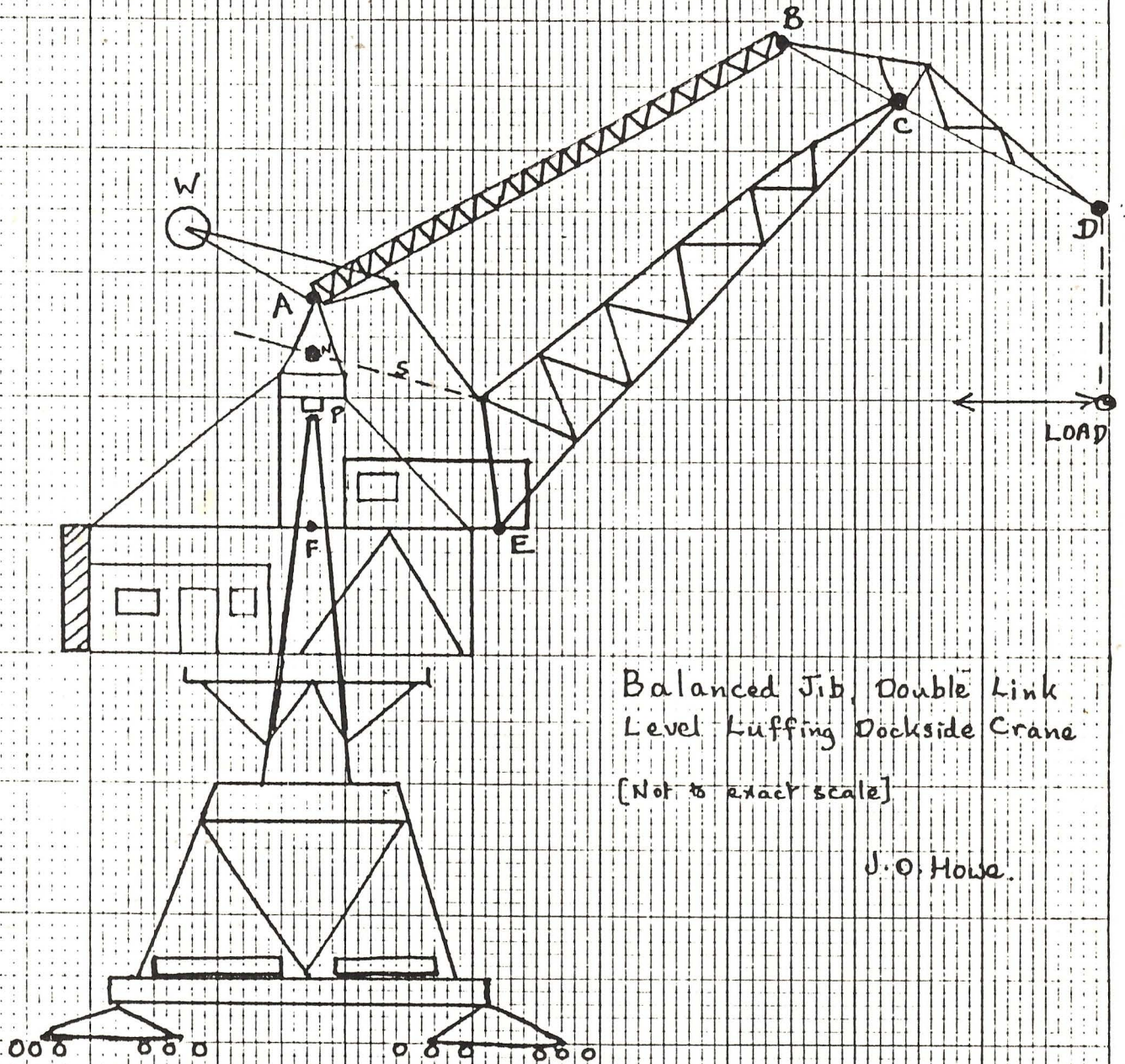
P is the point about which the whole superstructure pivots. It was approximately 25 inches above the rails.
W is the cantilevered jib counterweight.
N is a nut working on the screwed rod which luffs the jib.
Main jib EC 49 inches.
Tie beam AB 47.5 inches.
Cantilever jib BC 7 inches.
Cantilever jib CD 23 inches.
Mast above jib foot AF 15 inches.
Mast axis to jib foot FE 13 inches.

Full details and a sketch of the original crane are to be found in a book

H.H.Broughton. Electric Cranes 1958, Spon, London. pp475-7. which is available in the Sheffield City reference library, scientific and technical section. The librarian will soon find it for you. A photocopy of the relevant pages would cost about 30 pence.

John Howe





Balanced Jib, Double Link
Level Luffing Dockside Crane

[Not to exact scale]

J. O. Howe.

Sheffield Meccano Group meeting - 24th October 1981

The meeting was attended by about 25 enthusiasts and the hall was filled with the familiar sound of motors turning roundabouts, luffing cranes, propelling ping-pong balls and motivating crocodiles. During the afternoon Alan Partridge set up a small studio and took photographs of models for members. Superb refreshments were provided by Brenda Penney and Margaret Arfield, and we all had a good time despite the traditional downpour as we set off home.

Models on show

Frank Grant showed a very interesting new type of Meccanograph, using a continuous roll of paper and winding on automatically. He also brought a Keith Cameron planetary Meccanograph and a model of Trevithick's steam loco, using plastic Meccano gears to good effect.

Alan Partridge showed his incredible ping pong ball rolling machine, hypnotic in action. Even more mind boggling is his Jovilabe, showing the movements of Jupiter's moons to 0.01% accuracy. Alan also showed an orrery and an 'alternate motion' mechanism.

Peter Mason brought a neat modified version of a stationary steam engine from a design by Jim Gamble in a Bert Love book.

Bernard Sage showed his Autoviewer, a model of Sheffield town hall, a coin operated roundabout, a race game and a terrifying crocodile which gave a lot of fun to all present.

David Penney showed a coal (or rather pea) tippler, a Barber-Green road surfacer, a compact auto-reverse gearbox and the chassis of a Davis trencher.

Geoff Coles showed his display JCB digger as featured in the recent Meccanoman's Newsmag, his white helicopter, and a porter and pushcart that actually worked based on an MM design that probably would not.

Julian Coles brought his elegant DeLorean sports car, an American style 18-wheel concrete mixer truck and a four wheel drive chassis with neat steering.

Roger le Rolland showed a collection of miniatures, including a very nice traction engine, and a circular railway and a jet plane modelled in Stokys parts.

Dick Portus stoked up his large steam powered generating plant for the last time before it succumbs to the fate awaiting all Meccano models...

Alan Scargill showed a mains motor powered clock using Argentinian gears and covered with a 'dome' made from a large whisky bottle! Alan also had a five movement crawler crane on display.

Vernon Taylor showed a Highway Set tipper truck, a small scooter and an open car from a 1960's set 4 design.

John Beaumont showed a very well made early tramcar truck, with fine working brakes and springing.

Mike Cotterill gave us a last chance to see his unusual Wilson farmer's engine, featuring unusual underslung motion. Mike also had the steam power plant from his recently deceased block-setter, powered by a 'pile' motor and inspired by a prewar supermodel.

Richard Bingham showed a Nuremberg verge and foliot clock, powered by a number 1 clockwork motor and built from an MM design by Pat Briggs.

Geoff Wilson displayed a marine engine built mostly from yellow parts.

Martin Down showed a 5-set go-cart fitted with a very neat V-twin engine, displayed on a rotating plinth.

David Wilkinson showed a display digger, an SML planing machine, and a Neville Reed design 'right angle drive without gears' mechanism.

Jim Spooner showed his Walschaerts valve gear demonstrator, a collection of miniatures and a universal drive based on a tension spring.

Andrew Mottram showed an intriguing coin rolling game.

Mike Beadman brought a miniscule bulldozer, but unfortunately it was so small he forgot to take it home again!

Alan Grimshaw brought Tina the dog!

F O R S A L E

Gerald Griffin is in the process of disposing of a large collection of Zinc/Yellow/Blue Meccano. The vultures have been at it for a little while now, but recently there were still two complete number tens and quite a lot of separate parts left. If you are tempted, you can get in touch at: