

SHEFFIELD MECCANO GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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Chairman: Richard Bingham

Treasurer: Dave Penney

Assistant secretary: Mike Beadman

Secretary: Peter Mason

We have now held our second meeting at our usual venue in Sheffield, and we are in a better position to estimate the support we are getting. We seem to have a nucleus of regular supporters from the Sheffield area and a considerable number of enthusiasts coming from longer distances to our meetings. The hall was well filled for the meeting, and we all had an enjoyable time.

At a short business meeting we decided little more than that we would continue as at present with two meetings a year, and that the next meeting will be on Saturday 16th October. The hall will be open from about twelve o'clock, with the meeting proper starting at about two o'clock. The meeting place is the Millhouses Youth Centre, Dobcroft Road, Sheffield; if anyone needs any help in finding it, please let me know.

To keep you in touch with the wider world of Meccano, here is a list of a few other events:

24th/25th July	Ilkley Show (see inside).
3rd/4th September	Henley Exhibition.
25th September	North Midlands Guild (Thurgarton).
16th October	Sheffield Meeting.
13th November	Darlington Exhibition.

The Hole, or 'Much ado about Nothing'

I will commence this little treatise on the Hole by stating an indisputable fact: there is no doubt whatsoever that without the Hole there could be no Meccano. It is indispensable to the system. The Hole can be defined as 'nothing surrounded by something'. It therefore follows that any proud possessor of Meccano parts can truthfully say "I Got Plenty of Nothing". The very word Meccano has got a Hole in it, and even Frank Hornby himself sported a Hole in his name, which leads me naturally to think of Gauge 'O' and Dublo. Then of course there are the members of the many Meccano Groups, Clubs and Societies who actually hire a Hole in which to hold their various meetings.

To digress for a moment from Meccano engineering to genetic engineering, one will find that the Hole is much in evidence, as witness the Ear Holes, the Eye Holes, the Mouth Hole etc. etc. And what of the black Holes, at the present time so popular with Astronomical theorists? Have they forgotten that the first Black Hole was discovered many, many years ago in Calcutta?

Then again one can make a comparison with a certain popular sweetmeat and honestly aver that one's Meccano parts, old and new, are in 'mint' condition. The (W)hole subject of the Hole is, I would say, inexhaustible and so I will conclude this short exposition with a reference to other constructional systems and say, in the immortal words of Bruce Bairnsfather, the World War I cartoonist: "If you can find a 'Better Ole' (than Meccano) go to it." The inference being, of course, that you can't!

Bernard Sage

Why don't I make a ...

While skimming through old Meccano magazines recently (I only read them for the 'Fireside Fun' really) I came across the ideal subject for some vehicle modelling enthusiast. It is called the Metrac, and it appears in the November 1959 issue.

The Metrac appears at first sight to be an ordinary military style six-wheel truck, but the article tells of the mass of internal hydraulics it contains that make its performance far from ordinary. It has the ability to move any wheel or combination of wheels vertically, and also to bend itself in the middle into a "v" shape, giving rise to its party trick of climbing over a three foot wall! It is supposed to be very good at negotiating steep sided ditches, and can travel with a level load on very uneven ground.

After reading the article you wonder why it never caught on (or did it: does any military vehicle enthusiast know?) Maybe it did not have a large enough load capacity to be useful, or was it not reliable or rugged enough for its demanding job? It ought to make a very entertaining model, though, if anyone could manage to simulate the action of all those hydraulic rams.

Peter Mason

Sheffield Meccano Group meeting - 3rd April 1982

The second meeting of the Group was held at the usual venue of Millhouses Youth Centre, Dobcroft Road, Sheffield. The tables were neatly covered by a layer of white wrapping paper generously provided by Dave Penney, followed by a generous layer of Meccano models brought along by the members. The catering was as usual brilliantly organised by Margaret Arfield with various helpers on the day and we all had a very enjoyable meeting.

Models on Show

Frank Grant brought a very interesting horizontal (polystyrene!) log saw, powered by his patent modified E15R motor, and a three speed and reverse gearbox operated by an 'H' gate selector.

John Beaumont showed his very fine tram chassis, which features correctly spring-mounted electric motors, brakes which can be operated from either end of the vehicle, and operating 'man catchers' at each end to save you from being run over. He hopes to build some bodywork onto the tram in time to show it at the Darlington exhibition. John also showed his loom which was unfortunately not fully working on the day, but made all the right noises all the same!

Tim Spooner showed a model of a formula one racing car, the 'V8 Cosworth' engine hiding a pile type motor. The car was well turned out with 'racing slicks' based on ashtray tyres. Tim also showed a Roland Emmett style train and a collection of experimental mechanisms.

Alan Partridge displayed a very fine collection of Orreries, covering Sun/Earth/Moon, Mars and its satellites, and Sun/Mars/Moons. They explained something which may puzzle those of us who are not astronomically minded: the planets move so smoothly because they run on graphited grease bearings. Alan also showed an eccentric gear device and 'Napoleon' made from titanium surgical plates.

John Howe showed his amazingly complicated skeleton astronomical clock which also boasts a perpetual calendar; it has all its works on show and very complex it looks!

Alan Sanderson brought a small dragster car.

Michael King showed a missile firing aeroplane.

Bill Woollescroft showed his Meccano version of the Stokys tower crane featured in a recent copy of the Meccanomens Newsmag. He seemed to have solved all the tricky problems involved in interpreting the original in Meccano terms, and the model performed its operations smoothly.

David Penney showed his Davis trenching machine, featuring plastic sprocket chain and flexible track to represent the digging arm. This operated effectively from a mains motor.

Bernard Sage showed a varied collection: a complete fairground with eight rides, each operated in turn by a built up rotary switch; a giant musical box playing 'Edelweiss' or an old standard of which I neglected to ask the name, selected by changing drums; and possibly the most unusual model on show was Bernard's broken down car, complete with Bernard pushing at the back!

Geoff Coles showed a roundabout of the kind commonly known as a Paratrooper or Skydiver... whatever the name, it worked well at a fearsome speed. Geoff exploits the 'rainbow years' of Meccano in producing this model; parts coloured red, black, yellow, blue, zinc plated and white and coloured lights give a very realistic fairground appearance. He also showed his white helicopter and a steamroller made from the contents of 'Taylor's Technikit'. As well as these standard range Meccano models, Geoff brought an impressive display of Meccano aircraft: a biplane fighter made from the number 1 Aeroplane set, and three others made from later and larger sets - a three engined monoplane, a single engined sea biplane, and a twin engined flying boat similar to a Supermarine Stranraer.

Julian Coles brought an American concrete truck, a bottom dumper with snowplough, a crane truck and a threatening looking Viper interceptor spacecraft.

Vernon Taylor displayed the 10 set 4-4-0 locomotive and tender, immaculate in yellow and zinc plate and powered by a mains motor, a Highway Kit truck and a 60's style sports car.

Peter Mason showed a beautifully turned out Grasshopper Beam Engine which ran very well despite the balancing problems which Peter says are inherent in this particular type of model. The problem is that in this design of steam engine the beam is pivoted at the end instead of in the centre which is more usual, and so there is a lot of out of balance weight; this was counterbalanced partially by incorporating a one pound lump of (non-Meccano) lead water pipe inside one side of the flywheel. Peter also brought a 198:1 epicyclic gear reduction which he cannot as yet think of a use for!

Richard Bingham brought two clocks: one based on a built up synchronous motor and the other a neat bracket clock with a Foliot balance, powered by a number 1 clockwork motor.

The Ilkley Show

Alan Grimshaw has organised Meccano participation in two shows for 1982; the Skipton show is already past but there is still time to participate in the show at Ilkley. It is on Saturday and Sunday, July 24th and 25th, from 10 to 6 (Sat) and 10 to 5 (Sunday), in the Kings Hall and Winter Gardens. The show is organised by the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust and is designed to be a good day out for all the family. Alan has reserved about 40 feet of table space for Meccano, but he needs to know about a week in advance if you intend to display models, so those interested should get in touch