

MECCANO SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

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December 1991

A Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to all members of the Society from the President, the Secretary and your Editor.

If you want Meccano in your Christmas stocking, go out and buy it yourself now to be absolutely sure of repeating the thrills of youth with shining new parts, chunky gear wheels, and all manner of mechanical delights. How those Meccano conversion sets figured in our youthful Christmas dreams as we struggled with our spindly models and dreadful tin road wheels in the lower sets. All the while our thoughts were on the beautiful solid models photographed with those favoured lads in the Meccano Magazine. New accessory and conversion outfits were acquired year by year at Christmas, expanding the range of parts to match developing mechanical skills. Real engineering in miniature, not a claim which can be matched by any modern colourful sets of snap together plastic blocks of unmentionable name.

Nowadays, the educationalists are on about child centred learning, problem solving and creativity, but Frank Hornby had all these ideas set up for boys almost 90 years ago. The difficulty now is that much modern technology is so opaque and inaccessible to young hands and minds. Open the case of a modern radio, or lift the bonnet of a new car to see what I mean. The next stage after Meccano was often fiddling with the family car,

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but this is not possible now due to the use of sophisticated electronic engine control systems, and tiresome MOT regulations which prevent the operation of banger cars. What we need now is a modelling technology which allows real mechanical skills to combine with the best of simple electronic control principles, so that young users develop mechanical skills hand in hand with a knowledge of the new computer and electronic techniques.

I really don't know why the President and Secretary tolerate these editorials.....Again, a Happy Christmas to all, and do enjoy the holiday with your favourite technology.

Angus Annan

Notes from the Secretary

I have had a request from Haur Rawlence Productions Ltd of London for help in researching a documentary, for Chanel 4's Equinox Science Series. The programs subject is construction Toys, such as Meccano, they are currently seeking Film Footage and Home Videos from the 1940's, 50's and 60's showing children playing with these games.

They have requested help from any Meccano man who may have any items or thoughts that could be of interest. If you can help please contact me for more details.

Science Festival Edinburgh 1992, after last year's event we were asked if we would come along the following year, (1992), which we replied to the affirmative. To date however I have not been contacted, I am giving you the up to date position should you be anxious to reserve any dates in your diary.

The Canadian Meccano Mans Newsletter, enclosed with this newsletter are application forms for the above. You will note that the price is due to rise in January, so if you are interested, act now!

This newsletter is more of a magazine, with good articles and instructions for excellent models backed up with large clear photographs. I think it is very good, and with a few points, I will try to bring some samples to our January meeting.

Magic Of Meccano A show at the Kew Bridge Steam Museum, Green Dragon Lane, Brentford, Middlesex to be held on the 25th/26th April 1992. Open 11.00am to 5.00pm. Four halls filled with Meccano and trade stands. The Museum's giant beam engine will be working in steam. For exhibitor or trade information contact Betty White or Leslie Bossings on 081 568 4657, or write to the Museum with your envelope marked Meccano Show. Closing date for enquiries 30th January 1992.

Arkwright Models On the expiry of the lease on their retail shop, they are moving to mail order only, and they will be attending more exhibitions. From 1st February, the address will be 26 Wollarton Rd, Rhuford Bridge, Nottingham NG1 1FD. Callers only by appointment. New telephone number will be Nottingham 281983.

Meccano Exhibition Darlington

The Annual show of the North Eastern Meccano Society
Saturday 16th November
By Bobby Middlemass

The society was represented on this occasion by Bert Hutchings, Douglas Couper, Dave Stokes (trading only) and myself. Douglas and I set off at 6.00 am stopped for 1/2 an hour for some breakfast and would have arrived just after 10.00am. Unfortunately we were talking to much and took the wrong turning off the motorway going into Darlington and didn't arrive until 10.30am!

Though there were few large models on show this year, the exception being Rob Mitchell's "Ballast Cleaning Train" which we all admired at Rothesay, the more compact models on show were full of interest. Among the new models, which were on show, was an automatic wire and wooden stake fence making machine by Bill Butterfield which was fascinating in its various movements. John Martin had his prize winning great Northern Steam Rail Motor on view again, I missed last years exhibition and was glad to have the opportunity of studying it, it also showed some examples of clever use of Tight chain around circular plates, the whole being turned by a No.27 1 1/4" Gear suggesting a smaller G.R.B. using Meccano parts. Ian Mordue had his automatic Meccanograph, which he brought along to the Edinburgh Science Festival, it was working well. There was also "a sleeping Meccanoman" (constructor Quarterly December 1990) working perfectly I would say quite a feat!

Douglas had one of his steam engines and the dealers model of the Tipping Lorry. I had my Carosel Down, first time at Darlington. Apart from Dave, John Linder and Mike Rhodes had a good display of new and second hand parts on show.

The day finished with Rob Mitchell getting First prize for his Ballast train.

Subscription Reminder

A number of members have still not paid the 91/92 subscription. If you are one of these another subscription notice is enclosed for your convenience.

Please send your overdue subscription to the treasurer, otherwise this is your last edition of the Newsletter!

Cathart Model Railway Exhibition

26th/27th October
By Bob Middlemass

The club was represented by Jim Berrie and his daughter, Bert Hutchings, Dave Stokes and myself. We were given the front of the stage to display the models and there was a wide passageway between ourselves and various Railway Modelling Dealers. Dave Stokes had one end of the stage looking down the walkway for all his sets magazines/books etc.

Jim had "Blocksetter" along, which proved very popular and as the majority of the public hadn't seen Meccano for years, this was what they remembered Meccano was all about. He also had his "Baltic Tank", "Trapeze Artist" and a sample of an old Nickel set. Bert brought his "hands-on" for the children "Blocksetter" and childrens Kangaroo; whilst Dave showed his "Queen Mary" and Gordon McMillan (who was busy on one of the layouts) brought in a Meccano Aeroplane. I had my Carosel, the Acrobatic Monkey for the children and a motorised Meccanograph with 2*4 speed Gear Boxes to help change the designs quickly, this also went down well with the children, especially the little girls, who I think were a little bored with so many railways! I also had the 10 new action packed mini models on show.

There was a reasonable turnout when one remembers the 26th October was the Scotland v England Rugby Match and on Sunday the 27th there was the Football Cup Final at Hampden Park, both of which must have kept many fathers away. In all about 1,700 visitors came in during the 2 days.

We all enjoyed the weekend and felt that we had re-introduced Meccano to the South of Glasgow which hadn't seen it for some time.

Next Society Meeting

Sunday 14th January
2pm at the Reading Room
Blairlogie

Note from Alan

I was in London two weeks ago and I happened to be in that well known Knightsbridge Store "Harrods" and they had on display a No.10 set priced £1230, a No.9 set £430 and a Lancaster Bomber, built in yellow, exactly like the one on page 11 of the 1991 Meccano Catalogue. In addition to the above items there was a good selection of Utility Vehicles, Constructive Services Beginners series and the normal sets.

Alan MacDonald

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"Hornby Companion" volume 8 by Roger Beardsley price £45, due out December 1991.

The advance review given here is by Peter Gurd of Arkwright Models of Nottingham, and it has been reproduced by courtesy of the North Midlands Meccano Guild.

BOOK REVIEW by PETER GURD

Volume eight "THE HORNBY COMPANION" by Roger Beardsley at 628 pages is easily the biggest of the thirteen books in the series. Of these 240 pages are straight reproductions of the following -

- "Magic Carpet" - all products booklet, 1925.
- "Hornby Electric Trains" - introducing the first electric trains.
- "The Hornby Book of Trains" 1925/26.
- " " " " " 1927/28.
- " " " " " 1933/34.
- "Toys of Quality" - all products booklet - 1957.
- "Hornby Dublo Electric Trains", 1962.
- "Tri-ang Railways and Hornby Dublo" - an amalgamation leaflet, 1965.

The introductory pages leave the reader in no doubt that Roger Beardsley is passionate about the subject of Meccano literature in all its diverse forms. From the lavish all colour catalogues and big-outfit manuals down to a 2" square of paper informing us that the "MM" has gone up to 2d! - A true enthusiast.

The first six chapters (some 228 pages) are chiefly concerned with literature relating Meccano itself and the special purpose outfits. Particular attention has been given to the "Standard Mechanism" and "How to Use Meccano Parts" instruction books which have always rewarded closer study. This first section, which forms the meat of the book, will surely be a great delight to Meccano enthusiasts with any interest whatever in the historical side of the hobby. It soon becomes obvious that there is a definite bias towards the Meccano constructional system, and on reflection one realises this is not unreasonable as almost all of the "other products" (perhaps with the exception of Hornby 0 gauge trains) were very late appearing. The company was thirty years old when suddenly a diversity of other toys and kits were added to the range.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 (some 150 pages) comprise a review of the extensive range of promotional material and special leaflets that Meccano Ltd were so good at. Included are such items as competition forms, retailer's literature, show cards price tags and the famous Products Catalogues. There is good coverage in this section of Hornby Trains which are all extensively illustrated. Of special note are reproductions of some fascinating pieces of literature e.g. "Meccano News" an in-house publication for Meccano employees, "Our Selling Service" - seldom seen trade material keeping retailers abreast of the latest developments and of the range of sales aids available.

Perhaps it could be said that the book does not pursue its subject in the same depth through the final years of Meccano Ltd. But it could be convincingly argued that much of that material is still commonly available and there had been a severe falling of in house style and quality from the mid 1960's.

The price of this final volume is reflected in the cost of full reproductions of many original items. The merits of which will always be hotly debated. However it is a fact that the cost of just one original Hornby Book of Trains would cost as much.

THE MECCANO SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

Hon. President; Bert Love
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PRESIDENT'S CHRISTMAS LETTER 1991

Dear Members,

I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a happy and peaceful holiday season and to thank the officers of our Society for another year of active effort on behalf of us all.

The support given at the Rothesay Meccano Exhibition resulted in the best show to be held in the Winter Garden Centre for many a long year. Although our own Society's exhibition for 1992 is already destined for a Perth venue - in the autumn - there will be a repeat of the Rothesay show next summer, under the auspices of the recently formed Rothesay Meccano Club. I shall be acting as Secretary, with committee members ex-patriate (Rothesay) Douglas Cooper, and Jim Berrie.

I will see that members are notified of dates (about 3rd weekend in July) and arrangements in good time, with an open invitation, limited (at the moment) to members of the M.S.O.S.

This letter is being written at "Meccano House", Hall Green, Birmingham, during our November visit, before a return to Bute with yet another load of Meccano demonstration models, literature and boxes of 'all sorts', long overdue for a jolly good turn-out! I am still coming across items that have lain dormant in boxes for several years, and which, as a result, come under the heading of "Well I'm blown - I didn't know I had these" or "I thought I had lost those years ago!".

One of the aims of the Rothesay Winter Garden Trust, has been to secure a liquor licence for their excellent Bistro restaurant. This has involved a personal contest - if not a vendetta - with 'Anti-Winter Garden' members of the local licencing board. After a dozen refused applications over the past two years, the Trust finally appealed to the Sherrif Court at Dunoon, where their appeal was upheld. So, if any of you are visiting Rothesay in the future, you will be able to have a glass of wine with your meal!

I am pleased to report that my recovery from the very unexpected heart attack of June 5th, appears to be virtually complete - leaving me feeling very well and active. We have already made two visits to the West London Meccano Club this autumn and I have even found time (between rebuilding houses) to do some Meccano modelling. Robin Johnson has asked me to photograph and to write-up my No.10 Set design of the Treadle Fretsaw Machine which won the Issigonis Challenge Shield at SKEGEX in 1986!

On recovering this model from the roof space here, in September, I found that 75% of the zinc-plated parts were too badly discoloured for respectable exhibition or photography, despite being covered in plastic bin liners. This zinc oxidation is nothing new - we have

all seen the effects on Meccano parts, ever since Binns Road introduced the process back in the mid-60s. I have even noticed similar staining on French Meccano parts that are less than three years old.

However, all discoloured parts on the Treadle Fretsaw have now been replaced, and parts checked for compliance within the confines of a No.10 Set, ready for return to Bute in Mid-December, for a photography session at "Glencairn".

You will have seen from another section of this Newsletter, that the research firm of HAUER RAWLENCE (what peculiar spellings!) are on a research trail for constructional toys of an earlier epoch, 1940s-1960s when little film footage (and NO videorecordings) are available. The relevant circular letter has been sent out to a number (if not all) U.K. clubs with the purpose of throwing a wide dragnet.

As our worthy Secretary has already expressed his reservations to me over becoming involved, I can concur - from much past experience - that a considerable effort from canvassed clubs can still result either in 'nil' advantage to the hobby as a whole, a 'send-up' where senior clubs are involved of "Grown men playing with toys" - or, at best - a subliminal five-seconds view of one or two simple or mundane models.

Had the enquiry come directly from a TV producer (and a Scottish centre to boot), then I, for one, would be far more enthusiastic. Witness the excellent coverage obtained in the interviews with Jim Berrie & Co. in recent years.

Charlie Archer, one time Meccano dealer of Guisborough, reports that the Darlington Meccano Exhibition was once again down on model exhibits and public attendance - the recession touches the hobby. One would hardly think so, however, judging by the latest M.W. Models' list, where prices continue to rise alarmingly - nearly £50-00 for a simple Powerdrive motor! - who buys at these prices?

Overseas clubs seem to have their own sources - Calais for the French and Dutch massive clubs - with some Argentine stock. This latter may not be legally termed "Meccano Argentine" since Marc Rebibo's company bought the MECCANO rights - and the new owners continue this policy. Parts coming from Buenos Aires are officially EXACTO products, and hence, are NOT Meccano!

President and spouse will be en route to the Isle of Bute on Sunday, December 15th, and we shall be at "Glencairn" until the middle or third week of January. Torrential rains accompanied most of our October visit, when 1 cwt of daffodil bulbs and £50-00 worth of bush roses were planted. It will be no surprise then, if we find that all are rotted in the ground or washed out to sea when we return to the island. However, with Christmas upon us, Spring can only be 'just round the corner', so we will be anxiously watching for signs of new shoots in the New Year!

Frank Beadle and Bill Butterworth, long serving Secretary and Chairman of the Darlington Meccano Society have resigned, but the reins have been picked up by Joe Etheridge who will be re-issuing a clun Newsletter.

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Best Love

Hon. President.

The Canadian Meccanoman's Newsletter

BEAT THE INCREASE - RENEW NOW AT THE 1991 RATES

CURRENT RATES

Canada	\$22 Canadian		
USA	\$23 Canadian	\$21 US	
Other	\$26 Canadian	\$24 US	£11 Sterling *

RATES WILL INCREASE AS AT 1ST JANUARY 1992

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* Sterling payments may be made by personal cheque sent to, and made payable to:- Tony Knowles, 7 Potters Way, Laverstock, Salsbury, SP1 1PY, England.

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