

# Model Report

26 March 2011

by

Mike Cook

Having missed the meeting last October, I was really looking forward to meeting up again with friends old and new, and to seeing the products of their model building labours over the winter months. After an uneventful journey, I arrived to find the hall buzzing with activity and packed with models such that finding space for those that continued to arrive was proving to be a challenge for the “management”. However, everyone managed to find, or make sufficient space for their models. I lost count of the number of models present for me to report on, but it was certainly rather more than I have been used to in the recent past. I hastily installed my own model and then made an immediate start on inspecting the models as I had lots to see and find out. As always, my apologies for those I have misreported or overlooked completely.

The very first model on my personal tour was built by our secretary **Roger Marriott**. Typically, his model was designed and built for display purposes and comprised an eye catching Meccano nativity - A penny (2p) in the slot automaton showing Mary and Joseph with Jesus being visited by the three kings, while an angel oversees the proceedings and shepherds tend their flocks in the fields. An “unusual visitor” looks on in awe. Once fed the mandatory coin, the assembled characters move and gyrate their way through an operational cycle accompanied by serious engineering noises from the gearbox within. **Roger** told me that this model had also been well received in his local church over the Christmas period. Coincidentally, the second model on my tour was by your reporter **Mike Cook** and I must admit that it has been rare for me to bring a new model in recent years. However, in retirement I now have more time for model building (which is a complete myth by the way) so I tackled an American Avery 40 hp traction engine to go with my Fowler and Burrell engines. This model is based on the Avery 20hp traction engine model designed by **Dr Keith Cameron** and described in GMM supermodel leaflet No.25. The model was modified and slightly enlarged to accommodate a fully representative motion and two speed gear train, which presented quite a challenge given the complexity of the mechanisms and the small space available. The 40 hp version of the engine has a longer boiler and this provided the extra length necessary for the incorporation of a more detailed under-type engine and transmission. The model also incorporates an original Meccano infra-red remote controller for forward and reverse motion, and rather less than scale-like steering! The prototype steering utilises a nut on a coarse thread, but the Meccano screwed rod has a much finer thread requiring the driver to turn the wheel many times at high speed to effect adequate directional control. However, it seems to work well and the water tank and coal bunker provide perfect homes for the control unit and its 9v battery.

I was privileged to have not only **Roger** as a near neighbour on one side but also **Jim Gamble** on the other – this really puts things into perspective when sandwiched between two seriously accomplished Meccanomen! **Jim** brought along the classic Meccano motor car chassis display model, which is authentic in every detail and still in excellent running order. It was seen running more or less continuously for the entire day and was really appreciated by the nostalgia enthusiasts, which embraces most of

the membership at a guess. Next was one of our longest serving members, **Ken Wright** who brought along a small model, which was not a locomotive. His model was a nicely presented radio controlled towing truck assembled from a current Design radio control outfit. However, when it comes to nostalgia, **Roy Whitehouse** takes some beating and he did not disappoint at the meeting. **Roy** is well known as a restorer of blue and gold period Meccano to an exceptionally high standard. On this occasion he brought along his beautiful steam shovel, built from SM19 leaflet instructions in a restored, pristine blue and gold colour scheme. He also showed two restored French blue and gold outfits, No. 7a and No. 8a, fully strung in what looked like original boxes. The presentation of these outfits is extremely attractive and it is not difficult to appreciate why Meccano became so popular and much copied. **Roy** also brought along some of his tool kit used in the parts restoration process but, unfortunately he was not given the opportunity to explain how he works his magic. **Giles Smith** is a relatively new member and is busy accumulating Meccano in the time honoured way. Amongst his accumulation is a number of the very small single model outfits picked up here and there – I think he told me that he actually picked one up at a car boot sale on the way to the meeting! Having made up some of these small models he brought along a collection of six or more to show us how things are progressing. I think we can look forward to seeing more of **Giles'** model building in the future. **Tom and Matthew McCallum** completed the first row of Meccano models with some typical items from their collection. Firstly, a nice red and green display model of the Meccano gantry crane featured in much publicity material during the 1950's, accompanied by a Meccano dealers show card featuring the very same model. For the enthusiast, a photograph of their model is shown on the front cover of CQ62. Their second item was a very nicely presented blue and gold No.9 outfit dating from 1938. The outfit was packed in the original green Meccano cabinet with a single lift out tray and, once again, served to emphasise that Meccano Ltd. completely understood the business of presentation in order to attract sales.

The next model on my tour was a sizeable railway bridge built by **Robin Schoolar**. His model is based on the Delftshavense Schie Bascule Rail Bridge which carries an important rail line over a primary inland waterway, the Delftshavense Schie, not far from Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Most bascule bridges are set at right angles to the feature they cross, which requires archways through the towers to allow traffic to pass over the bridge. This crossing was already on a skew alignment which the designers had to accommodate. They turned the skew to their advantage with an innovative asymmetric design offsetting the tower to one side of the rails. **Robin** modelled the bridge largely in yellow parts to match the colour scheme of the bridge as originally constructed around 1990. It has since been repainted in white, but **Robin** has insufficient white parts to build it in that colour! The scale is around 7mm per foot (1:43) to suit the PECO O gauge track used in the model. The lifting sections of the bridge are balanced by a 7Lb lead counterweight such that the model takes minimal effort to operate. A small red plastic cased Meccano motor running on only three volts provides ample power. Although operational, the model is yet to be finished with the addition of much detailing - handrails, control room and enough spiral staircases to drive anyone round the twist! Interestingly the model incorporates a novel dual limit switch devised by **Robin**. He showed me an example of the compact switch which is built up from long bolts, hex nuts, compression springs and shiny nickel washers on a base comprising a SpeedPlay rectangular plate – but utilises no Elektrikit parts whatsoever! An interesting model and worth a close look next time you get a chance.

The diminutive and unusual model alongside was brought along by **David Goodman**. His model was of a scientific instrument – a magnetic stirrer, which could no doubt be used for real in a laboratory. A small metal bar is placed in the liquid to be stirred, all being contained in a suitable glass vessel. The vessel is placed on the flat surface of the device and a continuously rotating magnet under the surface causes the liquid to be stirred. Simple! I am aware that numerous scientific instruments built from Meccano have appeared over the years, and I have seen Meccano devices used in experimental wind tunnel facilities.

On a completely different scale, the next model was **Paul Brecknell's** giant bucket wheel excavator, brought along for another outing and progress report. There seemed to be some uncertainty regarding the state of completion of the model – **Paul** was not quite sure of the condition of the electrics. However, it looked superbly complete to me. The last major challenge for **Paul** was to devise a slip ring arrangement to convey power from the carriage to the superstructure through the rotating bearing, with the added complication that the bearing may be separated easily for transportation of the model. He eventually used four 4½" circular strips for the slip rings and the contacts were made up from four part no. 525 – core holders – as these are capable of retraction thereby allowing the upper and lower parts of the bearing to be separated. I don't think the model was fired up at the meeting so we will have to wait until October for a working demonstration. This is a very fine model with lots of innovative features which has taken **Paul** some six years to complete.

Next I came to **Terry Pettitt's** model, but first I must thank him for stepping in to write the model report after the last meeting. I was unable to attend the meeting due to a bad cold and had to withdraw at very short notice. Members will recall that **Terry** has built a very fine model of a Bedford tipper lorry, which he brought along to a number of previous meetings during its construction. Most recently he has replaced the tipping part with a fixed flat bed on which is mounted a snorkel type extending maintenance platform. This was the model on show at the meeting. The platform is powered by three small electric motors which drive parallel motion arms activated by rack strips within the arms. I saw it working briefly and, as might be expected from such an accomplished Meccano modeller, the platform arm extended and retracted very smoothly and very quietly.

Some members obviously enjoy a serious challenge in their Meccano modelling, and it would appear that **John Nuttall** is one of those members. He brought along a model which looked to me like a sphere of about 10" diameter the surface of which comprised a lattice of a very large number of Meccano strips. However, this is not any old lattice but a very clever arrangement described as a Snub Dodecahedron. In **John's** own words; this is a less well known Archimedian solid surface comprising 12 pentagons and 80 equilateral triangles. It has 150 edges, 60 vertices and is constructed from 150 2½" strips and 60 nuts and bolts. The large number of triangles in the construction make it very rigid.

Coming back down to earth again, next door I found a largish number of small aeroplanes built by **John Reid**. His first offering, set out on a board of about 2ftx2ft coloured to represent a grass airfield, was a diorama depicting a RFC/RAF Aerodrome somewhere in France around 1918. It all started as a result of an e-bay purchase of two M&S Sopwith Camel outfits and one thing led to another until he had created his little airfield. The

model incorporates about six Sopwith Camels in various states of readiness together with several “props” to give the diorama authenticity. The carefully constructed hangar is based on the French Bessonneau tented hangar of the period and the Matchbox Crossley RAF tender just happens to be near enough the right scale, which is approximately 1:46 based on the fuselage length of the Sopwith Camel. The aircraft models have been modified with various improvements, but the red aeroplane, for comparison, was built straight from the box with no modifications. Alongside, **John** brought along examples built from five modern Meccano France aircraft outfits. All have been modified to improve accuracy and appearance. The models comprised the following aircraft types: Spitfire with strengthening strips under the wings and rear fuselage together with improved propeller and spinner. "Red Arrows" Hawk Trainer with a strengthening strip under the wings and deletion of the strip over cockpit, which is too wide and looks ugly. Concorde with internal strengthening strips in the fuselage and with the tail plane relocated correctly on centre line of fuselage. Harrier with revised undercarriage, the addition of tail plane anhedral and the deletion of the strip over the cockpit which is too wide. Sopwith Camel with replacement engine and propeller (from the 1931-41 Aeroplane Constructor outfit), undercarriage, interplane struts, tail plane and with the addition of a pilot.

**Dave Phillips** brought along a very nicely presented model of a Minneapolis Prairie Tractor, the prototype dating from about 1910. The model is about 12” long and scaled approximately by the rear wheels which are made up from pairs of hub discs. The model layout is very similar to a steam traction engine, but the motive power is provided by a rudimentary water cooled four cylinder oil engine. The radiator, fan and water reservoir is mounted at the front of the chassis and is placed so as to obscure the drivers view – quite an impractical arrangement I would think. **Dave’s** model is made entirely with fully restored parts finished in mid red and green to give it an attractive and pristine appearance. The model is mounted on a base and set up for demonstration and **Dave** kindly showed me the model running. The unusual choice of subject lends itself to Meccano modelling and **Dave** has done well since he only had two photographs from which to work. Nearby was an articulated tipper lorry brought along by **Terry Wilkes**. This model was built from the 1970’s No.9 outfit model, 9.5 in the instruction manual. A nicely constructed model in period yellow, blue and zinc colours and, as ever, modified by **Terry** so that the tipping mechanism actually works.

As most members will know both **David Hobson** and **Tony Knowles** are Meccano enthusiasts, but they also have a keen interest in alternative construction systems produced over the last 100 years or so, usually in competition with Meccano. Their collective display of models and items of interest at the meeting revealed some of the more curious alternatives. First item was a “Little Jim” no.5 construction outfit presented in a nice wooden box and brought along by **David**. The outfit was manufactured by the Meccano Company of America Inc. and dates from 1928 – otherwise known as A.C. Gilbert. The red and green parts looked familiar and were set out in the box much as we are used to seeing. **David’s** second item was his model of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King modelled entirely in Eitech parts. This is a bigish model, mounted on a base board for presentation purposes and measuring about 2ft×2ft×15” high. Apparently the design was first worked out and built by **Tony**, and **David’s** version incorporates some changes – most notably internal lighting which shows the model off really well. **Tony’s** offering at the meeting was a familiar model built using a most obscure alternative system, the Dutch Necobo system dating from the late 1940’s to the early 1950’s. The system is a Meccano/Marklin copy with parts presented in red, blue and dark green colours. **Tony** had build up the 1962

Meccano outfit model 8.8 – the conveyance – a gangly looking model of a utility vehicle for moving large objects about. A nice model which works well but, to me, somehow does not look quite right built from the parts in this obscure alternative system.

The large display of boxed small accessory outfits brought along by **Richard Gilbert** prompted the question – Why bring all these familiar small outfits to the meeting? The answer was not immediately obvious. The display comprised the six accessory outfits from No.1a to No.6a as produced by Meccano in the UK from 1964 to 1970. Members will recall that these outfits were packaged in a long non-descript box measuring approximately 3”x3”x13”, the contents were just bagged, rolled up with the manual and stuffed in the box! Not too impressive given the earlier standard of presentation. **Richard** also brought along the same six accessory outfits as produced by Meccano France in the same period, but these outfits were packaged in the familiar shallow boxes with parts strung on cards to make a much more attractive presentation. The point of the exercise was to emphasise just how very much better the French outfits were at that time by direct comparison. The comparison was most convincing, I thought the French outfits looked altogether of better quality. There must be a message here!

It was rumoured at the meeting that **Ken Senar** has given up making very large models, so what does he bring? Nothing less than a massive 1:10 scale Westland Wessex helicopter in a fairly advanced state of construction. Most of the fuselage and the working controls to the main and tail rotors are now working and the partly completed model gave us all an opportunity to “inspect the plumbing”, as it were. As always from such a skilled modeller, the presentation is superb and the attention to detail is second to none. The model is being built from photographs, some from the web, but most of which **Ken** took of an original in the Museum at RAF Cosford. He also has a very poor cut-away drawing with no scale and, together with a scrappy diagram, he has been able to guess a few key dimensions. Working features to be seen on the model so far include dual cyclic stick controls, working rudder pedals and tail rotor collective pitch, sliding cabin door and casualty rescue winch. Features planned for the near future include windscreen wipers, twin engine exhausts, the entire nose assembly, undercarriage and other embellishments. Both main and tail rotor controls can be operated from the cockpit. However, the main rotor blades are only vestigial so as eventually to demonstrate the workings of the rotor head swash plate mechanism. At scale size, the main rotor blades would be too heavy and would over-stress the Meccano system, not to mention the danger to anyone in the immediate vicinity of the model. This is definitely one to watch, and **Ken** is aiming to get it finished in time for Skegex in July.

In the shadow of the Wessex was a collection of smaller models made by **Christopher Bond** in response to a 30 part model building challenge. I know nothing of this, so you must forgive me if I manage to mangle the facts about the challenge. **Christopher** brought along three models to demonstrate his ingenious responses to the challenge. First, a typical horizontal milling machine of about 1914 vintage. The model is not powered, but the table, saddle and knee movements all operate by hand without too much play. 29 parts were used in its construction not including the cutters, of which a variety would be available with the real machine. Second, a 1:120 scale model of the Russian Imperial Navy circular monitor ship “Novgorod”, built in 1874. Armed with two 11inch, rifled, muzzle loading guns intended largely for shore bombardment, the idea was a shallow draft, stable gun platform. It is a pity that it was almost un-navigable – not helped by the difficulty of synchronising six separate engines and screws, and the

fact that firing the guns caused the ship to move round in circles. A similar design for an imperial yacht intended to overcome the Tsarina's sea-sickness also failed – the hardy Scots who delivered it from Clydebank to Russia were all sea-sick for most of the voyage! The MM of August 1971 had plans and instructions for building a model of the Novgorod – but from a biscuit tin and balsa wood rather than from Meccano! The model consumed only 28 parts. Third and last of **Christopher's** models was one of the guillotine stop-lock gates at Lifford Lane, King's Norton, on the Stratford canal. These date from 1814, and were intended to prevent loss of water between rival canal companies. They are no longer in regular use due to the amalgamation of the separate companies into British Waterways. The advantage of this type of gate, rare in the UK except for minor examples in East Anglia and a few in the North, is that they can hold back water from either direction. Again, only 28 parts were used in the construction of this model. As I said, these models collectively demonstrate considerable ingenuity in their use of such a small parts count. Conveniently located next to **Christopher's** models was yet another collection of models built by **Sid Beckett**, also in response to the 30 part model challenge. **Sid's** four models included a children's playground slide, a fair-ground flying chairs roundabout, his mark 1 windmill complete with lousy roof and noisy mechanics and his mark 2 windmill with a much better roof and quieter band drive. **Sid** is a man of few words so I do not have any details about parts count for any of his models. However, once again, these models demonstrate the ingenuity of the dedicated Meccanoman

**Terry Allen** is a newish member, I believe, who has clearly "got the fumes" judging by the seriously ambitious model he brought to the meeting. His partly completed model was of a 1938 Bugatti 57SC Atlantic Coupé – so far the rolling chassis and engine have been completed. To give you an idea of size, the model is about 18" long, it is very carefully built up in zinc plated parts and it incorporates a lot of structural and mechanical detail. It is similar in size and layout to the standard Meccano motor car chassis as shown by **Jim gamble** at the meeting. This is a superb model and will look even better when **Terry** has managed to fabricate the very "curvy" body from standard Meccano parts. This has got to be another splendid model to look out for in the future.

The next model I came to was also the work of another newish member, **Mei Jones**. His model was an improved version of SM30, the railway breakdown crane. The model was nicely engineered in yellow-zinc-black colours and the considerably revised match truck showed lots of innovative features devised by **Mei**. We can clearly expect lots of good things from this modeller in the future. **Mei** was accompanied by his grandson who brought along a couple of smaller models, a crane and an aeroplane. Alongside, **Geoff Devlin** was showing his latest creation, a CAT 591 pipe layer built up from first principles in his favourite red and green colour scheme. This machine is the largest in the Caterpillar pipe layer range, working around the world installing pipe lines carrying gas, oil or water. For use in inhospitable regions an enclosed cab would be fitted. The prototype weighs in at 87 tons, is 22ft long, the jib is 32ft long and it is about 15ft high when rigged for work. When the machine is moved from one site to another, the jib is raised to a vertical position and the hydraulic piston attached to the jib is used to push start the jib from the vertical so the ropes can take over the load in the working configuration. The model is scaled at about 1:12 to give it an imposing presence and is yet another example of **Geoff's** knack for finding interesting subjects then constructing a fine model of the prototype.

**Roger Burton** brought two models to the meeting and the first was a small fairground ride of freelance design which he called "Helicopter patrol". The model is based on a three arm Octopus ride and each arm carries a little helicopter at its extremity. To give you some idea of size, this is a nice compact model having a diameter described by the arms of about 20" and an overall height of about 12". Never having built such a ride before, **Roger** consulted the instructions for a similar model in a 1950s No.7 outfit instruction manual and then set about making a more robust structure and drive train. A Monoperm motor is housed under the hinged 4½"x2½" plate in the base. The turntable sits on a 4" Meccano ball bearing and is belt driven by a multipurpose gear wheel driving a 6" pulley. To create the up and down motion of the three helicopters, he has used a throw of approximately ¾". **Roger's** other model was a very nice rendering of a drop stamp machine, the design of which was first made by **Mike Brammer** and which appeared in CQ5 in September 1989. Like the helicopter patrol, the model is constructed in red and green colours, it is about 15" high and stands on a base platform 12½" square. The operating mechanism is simple, yet very effective, in raising and dropping the tup. With careful control, the tup can be inched and held half way up the slides. When the tup drops and strikes the anvil, the model (as would the real machine) makes a considerable noise, so a cushion has been placed on the anvil.

**Tony Parmee** brought along two models including his General 'B' omnibus – an ancient vehicle appropriately modelled in early nickel parts. This is an attractive model, the original of which is attributed to one **S. Wilson** and featured in MM many moons ago. **Tony's** model has had numerous outings over the years so I will not attempt a repeat description of it here. **Tony's** other model was the 1954 No.9 outfit manual model 9.1, the mechanical horse and trailer. Apparently, since acquiring his original No.8a outfit, it has taken him 53 years to get around to building the first model in the book! His excuse is that he wanted to see if the bonnet really is curved as in the illustration and if the trailer hitch actually works. It goes without saying that after **Tony's** inevitable modifications it did in fact look and work like the manual says. And it only took three improvements, although he reckons there is room for more. Built in mid red and green colours, the model is about 3ft long by about 9½" wide, and it looked very nice to me.

Fire engines galore can only mean one thing to MMG – watch out Chairman **George** is about! As just about every member will know, for quite a while our Chairman **George Illingworth** has been building models of just about every fire engine ever produced. There can't be too many left for him to ferret out and replicate in miniature! This time he brought along five models of fire engines representing 60 odd years of their development. All were built to approximately 1:12 scale and included the following: a 1936 Dennis Ace Light Fire Engine, a 1965 Thornycroft Mk VII Crash Tender, a 1971 Chubb Pathfinder Airfield Crash Tender, a 1976 Bedford TK Convoy Support Vehicle and a 1990 Volvo FL6 Water Tender Ladder. And this represents just the latest additions! Needless to say the models are very well presented since **George** is a very skilled Meccano modeller and he has had lots of practice on fire engines! Take a look next time you get a chance.

Equally dedicated and equally skilled is **Alan Covel** who always seems to manage to produce a different and abnormally large model of an unusual prototype vehicle for every meeting. It is also quite amazing that his models always look like they have just been built using mint parts. This time **Alan's** model was of a 1924 Bugatti type 35

“racing” car superbly well built in his customary yellow, blue and zinc coloured parts. Starting with a small Matchbox diecast Bugatti model of just over 3” long, **Alan** has built a very large copy, but still in the style of the standard “Dinky” vehicles – that is with fixed non-steering front wheels. The model incorporates a sturdy chassis, it runs on 16” diameter cycle wheels and it is big. The wheelbase is 52” and overall length is 80”, which makes it about half scale! As before, **Alan** entertained the members by demonstrating that with the skill of a contortionist he was able to insert himself into the vehicle and, with a little more difficulty, he was also able to extricate himself safely afterwards! I also learned that this model is his fifth and largest Bugatti model to date.

It was a pleasure for me that one of the first people I should meet shortly after arrival at the meeting was **Mick Burgess**, a friend I have known for more years than I care to remember. However, it was not long before I heard a rumour that he had actually brought a model to the meeting and that I should make sure I did not miss it for my report since it was a very fine model and an extremely rare event. I was told that said model was parked on the piano and by the time I got there **Mick** and model had been, gone and went! However, with the aid of some verbal information and **Bob Thompson’s** splendid photographic record of the meeting I was able to establish that the rumour was in fact true. The model is a freelance rendering of an LMS Stanier 5XP locomotive and tender. Scale is dictated by the choice of 3” diameter Meccano spoked wheels which determine the overall length of about 24” and width of 4”. Beautifully presented in a red and black colour scheme, with zinc parts for the motion - the model represents a pre-war red Jubilee class locomotive. Not yet finished, so this is one to look out for in the future – but you will have to be quick as our man does not hang around for too long at the meetings! Not content with one model, **Mick** actually brought along another nice little model of the Triumph TR3A sports car, modelled in yellow and zinc coloured parts and built to the design by Bernard Perrier published in CQ 77. He says it is built more or less as per description, but with the addition of rack and pinion steering. This must be a first for me – after many years of model reporting, I think this is the first time I have actually managed to track down and write about models built by this accomplished builder.

Next I came to a model by another extremely accomplished builder, **Mike Edkins**. **Mike** is well known for his modelling originality and many of his constructions incorporate innovative and complex mechanisms. He brought along his skeleton clock for another outing and this is a fine example of his ingenuity. Powered by a Magic motor it runs well and keeps very good time. The model was originally built in 1993 and building instructions have since been published as MP193. Moving on to a familiar favourite, the twin cylinder stationary steam engine built by **Tony Wakefield** from SM32 leaflet instructions. This model was nicely constructed largely using red and green colour parts but, inevitably, **Tony** has introduced a number of his own improving modifications. Most of his modifications were devised to improve the running qualities of the engine and many elements of the motion were designed to be fully adjustable to facilitate smooth running for display purposes, and I can say that the model does in fact run very smoothly indeed.

A large model of a modern single deck bus seemed to be ownerless, but after some sleuthing around I managed to establish that it was built by **John Ozyer-Key**. Nicely made in red and green colours, **John** had built the model from the design originally made by the late **Roger Wallis** and described in MP63. This must have been an easy



project for **John**, since we normally associate him with enormously complex heavy duty vehicles of which he is a master builder. Keeping the bus company was what has become a classical model of mechanical boxers and boxing ring, originating from a 1930s MM and built for display by **Keith Way**. The boxing ring base is 12½" square and has a roof canopy supported by pillars at each corner. The base houses the driving mechanisms for two boxers and a referee who hurl themselves around at the touch of a switch. **Keith's** colour scheme of red, green and gold set the model off nicely, but the addition of lights around the underside of the canopy is a really nice touch for display purposes.

I am always impressed and amazed at what **Terry Bullingham** manages to achieve given his serious visual handicap. It is no secret that he is working on a model of the classic block setter, and in the time honoured fashion is introducing many modifications of his own making. He brought along to the meeting a model of the twin cylinder steam engine used as the main source of power in the crane. The engine looks right and incorporates numerous features designed to enhance its appearance and its mechanical properties. It also runs very smoothly and is a tribute to its builder.

Keeping **Terry** company was my good friend **Colin Reid** who always manages to bring along an assortment of novelty items of interest to Meccano enthusiasts and often acquired at enviable prices in local sales. I spotted two vertical boiler steam engines of considerable age and a Hornby "O"-gauge locomotive amongst his stuff. However, his main item was a little device he has engineered from old Meccano parts for straightening out misshapen links in lengths of well used (and abused) chain. It comprises two rack strips bolted back to back on an old windmill sail, the latter enabling it to be mounted in a bench vice – teeth uppermost. The toothed edges of the rack strips are chamfered to allow the chain links to be "forced" into the rack teeth. To help this process the tooth depth is increased with the aid of a small hacksaw. The old chain is then hammered into the tool using a wooden mallet, or similar. By this means the links are knocked into shape again. Very simple and very effective. Ask **Colin** to show you next time you see him.

**Mark Rolson** has been building a sizeable model of a Matador truck and which he has brought along to several meetings now. The model was on show again, and **Mark** informed me that the body work of his heavy duty vehicle is very nearly completed. I am not sure if I can mention this, but he also brought along a part built model of a tractor mounted crane. The model is approximately 12" long, the crane jib is about 18" long and it is based on a copy of a L-g- model!

I did not know that **John and Joyce Sleaford** have a Meccano modelling son, so I was pleasantly surprised to see that **Peter Sleaford** is an extremely accomplished model builder. **Peter** brought along a superb Foden steam lorry based on the description given in MP191. He explained to me that he has made considerable modification to the mechanical detail of the model to give it greater authenticity and the result really is very good. Alongside, **John and Joyce** had their typically colourful display of assorted smaller models, many built from the small modern Meccano outfits, and including a cement mixer lorry, a skip with truck as described in CQ49, a lorry mounted crane as described in CQ50, a cable operated dumper truck and a quad bike built from outfit 7530. Although, sadly, **John** is now handicapped by failing eyesight, this did not stop him from demonstrating the finer points of some of the models to me.

Their immediate neighbour, as usual, was **John MacDonald**, our very own military hardware modelling specialist. His models are usually bristling with working mechanical detail, so it was surprising to see something remarkably simple for a change. His model was of a WWI horse drawn ambulance sporting an appropriate level of detail including the horse. However, this is not a Meccano horse, or any other old hack, but a detailed plastic scale "Dobbin" which could have been made to measure. **John** kept the members amused with this horse, since manipulation of the animal caused it to make the most realistic clip-clopping sounds and an authentic sounding whinny as well! Once again, it is demonstrated that the ingenuity of the Meccanoman knows no bounds!

Somewhere along the way I seem to have missed out on some new stuff built by **Richard Payne**. He has commenced building what will obviously become a substantial and detailed model of a Scammel four wheel drive heavy vehicle. He has built up the front and rear axle assemblies and it is these that he brought to the meeting. The front wheel drive axle incorporates steering, what looks like a standard differential and hubs with internal ball races. The driven rear axle also incorporated a standard differential driving the wheels through 4:1 epicyclic reduction gearing buried within the hubs of the built up wheels.

Our only resident "trader" on this occasion was **John Thorpe** who had the usual abundance of genuine and replica Meccano items for the delectation of the members. And that was pretty much it! Another memorable and very well supported meeting, not to mention the vast array of models with something to cater for every taste – large or small, simple or complex and old or new – it was all there!

Some final thoughts. As ever I am grateful to those members who were good enough to give me some written facts about their models, it really does make my job easier. However, now that we have a nice new website and the means for filing meeting returns on line, the potential for improved reporting is all there. I urge all who can to use this facility and to write a little about their models as they might like to see it in my report. It is then very easy for me to "cut and paste" the material into the report without further ado. This will help enormously in reducing the effort required to produce the report and should enable me to get it completed rather quicker in future.

----- oOo -----