

News of AMI LAC In the last few years I had heard from time to time that AMI LAC was still being made near Milan, but I'd no details until Tony Matthewman kindly sent me 2 glossy leaflets that he picked up at a German trade fair earlier this year. The name of the manufacturer used to be Alemanni Leonida but a business card that Tony also enclosed has 'LAC di Alemanni Ausonio' on it. The address is the same as it was before: Vicolo Dragoni, 5, 20071 Casalpusterlengo. Tel/Fax: 0377 84225/84120.

The first leaflet is for a range of 5 standard outfits, AMI 2 to AMI 6, and there's a photo of each showing at least some of the contents. Sets 2-5 are packed in black, or perhaps very dark blue, boxes with 6 models on the left of the lid and a slab of small print on the right. The parts are housed in white moulded plastic trays, 1 for Sets 2 & 3, 2 (layers) for No.4, and 3 for No.5. The No.6 is in a wooden box with 4 trays/layers; the outside of the lid isn't visible.

The main parts that can be seen in the No.2 are a 5*11 Flanged Plate, Strips up to 11h and 5*1*5 DAS, 5h Curved Strips, Trunnions, a 3*5h Flexible Plate, a Bush Wheel, and 4x1" Pulleys. The additional parts in the No.6 are Flanged Sector Plates; 25h Strips, A/Gs, Braced Girders; 4x3" & 2x2" Pulleys; 11h Flat Girders; Flexible Plates up to 5*7h; and Windmill Sails.

I have, courtesy of Malcolm Hanson and Richard Symonds, photos of 2 earlier sets; a No.5 in a wooden box, and the trays from a No.6. As far as can be seen the current sets contain the same types of parts as the earlier ones, and the quantities may also be similar, though one can't be so sure about that.

The AMI LAC range encompasses both MECCANO and MÄRKLIN-style parts, and often both patterns are included where there were differences. In the No.6 there are 2 types of 5h Curved Strips, the MECCANO 90a and the MÄRKLIN slotted type. Generally though only one style is included, with MECCANO Braced Girders (open ended), 2 & 3" Pulleys, and Trunnions, but MÄRKLIN Flanged Plates, DAS, and 3*1*3h Double Bracket. The Flexible Plates belong to neither with, as can be seen below, alternate holes and slots along the lengthways edges. Not having all the holes in the ends slotted seems to me a disadvantage.

AMI LAC parts were always finished in a variety of colours and this is still true, but they are less sombre now, with iridescent and bright yellow, blue and red parts. The same pieces are often shown in different colours in different sets, but broadly Brackets and Strips less than 11h long are iridescent, longer Strips, DAS, and A/Gs are yellow, Pulleys are red, Flat Girders, Windmill Sails and Flexible Plates are blue, and Flanged Plates and Braced Girders are yellow or blue. Bosses are shown painted. The models on the lids have silver Strips, a yellow Flanged Plate, and red Pulleys

and Trunnions.

The manuals shown have the same cover (with a boy, a girl, and a green Crane) as earlier ones, and the small models on the box lids are all No.2 models in my manual from perhaps about 1970. But I couldn't find the 2 larger models that are on some lids, so some changes may have been made. One of the larger models has a MÄRKLIN-type 5h Ø Pulley whereas only the MECCANO version can be seen in the sets, but often in my manual the former was shown but the latter called up in the Parts Required.

The other leaflet is for 6 'i KITS', small sets with enough parts to make only the featured model. The boxes show the model on a blue ground, and are numbered 100-105, for, respectively, Treno (loco), Cavallo (rocking horse), Rullo Compressore (road roller), Aereo (aeroplane), ? (crane), and Nave (ship). Some of the text on the boxes is in several languages, but not the names of the models. The latter are very simple and not I think specially attractive, although the Rocking Horse is quite nice. I couldn't find any of them in the old manuals.

The colours of the parts are as above except that the Flexible Plates are variously yellow, red and blue. The separate parts needed for the Road Roller are shown and include a Flexible Plate that has the necessary 2 sharp bends in it ready made. The Flexible Plates look as if they are metal rather than plastic. The Ship's funnel in the photo of the model on the Leaflet appears to be a white plastic tube with a single hole for attachment by an Angle Bracket, but on the box it's shown as a Flexible Plate rolled to a very small radius.

Since there's a corner here I'll include Summaries of my manuals. If anyone has others with different models or covers, please get in touch. After producing sets for a year or so in about 1922-23, AMI LAC re-entered the market in 1956 with, it is said, the intention of making all the parts in the MECCANO and MÄRKLIN systems. If that were so they didn't quite succeed - in particular the only circular part larger than 100mm was the MÄRKLIN-style 150mm Flanged Disc. But there were, and perhaps still are, some 474 parts available (and listed in the manuals described below) including a number of their own pieces, notably a range of 'L' and 'Z' section Plates.

SUMMARY OF MANUAL •Name: AMI LAC Costruzioni Meccaniche #9
 •Details of maker: Leonida Alemanni, Casalpusterlengo. •Dates &/or Ref Nos: none. •Page size: 244*162mm deep. •No. of pages: 84 inc covers (no page nos.). •Language: Italian. •Printing: line drawings of most models but halftones from p68 on; cover as opposite. •Page Nos. of Illustrated Parts List & highest PN: 5-18,220/11. [No Set Contents] •Sets covered: 3-9.
 •No. of models for each set: 38,33,24,20,15,10,8. •Name, Model No., Page No. of first & last model of each set [no Model Nos.]: 3: Aratro,27;Slitta,34. 4: Barca a vela,35; Carriola,42. 5: Vagone, 43; Carretto,50. 6:

Scavatrice,51; Martello, 58. 7: Sistema di trasmissione, 59; Maglio, 66. 8: Altalena,67; Furgone,74. Grue per cantiere,75; Macchina per la costruzione funi metalliche,82. •Other notes: •Useful constructions on pp19-26; •Details of sideplate motor on p83; •Manual was bought new from factory in 1973.

SUMMARY OF MANUAL [Details which are as above aren't repeated] •Name: #2 replaces #9. •No. of pages: 36 (no nos.). •Printing: all line drawings. •Sets covered: 1-2. •No. of models for each set: 46,41. •Name, Page No. of first & last model of each set: 1: Indicatore stradale,19; Pinza estensibile,26. 2: Ancora,27; Ancora,34. •Other notes: •No constructional details, motor on p35. •This manual was probably printed later than the one above because there's a new line on p4 saying that the price of individual parts has risen by 25%. When the #9 was bought the increase was 50% but this wasn't in the manual.



REF. AMI 3 ; da 6 a 8 anni

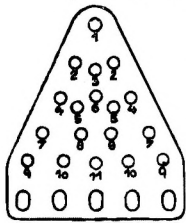
OSN 15



REF. 101

401

An AMI LAC Question On the No.9 manual described in 15/401, Josep Bernal has pointed out that the Triangular Gearbox Plate, left, is shown on the (unnumbered) p25 as PN 113, but that neither the Plate, nor a #113, is to be found in the Illustrated Parts, or elsewhere in the Manual. The numbers by the holes are used in a Table to show which pairs allow particular combinations of Gears to mesh. So was there ever a Part 113, and also were there originally parts to fill other gaps in the part numbers? Incidentally #113 was the pre-WW2 number of an identical looking MÄRKLIN part.



There was certainly more than one type of



manual - the No.9 manual cover from OSN 15 (left) is in MCS/NZ, but the different one, under it is in the /FB edition. It has only AMI, not AMI LAC, on it (note though that inside both have just AMI). The p5 /FB model, a Travelling Band Saw, from Set 6, seems to be the same as a No.8 model (top right) in the OSN 15 edition. (The view in MCS is from the other side and shows a pulley drive from the rear wheel to the gear-box, and from its output shaft to the lower band wheel.) So it's a good bet that the /FB one is the earlier, but Frank tells me that there



is no Part 113 in its Illustrated Parts. So if #113 did ever exist, details of still earlier manuals are needed.

A later MINIATUR Outfit Werner Sticht has passed on details of a No.20 Set, near complete and with manual, owned by Jürgen Kahlfeldt. My thanks to both.

The box is black, 258*175*20mm, with a large colour label just like the DEN LILLE INGENIØR manual cover in 7/157, except that the LH panel has fancy scroll work top & bottom, and 'WALTHER'S Miniatur No. 20' in between.

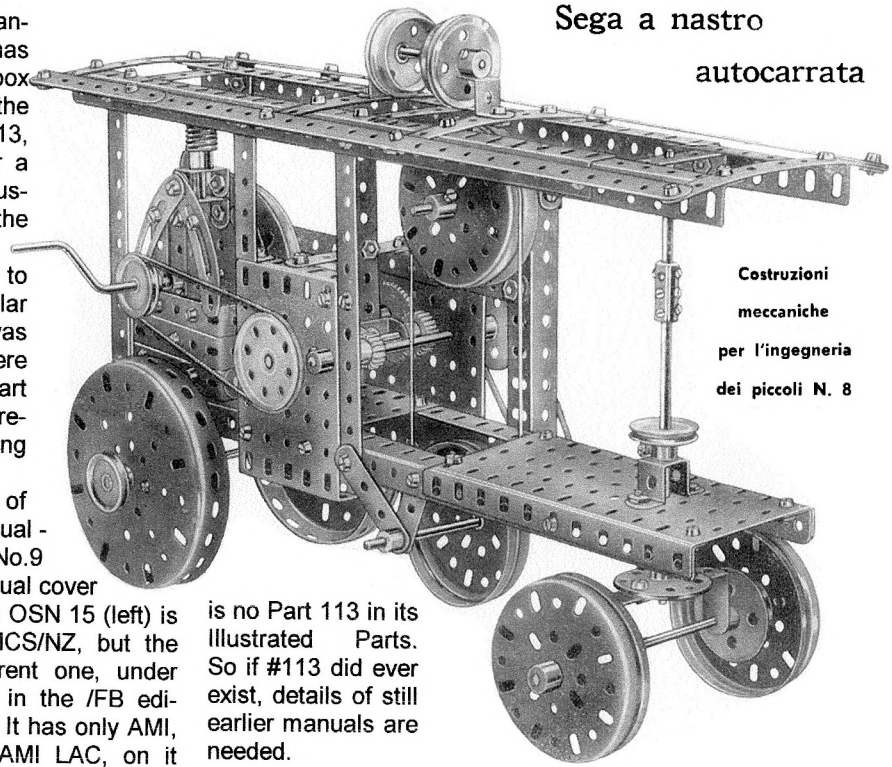
The manual is the same as the 1915 one described in 17/469, and the Set Contents are identical to those in it (see MCS), except that the quantity of Nuts in Sets 20/21 is given as 44/67.

Parts. The Strips are .65mm thick and vary in width from 9.4 to 9.6mm. Holes are 3.2mm and the spacing varies from 9.96 to 9.98mm. The Saw Blade & Fan are similar to STABIL parts but smaller in diameter. [The sizes given in OSN 17 are the same as STABIL parts.]

The N&B were missing from the Set but the **thread** on the Screwed Rods has an o.d. of 3.15mm and 40 tpi [so probably 1/8" BSW]. The jaws of the Spanner are 5.8mm wide.

Date. The box label indicates 1919 or later, and the prices in the manual could be either from before 1918 or from December 1923 onwards (with high inflation in between). So it's reasonable to think the Set is from 1924 or later.

Sega a nastro autocarrata



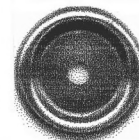
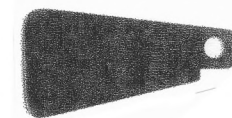
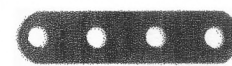
Costruzioni meccaniche per l'ingegneria dei piccoli N. 8

Some PFIFFIKUS Parts David Hobson kindly lent me some parts which he found in a mixed lot, and identified from a small photo in *Baukästen*, p218, as very likely to be PFIFFIKUS - a small German system, said to be from the 1930s, maker unknown. The hole pitch is 12.5mm and unusual features are Strips a little narrower than normal, holes a little larger, a small Windmill Sail, a pressed Half Road Wheel, & 2 SAS (Single Angle Strips). Screwed Rods are used as axles.

• **DATA** (in mm) **Strip** (11-hole): •Hole pitch/dia, 12.5/4.5; •width, 10.9; •thickness, .65; •ends semi-radiused. **Boss, Axle Dia, DP (Mod):** N/A. **Thread, N&B:** not known.

The different parts in David's haul are listed below. All holes are round and vary from 4.4 to 4.5mm Ø.

• **Strips**, 2,3,4,5,7,9,11h, mostly 11.0mm wide & .70mm thick, with ends cut well back, sometimes to 2½mm outside the end holes. The 4h is shown below.



but in the little Biplane that David made with his parts, a pair bolted together make a good propeller.

• 1*3*1 & 1*5*1 **DAS**; 1*6 & 1*10 **SAS**; and an **A/B**, all made from the appropriate Strips.

• A 3*7h **Perforated Plate** with very small corner radii. A **Windmill Sail** (left), 45mm long o/a & 23mm wide - it is shown on a Windmill in *Bk* (bolted to an 8h Wheel Disc),

• The **Half Road Wheel** (left) is 28½mm Ø & 3mm deep. The centre hole is 4.3mm, and it is surrounded by a flat circle of 18mm Ø. Two together give a complete 'tyre', and back to back a pulley of sorts.

• The parts are well enough made for what was probably a cheap set, though the holes in some Strips are slightly off centre and the hole pitch not quite correct in some pieces. All are plain steel with no sign of paint or plating, but in *Bk* the Half Wheels have a brass look.

• A 2-ended **Spanner** can be seen in the photo, with hex openings; one end is straight and the other is cranked & angled.

A modern dictionary gives 'artful dodger' & 'sly dog' as meanings of Pffiffikus, but a prewar one prefaces those by 'clever fellow'.

on the AMI-LAC, Eitech, & Dickie-Schuco sets in the next Issue.]

4. On **PRINCE WILLIAM** (23/679), Tony Press sent the photo below of Jack Little's Loco & Tender, standing in front of the Loco's box. The main parts, including the Loco's Undercarriage, are green, with red Wheels, Boiler Supports, Coupling Brackets, and Saddles for the (brass) Chimney & Steam Dome.



5. Thomas Morzinck sent the photo below of Dr. Griebel's **KÖSTER Goods Train** (23/679) on 0-gauge track. The sides of the Loco are green and those of the Wagons red. The Loco roof is grey and all the Strips are black.



6. On the claimed Aug. 22 1922 patent for **STEEL ENGINEERING** (23/666-7), David Hobson has found that the only 'toy' patent of that date was No.1426376 to A.C.Gilbert, but it related to 'square girder construction', not **STEEL ENGINEERING**. It was originally filed on 2 Feb. 1915.

7. On the **AMI LAC** Gearbox Plate (23/659, John Hanby wrote that it wasn't available when he asked Guiseppa Servetti about it in around 1968. The MÄRKLIN part was

shown in a June 1967 List but by 1969 it had been deleted, along with over 20 other parts.

8. From Dan Farmer, St Paul, Minnesota, 'Hello! I just found your website. My grandfather, Weston Farmer, created the **BUILD** erector set back in the mid '40's. My father has told me stories about how he & his four brothers would sit around creating the models that were eventually used in the manual. Quite apart from **BUILD**, my grandfather was a world renowned naval architect & writer. He even worked for Walt Disney in the early days, and I recall actually throwing out some Disney 'cells' as a teenager when helping my grandparents clean out the summer cabin!

The reason I went online looking for references to **BUILD** is that my father just sent me a complete **BUILD** set. Of course, **BUILD** was a small player, with Gilbert at the top of the heap, and ironically I think it was my grandfather who bought me the Gilbert **ERECTOR** set I played with as a child. But I'm pleased to find that **BUILD** is still remembered and mentioned on several web sites.'

[**BUILD** was a small system of some 36 parts, but with some unusual features. It is shown in MCS and I hope to include some notes on it in OSN at a later date.]

9. From Jacques Pitrat. 'I have found an ad for the French system **MOBILO** in the 18 December 1919 issue of the weekly 'Sciences et Voyages', and it is likely that the system had recently come onto the market at that point.' [See 20/581 for a note about **MOBILO** Wheels.]

10. From Orion DreamDancer. • Photos of a **Super GIRDER BILT** Set which match the one described in 19/555 except for the N&B. They have the same 4-40 thread, but the Nuts are brass (again 1/4" A/F), and the Bolts, 5/16" & 7/8" u/h, are steel (perhaps brassed) with respectively round & fillister heads. [A set shown on ebay seemed very similar except that the background colour of the tubular container was light brown instead of the red of Orion's set & those described in 17/467 & OSN 19. No Spanner could be seen and the Screwdriver was a 'commercial' type with a clear yellow plastic handle. The Bolt heads were too blurry to be clear.]

• 'The manual from a **STEEL TEC** No.4 Set corresponds to the one mentioned in 11/277, and is #7021 dated 1993. The Dump Truck is the only model in the No.6 which uses the 6*8 & 6*5h Plates in that outfit, and they are not in the No.4 Set or the #7021 manual.'

EXTRA MCS SHEETS Each Sheet costs 15p + postage if the whole batch as listed in each Issue of OSN is ordered at the same time. That makes £3.30 for the 22 below, plus postage. For all other purchases each Sheet costs 20p + postage if copied double-sided like the originals, but 7½p per side + postage if copied single-sided. All back Sheets can be supplied.

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BILD-A-SET: X1.2/5,4/5a/6 [1 Sheet]

CONSTRUCTOR [0]: X1.1,2,4,5 [2 Sheets]
CONSTRUCTOR [1]: X1.1,6,a,b,3/4c [3 Sheets]
ELECTRIC: X1.7,a,b,c [2 Sheets]
MECHANIX [3]: X1.1,2,3/4/6,5 [2 Sheets]
METALCRAFT 'LYONS': X1.4b/5a,5b/6a,4c/5c,5d/6b,
5e/6c,5f,4d/5g,7 [4 Sheets]
MICKEY MOUSE: X1.1,2,5,7 [2 Sheets]
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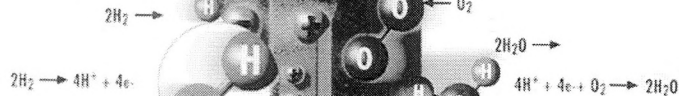
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from 8 Trunnions Plate; & a Cyclist. through reduction plastic Gears in of red ones in the new high eitech, and prestige

attached to a centre Face The last 2 are driven gear trains – with blue both, plus a pair Cyclist. So, a tech toy from no doubt a product useful to



PEM = Proton Exchange Membrane

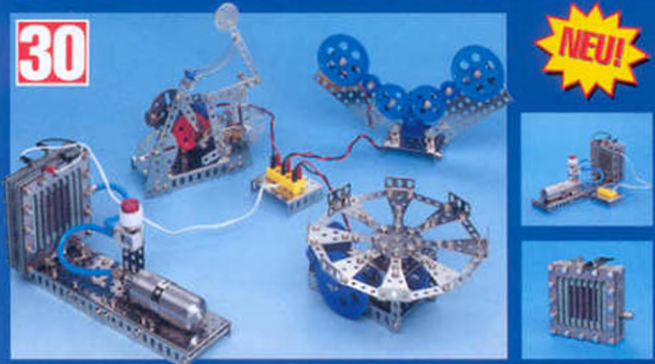
DIE BRENNSTOFFZELLE



CONSTRUCTION

30

NEU!



eitech BRENNSTOFFZELLE

the advertising department. But how far it will appeal to the 14+ year olds that it is said to be suitable for is perhaps questionable. Unlimited experiments are mentioned, but quite what can be done apart from powering up simple models by pressing the red button isn't clear. Perhaps schools might use it to demonstrate the principle. Kosmos also have a Brennstoffzelle set on sale and on the box is a simple 'car' made of transparent plastic and powered by the Cell. In a photo of the set there's something that might be a small multimeter, and if so it is no doubt for use in the 30 experiments that are claimed on the lid.

MANUALS None are shown in the 2000 catalogue; in the 2001 three are shown with the 03 Set (there used to be one with models for Sets 01 – 04) – the only cover visible has '03' on it, & the Lorry & Gantry Crane that are on the 03 box lid.

Contacts The address - eitech, 37308 Pfaffschwende, Germany - is unchanged; phone: 03 60 82 / 4 32-0, -22 (export), -24 (sales), -23 (dispatch); fax 03 60 82 / 4 20 28; email: eitech@t-online.de; web: www.eitech.de.

News of AMI-LAC The last update on this Italian system was in 1996 (15/401) and it's nice to hear that it is still being made. Werner Sticht came across their stand at the Nürnberg Toy Fair early this year and kindly lent me the leaflets he acquired.

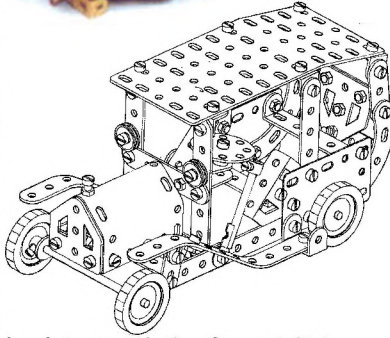
The two showing the 6 'i kits' and the standard sets 2-6 are identical to those in 1996, but some other outfits are included in a price list. In the standard range are a Set 5L, a No.5 in a wooden box, and Sets 7, 8, & 9, also, along with the No.6, in wooden boxes. A No.6 box Werner saw was made of unvarnished plywood and the parts were fitted into blocks of styrofoam. The manual for it was exactly the same as one from the 1960s (with the type of cover shown in OSN 15), and even the prices of parts hadn't been changed. The No.9 is only available to special order. Prices (possibly trade) go from €8 for the No.2 to €27 for the No.5, and €40 for the 5L to €129 for the No.9.

The i kits are called 'Set Kit Junior' on the price list, and run from €4 to €6 - there is one not on the Leaflet - #106 Scooter.

Also new since 1996 are 3 'Multi Kit' sets, and a leaflet shows the boxes and small photos of some of the models. Each box has 5 models on the lid and they are generally much better looking than the run of AMI LAC manual models. One outfit, #2000/1, price €24, is meant for 7+ year olds, and the rather elegant lid (below) has 5 models set against a flat B&W townscape, with a yellow band at the bottom. The models are a 3-Wheel Delivery Truck, a Tramcar (not so good), and the Loco, Motor Scooter & Motor Car below. They are all about 7" long with 1" Pulleys as



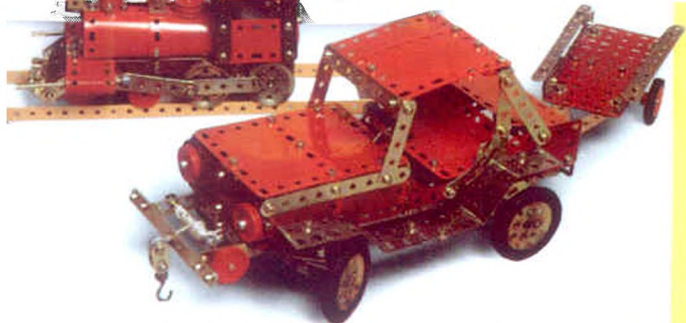
wheels, and Tyres where appropriate. The Car is taken from an A3 model sheet that shows 7 constructional steps in B&W, but whether this is the type of presentation used for all the models, or is just a publicity handout I don't know. The model looks well to me but has no mechanical features & requires bending several parts, including curving a Flat Trunnion at the back to match the Curved Strips.



The other two sets are listed as 'Multi Kit Senior' and the smaller one, #200, costs €38, and is for age 8+. The lid has the yellow band at the top and the models are against a red foreground blending into a blue background. '5 GRANDI MODELLI' are claimed on the box and they are a nice 9½" span Fokker Triplane, an 11" Aircraft Carrier & a Helicopter,

both above average, a quite good Windmill, and a long but indistinct Low Loader.

The other Set is #201 at €60 and the lid is in the same style as the #200 but across it is '10 GRANDI MODELLI MOTORIZZATI' - so the Set must contain a Motor. The 5 models shown, all interesting looking & realistic, are: a Ship, perhaps a frigate, about 20" long with what might be a little Helicopter on the afterdeck; a decent size Crane with a grab, and a 4-Wheel Truck to take the spoil; a Tractor with 2" Pulleys/Tyres as the back wheels, and fitted with a 4-furrow plough on the back which can be raised & lowered; the 4-4-0 Loco below with 1" & 1½" Pulleys as wheels, a conical funnel, & a cowcatcher (I think); and, also below, what I'll call a Pickup Truck & Trailer - it has a winch on the front, the wheels are 1½" Pulleys/Tyres and, as on the Tractor, they appear to steer.



The parts used in the new sets appear all be from the standard range, apart from some white plastic looking Windmill Sails - they are 5½" long, taper from 1½" to 2½" wide, and have a hole in each corner. Colours too look standard with the Flexible Plates mostly red but with a few in blue.

The name & address of the firm are much as before: Lac di Ausonio Alemanni, I-26841 Casalpusterlengo (LO), Vicolo Draconi, 5. The phone/fax is now 0039 0377 84225/84120, and the email address is lacgioc@tin.it.

Four ONADO Sets Courtesy David Hobson I've been able to examine two No.2 outfits and two No.3's, all apparently unused. All but one No.3 have the earlier, unpainted parts, but have proper manuals, and are thus thought later than the 'No.1' described in 15/404. They will be described in their probable chronological order, based on their packaging, followed by notes on the painted No.3. Leaving aside the introduction of paint, only very minor changes can be seen in the parts, but there were several different types of N&B, and two different threads were used in each Set, but not in a consistent pattern.

First No.2 The box is of plain brown cardboard, 11¼*9¼*1", with a 'No.2' circular sticker on the side of the lid. The lid label is the same as the later No.2 shown in 22/629 except that the girl's dress, the boy's shorts, & the small lettering are red (maybe bleached out of the OSN 22 item). Brass clips are again used to attach the parts to a backing board, light yellow in this case.

The contents are as in the OSN 22 'painted' No.2 - the parts are laid out in the same way in both sets, & are as described in OSN 15 & 22 except: • Their bare steel finish, bar the tinned Spanner & Road Wheels. • The Collar, single-tapped as before but 5/32" BSW, with a 7/16" u/h RH plain steel Set Screw. • The Spanner - it's the flat type shown in 21/615 but 100mm long and the 5 holes are parallel to the tapered edge. • The commercial 4BA N&B - the 42 hex Nuts are machined brass, 6.3mm A/F & 3.5mm thick; the 36 CH Bolts are dull treated steel, 3/8" u/h, with 6.2-6.4mm Ø heads. The Nuts fit the ring opening of the

Spanner. • The brown card box for the N&B, right, which measures 2½*2½".



The manual is an earlier version of the OSN 15 one, with 4 pages of the same size, plus covers. The front cover is the same but the Tower Bridge is grey (ordinary ½-tone), the lettering blue, and there's a note on the model, 'See instructions on Page 4'. As in the OSN 15 Leaflet the Intro talks of parts 'preserved in oil', and Sets No.2 & 3. There is no allusion anywhere to sets smaller or larger than these. The models are as before for Sets 2 & 3, and so the last one is the TRAVELLING CRANE on p4. The note on the cover about the Tower Bridge (which was later a No.4 model) includes the extra parts needed above a No.3 Outfit. The list of parts on the IBC is as in the OSN 15 Leaflet except that the Winding Handle has been added, and the lengths of the Spindles are given (as 1" & 3").

Second No.2 This is identical to the first one except: • The N&B. The Bolt is as above but with a RH; the Nut (62 were found against 35 Bolts) is a steel, commercial machined thin type (2.1mm thick) with the same finish as the Bolt. • The box for the N&B is different - the same size as the one shown in 21/615 and made of the same ivory card, but with no printing at all on it. • There was no manual with this Set.

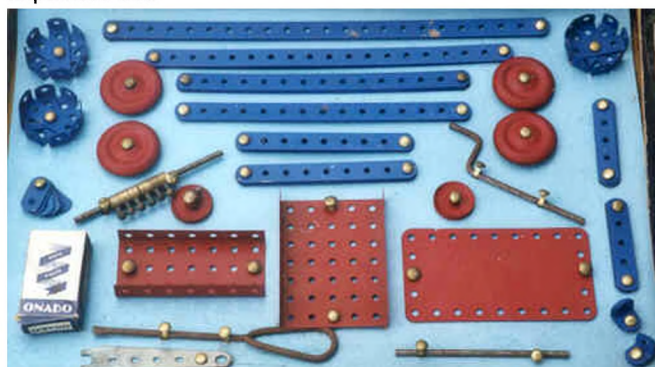
The 'Unpainted' No.3 The box (16*11*1¼") is a rich blue on the outside, and has the same label as the sets above, and 'No.3' on a similar sticker. The box for the N&B is the one in OSN 21 printed in navy blue. (No precise dates are known for ONADO but the set box was made from salvaged card, and 'DE IN HOLLAND' can be seen stencilled in black inside the lid).

The parts are clipped to a backing board as before but it is mauve in this set. The extra parts in the No.3 compared with the No.2, are: 2 each of 19 & 23h Strips, 8x 2h Strips, 4x DAS, a 5*7h Flanged Plate, 4 Collars, 2 Road Wheels, 1 each of 1" Pulleys, Fast & Loose, 1 Crank Handle, 2 Axles, 4" (instead of 1x 3"), a 5*9h Flexible Plate, and more N&B - 48 Bolts & 54 Nuts. Oddly there are only 8x 9h Strips against 9 in each No.2.

The parts are as already described except that • The Flexible Plate, and the discs of the 1" Pulleys, are tin plated. • The screwdriver is the same wire type but at 5¾" is slightly shorter. • There is 6-point peening on the Loose Pulley, and its bore is 4.1mm. • The N&B are different. The Set Screw in the Fast Pulley is 5/32" BSW, steel, 3/16" u/h, with a 5.9mm Ø CH. The Collars on the other hand are now tapped 4BA, with a 3/8" u/h, 6.2mm Ø RH Set Screw. The N&B, of plain steel, have changed to the BSW thread - the pressed hex Nut is 2.5mm thick, & 8.0mm A/F (and so fits the open end of the Spanner); the Bolt is ¼" u/h, with a 5.8mm Ø CH.

The manual with this set is identical to the one with the first No.2.

The Painted No.3 The box is the same as the unpainted set except that it is purple on the outside. The arrangement of the parts is identical (as in the photo below) but the backing card is light blue. The N&B box is the same navy patterned type. The only difference in the parts is that the Spanner is the OSN 21 type with holes parallel to the base edge, but even shorter at 87mm o/a. The manual is as in the unpainted set.



AMI-LAC in 2007 Most of the sets mentioned in 25/727 were still on the Company's web site (www.lacgiocattoli.it) last autumn, but 3 of the larger outfits no longer appeared and some new single-model sets had been added: 3 in the '100' series, and 3 labelled 'New', including one using a Solar Cell.

Basic Sets Nos.6, 7, & 9 of the previous 2-9 range were no longer listed. Those remaining now have reference numbers with '00' before the Set No. The lids of the Sets 2-5 in cardboard boxes have been changed to the style of the new No.3 below. Each has 5 small models, usually ones that were



Solar Cell powered 'Nodding Donkey' Pump (sold by Girders & Gears as No.300), the Sports Car above, and an Articulated Oil Tanker running on 1" Pulleys/Tyres.

Other Recent Outfits A number of used sets, 4 Basic and 3 others, were offered on the Italian Ebay in January 2006. Of the Basics, 3 were as already described, the fourth had the same style of lid but the large model was a **Dragster** with 1" Pulleys+Tyres as wheels.

Now the 3 other outfits. A Solar Nodding Donkey set was in a wooden box which scales at about 12*8", and the label has a picture of the model and the words **SOLAR 1 & DERRICK**.

The lid label below is from a set called **LA BICI** (= The



on the earlier lids, plus a larger one: a Biplane for No.2 and the same Crane for both the No.4 & No.5. The tops of the wooden-boxed set lids, 5L & 8, are not shown.

The current sets seem to have the same parts as before and the same range of finishes is used though the colour of some of the individual parts has changed. A few details are given of the wooden boxed sets. The **No.5L**, like the No.5, has 268 parts in 3 layers, while the **No.8** has 724 in 8 layers. There are photos of these 8 layers on the web site and the main parts that can be seen include 7,2,3,2 of 25,17,11,7h A/Gs; 5x 11h Flat Girders; 2 each of 5,11,25h Braced Girders; 4 each of 3" & 2" Pulleys; 5x 1 1/2" Pulleys with 4 Tyres; 2 each of 65mm Flanged Disc Pulleys, & 95mm Flanged Discs; 4 each of 5*11h & 5*7h Flanged Plates; 6 Flanged Sector Plates; 2x 3*5h, 2x 5*5, & 1x 5*7h Flexible Plates; 2 Boilers with Ends; 3 Sleeve Pieces. The flat parts may of course have others stacked below them. Smaller parts include a selection of Gears, among them a Worm, a Worm Housing, 3 Bevels of different diameters, & probably 2 sizes of Contrates; 3 different types of Pawl (with RH & LH versions of 2 of them); several items of 'brassware'; & a 7h Double Arm Crank.

No manuals are shown on the site for any of the sets. As none of the featured models are included in the 'standard' AMI-LAC manual (see 15/401), they are presumably covered elsewhere, on individual model sheets most likely.

In passing it may be of interest that Girders & Gears have inventories of Sets 3-8 on their web site (www.girdersandgears.com/amilac.html) based on the parts found in actual sets.

The 3 **Multi Kit sets** continue unchanged.

The **extra '100' sets** are No.107-9 for a Delivery Van, a Loco, & an Old Motor Car respectively - all models from the 2000/1 set, see 25/727.

All that is shown under '**New**' are photos of 3 models, a



Bike) on a label inside the lid. It is again in a wooden box, roughly 13*9", and is said to have 358 parts. The yellow frame is made of A/Gs and the wheel rims from 4x 25h Formed Strips. That would give a diameter of around 15", and the chain wheel is a Sprocket which scales at 3 1/2" Ø. The base of each wheel stand is a 5*7h Flanged Plate.

The final set has the lid label below. It is in a similar wooden box and is called **IL CICLISTA** inside the lid. It has 176 parts including 1 1/2 & 3/4" Sprockets for the Chain drive to the 3" Pulley back wheels Perhaps the 3" Pulleys are fitted with narrow black Rings as tyres, and the spherical head is probably another special part.



AMI-LAC HISTORY Anton Calleia wrote about a No.7 set in the 4th Quarter 2003 Southern California Meccano & Erector N/L. He had also been in touch with Dante Alemanni, the current head of the firm, who told him something of the history of the system. The company was founded by Dante's father Leonida in 1908 and in 1954-55 it acquired the AMI (Articoli Metallici Ingegnerosi = Ingenious Metal Items) firm owned by Fratelli Comerio. AMI sets had been made since the early 1930s and after the change of ownership AMI-LAC sets were produced. In LAC, LA stands for Leonida Alemanni, & C for Casalpusterlengo, the name of the town near Milan where the factory is located.

The company is proud that good quality traditional sets are still produced with nearly all the parts metal, and 5/32" BSW N&B. Also, that they were the first in the field to introduce powder-painting in 1980.

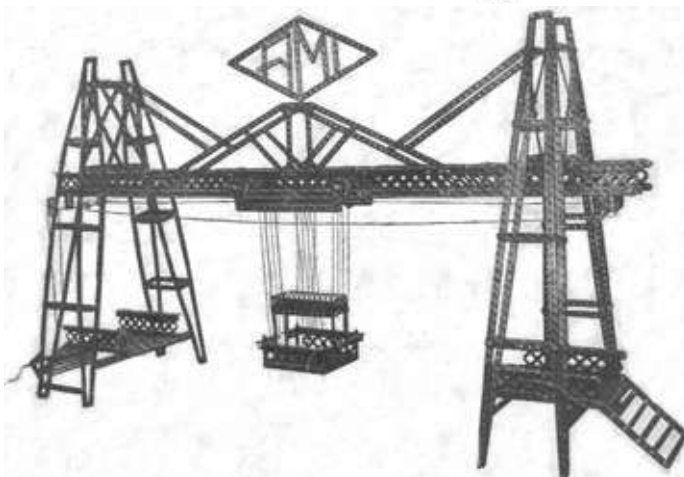
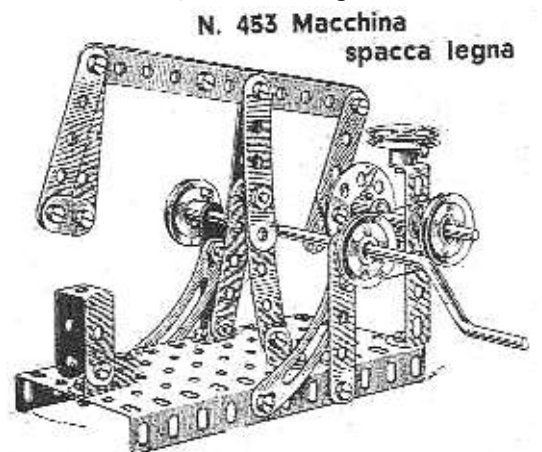
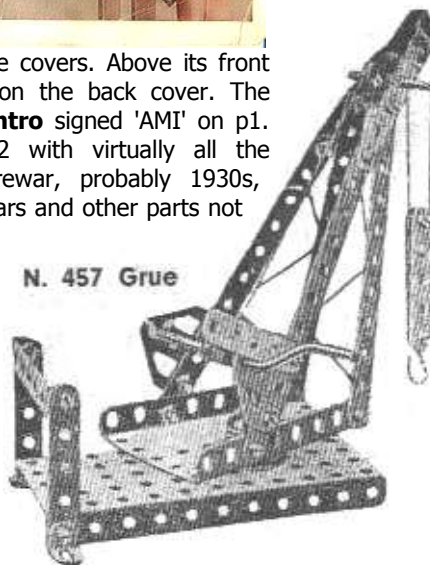
An AMI Manual Writing the above reminded me that Orion DreamDancer once kindly sent me scans of a No.1-2 AMI manual. As will (eventually) appear it is early version. It has 84



pages, 236*171mm, plus the outside covers. Above its front and below the Transporter Bridge on the back cover. The inside pages are as follows. • An **Intro** signed 'AMI' on p1. • **Basic Constructions** on pp2-12 with virtually all the illustrations taken directly from prewar, probably 1930s, MÄRKLIN manuals. Some contain Gears and other parts not in the then AMI range of parts, and most of them were carried forward into the AMI-LAC No.9 manual described in 15/401. • The **Set Contents** for Sets 1-4 & 1a-3a on pp13-14. They are identical to those for AMI-LAC sets in MCS but beware, more about this later on. • The **Illustrated Parts** on pp15-18. Compared with those for AMI-LAC in MCS & the No.9 manual (they are identical except that in MCS the parts

aren't named) the then AMI range was much smaller, 146 parts against 470, but again more on this later. The PNs are the same in AMI & AMI-LAC, so too the illustrations except that the 3" Pulley changes from the first MECCANO 4-spoke pattern to the current type. The only other difference is that the Flanged Disc #67 is described as 90mm Ø in AMI and 95mm in AMI-LAC. It would take too much space to list all the AMI parts but their PNs are: 1-1g,2-7,8-9h,10,11,12,12a,13-14,15,15a,16,16a,17-18b,19,19s,20,21,22,22a,23,24,25,25a,26,27-27b,32,33,33a,34-37c,40,44,44a,45-46,47,47c,52,52a,53,53d-55c,57,57a,59,60/4-60/11,60/4a-60/13a,61,62a,63,65,66,67. The main additional parts in the AMI-LAC range are 37 & 49h Strips & A/Gs; Flat Girders from 2-49h long; many more Brackets; D/Bs with bosses; more Gears including long Pinions, Concrates, Bevels, Helicals, & MÄRKLIN-type Gear Rings; Pinions & a 1" Pulley with dog clutch bosses; Sprockets & Chain, more 'brassware', Cranks, & fittings; Slotted Strips; Screwed Rods, Braced Girders; a Boiler, Sleeve Piece, & Chimney Adaptor; various circular parts up to 15cm Ø; many, many more Perforated & Flanged Plates, and Tyres. However later it will be clear that many of these parts were added to AMI before it became AMI-LAC. The AMI-LAC range often includes both MECCANO & MÄRKLIN versions of basically similar parts and this was the case for AMI Flanged Plates & DAS in the 1-2 manual. Also both a 56t & a 57t Gear are included (#27a/56 & 27a/57), presumably because Märklin hadn't changed to 57t when the AMI Gears were introduced. From the lists to hand Märklin introduced the 56t Gear in 1926 or 1927 and it was replaced by the 57t sometime after 1931 and by 1934 (Meccano changed from 56 to 57t in 1921). • A title page for 'MANUALE N.71a' on p19. • 142 **No.1 models** from N.1 Forchetta on p20 to N.141 Tabella on p37 (the extra model is 75a). • 257 **No.2 models** from N.201 Carriola on p38 to N.457 Grue on p84 (N.376 is misnumbered N.476).

The models are typical of those for small sets in the 1920s, and there is an adequate halftone or shaded line drawing for each, plus a parts list. I suspect that the halftones came directly from MECCANO, & the drawings from MÄRKLIN



manuals, the handful I checked certainly did. One of each type is shown above, full-size. AMI-LAC model illustrations are usually rather larger and are either clear line drawings or, for the larger models, good halftones. Many of them look to be original designs.

Some AMI Outfits 2 sets have been seen on Ebay, a No.00 and a No.8, almost certainly the smallest and largest ever produced. The **No.00** box is blue, 20*32cm, and the parts are clipped to an orange card. Some may be missing but the main ones are probably present: a 5*11h Flanged Plate, a few 5 & 11h Strips, a DAS, 4x 1" Pulleys, & a Bush Wheel. The latter is brass, the DAS bright, and the other parts a very dark green. The manual cover is for Sets 00-0 but is otherwise exactly as the 1-2, and the lid label is the same design. [->>]

The **No.8** looks unused. It is in an attractive wooden box, 53*34*15cm, with a hinged lid, and a hinged drop-down front giving access to 5 wooden trays. One has a corner cutout to accommodate a Boiler in the tray below. Most of the parts are clipped to orange cards with the small parts in 7 green, round boxes, probably plastic with AMI moulded into the lids. The label inside the lid is similar to the 1-2 manual but the model on it is a Lifting Bridge. There were 3 manuals with the Set, a



1-3, a 3-5 & a 6-8, and all have the type of cover above. In all they were said to have 550 pages with 150 in each of the two larger ones, and 1500 models for Sets 3-8!

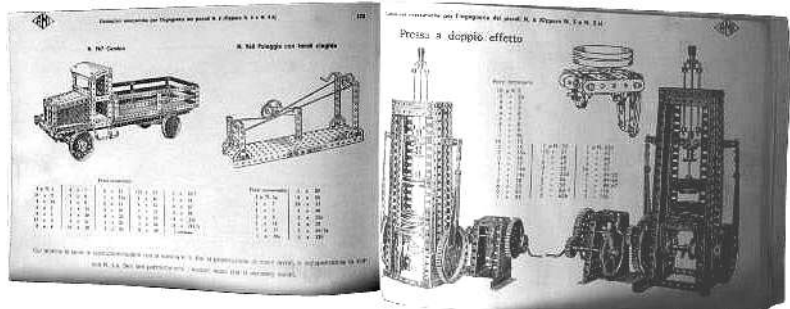
The No.8 is a big set and the Ebay photos show each of the 5 trays. It is obvious that they contain many different parts not in the 1-2 manual, Braced Girders for instance, and Tyres, Contrates, Sprockets, & Gear Rings. Also among the Ebay photos, most of a 6 sided parts leaflet on which can be seen parts which match most of those in the corresponding parts of the AMI-LAC parts list. The two lists are not in quite the same order though and because some of the Leaflet isn't shown, one can't be sure which of the AMI-LAC parts were not in the AMI range. Another item in the AMI leaflet is the sideplate Motor which continued into AMI-LAC.

So it seems that AMI developed both in terms of the range of sets, the range of parts, and perhaps the man-

uals (they had new covers at any rate). Turning to the **set contents**, those for Sets 1-4 & 1a-3a in the 1-2 manual are identical to those for the same AMI-LAC sets in MCS. However although an AMI-LAC manual cover is shown in MCS I suspect that the Set Contents there, for Sets 00-5, is actually for AMI. If so, the AMI range of sets at that stage had increased from 1-4 to 00-5, and sets 6-8 were still to come. There is no Set Contents in the AMI-LAC No.9 manual but the total number of parts in the sets is given and roughly it seems the AMI 00-3 became the AMI-LAC 1-5; while 4 & 5 became 6 & 7 but with fewer parts. The AMI-LAC No.7 had 580 parts, against 651 in the AMI No.5. Possibly the AMI 6 & 7 became the basis for the AMI-LAC 8 & 9 but there is no firm evidence for this. If correct though it may have been that AMI-LAC decided to see how sales of the larger sets went before deciding whether to have a prestigious No.10 based on the AMI No.8 (which was said to weigh 17kg).

Going back to the parts, the **colour scheme** in the No.8 is: light green Strips, DAS, A/Gs, & longer Flat Girders; dark green Flanged Plates, Braced Girders, & some Brackets; medium red Eccentrics, Trunnions, a few Brackets, & circular parts of 6cm Ø & above (the Flanged Disc scales at 9.5cm; the 3" Pulley is the later type and is shown thus in the parts brochure); bright smaller Circular parts but the 28mm Flanged Wheel is brass; light blue Flanged Sector Plates & Windmill Sails; blue Flexible Plates; blue-grey Boiler with dark, perhaps black, ends. A few of the small parts are chemically blackened.

All that is known of the **6-8 manual** are the 2 pages below that were shown on Ebay. The Press on the RH page became a No.8 model in the AMI-LAC manual with identical illustrations but neither of the other two models were included in it.



OSN 38/1153

AMI-LAC: S3

Snippet: 'New' System

Another METALLBAUKASTEN

'Früh übt sich ' on the sliding lid of the set right is the first part of a German proverb which ends '..were ein Meister will'. In English one might say 'Practice early if you want to become a master (craftsman)', and this sentiment is illustrated on the lid by the boy with his Crane and the man with his real crane in the background. The logo in the bottom right corner is made up of the words 'Kühle Spiele Halle' and possibly this could indicate a firm called Kühle making Spiele (= toys etc) in the town of Halle.

The largest town called Halle is some 30km east of Leipzig, and this seems the most likely given that Leipzig was a centre of toy making. If so it would have been in what was East Germany after WW2 but there are no signs of East German officialdom on the lid. So the Set could be from pre-WW2 and this would justify the date of c1930 claimed in the Ebay ad. But immediately postwar could also be possible, before the



apparatchiks got into their stride. And of course it might have been a West German Halle.

The box measures 30*23*3cm and the Ebay ad mentioned 'Nr.301/302', presumably the set designation, and probably the text under the logo on the lid. The Strips & Plates look as if they might be aluminium and scaling from them gives a hole pitch of around 1.5cm. Likewise the wooden Wheels are 2-2½cm diameter.

OSN 38/1153

METALLBAUKASTEN [6]: S1

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EDITORIAL Distribution of OSN pages by PDF seems to have gone well with no problems reported, and I'm glad to say that more than half OSN subscribers now use this method. So, if you were/are in two minds about it, give it a try, you can always revert to the printed version, and if you do your PDF sub will credited to you.

Several PDF subscribers have asked why the first 2 pages, 1452-3, of OSN 48 appeared last. I should have explained earlier that they would not be sent until the printed version was finalised. This to allow the printed & PDF versions to be the same, and to allow any late items to be included.

Shorter NOTES, with thanks to all contributors.

1. **MÄRKLIN's Early Days** Urs Flammer sent a copy of a pink flyer that he found in a MÄRKLIN manual. Its date isn't certain, the manual was dated 21.3 but the logo on the flyer, right, is thought not to have been used until 1922. Urs' son Patrik kindly translated the flyer for me. It is headed 'MÄRKLIN instead of MECCANO' and starts by saying that the construction sets our company is currently producing under the trade name MECCANO will from now on be available as Metallbaukasten MÄRKLIN, and that all parts in the MÄRKLIN sets are compatible with Meccano parts and can be used in combination. It goes on to say that MÄRKLIN sets will contain a larger and better selection of parts and that is the reason for the change of name, 'to distinguish them from the old MECCANO sets'. Finally that Märklin vouches for the quality & versatility of new sets and that they are a purely German product with all the parts produced by 'German hands' in Märklin factories. And that all aspects of the product are Märklin's property and are covered by patents etc.



MÄRKLIN: S4

[48/1452]

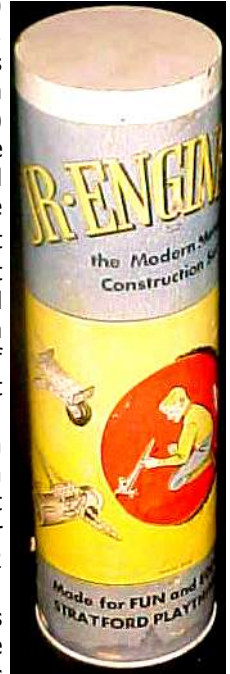
2. **Snippet. 'New' System: LA MECCANICA APPLICATA.** The manual below, said to be from the 1930s, was offered on Italian Ebay. As can be seen it carries a logo, 'MOGO'. I suppose it is for Set 4-5, and the model looks to be made from MECCANO-style parts.



LA MECCANICA APPLICATA: S1

[48/1452]

3. **Snippet. Another JR ENGINEER Set.** Unlike other known JR sets (see 43/1293 & earlier) this one is packed in a cannister (right), 9" high & 2½" Ø. The different parts which were shown with it are as those in the Special outfit (described in 33/976) but do not include the C/W Motor, the Disc, the Wheel Disc, the Perforated Plate, the Crank Handle, the Collar, & the 13mm Bolt. The Flanged Plate is not painted. One other part looks as if it might be a small gear wheel on a small diameter spindle: it could be part of a C/W motor, but it doesn't match any of the parts in the Motor in the Special set (see 33/976).



The quantities of the main parts shown were 1 Flanged Plate, 6 each of 5 & 12h Strips, 2 DAS, 2 Curved Strips, 4 at least of the A/B, 1 at least of each of the other 3 types of Bracket, 4 Road Wheels, 2 Axles, & a Screwdriver.

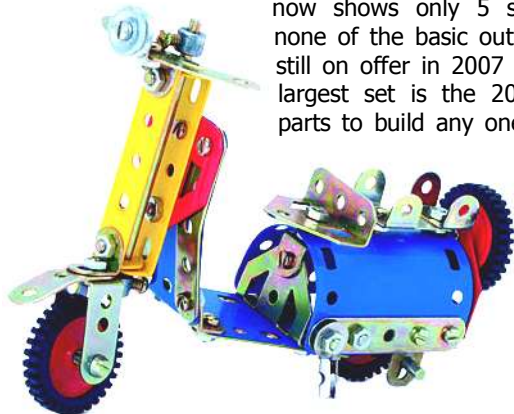
No manual was shown and the models on the cannister are not in either of the known manuals. The cannister itself was probably used in some of the models because it was said that 6 spots on it were marked 'punch here', and it could be seen that this had been done.

The maker of this set was Stratford Playthings Inc. and the 'indecipherable' name above 'Playthings Inc' of the front of the Special manual (see 43/1293) can now be seen to be 'Stratford'.

JR ENGINEER: S6

[48/1452]

4. **AMI-LAC Update** The firm's website, www.lacgiocattoli.it, now shows only 5 small sets with none of the basic outfits which were still on offer in 2007 (38/1151). The largest set is the 2000/1 with 219 parts to build any one of 5 vehicles, see 25/727.



Of the other sets, three, 107-109, were described in OSN 38, and the other, No. 106 with 127 parts, is for

another of the models that can be made from the 2000/1 outfit, the Scooter above. All 4 sets are packed in same type of plastic case shown right.

The same 3 models as in 2007 are shown as Novità but again with no indication as to whether there are sets for them.



AMI-LAC: S4

[48/1452]

Notes on the different AMI & AMI-LAC Sets, and a COSTRUZIONI MECCANICHE Puzzle. COSTRUZIONI MECCANICHE [Mechanical Engineering] appears on the lid label & manual cover of all known sets of the AMI & AMI-LAC brands (see 15/401 & 38/1153) until the last small sets noted in 48/1452. It also appears on a 'mystery' set, maker unknown, and perhaps a reader knows its story.

To start with, a recap of AMI/AMI-LAC history from 38/1152. AMI (Articoli Metallici Ingegnerosi [Ingenious Metal Articles]) sets were produced from the early 1930s by a company owned by Fratelli Comerio. In 1954-55 it was acquired by Leonida Alemanni and at that point the sets were renamed AMI-LAC (Leonida Alemanni Casalpusterlengo). Casalpusterlengo is a town near Milan in which the Alemanni factory was/is? situated.

In looking for clues to the mystery sets the AMI & AMI-LAC material to hand, mainly Ebay photos, was examined and the combinations of lid labels & manual covers used are set out below in their probable date order.

1. Two boys with a Lorry-mounted Crane for both the label and cover (Fig.1). The parts in the sets were black.

2. The label had the same boys but posed differently with a Lifting Bridge (Fig.2). The manual cover was unchanged. The parts in most sets seen are coloured (in the mix of colours typical of AMI/-LAC sets) but a few are still all black.

3. The Lifting Bridge label continued but the cover (Fig.3) has the boys in full colour with a Tower Crane. The parts are all coloured. Note. The largest set seen in Phase 2 above is a No.4; the smallest in this phase a No.5. So it's possible that Phases 2 & 3 are one period with different manuals for the smaller & larger sets. However 3-5 manuals are shown in some of the Ebay photos from each phase.

4. The Tower Crane design in Fig.3 is used on both the label and the cover. 3 sets have been seen, two No.2's, each with a 1-2 manual, and a slightly larger set with two manuals a 3-4 and a 3-5. One No.2 and the larger set have coloured parts but, unexpectedly, most of the parts in the other No.2 are black.

5. At this point the ownership had changed and both the label and cover were the familiar type in Fig.4 with a boy & a girl by a simpler Crane.

6. The revisions to the standard sets after 1996 and their packaging are covered in earlier Issues. It seems that the existing Fig.4 manuals were never changed. The various other sets which appeared were also covered but one not mentioned previously is an Energia Solare set. It has a lid in the style of the La Bici & Il Ciclista sets in 38/1151 but it is a multi-model set with 4 models shown on the lid. One other point, all the examples seen of Sets 101-105 have the AMI-LAC logo top right on their lids and most have LAC in an oval bottom right. But in two cases where there are several photos of the same set one at least does not have the LAC marking. Would that indicate a change in the company's ownership towards the end? The AMI-LAC website disappeared in 2017.

Now for the puzzle. Three mystery items have been seen (very few compared with, say, those from Phase 1). Two are No.1 sets with a No.1 manual, the third just a No.1 manual. All labels & covers are the same (Figs.5,6). One set has, apart from some small Wheels, black parts (Fig.6). The second is in an identical wooden box with some black parts as in the first set but also numerous red & green parts, which look like MECCANO. They include a 3" Pulley not listed in the AMI manual to hand. Almost certainly these red & green parts are not original. A page from the manual is shown in Fig.7, and the inventory for Set 1 is on another.

Beyond the black parts, no similarities could be seen between the mystery and AMI/AMI-LAC sets. From the parts the inspiration for the mystery set seems to have been MÄRKLIN and the Fig.7 page of models is in a 1939 MÄRKLIN manual, arranged in the same way. Some, perhaps all, the models are in earlier editions, and also in the AMI manual, but scattered among the pages.

So a copy of late 1930s

MÄRKLIN seems likely, probably from soon after, rather than before WW2. That would seem to rule out the mystery outfit having been an early AMI set but it's just possible that it was another line from Comerio (or less likely, even later by Alemanni). But this seems unlikely and pro tem the Set is seen as being from a different system. Perhaps by an ex-AMI employee?

