

MASTERBUILDER Several readers have asked if there is more information available about this system and there is a little but there are still large gaps. The parts available as originally shown in MCS were from a 0 set manual; in Frank Beadle's latest version those in a No 2 are reproduced, with a wider range of strips, girders, plates, brassware, etc. The only manuals and sets seen are within the range 0 to 3 and how these relate to the sets 4001 to 8003 given in MCS is not known.

First to discuss the MB (MASTERBUILDER) parts that are usually found and are included in sets 0 to 3, though not necessarily in those from 4001 upwards, as will be clear later. As stated in MCS the steel parts normally have a black metallic finish although occasionally they are nickel plated. The strips are $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide, the Channels are $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide by $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep, and the Angles are $\frac{1}{2}$ "x $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The plates are rather brittle, they are very dark brown in colour and those seen are about .135" thick rather than the 6mm stated in MCS. The Drum is also of plastic and two colours exist, black and a very dark red. Some of the brass parts are castings with the part numbers cast in and only the bores machined. The rest are fully machined and are often not marked with their numbers. Variations in the design of these parts are found, for example the Shackle as illustrated in MCS is $1\frac{1}{8}$ " long but there is also a $\frac{7}{8}$ " version with an almost fully rounded end. There is a short version of the Connector 1044, only $\frac{1}{2}$ " in length, and one variety of the Socket has a diameter of $\frac{5}{16}$ " instead of the normal $\frac{3}{8}$ ", and has a cross bore at right angles to the usual cross tapping. Three gears are shown in MCS although only two of them are numbered, the third is marked KW 1103 and has 30 teeth against the 20 and 40 of the other two. All are made of brass and they and all the brass parts, including the cast ones, are found either nickel plated or left in their natural state.

MCS shows two Railwheels (flanged wheels), the $\frac{1}{2}$ " 1081 (0 set) and the 1" dia 1082 in the No 2. 1081 is fully machined from brass and stamped with its number but 1082 has not been seen bearing a number and there may be two versions of it. One that has been seen in a more or less complete set is made from a steel pressing with a $\frac{5}{16}$ " dia boss added (sketched below); the other is fully machined and similar in form to the 1081, but has not been positively identified as MB.

These then are the parts commonly found, but much less often parts painted dark blue, red, yellow or orange turn up. This finish was applied not only to the steel parts but also to the brassware. Not all the parts in MCS have been seen in this colour scheme but 4 parts not in MCS have been found so painted: a blue 3x5 hole plate, fully perforated, and stamped MASTERBUILDER 6005 MADE IN ENGLAND, a similar plate, but with flanges added to its longer sides (KW6004 in both blue and orange), an 11x5 hole Flanged Plate with the flanges on the longer sides (not stamped but in the same blue as the Plates above), and a red 8 hole Bush Wheel bearing KW6031. These parts were probably from the time of the 4001 etc sets because with some of them was found a small cardboard box with MASTERBUILDER CARFAX on it and the latter name is that of set 6001 in MCS. Inside the box were some labels, 2 of which are reproduced here, they mostly have names of known parts on them but two are additional 6000 series parts. No doubt there are other parts yet to be found.

MB is a rather unusual system with its narrow strips, the channel girders and the relatively large amount of brassware available. One drawback when making models is that none of the parts have any slotted holes, although some play is present because the bolts are smaller than the holes. Some detailed dimensions were given in OSN 1. Frameworks can be made that look both light and strong by careful use of the various strips and girders, but the brass parts, particularly the cast ones, tend to look rather clumsy. The (later?) ones with the diameter reduced to $\frac{5}{16}$ " look much better and with the $\frac{1}{8}$ " diameter thread used there is still an adequate, if not generous, wall thickness for the tapped holes. There was no roadwheel or anything that could be used as one even in Set 2, which can't have helped sales in the 1950's, but presumably the Automobile Sets mentioned in MCS would have included them. Another oddity was to have 3 spur gears, which gave at most a 2:1 ratio, but no bevel, contrate or worm.

precision engineered
MASTERBUILDER parts

FLAT PANEL, 1" PART No. KW6005

MADE IN ENGLAND

KW3029

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STRIP, 2" PART No. KW6012

MADE IN ENGLAND

KW3029

