REPORT OF THE 10th MEETING OF THE

MIDLANDS MECCANO GUILD

by the Secretary

DESPITE a casualty list of 14 members, absent through sickness or because of previous commitments, the 10th Meeting of the Midlands Meccano Guild was once again a successful turnout. A warm, dry day greeted the members as they approached Shakespeare country on Saturday, March 25, in a wide variety of transport ranging from light vans to minibuses. By 2 p.m., the models they carried were set up in the St. John's Ambulance Hall in Stratford-upon-Avon and, in no time at all, the gallant band of volunteer wives had the first brew of tea handed round.

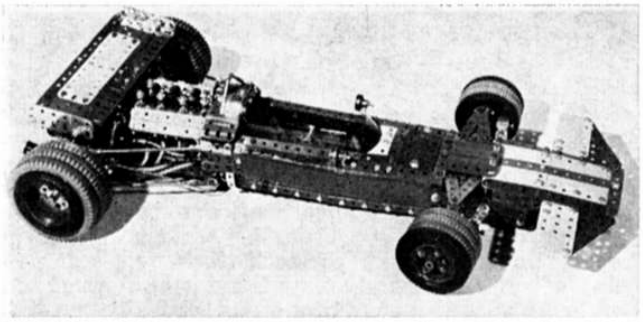
Shortly after this welcome refreshment the Meeting proper began with a short address from the Secretary who demonstrated a recent genuine Chinese "Meccano" set—a remarkable copy in silver, yellow and blue—and then went on to show some further small items of recent manufacture for the enthusiast. This was followed by a series of demonstration talks by individual members who described their models from the platform, each member being limited to ten minutes' talk. David Guillaume, of Alcester, started the ball rolling by showing part of an automated industrial processing plant which went through a sequence of dipping parts by a vertical and horizontal conveyor mechanism. The section displayed was of module construction so that sub-sections could be easily serviced and demonstrated, Motors with Gearbox being used for the sequencing and operational movements.

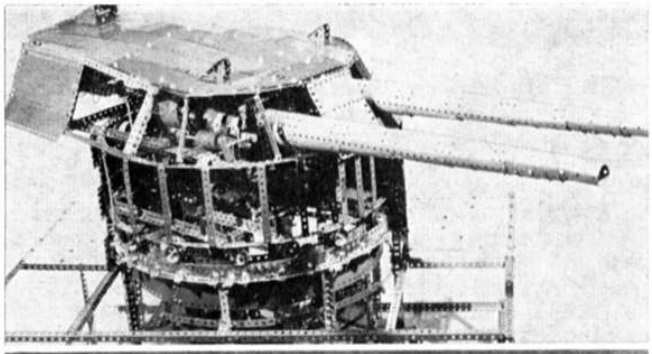
Transport models were again a prominent feature of the meeting and Peter Dixon of Stourbridge showed his excellent Formula 1 Grand Prix racing car. Almost 2 feet long, Peter's car was a prototype incorporating the main features of a modern car including a well moulded body form and cockpit, wishbone suspension and flexible steering geometry, as well as aerofoils front and rear, fully operative foot pedals on clutch, accelerator and disc brakes, and a very neat compact six-speed gear box of all-Pinion design. This was the first advanced model which Peter had ever designed and he made a first-class job of it.

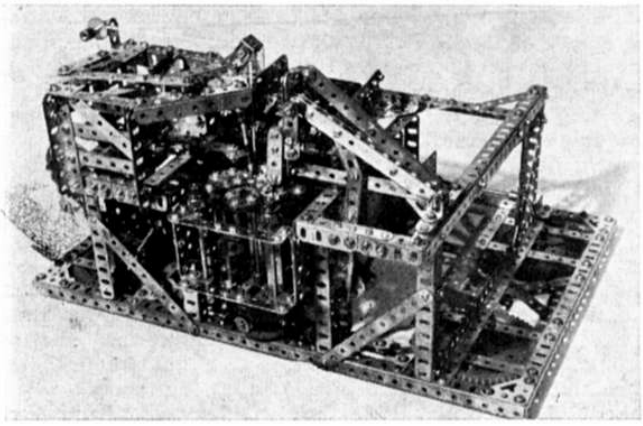
Peter was followed by a veteran in vehicle modelling, Brian Edwards of Bedford, who demonstrated a very neat vintage Morgan three-wheeler car complete with outboard twin-cylinder motor-cycle engine and transmission. Prototype two-speed gearbox, clutch and parallel bar steering geometry were included. Front mudguards and headlamps swivelled authentically with the steering and the suspension—coil spring at the front, twin cantilever leaf springs at the rear—performed in a realistic manner. As usual, detail was excellent in Brian's model.

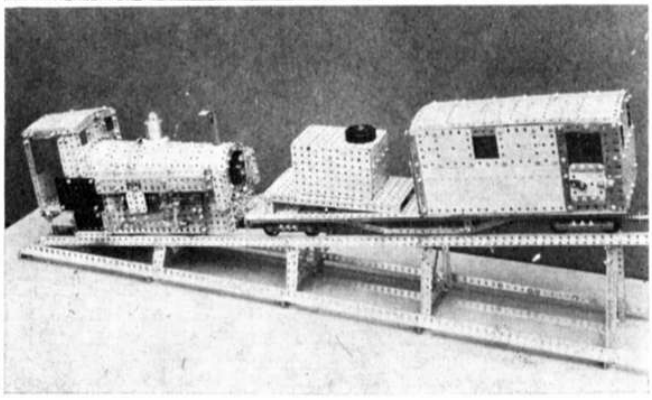
A novelty item was provided by Mike Nicholls (a brand new Guild member and self-confessed novice!) in the form of a "Sawing a Woman in Half" sideshow. The fiendish magician, with remarkable likeness to Alf Garnett, rolled his head and politely raised his hat as he cut through his victim who also rolled her head and both feet at the same time! Mike also showed a modernised version of a pre-war Watts

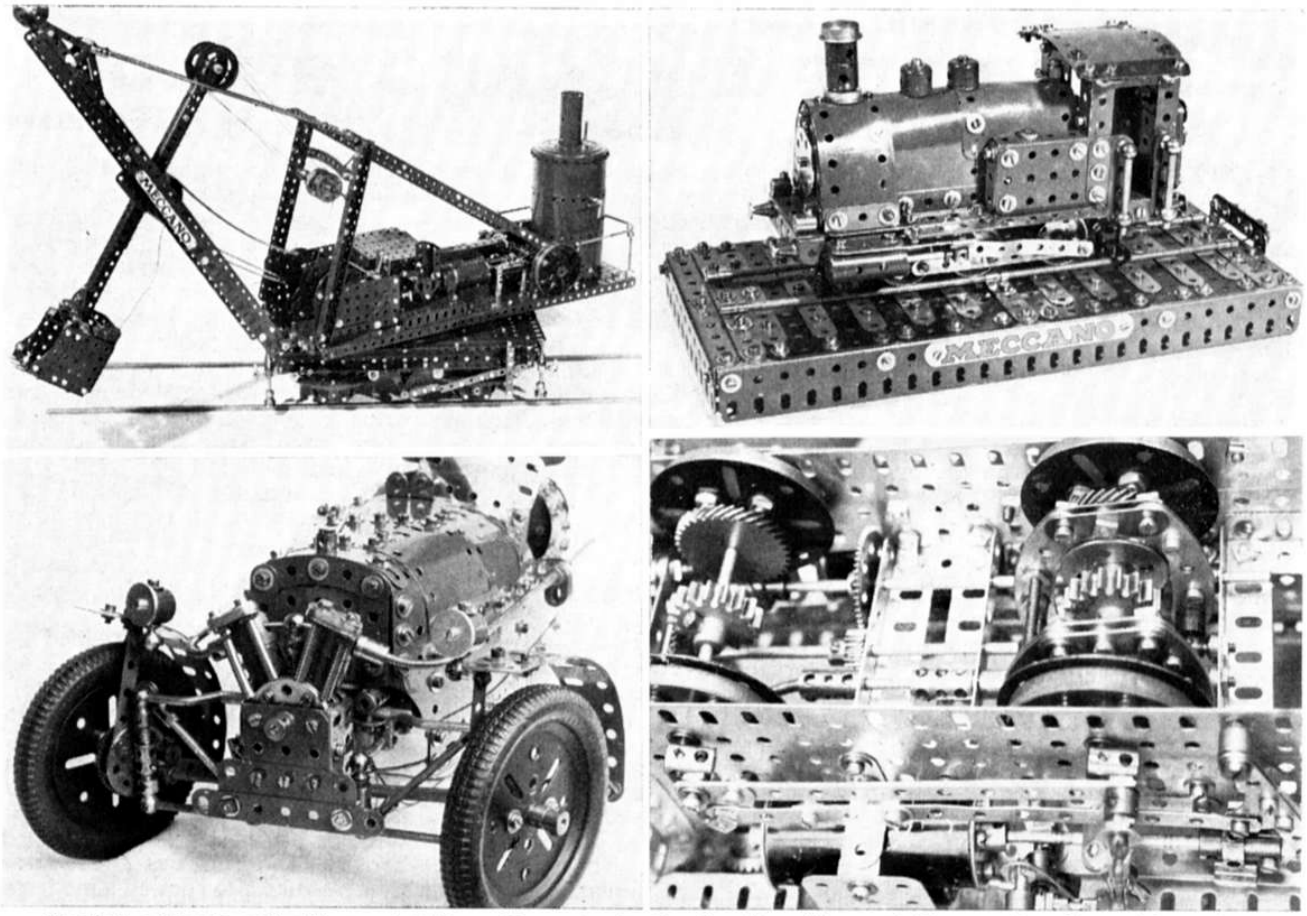
Below, reading clockwise, a Formula 1 Grand Prix racer by Peter Dixon. The model is complete with working 6-speed gearbox, clutch, differential and many other features. One of the two "king-size" models on show—a 16 in. gun-turret of 1914 vintage modelled by Tony Homden. The Snowdonian Rack Railway by Stephen Lacey with water-tank truck and luggage van. The valve gear and angle of tilt of the boiler are as per the original. The President's Prize-winner—an elegant high-speed French Knitting Machine by Phil Ashworth. The tip of a standard crochet hook is the only non-Meccano part required!











Top left, a "freelance" rail-mounted Steam Excavator by Jim Gamble. The model has excellent lines with motions controlled through gear linkages from realistic steam engine detailing. Top right, a neat 0-6-0 Tank Locomotive reproduced by Bob Faulkner. Bottom left, speedster of a different age! A vintage Morgan Three-Wheeler by Brian Edwards, including authentic suspension and steering geometry with 2-speed gearbox. Bottom right, an underside view of Stephen Lacey's rack locomotive showing the novel use of a large-toothed Quadrant Pinion to grip the made-up centre rack between the rails.

Beam Engine and explained how he had overcome some of the early imperfections common to such models. Jim Gamble then brought his first-class freelance railway excavator up to the platform. This model was beautifully detailed with a fully "riveted" boiler (concealing a Motor-with-Gearbox which supplied all movements!), steam motion with valve gear, flywheel etc. and a four-movement gearbox supplying drive to travelling, slewing, bucket racking and jib luffing. A fully-sprung railway truck base was provided and a novel turntable to Jim's design incorporated a "spider" made from a Circular Girder carrying ½ in. Pulleys which ran between roller races comprising 6 in. dia. Pulleys. The excavator was beautifully built in the advanced manner of the modern supermodel.

Clive Hine had two excellent models on show, one being a six-car fairground ride on undulating tracks which ran throughout the meeting accompanied by piped fairground organ music. His second model was an automated Coles self-propelled crane where steering, road travelling, hoist, slew and luffing were controlled by a drum-switch operating relays made from Meccano Electrical Coils and Brass Strips. By contrast, the next model, exhibited by Len Wright of E. Brough, Yorkshire, was one of the two "King-size" models on display. Len had made a replica of the giant Lorry-Mounted Crane, designed by Eric Taylor for a previous Guild Meeting. Len had managed to improve the wheel arrangement by using a heavier gauge of large-diameter tyre (available on certain ash-trays), but otherwise this was an exact copy of Eric's original model in a slightly different colour-scheme.

Last of the platform demonstrations was given by Phil Ashworth of Hull. Phil is noted for his sophisticated models, modular construction and total surprises! This time he astonished the Guild once again by showing a French Knitting machine in answer to the President's prize challenge made some two years previously. The machine was completely automatic and had mechanical linkages throughout. The "cotton reel" and four "panel pins", common to childhood days when French knitting was done on such homely items with the aid of a pin, were replaced in the Meccano model by a hollow drum based on spaced Gear Rings with four Keyway rods mounted vertically in the centre. The drum is indexed through 90 deg. for each stitch by a gear train and a dipping mechanism, fitted with the tip of a crochet hook (the only non-Meccano part permitted within the rules for the President's prize), picked up a loop at each oscillation, synchronised with the 90 deg. turn of the knitting drum. A high speed spinner, also synchronised, fed the wool yarn from a storage reel via a tensioning device, the business end of the spinner being a Cord Anchoring Spring, the tiny loop of which proved ideal as a feed for looping after the stitch was completed. The machine was hand-operated with a motorised alternative and, in either model, the machine knitted faultlessly to give Phil the prize which his brilliant

analysis of the motions richly deserved. On receiving his prize later in the meeting, in the best spirit of the Guild, Phil handed over his cheque to the St. John Ambulance Brigade Chairman.

At this stage the assembly moved down to the far end of the hall to see the last of the demonstrations. This was the other King-size model of giant proportions in the shape of a 16 in. gun turret of the Queen Elizabeth Battleship type, dating back to 1914. Tony Homden had built this amazing model which was complete through several decks from the magazines and cordite rooms to the actual turret itself. A dozen electric motors were required to operate the multiple movements which included shell hoisting, shell and cordite ramming, breech locking, elevation, recoil and turret slewing on a massive 24-roller turntable. This latter item had taxed Tony's skill extensively in producing a perfectly smooth, circular path for the heavy turret to revolve on when powered by standard motors. Any model which can survive a 100 mile van journey on its side and still perform is a credit to any enthusiast! The model was complete with dummy cordite bags and a magazine filled with wooden shells to scale size, turned, says Tony, on a Meccano lathe, specially built for the job. His model, together with the other excellent demonstrations from other members, earned well-deserved applause.

Tea break was taken at 4.30 p.m. when the Guild tucked in to a delicious spread put out by the kitchen "staff". They were thanked by the President on behalf of the Guild. A short business meeting took place at 5.15 p.m. when new members were enrolled, the prize for the French Knitting Machine was presented and the date of the next meeting fixed. Members were then free to roam among the many other models on display round the side of the hall and to discuss points with other enthusiasts. This is a most valuable opportunity for exchanging ideas. Meccano parts were on sale at attractive prices and the camera was set up to record the models on show. The meeting closed at 8 p.m. and was voted another success.

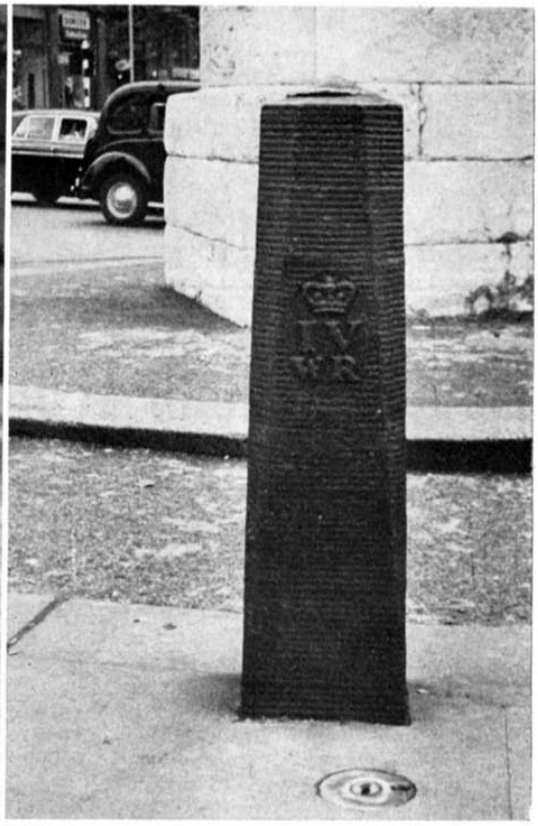
Footnote

Peter Matthews, Secretary of the Holy Trinity Club, is going to South Africa and will be handing over leadership to Tony Homden. A statement will be issued after their next meeting.

STILL SERVING

Have you looked closely at old bollards in your town or city?

By E. HARPER



EVERY year more and more ancient landmarks disappear from our roads. Among the most frequent casualties are some of the old bollards which for centuries have silently guarded pedestrian lives.

As soon as wheeled transport, whether man powered or horse-powered, reached proportions that endangered the lives of those walking, some form of bulwark was needed. At first, probably stout timber was used, to be replaced by stronger, more lasting bollards, made of other material, many of which still stand in our towns today.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the Admiralty found itself with a quantity of obsolete cannon cluttering up the dockyards. Similarly the Army had a store of obsolete guns. Someone had the excellent idea that these old cannon could be used at strategic points to protect the public and in due course they were erected on pavement edges and around public buildings.

An early engraving by Inigo Jones of Covent Garden shows neat rows of cannon-bollards protecting the open space before the building. Bollards such as those drawn by Jones can still be seen in the area to this day.

A genuine 6-pounder sawn-off cannon can be seen in Upper Thames Street behind Cannon Street station.

The church of Allhallows the Less which stood here