

THE TAYLOR TOUCH

A COMMEMORATIVE ARTICLE
DEDICATED TO THE LATE
ERIC TAYLOR ■ BY BERT LOVE

At a time when the fortunes of Meccano Ltd were going through a sticky patch some ten years ago, a few adult enthusiasts exchanged letters with a view to injecting some new interest in the hobby. After a nervous start, when many an adult was wondering if he might be considered either childish or senile for getting out his long-cherished Meccano Outfit, the Midlands Meccano Guild was formed at Stratford-On-Avon, in 1968.

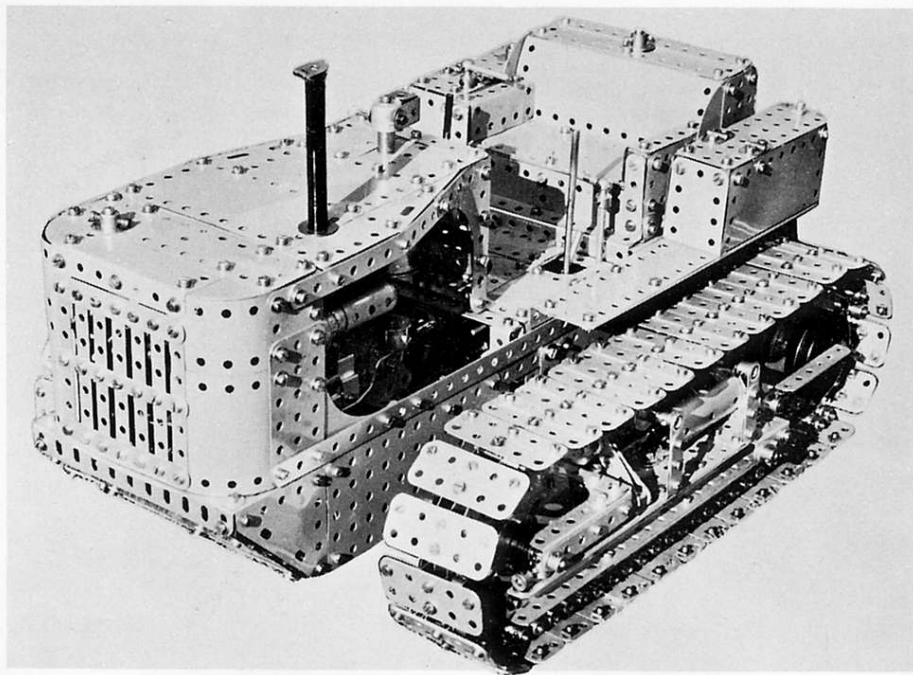
One of the founder members of this Guild was Eric Taylor of Nuneaton in Warwickshire, and I will never forget his breezy reply to my invitation to attend the inaugural meeting: "... be delighted to attend, ... quite handy with a broom, putting up tables etc ... I'll bring a model along, but it's nothing very special ..." Eric's 'nothing very special' model turned out to be the focus of the meeting, giving us all a lesson in how to build a model along engineering lines.

It was, of course, his well-known (now world wide) Giant Level-Luffing Crane. Its general outlines were taken from a thumbnail picture appearing on the cover of an old French magazine, but its construction was all Eric Taylor.

Before seeing the crane erected and operating, one enthusiast was foolish enough to remark in Eric's hearing that good supermodels could no longer be built because all the best parts were obsolete. When Eric put his crane through its paces, he soundly disproved such fallacies with his own model, making the case for obsolete parts so ridiculous that the unfortunate enthusiast concerned still has a red ear to this day!

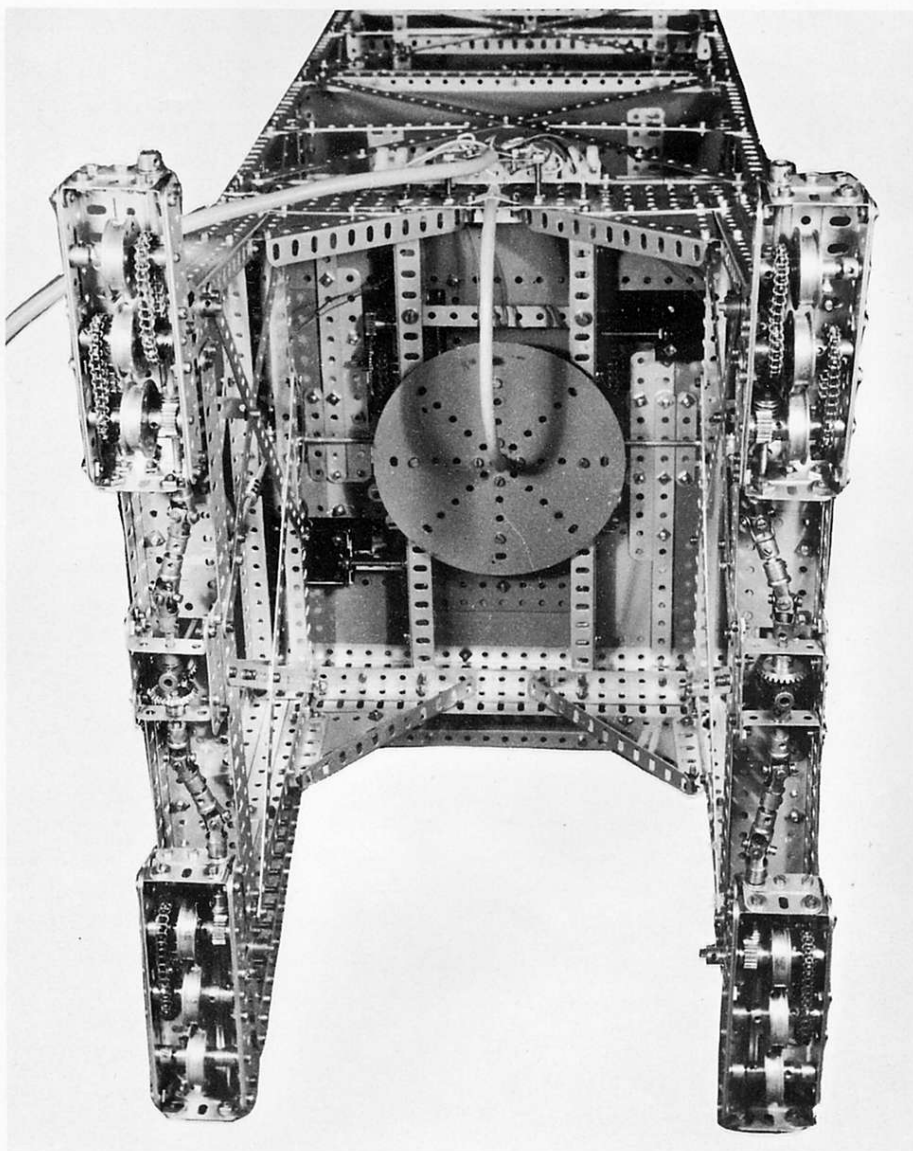
Even a gentle wiggling for the use of the occasional non-standard part brought a ready reply from Eric, who would sketch an alternative section of the model using only standard parts, and anyone with the patience to test this, soon found that he knew what he was saying.

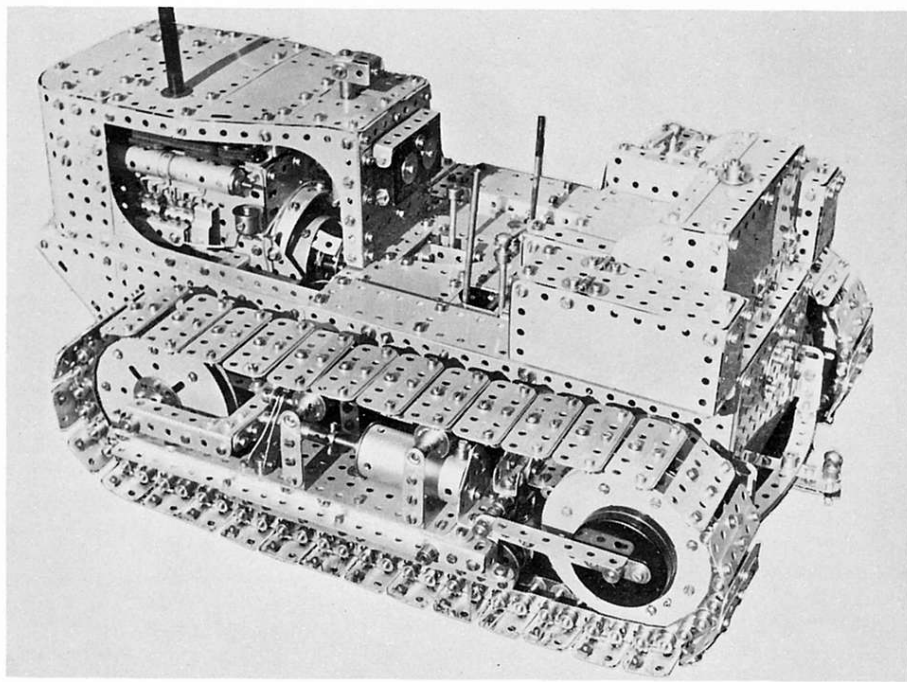
As a trained engineer, Eric could



BELOW: An underside view of the late Eric Taylor's Giant Level-Luffing Crane. Elegant but sturdy portals supported the Crane on four power-driven floating bogies. All movements from the four independent motors were remotely controlled via a trailing 12-core cable.

ABOVE: A general view of Eric Taylor's Heavy Duty Crawler Tractor, in which all four gears were reversible, the tracks were spring-loaded for tension, and the track frames were compensated for chassis tilt by an ingenious equalizing beam mechanism.





ABOVE: A side view of Eric Taylor's Heavy Duty Crawler Tractor showing rollers, sprockets and tension ram in the track frame. Some engine details can be seen, and the position of the gear, steering, and reverse levers. Note the swinging tow-bar pin and quadrant.

cope with anything from a model maker's specimen off the lathe to the control of a complete heavy earth-moving plant, so when he turned up with the equally well-known Heavy Duty Crawler Tractor at the next Guild meeting, it too was soundly designed on engineering principles.

His models reflected his personal philosophy of usefulness and purpose, ruggedness and reliability; he was not a man who suffered fools gladly.

It was a privilege for me to visit Eric's home, as I did quite frequently with my camera gear, to put his work on record stage by stage; and every challenge of mine as to why he had used a particular part, mechanism or method of construction was met with a precise and logical answer. As each model was stripped before the camera, a lifetime's skill was revealed in Eric's approach to his design and construction. The experience was something like sitting at the feet of Plato.

Building instructions for these first two models were drawn up by Eric and printed by the author in response to a wide demand, following the publishing of mere glimpses of the Crane and Tractor in the *Meccano Magazine*, and literally hundreds of copies of the original photographs were sent to Meccano enthusiasts in all corners of the globe.

The impact of Eric's models on the Meccano scene was almost electric. Model-building standards at subsequent meetings rose rapidly to a very high level. Some members stood back in awe, almost thunderstruck by the precision of this new-era Meccano modelling, but the inspiration for the fainthearted was

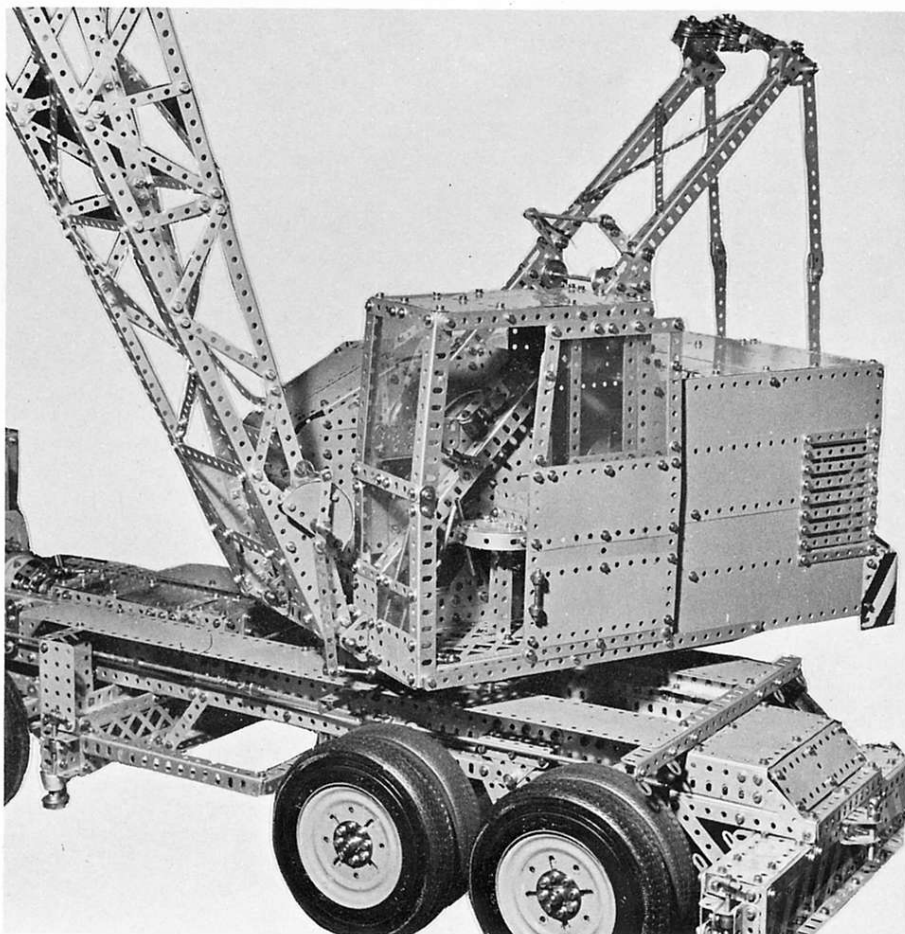
there, and what is more, those who thought that they knew a thing or two had to look to their laurels.

Those who had previously been entrenched in the notion that the pre-war Supermodels were the acme of perfection, had to revise their opinions pretty smartly. At the same time, other Guild members showed their mettle by producing very sophisticated models, and underlined the versatility of the system in so doing.

Any illusions that men were playing with children's toys were soon dispersed as the Guild increased its membership and broadened its range of modelling topics. Any enthusiast with a real eye for the possibilities of the Meccano system can see how far we have come just by a brief visit to Henley-on-Thames at Meccano Exhibition time, or to the country-wide exhibitions where the new traditions of superb Meccano modelling are clearly in evidence.

One good picture is worth a thousand words I am told, so I will continue my tribute to Eric Taylor by asking readers to take a close look at the four illustrations accompanying this article.

Eric's death is a sad loss to the Meccano Fraternity, but the recreation of his Crane, Tractor, and Giant Lorry-Mounted Crane at Meccano Meetings around the world is a great tribute to his example.



BELOW: A partial rear section of Eric Taylor's Giant Lorry Mounted Crane. Main and auxiliary gear boxes were fitted to the chassis. The machinery cab had self-erecting 'A'-frames, captive ball race, and anti-fouling luffing ropes. Additional features included tandem steering, brakes on all four wheels, twin rear differentials, on-beam coupled axles, and outrigger stabilizers.