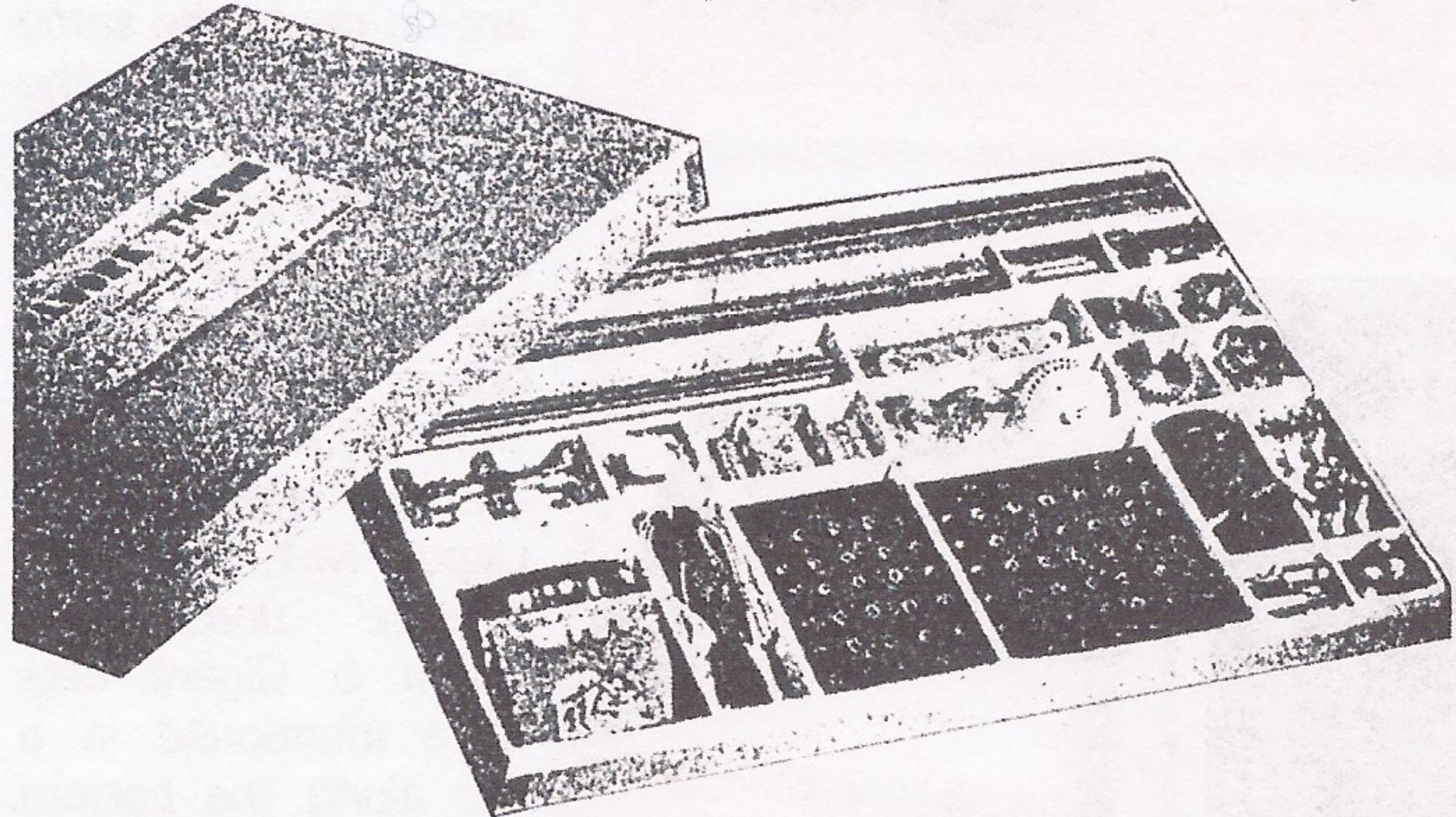


MASTERBUILDER History Some notes on the parts & sets in this early post-WW2 UK system were given in 1/3, 4/73, 6/119, 8/184, & 9/225, but little was known of the history & few definite dates were available. Now David Hobson has sent details of the ads which appeared in *Games & Toys*, & Geoff Brown has passed to me some recollections by Lloyd Tomlyn of MASTERBUILDER's final days. Some photos of sets from various sources will also help with the details. Thank you to all.

K.W. Products (KWP hereafter) made MASTERBUILDER (MB henceforth) and it still isn't known what the K.W. stands for; but the W may come from Wardlaw W. Waddell, the man who put his name to the Intro in the Model Leaflets, with 'Designer' after it.

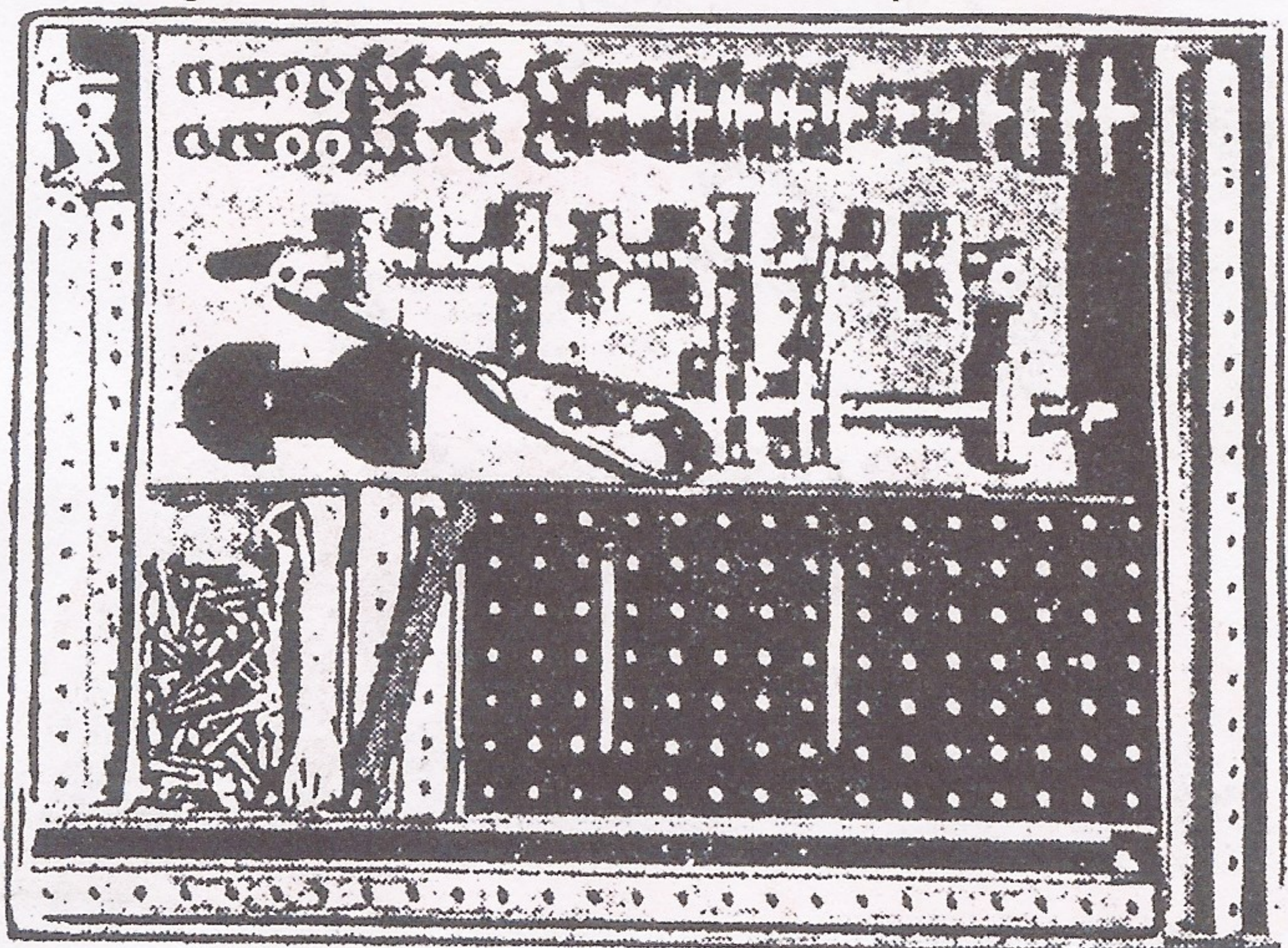
METALWORK THREE The first ad from KWP was in Feb. 1946 for, not MB, but 'Our First Product - METALWORK DESIGN NUMBER THREE' with 'Attractive Plastic Parts' & 'Lightweight Metal Alloys'. The name on the lid of the set in the illustration from the ad, below, is probably METALWORK THREE. The parts



that can be seen look like those in this first MB phase, including Bakelite Plates, Gears, & cast Unions. The reference to Lightweight Alloy though presumably means some parts in aluminium alloy. No METALWORK THREE sets or alloy parts have come to light so far. The address of the company was given as 55a Chaveney Road, Quorn Leicestershire, Tel: Quorn 259, and the Home & Export Agents were Neville B. Bloch Agencies, 23 Coleman Street, London, E.C.2., Tel: MONarch 2502 & 1903. The ad was repeated in the March issue.

THE NICKEL PERIOD In April the first MB ad appeared, headed 'The New Range of Constructional Sets for Boys', and an Excavator was shown, a No.3 model, though this wasn't stated. Lightweight Alloy was mentioned again, but not in any later ads. No KWP address was given but a Leaflet KW1262 was available from Bloch Agencies (the No.1 set of the time was KW1261-1).

The May ad showed the 4 sets, Nos.0-3. All have a single layer & the largest is shown below. The black shape under the Screw-

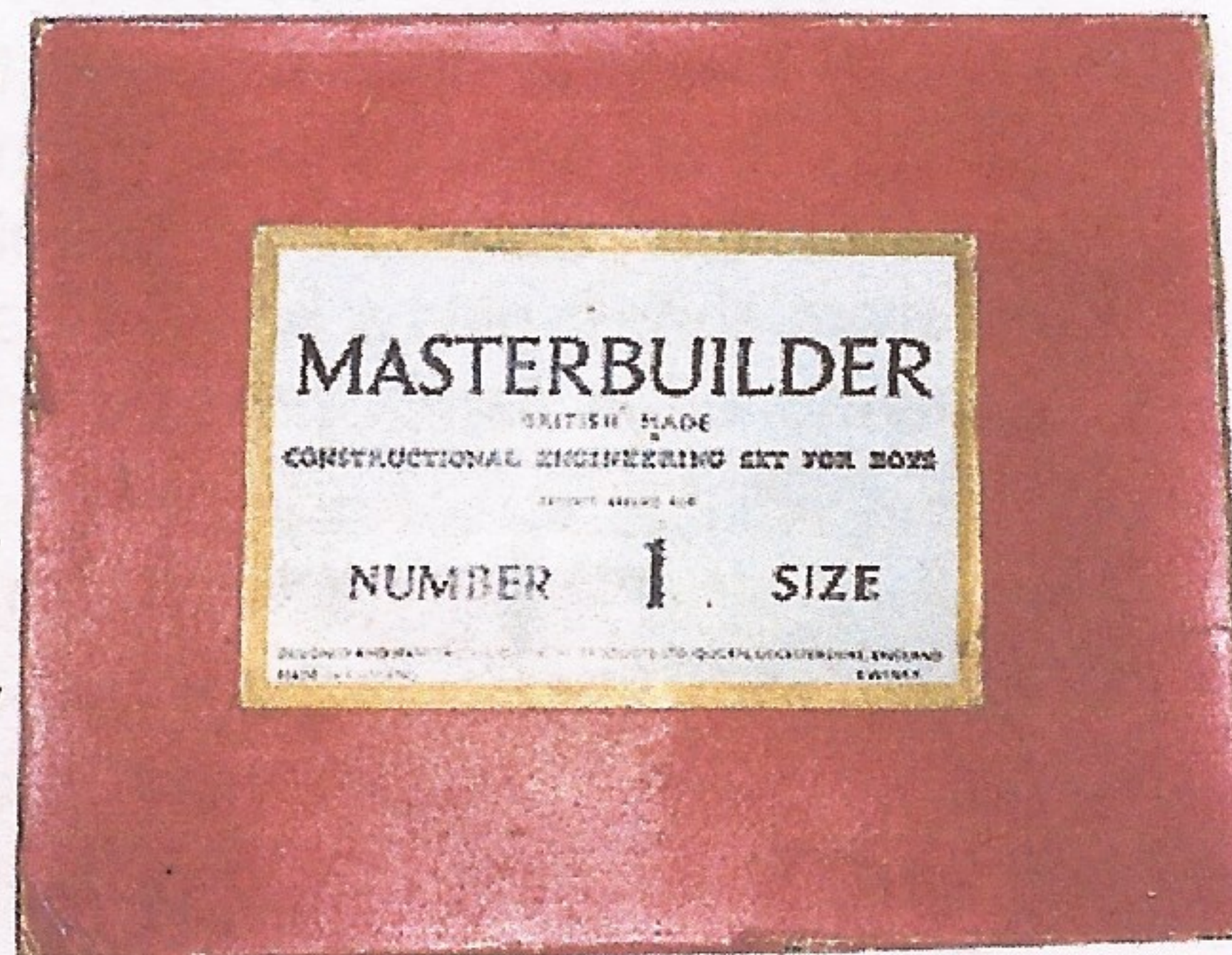


driver is the Bakelite Winding Drum. Both sets known from this period have turned Flanged Wheels and all the metal parts are nicked except the chemically blackened Axles & Screwdriver. Both lids are in the style of the No.1 in the next column, the pattern shown in the ad. The small words above the '1' are PATENT APPLIED FOR, and the Quorn address is along the bottom. The No.1

was mentioned in 8/184 & has a box 10*8". The other set is a No.0 in a box about 8½*6¾".

The June ad, repeated in August, featured the No.2 outfit Oilfield Drilling Rig, 22" high, below, and the Circular Plate can be seen in it.

A note in the *Model Engineer* for 15 Aug., 1946 gives the Quorn address and



OILFIELD DRILL RIG
BUILT FROM

MASTERBUILDER

NUMBER 2

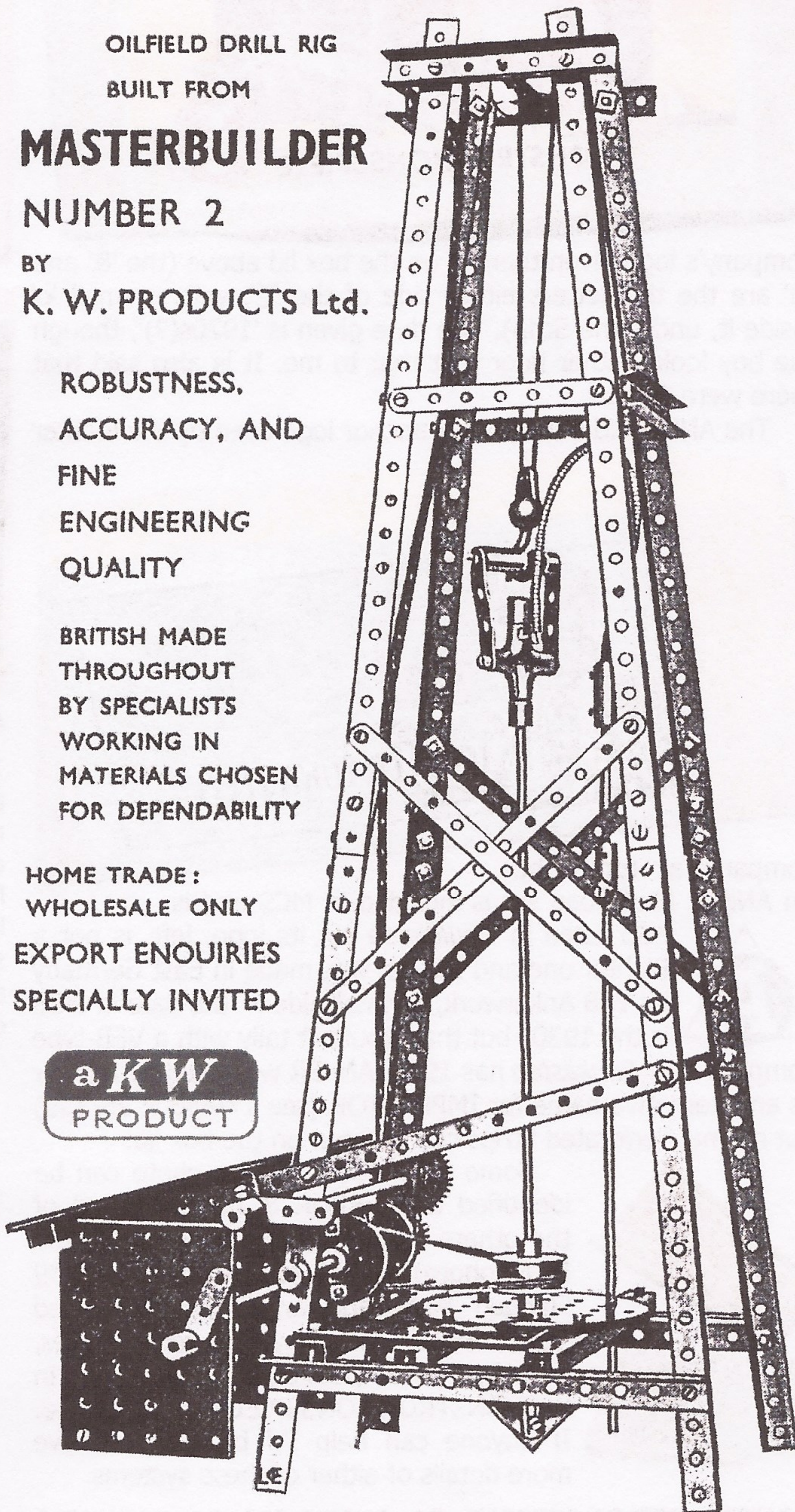
BY
K. W. PRODUCTS Ltd.

ROBUSTNESS,
ACCURACY, AND
FINE
ENGINEERING
QUALITY

BRITISH MADE
THROUGHOUT
BY SPECIALISTS
WORKING IN
MATERIALS CHOSEN
FOR DEPENDABILITY

HOME TRADE:
WHOLESALE ONLY
EXPORT ENQUIRIES
SPECIALLY INVITED

a KW
PRODUCT



says that the smallest set has 48 parts from which 12 different models can be built, and the largest has 156 parts for 25 models.

The heading of the October *G&T* ad was 'Designed for Export' with the phrase repeated in French & Spanish. Underneath was the No.0 Factory Truck, and under that a display of No.0 boxes.

The next ad in Feb.1947, & repeated in April, was, like all later ones, half page against the full pages previously. It was different in character too and under the illustration of the No.0 set used earlier, simply listed 18 MB features. Among them: turned Wheels & Pulleys; instruction books in 17 languages; plans for future additions to the range; accurate brass drop stampings; contrasting metal finishes.

THE BLACK PERIOD I wondered if the Feb ad above marked

the change from nickel to black parts, and the new packaging which seems to have happened at the same time. But really the only thing that might indicate this is the remark about 'contrasting metal finishes', in that the 'brassware' in the black sets was plain brass or nickel. At any rate sometime between Feb. 1947 and the next ad in Oct. 1949 (over 2 years later, for sets with coloured parts) the change to black parts and the new boxes occurred.

The new No.0 set (KW1265) was single-layer in the same size box as before. The No.1 (KW1266) & No.2 have one layer but also parts attached to fold-over 'wings' giving in effect a second layer. A No.3 in an Ebay photo has two trays, each an inch or so deep and presumably they sit in a deep box, but only its lid can be seen. All have to same type of lid featuring a model from the set in question, and a No.3 is shown below (under the '3' is a line of



text & a red & white strip like the top). The small print still includes 'PATENT APPLIED FOR', and at the bottom, 'DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED BY K.W. PRODUCTS LTD., EREKTOR WORKS, MOUNTSORREL, LEICESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND.'

Apart from the black parts, and the plain brass finish on some of the brassware - on all of it in some sets - the only obvious change was to the Flanged Wheels. In the Nickel sets they were turned parts, 1/2" Ø in Sets 0 & 1 and 1" in Sets 2 & 3 (though one No.1 seen has the 1"). But most Black sets of all sizes have the plain steel pressed type shown in 6/119. Some of the bosses & certain turned brassware in some Black sets are 5/16" Ø rather than 3/8" but there is no consistent pattern and even in the next Coloured period 3/8" parts are found occasionally.

As far as is known the contents of the sets did not change but the letter in 8/202 leaves the possibility that they were reduced a little at some point, even though it seems probable that the models in the Model Leaflets stayed the same.

Leaflets seen from Black sets are KW1271, 1272 & 1273 for Sets 0, 1 & 2. A Leaflet from a Nickel Set 0 has the same set contents as KW1271 but its reference can't be seen. The No.0 KW1271 lists 49 parts, plus N&B, a Spanner & a Screwdriver, and 6 models are shown. The corresponding figures for Nos.1 & 2 (KW1272,3) are 76 & 110 parts and 6 models each. All these Leaflets are folded to give 4 panels and on one side they contain the Intro on the yellow front, the Set Contents, & 2 models; on the back are 4 more models. An Ebay photo of a No.3 Leaflet shows it with 6 panels and it may contain more models because the side shown has 4 models plus the Intro & Set Contents. If there were 5 on the back side that would account for the 25 in the *Model Engineer* piece (assuming 6 and not the ME12 for the No.0, an error possibly).

Models for Sets 0-2 were mostly Cranes and various pieces of machinery & plant. Vehicles were limited because there was no

Road Wheel, but there was a small No.0 Tramcar running on 1/2" Flanged Wheels, & for the No.2, a Diesel Shunting Loco & a Flat Goods Wagon, both running on 1" Wheels. The only No.3 models that can be seen clearly are a Gantry Crane & a Lifting Bridge.

Linking sets are mentioned in the Model Leaflets and one example, the only one I've ever heard of, was listed in an auction recently. It was a No.2A, but no picture unfortunately, and it wasn't possible to tell if it was from the Nickel or Black periods.

THE COLOURED PERIOD The ad in the Oct. 1949 *G&T* said that MB has stove enamelled coloured parts, that it builds realistic vehicles & stationary models, and that the component & accessory service is unique in completeness. It was also said that over 150,000 sets had been sold & approved retailers were now being appointed. Readers were invited to write to K.W. Products Ltd., Erektor Works, Mountsorrel, Leics, Tel: Rothley 283, for details. Bloch Agencies weren't mentioned. The ad carried a photo of the Carrier set and below a photo of an actual similar set (a Mudguard & one of the two 3/8" Pulleys are missing, & originally all the parts were strung with yellow cord). The red words along the bottom of the lid are 'Ask your dealer for MB realistic accessories and robust spare parts'. The colour scheme varied from set to set, another Carrier set has the same parts but in red, blue & yellow, and a Carfax outfit is in just blue & yellow. The Carrier box is 10*14*1 1/2", & the Carfax is also 10*14" but has no wings - its lid is identical to the Carrier except for the red name, set number, etc.

The next, & final, ad, in November, was identical to October.

8/184 has details of the only 'Coloured' manual known, for the Baronet, Carfax, & Carrier sets, & some of its models are shown there. All 3 sets were quite small (with, excluding Tools and N&B, about 24, 47, & 85 parts respectively) but 7 larger sets were listed in the Manual. Coloured parts not in the 3 small outfits are found

from time to time but it isn't clear if they were from larger sets or simply some of the spare parts that KWP advertised. Probably the latter as no trace of larger sets has been found so far, nor a manual for any of them. A lot of work must have gone into the OSN 8 manual and perhaps KWP



decided to wait to see if the sales of the small sets justified producing the larger sets & manuals for them.

THE FINAL DAYS Lloyd recalls that MB was made in a 2-storey factory on Leicester Road. It is still there but currently unoccupied. Most of the ground floor was used by a company called Mountsorrel Pressings Ltd & it's very likely that they made many of the MB parts. KWP closed in the early 1950s & the factory was bought by Lloyd's future father-in-law, Reginald Cooper, for other purposes, although Mountsorrel Pressings continued for a few years. The purchase included the remaining MB stock of parts (mostly blue & orange) and these were given to Lloyd and his fiancée who used them in their spare time to fulfil the orders which continued to come in. Eventually, as some of the parts became out of stock, the orders stopped, & Lloyd kept what remained until last year when Geoff acquired them from him.