

FRANK HORNBY  
150  
1863 - 2013

# Celebrating 150 years of Frank Hornby...



**Frank Hornby was born in Liverpool on 15th May 1863.**

**At the age of sixteen, he left school and started working as a cashier in his father's provision merchant business.**

**In 1887 he married schoolteacher Clara Walker Godefroy and they had two sons, Roland and Douglas, and a daughter, Patricia.**

**When his father died in 1899, the business closed and he became a bookkeeper for a local meat importing company owned by David Elliot.**

**It was at this point in his life that he started experimenting with making toys for his sons in his home workshop...**

**Although he had no formal engineering training, Hornby was responsible for the invention and production of three of the most popular lines of toys of the twentieth century: Meccano, Hornby Model Railways and Dinky Toys.**

**His inventions made him a millionaire in the 1930s — he owned a mansion in Maghull, and was chauffeured to his factory daily by limousine.**

**In 1931 he briefly entered politics when he was elected as a Conservative MP for the Everton constituency.**

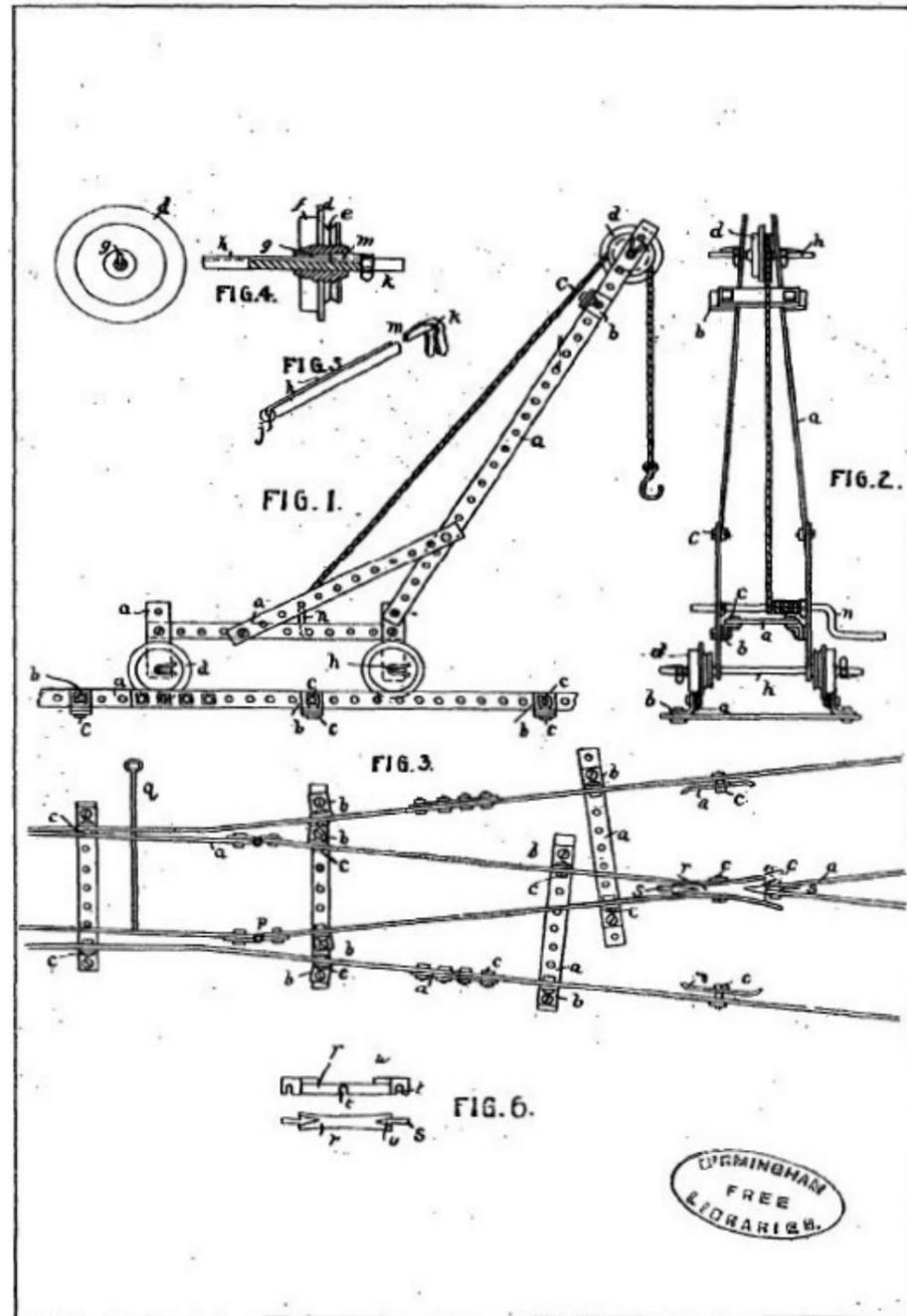
**He died on 21st September 1936 and is buried at St Andrews Church, Maghull.**



# In 1901 Frank Hornby invented the world's finest construction toy...

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A.D. 1901. JAN. 9. N<sup>o</sup> 587  
HORNBY'S COMPLETE SPECIFICATION. (1 SHEET)



Frank Hornby began making toys for his sons in 1899 with pieces he cut from sheet metal. He built models of bridges, trucks and cranes, although the pieces they were made from were not interchangeable.

The breakthrough came when he realised that he could make separate parts with holes spaced at half-inch intervals that could be bolted together, so that any model could be built from the same components.



By the end of 1900 Hornby had built a set of parts he considered worth marketing. He patented his invention in January 1901, borrowing five pounds from his employer, David Elliot, to cover the costs.

Elliot saw potential in what Hornby was doing and offered him some vacant premises adjacent to his office to pursue his ideas. Henceforth, Elliot and Hornby became partners.

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The first “Mechanics Made Easy” sets went on sale in 1902, but were soon so successful that Hornby’s suppliers could not meet the demand. With the help of a loan for machinery and wages, Hornby and Elliot were manufacturing their own parts in their own factory by June 1907.

In September 1907, Hornby registered his famous “Meccano” trademark and formed the Meccano company, which Elliot decided not to join.

With demand rising worldwide, factories were built in France, Spain and Argentina. A new factory in Binns Road, Liverpool, opened in September 1914 and became the company headquarters for over 60 years.

A Meccano Guild was established in 1919, with its own *Meccano Magazine* being used as a means to keep Guild clubs informed of each other’s activities (as well as encourage the sales of Meccano).

In a brilliant marketing move, Meccano sets were re-numbered from 0 to 10 in 1937, with Accessory Sets allowing children to progress through the range and aspire to owning the flagship No 10 Set.

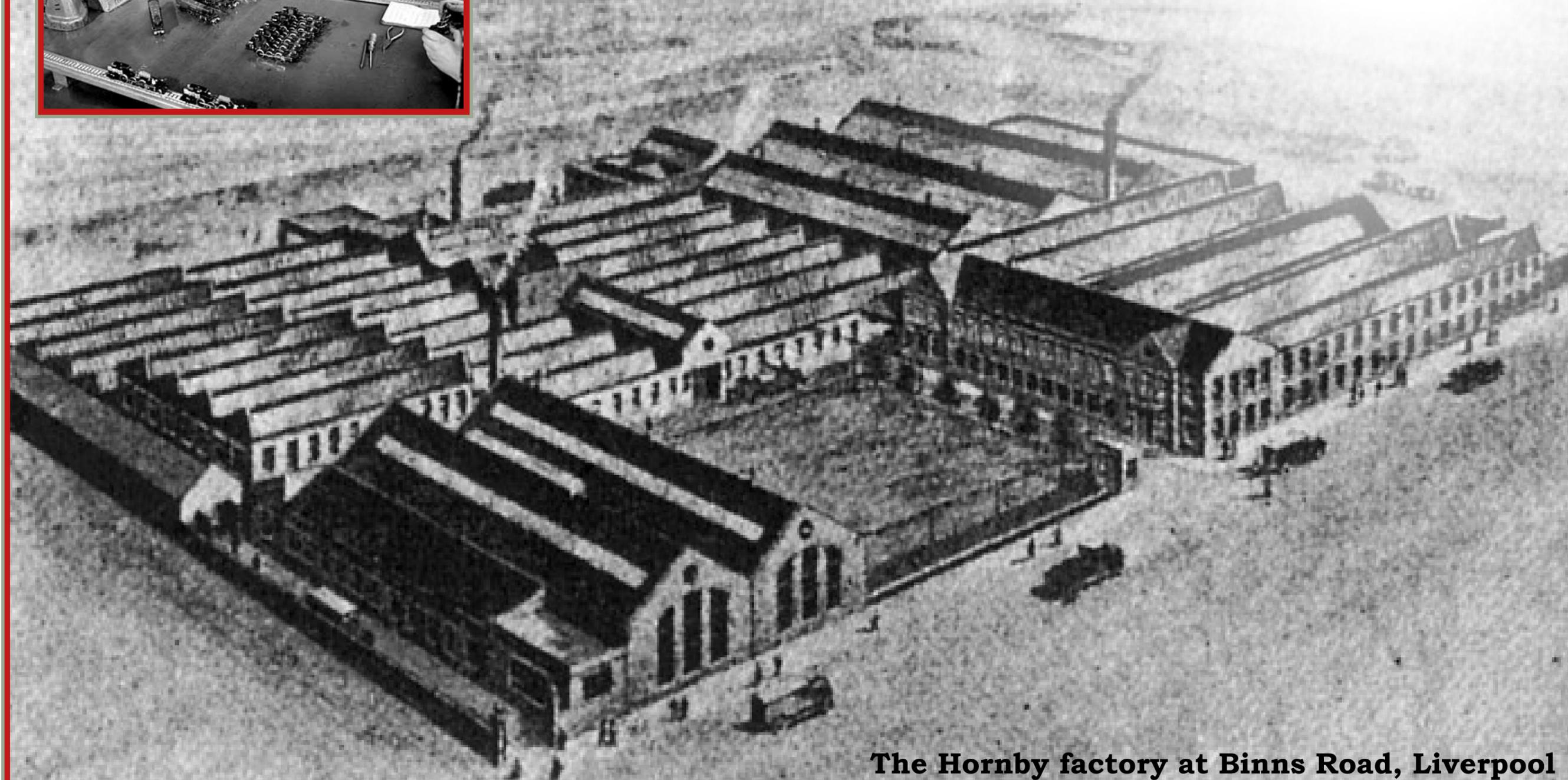


Photo: nzmeccano.com



By 1964 Meccano was losing out to competing construction toys such as Lego, and the company was sold to Lines Bros — the first of many takeovers to come. The company is now owned by the Canadian toy group Spin Master who continue to manufacture Meccano sets in France and China.

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**The Hornby factory at Binns Road, Liverpool**

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**DINKY SUPERTOYS**

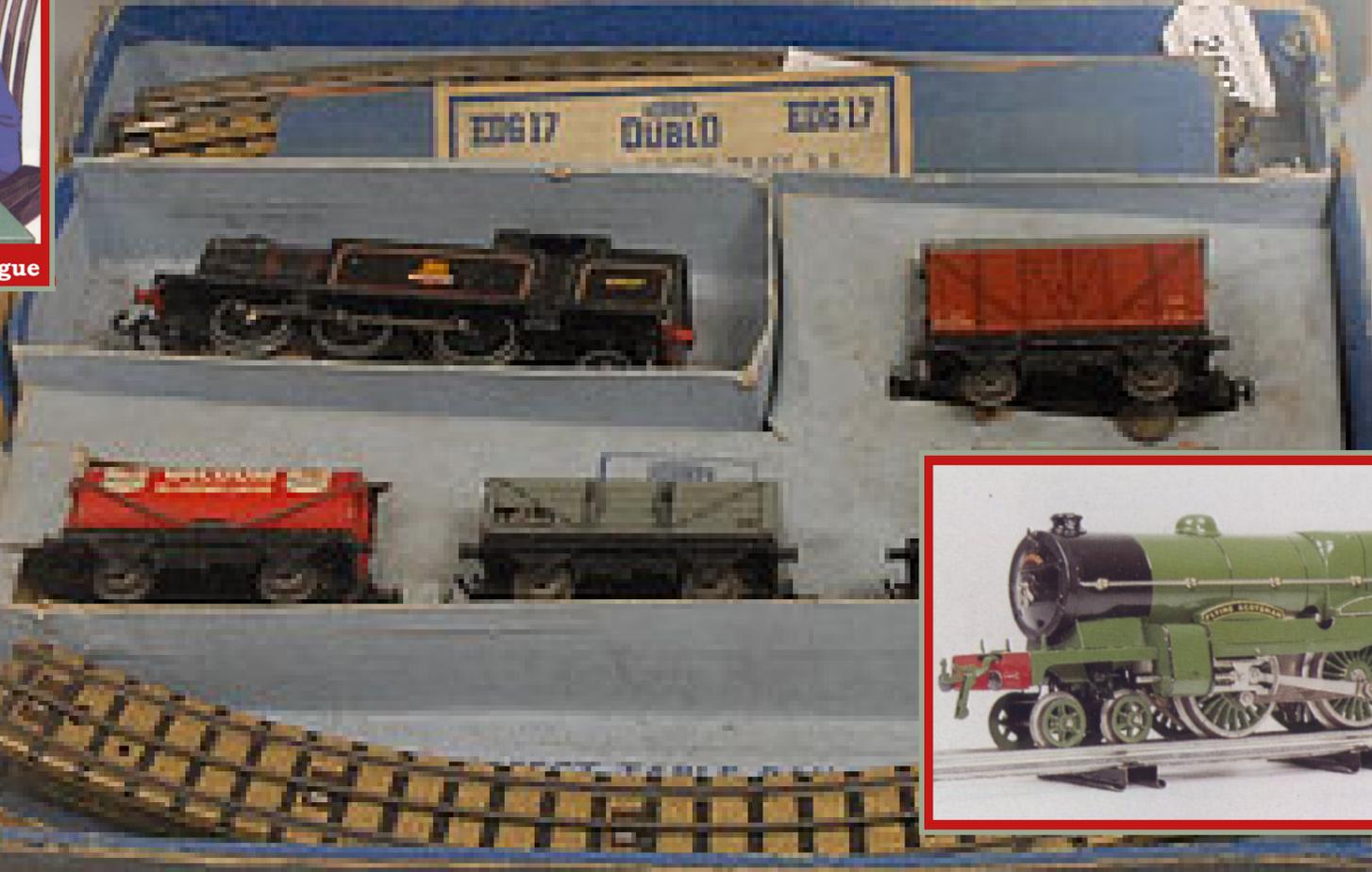
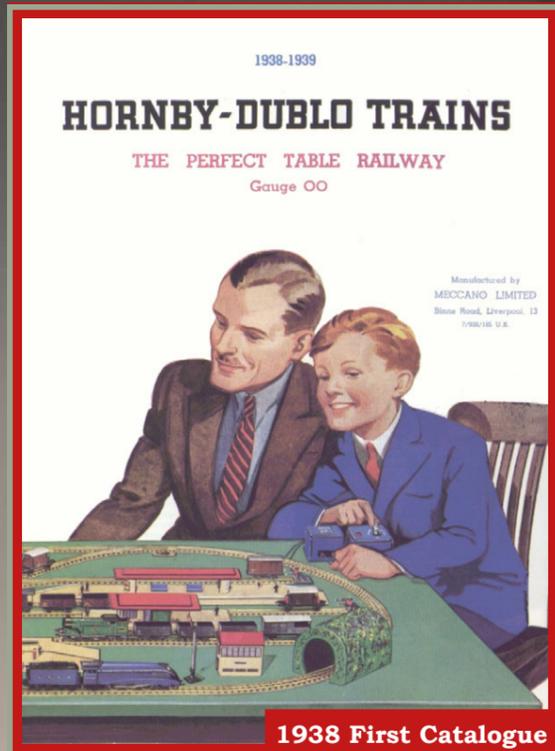
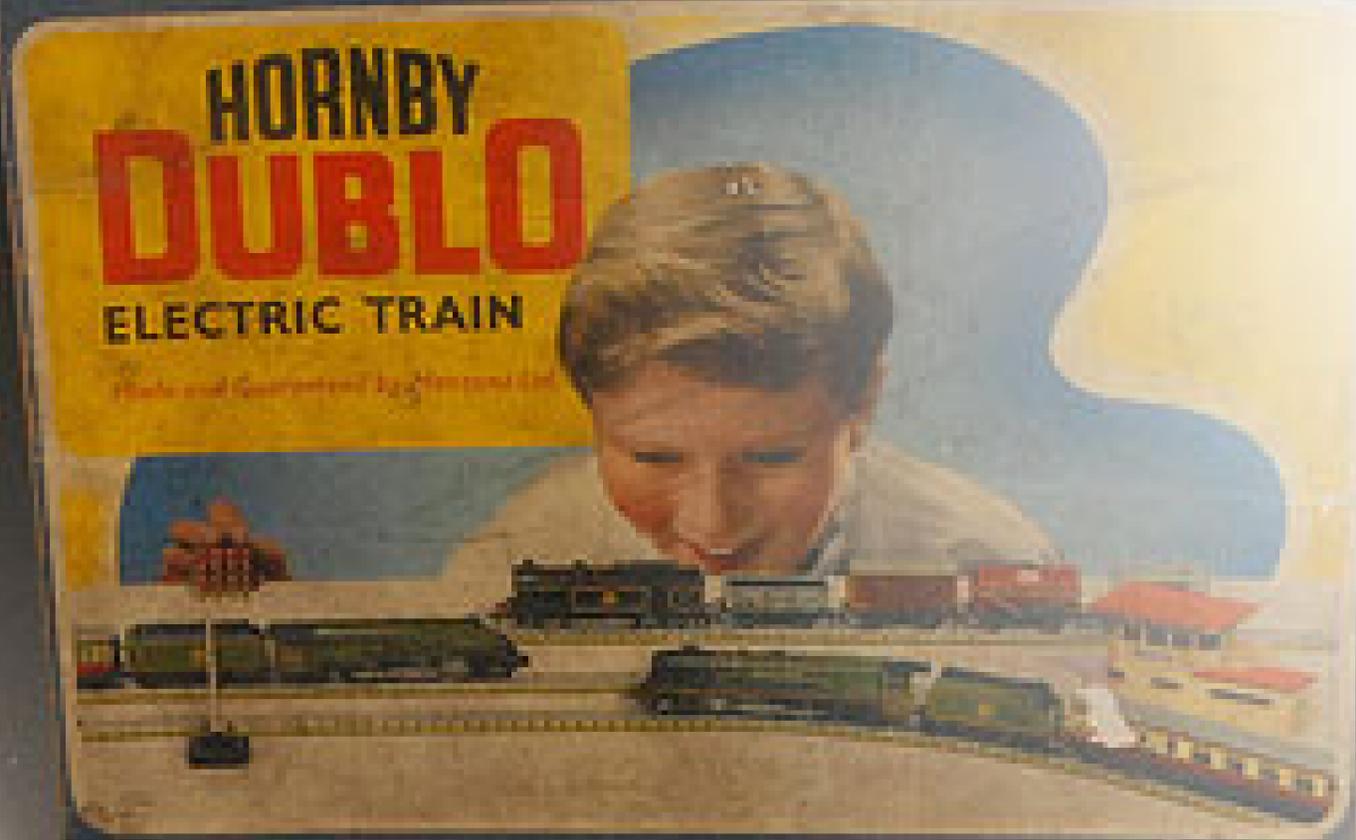
 No. 651 Centurion Tank Length 5½ in. 8/9	 No. 955 Fire Engine with Extending Ladder Length 5½ in. 7/9
 No. 905 Foden Flat Truck with Chains Length 7½ in. 9/11	 No. 963 Blaw Knox Heavy Tractor Length 4½ in. 8/11
 No. 965 Euclid Rear Dump Truck Length 5½ in. 9/11	 No. 934 Leyland Octopus Wagon Length 7½ in. 8/11
 No. 982 Pullmore Car Transporter complete with Ramp Length (with Ramp) 18½ in. 17/11	 No. 964 Elevator Loader Height 6½ in. 18/6

MADE IN ENGLAND BY MECCANO LTD.  
 ALL PRICES INCLUDE PURCHASE TAX

**1958**

Photos: historyworld.co.uk / Dinky Toys Collectors' Association / Keith Harvie

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Photos: Hornby Railway Collectors' Association

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1948 Medium Red/Green Outfit 9



1936 Blue/Gold Outfit D



1928 Dark Red/Green Outfit 1



1916 Nickel Outfit 1



1963 Light Red/Green Outfit 4



1902 Mechanics Made Easy



2013 Evolution Set



1965 Silver/Yellow/Black Set 4



1977 Blue/Yellow/Zinc Set 3



1979 Dark Blue/Yellow Outfit 9



1987 Set 2



1994 Basic Set 3

# Now it's your chance to discover this wonderful toy!

Visit our Meccano Show this year and see 100s of working models of trains, planes, cranes, fairground rides and much more.

We'll also be holding the SELMEC Rope Races — watch our competitors test their Meccano model climbing skills as their models race to reach the ceiling or cross the room by rope!

If this is not enough, you can also buy Meccano sets and spares from our dealers, win Meccano prizes in our raffle, and relax with hot and cold refreshments.

A great day out for the whole family and FREE for accompanied children!



**Saturday 12th October, 10:30 – 4:30**

**Eltham United Reformed Church**

1 Court Road, Eltham SE9 5AF

For full details take a leaflet, scan here



or visit [www.selmec.org.uk](http://www.selmec.org.uk)

