

NCE welcomes letters from readers. We attempt to print as many as possible, which means letters longer than 200 words are likely to be condensed.

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This week

- Highways robbery – members poached
- Eurocoded messages and cyclical paths
- Obsolete foundations and a glass act
- Hot property and going Dutch
- School of thought and sent to the tower

Twentieth century toy

In response to Christopher Ward's comments regarding the relative merits of Meccano and Lego (*NCE* 28 June). I can only assume he is unaware of the Lego technic beam and connector pin or axle system which enable large trusses to be built very quickly.

I am a member of the online Lego community Lugnet (www.lugnet.com). Mr Ward's letter has led to some interesting discussion among the world's Lego enthusiasts at <http://news.lugnet.com/loc/uk/?n=6806>.

I was taught that there are four main materials used in construction – timber, concrete, masonry and steel. Clearly neither Lego nor Meccano is suitable for modelling timber or

concrete construction.

However, Lego is far better at modelling masonry because its basic elements are bricks. There is little to choose between the two when modelling steel construction.

Meccano may have had an advantage in mechanical engineering modelling before the late 1970s, but these days Lego has a much wider range; its mechanical elements include differentials, shock absorbers, pneumatic pumps and cylinders, gearboxes, cams and flexible drive shafts.

Lego also has an educational theme called Dacta, which is only available to educational establishments (though if anyone is interested it can be bought at Legoland or by mail order from www.pitsco-legodacta.com). Dacta includes solar cells, capacitors and other electronic and mechanical parts along with teaching guides and classroom support. I am a civil engineer mostly

thanks to Lego and I cannot allow such a slight to the Toy of the 20th Century to go unchallenged.

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IHT milked

I read with interest the article *ICE beckons engineers from other institutions* (*NCE* 5 July), since Engineering Council registrants of the Institution of Highways & Transportation (IHT) are identified as one of the targets.

I am pleased to say that the IHT has recently conducted its first round of Professional Reviews, and we are working very productively with our mentor body, the British Computer Society. Ironically, 90% of Engineering Council registrants who have so far chosen to be members of the IHT are registered through the ICE.

The EngC has always been against nominated bodies poaching each others' members. I am therefore at a loss to understand the ICE's stance. The article states that engineers and engineering technicians belonging to other professional institutions are being encouraged to "develop their professionalism further" by switching to the ICE.

The IHT has received numerous enquiries in recent months from members of other nominated bodies regarding switching membership. Mindful of EngC policy, we have been most careful to avoid giving any encouragement for such people to do so, although later this year, our doors will be open to engineers working in transportation but registered through other institutions. I look forward to the EngC clarifying its policy on institution relationships as a matter of urgency.

Allan Mowatt (F),
President, Institution of Highways & Transportation



TOY STORY: Meccano vs Lego. The debate rages on.