

Chairman's report

Simon Bennett, Chairman (chairman@brickish.org)

Welcome to Brick Issue 8. I hope you received all the Lego you wanted for Christmas and also that if you could, you gave some to others to share in the joy. At the Brickish Christmas party I acquired an ex-retail play table which I took to my parents' house along with a box of spare bricks and assorted other parts so whenever my nieces and nephew stay at their grandparents' house they have access to plenty of Lego. At the party I also obtained some nice sets as presents and was therefore able to spend Christmas afternoon watching my nephew play with his Duplo Zoo.

I write this having just got back from a 'small' house-fest at Pete Reid's. I say small because there must have been more than a dozen of us there and that, in a flat already fairly full of Lego, was quite cosy. But the main thing is we had a great time, we checked out some recent MOCs, discussed the merits of Exo-force (and went to Woolworths to get some) and then Yvonne suggested creating some minifig scale sculptures and



Tony Priestman.
Photographs - Ian Grieg

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paintings to go in a modern art gallery MOC she is working on. It was a great informal gathering so thanks to Pete and Yvonne.

Since the last Brick Issue we have had a successful Christmas party and by the time you get this there will have been another three events, David Tabner's Yateley Fest, David Graham's exhibition in Saltcoats and another house-fest at Tony Priestman's. It's looking to be a great year for events and I know that not every member can or does check the website regularly so from now on in every Brick Issue the upcoming events will be published so you all know what is going on and where. So for those who haven't yet come along to a Brickish event, please do; I think you'll find them fun and very friendly. I'm therefore going to follow in Tony's well-worn footsteps and encourage you all to hold a small fest for others in your local area if you can. You don't need to do much, just having a tea and a chat over a small gathering of MOCs or sorting someone's boot-sale haul is great fun.

As always, if you have suggestions for events or activities you would like to see happen, just suggest them to anyone in the Committee.

On Saturday 28 January Lego invited me to their stand at Toy Fair, the UK trade show for toy producers. The

sneak peek at upcoming sets was very nice (Mindstorms NXT and the UCS Batmobile really impressed

me) but most useful was a chance to meet face to face with Melissa Wallace, Lego Europe PR Manager. She is keen to involve us in what she does and to help us if she can. Obviously we need to bear in mind that her job is to sell more Lego and so her time and budget for us will be related to our 'reach' and effectiveness in that. There are a few ideas that may find their way into events we will be holding this year and as always, look out on the website where information will be posted and you can discuss what we might want from the company.

In the past there has been a high turnover of employees at Lego but I hope the changes that are happening to the company will improve the situation and we can look forward to an ever improving relationship with them. From what I saw at Toy Fair, new trains aside, they are certainly going in the right direction with new sets.

Play on

Simon



Simon Bennett

Editor's letter

This will be my last Brick Issue as editor, I don't feel that I can give the commitment necessary to fulfil the role. For many reasons my involvement with the Brickish Association has lessened over the past year, I've missed what sound like some brilliant events, and I feel it is time to step back from the editor role. I have enjoyed producing the Brick Issue and it is something I am very proud of, and those that have contributed should be as well.

I would encourage anybody to have a go at writing an article, read the "Article writing" document for hints. I hope somebody will step forward to take on the editorship, and I will be happy to help as much as I can. I look forward to writing some articles.

Regards Mark Palmer, Editor newsletter@brickish.org

Member Profile: Richard Forster-Pearson

*** What is your earliest LEGO memory?**

Trying to make safes out of standard LEGO 2x4 bricks to keep my pocket money in when I was about ten years old (1961). But I always never had enough bricks.

*** What is the best MOC you've ever built?**

My interpretation of a V12 Engine and generator that I built from the first of many Mindstorms kits. The Mindstorms programmable brick controlled it and I used a Visual Basic front-end control panel to control the brick.

*** What bought you out of your dark ages and when?**

It was the first time I came across LEGO Technic in 1988. The first model I saw was the 8860 car which belonged to the son of an acquaintance of mine, of about 11 years old.

I was so impressed that I bought one the next day. After building the model I found that it could be motorised, so two motor kits and a gearbox were purchased, one for steering and the other for propulsion. From that time, my mind was blown and I was definitely hooked on Technic.

*** What was your greatest LEGO moment?**

I have two: the first was going to Legoland Denmark in 2001 for my 50th birthday, and the second was receiving the Star Destroyer set 10030 from Santa at Christmas 2003.

*** What's your favourite set and why?**

The Space Shuttle 8480, because of its technical complexity, and it looks quite impressive when the doors are open and the boom is deployed with the opened satellite on the end. My favourite non Technic LEGO model is the 10152 Maersk Sealand because when it is built I think it just looks so good.

*** Are you a collector or a builder?**

Primarily I am a builder but you never seem to have all the right bits so I must be a collector also.

*** What LEGO-related activity do you spend most time doing?**

I spend most of my time making and thinking, also programming of robotic things with different types of sensors and things I have made with my electronics knowledge for the LEGO Mindstorms brick. I also see things like Trucks, Railways and Buildings and think "can I do that in LEGO?" and go and try to make one.

*** What is your favourite LEGO element?**

A standard LEGO 2x4 brick. What an absolutely amazing and interesting piece of plastic engineering this is. It was designed before metrification, so its measurements are 1.25" long and 0.625" wide (2:1). It has a shoulder height of 0.375". To me this is just pure LEGO.

*** Which other AFOLs do you collaborate with?**

I try to get to the different fests of the Brickish Association. The Scotfest was well worth the journey from Derbyshire just to meet and see Jennifer Clark's Demag50 and meet the other AFOLs. I also spend a lot of time browsing the net such as Lugnet.com.

*** Apart from LEGO, what else are you into?**

I am into electronics as this was my main source of income as I ran my own company for a great number of years. But now due to ill health I no longer work but have a lot of time now for LEGO. I am also into DIY and caravanning and have two Springer spaniels.

*** What do your non-AFOL friends make of your hobby?**

I think they think I have not quite grown up yet, but I think they like me all the more for it.



ScotFest-Truckfest 2005

By David Graham

A Scotfest held in Aberdour each October has become part of the Brickish calendar of events. The reasons for its success is that Aberdour's proximity to the Forth Bridge makes it easily accessible by air, train & road, also being a small fest, its friendliness is renowned.

As there are only a few Scottish Brickish members it is important that others come from further afield. To get people interested it was decided to name it 'Truckfest', and people were asked to bring along a eight wide mini-fig scale truck - there were no other rules.

Luckily Aberdour is popular with tourists so there are a range of B&B's. Pete & Yvonne had stayed in one last year and their posting of the 'Scary Hotel' caught peoples imagination, with 7 people staying at least one night. The fest was held in the Boat Club which has all the facilities you need and provides a cosy meeting room with views over the Forth. Everybody had an opportunity to show off their truck. The range was amazing from Phil's Ice Cream van, to Yvonne's Camper van. Huw brought along bags of identical parts and we had to use our imagination to build something - I always find this the hardest part of a fest.



Model and photograph by William Howard

Lunch was sandwiches, cake & fruit. Then there was a game with two people sitting so they couldn't see each other, one with the instructions, and the other with the parts. It was fun watching the one with the instructions trying to explain to the other, how to build the model. There was then time for another 'Show & Tell', one of the highlights was Steven Lockes enormous Dalek that he had brought on the train.

Finally we went of to a local Italian restaurant for a meal before some people had to head off home.

I hope there will be another fest in 2006, everybody will be made welcome.

Brickish Association Events

This is the first Events page which we hope will become a regular feature of your BI. Here you can find reports on events that have been held and information about those that are coming soon. If you have an event that isn't listed, let us know. If you want to know how to get to an event either check the website or contact a member of the Committee.

Upcoming Events

AGM: 1 April

Parish Hall, Dilhorne, Staffordshire

The AGM will again be in Dilhorne this year. Thanks are due again to Michael LeCount for organising the venue and catering. We will be joined by Jan Beyer of the Lego Company who should be able to answer your questions about the company and possibly about upcoming products. Busy Bee Toys will be there again and Phil Traviss will be bringing a historical display of competitors products. The full programme will be posted on the website a few weeks in advance.

At the AGM itself three posts on the Organising Committee are up for election; President, Vice-Chair and Secretary. At the time of writing nominations have not been received. So if any member wishes to vote by proxy please call, write or email the Chairman and we will send you the ballot details when they are finalised. If you wish to be nominated you will need to write or email the Chairman with the support of five other members of the Association. Also at the AGM we will vote to change the constitution so nominations are required in time to inform members in the Brick Issue from next year onwards.

Petersfield Fest: 8 April

Community Centre, Petersfield, Hampshire

Fast becoming a firm favourite in the calendar is William Howard's bash. This year he is aiming for another three figure attendance and has plans for displays of 'Paradisa and Belville, Technic and Mindstorms, Space, Vikings and Castle. There will be space for sellers and the public are welcome too.

Glenrothes Model Railway exhibition: 13-14 May

Rothes Hall, Glenrothes

David Graham will be displaying his Train layout.

Merrist Wood Display: 21 May

Guildford College Merrist Wood Campus

David Tabner has arranged for a small group of members to display at this College Open Day.

Events since November

Christmas Party – 26 November 2005

The BA Christmas Party was held for the 3rd time at Legoland Windsor. 42 members, and 11 children, were there, some bringing their children and a good time was had by all. Festivities included games and food and there was an excellent opportunity to clear Legoland out of some of their admittedly incomplete range of sets at a fairly substantial discount. Thanks are due to Duncan Titmarsh for arranging this again but he is unable to do so for 2006 so the Association is looking for a volunteer to help with arrangements.

Yateley Fest: 28 January 2006

David Tabner organised this fest, which was very well attended. It was great to see a few new faces among the attendees, and everyone enjoyed catching up. There was a brisk trade all day, with some great rummage provided by Andy Watt and Mike and Emma Smith.

There were also some excellent models on show, Richard James' road sections and Ed Diment's Lancaster bomber were particular highlights.

David Graham also displayed his trains at exhibitions in Helensburgh and Saltcoats and some smaller fests were held by small groups of members.

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Who will buy my wares

By William Howard

Faced with a large blank space in my Castle Town display, and rapidly running out of both time and bricks to fill it, I hit on the idea of a market scene.

Stall Construction

The market stall consists of two sections – the table and the canopy. The table is simply a 4-wide surface constructed from several overlapping 1-wide and 2-wide brown plates held together by 1x4 plates attached cross-wise underneath. Legs are provided by 1x1 round bricks at the corners. If using a single 4-wide plate as the table, it looks best to add the 1x4 brown plates underneath to represent the cross-bracing typical of trestle tables. The length of the table top needs to be two studs shorter than the canopy and can be varied to suit the location and parts available - I tend to make mine between six and 12 studs long.



Photograph James Stacey

The canopy is two studs longer than the table and made from 33-degree slopes mounted on a 2-wide plate and topped off with tiles. Striped canopies are made either by using 3x1 slopes in alternating colours or by using the 3x2 and 3x4 printed slopes.

The canopy is supported on 1x4 antennae mounted in 1x1 vertical clip plates and supported on the corners of the table. 1x1 plates above the clips stop the canopy dropping too far down the antennae.

Many smaller stalls tend to look better than a few large ones and are also easier to arrange to fit odd shaped spaces. Not all goods need to be placed on the stall – crates of beets, boxes of bottles, barrels of apples, cauldrons, etc can all be placed on the ground around the stall. This extends the area occupied by the stall, is even easier to arrange to fit the available space, and tends to create a more visually appealing display.

Tiered stalls are simple to construct (being a few 2x10 or 2x12 plates on stacks of log bricks) and, when faced with baskets, make good flower stalls.

By using different length stalls with various canopy patterns, and filling the spaces with “floor clutter” a bright, bustling market can be created relatively quickly.

Stall Produce

What produce to place on the stalls depends, to a large extent, on what small, specialised parts are available. A fruit and vegetable stall using apples, bananas, cherries, carrots, etc is an obvious choice. Trays for bananas and cherries can be made from corner and side panels. Printed 2x2 tiles for example, the garlic from the Vampire Crypt studios set, can be mounted at an angle on hinge bricks. A barrel of carrot tops can represent just about any root vegetable. Red, yellow and orange 1x1 round plates on the small leaf parts can represent vine fruit, like tomatoes. Brown, red, yellow and orange minifig heads topped with a three-leaf plant, can represent large beets or squashes. Two or three stacked flower stems topped with a yellow 1x1 round brick and a cone can represent maize and similar crops. Larger produce can be arranged

in barrels and crates around the stall, plates in the bottom of a container will reduce the number of items required to fill it and or raise the items to a better viewing height.



Photograph by William Howard

Hardware stalls are also easy to stock. Large items such as cauldrons, crates of mining equipment, non-specific barrels, bundles of brushes, etc can all quickly add to the “floor clutter”.

Don't forget the “luxury” items such as glassware, books, millinery and armour. Small “scent” bottles, with gem or round plate stoppers, can be made from transparent 1x1 bricks (both round and square) or the printed transparent minifig heads. Bottles are simply 1x1 transparent cones on round bricks. Curios can be made by placing a metallic 1x1 round plate under a clear dome. Books, scrolls, maps, etc can all be used “as is”. Hat and wig stands are blank minifig heads raised to a suitable height. Cloaks and capes can either be displayed on a separate stand or hung from a 1x2 plate with arm on the underside of the canopy.

Other inspiration for stall items can be found in many Castle, Town, Harry Potter and Belville sets.

Focal Points

Almost every marketplace has some form of focal point. This could be anything from a tree-stump that public notices would be pinned on or petty-criminals tied to, through a statue or memorial, to the Market or Moot Hall. Street entertainers and food vendors (for example, the juggler and ale seller) would typically be found near these central features.

Transportation

Goods and produce need to be transported to the market, so include carts (both hand and horse drawn) and porters (any plain minifig with a cowl and basket make an effective “bummaree” from Medieval to Modern times) to add activity. Ideas and designs for carts can be taken from many castle sets.



Photograph by William Howard

Other Stuff

Markets need people – lots of people. Just about any available minifig can be used as stall owners, porters, cart drivers, shoppers (both lower and upper classes depending on stall visited), officials, street entertainers, food and drink vendors, street cleaners, body guards, squaddies, etc. Don't forget the animals either – kittens playing around the floor clutter, birds perched on canopies, opportunist rats, dogs chasing rats, etc.

Building the village

By David Mackenzie

After reading Mandy Dee's article about her house inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright - who, it seems, also inspires several other AFOLs - I thought I should write an article about my ongoing efforts to create a LEGO rendering of the best-known work of my favourite architect.

The Hotel Portmeirion, on the coast of North Wales, was built by the Welsh architect Sir Clough Willams-Ellis over a period of 50 years from 1926. His aim, after becoming distressed at the incompetent and selfish town planning sweeping through England at the time, was to demonstrate good architectural practice and sympathetic town planning. The entire site was listed Grade II in 1971 giving Sir Clough the honour of being one of the few architects to have his buildings listed in his own lifetime. Situated on its own private peninsula, Portmeirion nestles in a dense woodland blanket and is generally of the Italianate style with the occasional Gothic, Georgian, or Jacobean flourish. Each building is designed to make optimum use of the surrounding landscape, while still being sympathetic to its neighbours such that both old and new gain interest.

I admit to being a huge Portmeirion fan, staying for a week each year in August. I had considered for some time building a model of the resort and after failed attempts using paper, cardboard and wood, I gave LEGO a try and so far seems to be the perfect modeling medium for my clumsy hands.

On first observation, LEGO seems like a natural choice for a model of Portmeirion - the brightly coloured walls, quaint shuttered windows and winding passageways lend themselves to the medium. However, closer inspection reveals a daunting combination of awkward angles, outrageous roof-shapes and skewed proportions.

I have so far not built the buildings that the most difficult of these features. When the time comes to build them, I hope my LEGO skills will have improved sufficiently to find elegant solutions while still maintaining the spirit of the building.

The pastel shading of Portmeirion can cause problems. There is a wide variety of LEGO-unfriendly colours throughout the village. Thus far, I have found tan a useful substitute for anything vaguely light brown or beige. However there are a few buildings for which tan is not a solution. The "Unicorn" cottage, for example, is



Photographs by author

most definitely pink - a colour difficult to obtain even in small quantities.

Many Portmeirion buildings are adorned with finials. (Finial: an ornamental top or end of a roof, gable etc.) I experiment with 1x1 plates, bricks and cones to create a slightly different variation for each model. Lever bases make an excellent finishing touch.

Portmeirion fan and musician Jools Holland says, "If you like a building, you measure it" and so, taking Mr. Holland's advice, I do this on photographs of the building or on Sir Clough's actual plans - many of which are reproduced on postcards, prints, and in the Portmeirion guidebook - and sometimes the physical building itself. These measurements help me ensure my models are proportionally correct, and, although not necessarily in exactly scale with each other, they are all to "minifig" scale.

Portmeirion is actually built to around 7/8 of normal scale - as Sir Clough explained, "every arch you can walk through, but only just". Naturally, I would like my minifigs to enjoy their stay in my village, so I use 4x5 doors for the ground floors, and 3x4 doors for upper floors. The ground floor can then be built six bricks high, and any upper floors only five high. This helps maintain the Portmeirion's slightly miniature scale, while leaving at least the ground floor accessible to minifigs.

Some Portmeirion buildings have awkward roofs. The shape and pitch of a roof determines which method to use. For irregularly shaped buildings when normal roof slopes are insufficient, I use stepped plates (or tiles if stepping in half of a stud each time). If the roof has a very shallow pitch I fabricate a large plate and simply lay it on top with skillful plate work around the edges to conceal any gaps.

I make heavy use of the brilliant LEGO geometry that allows a stud to fit into the tube on the underside of a brick. This makes it fairly easy to step in or out by half of a stud without using jumpers, and adds detail and interest.

Here are my tips for modeling your favourite buildings:

- Use the fenestration of doors and windows to help determine the size of your model (Fenestration: arrangement of windows in a building)
- Do not fear half-stud offsets
- Cheat by giving upper floors less height
- Experiment to create your own version of intricate detail
- Use complementary roof styles for adjacent buildings
- Photograph it on location to the bemusement of passers-by!

You can stay up-to-date with my efforts at my site: <http://www.priz.co.uk/build/>

Oh, and I recommend a visit to the real Portmeirion as it really is the most extraordinary place.



Building The Delphinus

By Steve

The Delphinus comes from the Dreamcast RPG Skies of Arcadia, in which flying ships rule the skies among floating continents. I just love the ship designs, in particular the Delphinus, and wanted a model from the second I saw it. Alas, Skies never made it that big (not even in Japan) and no model was ever made available, so I decided to do what any AFOL would and make my own!

The original plan was for a meticulously detailed minifig scale version (and that plan is still kind of on the back burner), but without any good source material it never got beyond sporadic MLCAD experimentation. I'd forgotten all about it until I found a community of Skies fans and posted an appeal for schematics or pictures. I didn't get much of a response at first, but I did eventually get one halfway decent picture. What immediately struck me was how the ship's bow tapered, and it just clicked how well that could be achieved with a pair of 75° 2x2 slopes joined to a pair of 75° 2x2 double slopes - thus the small scale version was born.

Using MLCAD I began to work back from the front. I love the effects SNOT can generate, but I've always been nervous about my ability to employ it successfully. It started coming together extremely well, though - so much so that I started making the project a little more ambitious. For starters there's a swell in the hull towards the bow which has a curved bottom and a slight outward taper - not a very Lego friendly shape! I had planned to leave the taper out, but became convinced it could be achieved without too much effort. The somewhat unorthodox method I settled on led to the main structure being divided in two - one part studs forward, the other studs down. The technical challenge this offered was a bit daunting, but I could see it would lead to a much stronger construction.

Having achieved that, I thought I must be able to get a half plate offset on the ridges at the sides so that the

slope began flush with the side. I ruled it out on the studs forward only version because it would have made an extremely weak point, but the studs down spine solved that problem nicely. What's more it meant I could put the corresponding ridge on the bottom, and have that sit flush as well. Don't you just love it when models build themselves? Indeed the rest of the hull just fell together, even the diagonals where the hull widens to

support the left and right gun turrets which I'd been fretting about a lot.

It suddenly dawned on me that from underside it would look almost hollow. It wasn't a desperate problem, I'd been thinking more of a display piece than a toy as such, but with everything going so well and so much space to work with I thought it was worth trying to rectify. It's mostly taken up by two big cylindrical motor units which were easy enough to replicate, although the sloping parts between were a lot harder to achieve and it wound up rather flat in comparison. What did work out nicely though was the way natural droop angled the grilles at the end of the cylinders, adding both realism and a little interest.

Things got a bit more challenging when it came to the superstructure and bridge - at this scale it really needed to be five studs wide. I was planning on leaving it at four, but inspired by the nose on the UCS X-

Wing I decided to give the five stud offset a go. It married up rather nicely, the "fight deck" (where the random encounter battles take place in the game) covering the only point where the switch was especially obvious. I was particularly satisfied to achieve a one and a half plate (sesquiplat?) offset on the underside of the superstructure, meaning the new 1x1 sloping tiles form a continuous surface.

Since I was incorporating the new 1x1 slope tiles, and also because it suited the model better, I decided to work in bley. Not quite everything was available in bley, hence the grey 75° 2x2 double slopes at the front and the blue ridges on the sides, but what annoyed me more was how noticeable the drop in brick quality was. Bricks weren't sitting flush with each other and the studs forward section was out of proportion to the studs down, resulting in a slight curve that puts the superstructure somewhat a kilter.

The only thing missing is the propellers, I couldn't for the life of me figure out how to render them satisfactorily while also having them actually fit. I think it has wound up a little out of proportion due to the angle the picture is taken from which is why there isn't enough space under the bridge section, but I haven't given up yet! I'm also working on some more Skies ships to go with it, although it turns out the Delphinus is huge in the game - built to scale most will only be about six studs long!



Photographs by author

Lego selling, a husbands point of view

By Matt Pike

Christmas party small talk has always been difficult for me; I am maths teacher and as soon as people know that they walk away. But now all is different: I say that I am married to someone who sells Lego over the internet. The questions never stop.

What does being a seller entail? Well you start with a dilemma – is it easier to sort and put away by colour; to pick and pack by part! Then another – parts make most money but what about the moral duty to sell complete sets; how else will youngsters start? After that the common issues of space and time as Lego always expands to take over both.

There is no doubt that Alison's move into selling Lego was dominated by our love for it, we started the habit by making up complete sets for a friend who sells second hand toys. Selling the left over pieces on Bricklink was an obvious next move but we made a hard thought out

decision to move into parting out new sets, a decision we have never regretted.

Indeed we now employ two people on a part time basis.

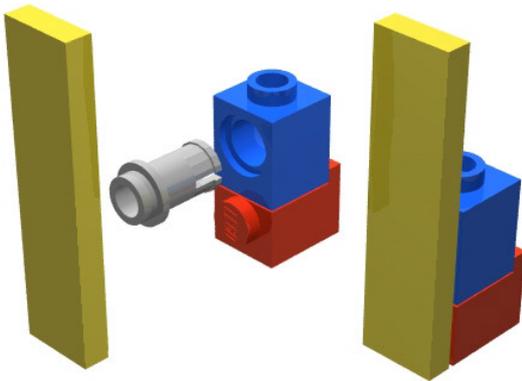
The highlight for me, apart from the free weekend when Alison goes to the Brickish party, is the out of the ordinary orders. The best has to be a technic brick, axle and wheel that a vet grafted onto a tortoise that had a leg amputated. These tend to come from our website rather than through bricklink; but remember the time quandary – that website is so outdated!

However we have designed tasks and supplied pieces to 'corporate team builders' for memory, technic bridge and motorised transporting competitions. We also sourced the parts for a company to build their own version of an industry standard calibrating machine – "don't worry about condition or colour – it has to be these pieces"

I have got over the fact that horizontal and vertical clips are wrongly named and never bothered to get involved in the 17 different formations for the underside of a 2x4 brick. The house and loft are full of Lego, my feet constantly pained when I stand on dropped pieces and the car goes (almost by itself) to the Post Office daily. It has to be one of the best jobs ever; we are glad that we can supply your habit and I can now go to Christmas parties without fear.



BRICK TRICKS - 1



by Jason Railton

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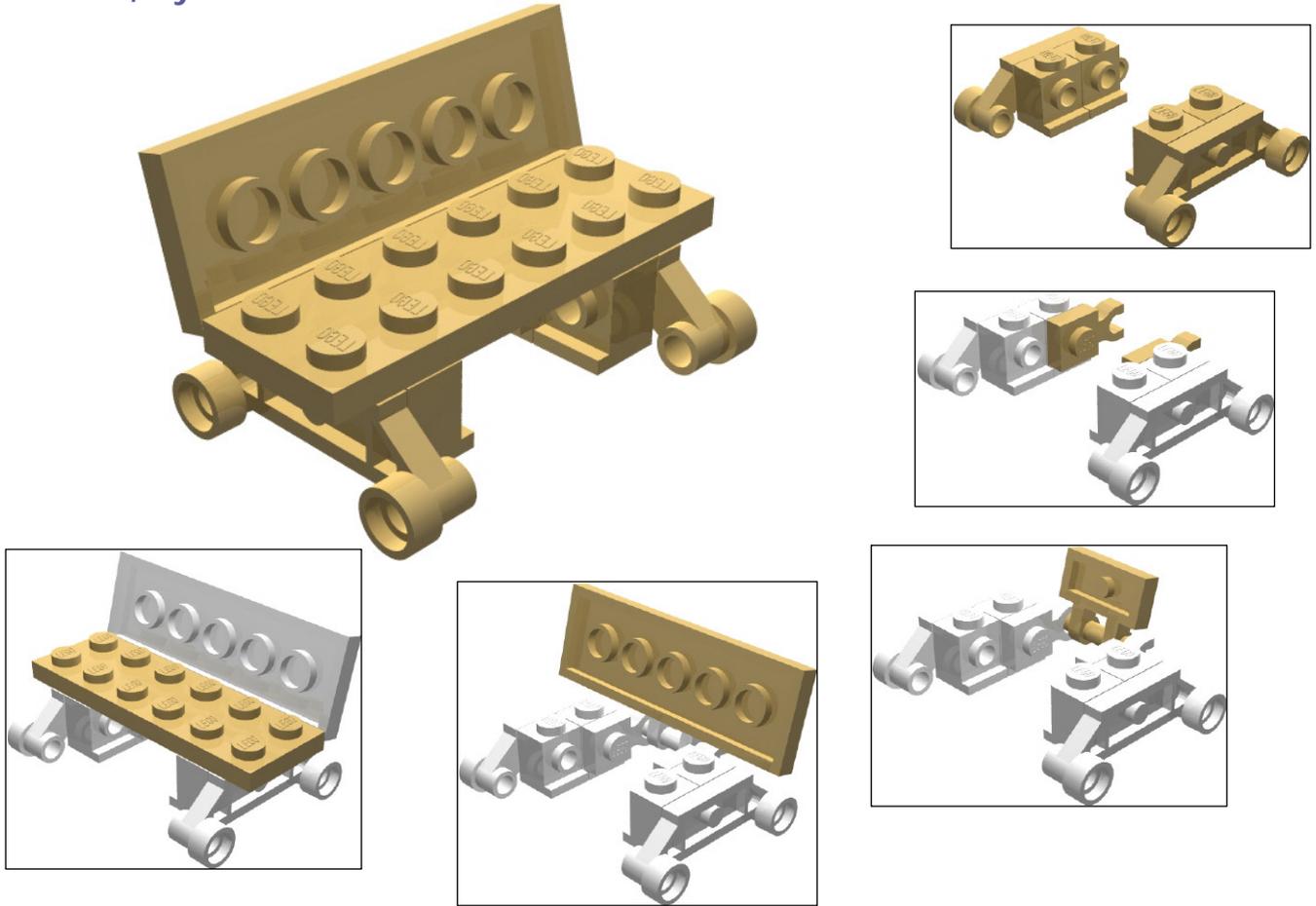
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5 MINUTE MODELS

8. Bench, by David Mackenzie



If you have built a small model you are particularly pleased with, or have suggestions for Building Tips, please send a few notes and pictures, or LDraw instructions, to the editor.

Castle display at Shrewsbury,
Models and photograph by William Howard



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