Track Test

LEWIS ECKETT REVIEWS THE

TAMIYA

HOLIDAY BUGGY

WHEN I FIRST SAW this new buggy from *Tamiya* at the Earls Court Toy Fair in January I was, to say the least, disappointed. It seemed to me at the time that instead of going forward, *Tamiya* had taken a step backwards with the 'Rough Riders' and 'Sand Scorchers' practically monopolising the buggy market, surely it would have been better to produce something far more advanced than a low cost, simply designed and less powerful toy!

However, first impressions are not always the best, particularly in this case. When I actually got down to thinking about it, their choice seemed to be a very shrewd move indeed. This thought was further strengthened when I was able to see a kit first hand and subsequently build one. Basically, it would seem pointless for *Tamiya* to try and invade the market that they already have a large slice of, in the shape of their 'Rough Rider,' 'Sand Scorcher,' 'Cheetah' and 'XR311' combat support vehicle; also with these four items costing over £100 pounds with radio and Ni-Cads, way out of the price range of younger enthusiasts, a low cost buggy did seem to be a wise choice.

The kit

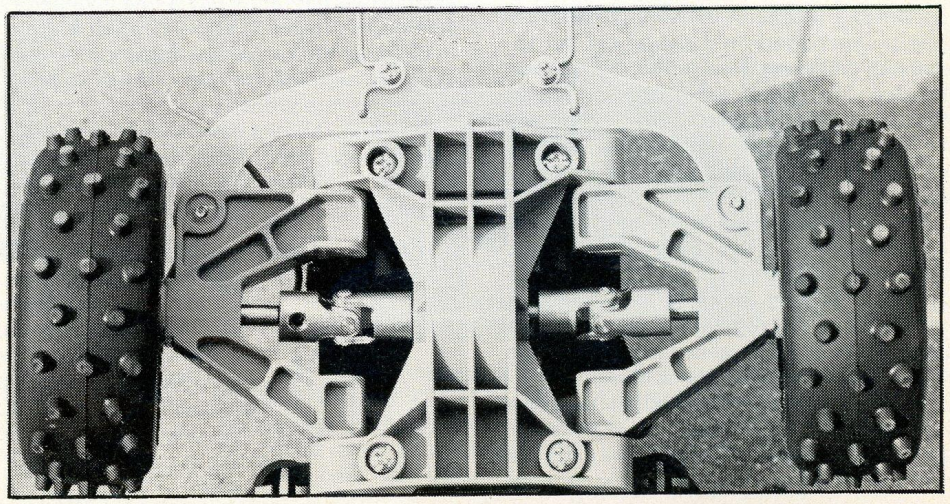
As with all their products, *Tamiya* have packaged this kit beautifully, the box is a masterpiece, not to mention large it makes you wonder what's in it. Inside, the kit pieces are individually packaged in sets, each set has a letter and each individual piece has a number corresponding to the instructions.

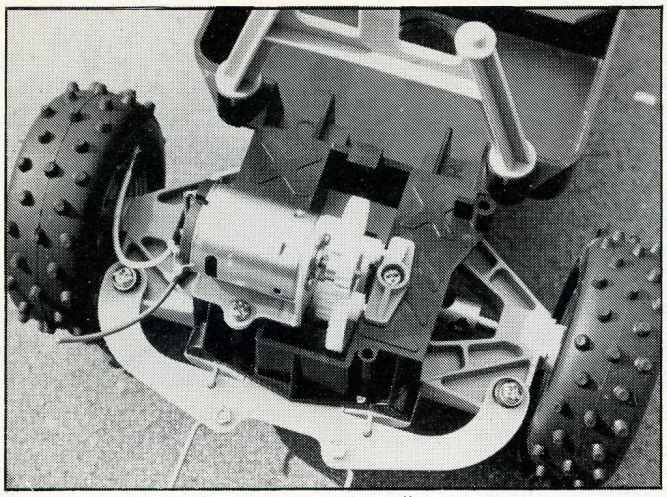
The instructions are very comprehensive, 'exploded' view diagrams are used mainly throughout, with inset diagrams and footnotes to explain particular steps in the assembly. Also included in the kit are two hexagon keys, a box wrench and a small tube of grease, the only tools the buyer has to supply are a modelling knife and a screwdriver. *Tamiya* have obviously put their expertise as plastic kit manufacturers, to great use here, moulded plastic parts are used predominantly, the only metal parts are the motor and its mount, the drive shafts, universal joints and the screws to hold the kit together. Hopefully, the lightness of the finished buggy, due to the low amount of metal parts, would allow the small *Mabuchi* RS-380S motor to turn in a respectable performance. The body-shell and basic frame are both one piece mouldings with all the holes and slots already formed.

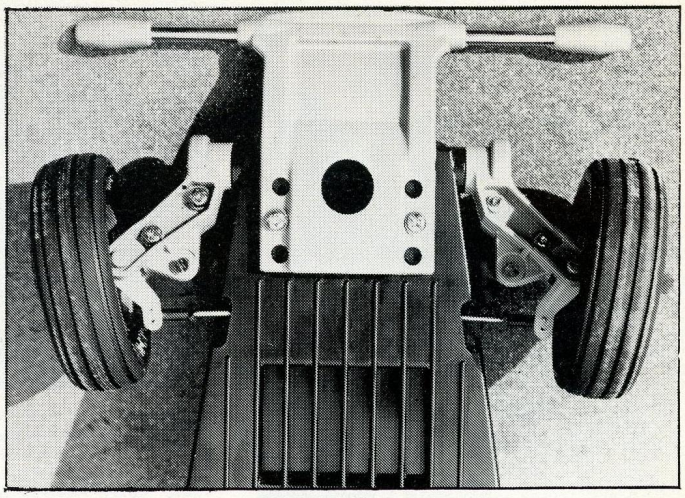
The Holiday Buggy being put through its paces at the local skateboard park. Note: to cope with continuous climbing situations such as this, the lower gear ratio will be needed. Below: the underside of the rear suspension assembly.

Assembly

The instructions start off with the assembly of the rear end, the drive shafts (lightly coated with grease) are fitted into the three plastic gears (a, b and c), the







Above left: the rear suspension assembly from above, the plastic gears need oiling occasionally, to keep them smooth running. Above right: the front suspension arms and steering linkages and heavy duty front bumper.

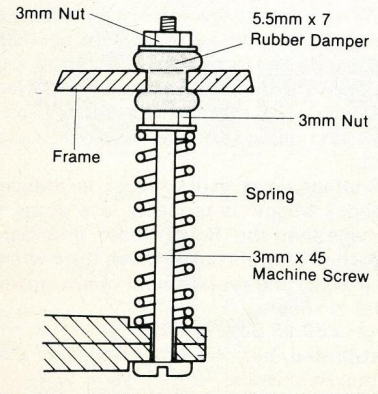
universal joints and bush bearings then slip onto the main drive shaft and are held in place with 5mm grub screws.

The two gear shafts fit into slots in the frame, whilst the main drive shaft, suspension arms and the FRP (Fibre, Reinforced, Plastic) suspension, spring all fit into the bottom half of the rear end assembly. Both halves then fit together with self-tapping screws. Simple! The rear suspension unit makes use of the FRP spring already mentioned. Again, at first glance, this method seemed less than adequate; would the spring be flexible enough and strong enough to take the punishment meted out to it? The small motor fits directly on top of the rear-end assembly and drives the gears via a pinion gear. Two different size pinion gears are supplied, one of 15 teeth, the other of 18. In the instructions, *Tamiya* say that the larger gear will give a slow start with a higher top speed, whilst the smaller gear is the reverse. Bearing this in mind, I opted for the higher top speed gear ratio.

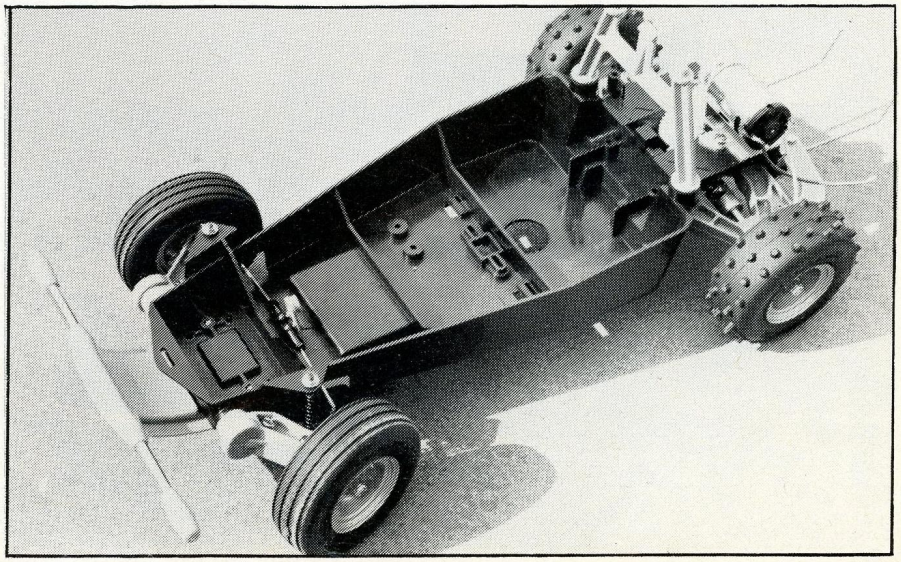
With the rear-end easily completed, the front suspension assembly could be tackled. The suspension arms are in two halves, these fit round two stubs protruding from the basic frame. The wheel axle and steering arm uprights also fit between the two suspension arm halves. The suspension uses a central screw joining the suspension arm, with the top of the frame, a spring fits between the two held in place with a nut and washer. Then a rubber damper fits over the top end of the central screw and halfway through the arm protruding from the frame. Finally, a nut and washer screws down on to the rubber damper so that it compresses either side of the top frame arm and provides a bumper between for the spring. See Fig. 1.

On the whole, this system seems to work well, unfortunately the two suspension arm halves do not fit too snugly on the frame sub-axle. When the suspension is in action, the suspension arm has a tendency to twist away, causing the two halves to pull apart slightly — a bit of delicate trimming of the two halves where they meet rectifies this problem. With the bumper fitted, both ends are complete and the buggy began to really take shape and in such a small amount of time. The next step was to install the radio gear.

Fig. 1

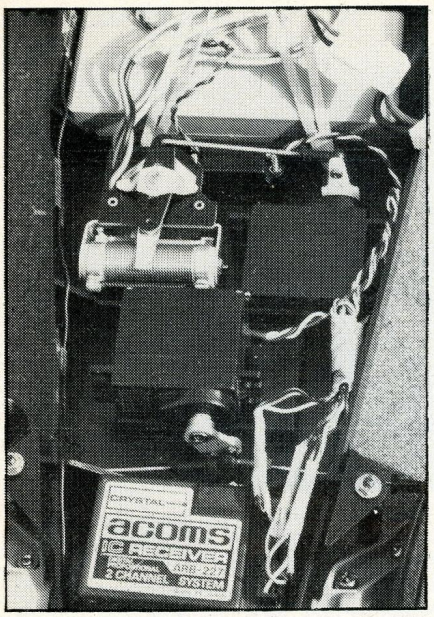


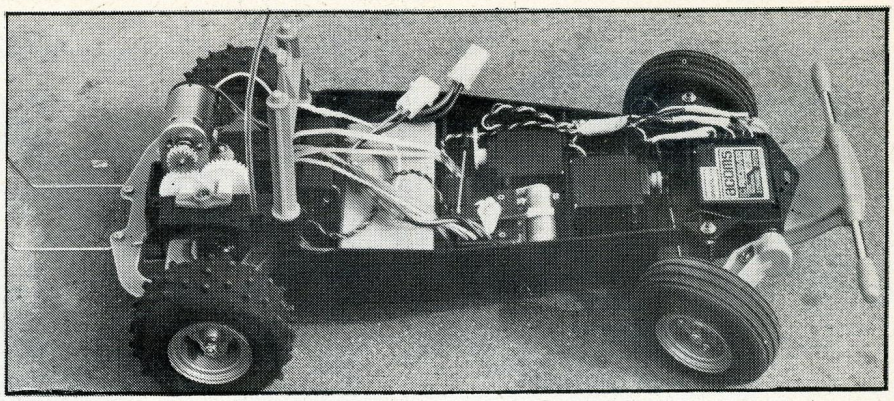
Below: the Holiday Buggy rolling chassis prior to the installation of the radio gear.



Installation

All the radio gear is fixed in with servo tape, installation takes only minutes. As the buggy is designed for *Acoms* radio gear, it seemed only sensible to fit this type and thus keep things simple. The receiver fits in a space provided at the front of the frame, amply protected by the heavy duty front bumper. The steering servo fits on a raised platform in line with the two cut-outs for the steering arms, the servo is raised so that the arms clear the bottom of the chassis, when angled down to the suspension arms; what's more, an arrow on the chassis tells you where the centre of the servo should be! The throttle servo and resistor speed controller fit side by side in the centre of the chassis. The speed controller is of a forward-reverse type with a 15A fuse set in one of the wires leading from the speed controller to the motor in order to protect the radio gear in the event of an overload. The radio switch is set between the throttle system and speed controller, and faces downwards so that it protrudes underneath the chassis, surely a bit dangerous, as the switch can be moved if hit by something underneath? Well, only a





Right: the radio gear, speed controller and Ni-Cads fitted into the basic chassis frame, other makes of radio can be fitted but the Holiday Buggy is designed specifically around Acoms radio gear. Above: the completed Holiday Buggy minus its body shell.

test run will tell. The Ni-Cads and receiver battery are fixed in with two rubber bands to allow for easy access. Now that the radio gear was installed and all the appropriate connections made between the motor and speed controller (no soldering is needed, just crimp the wires together, and push some vinyl tubing supplied over the connection) it's time to add the wheels and tyres and finish the bodyshell.

Finishing

As with their other four buggies, *Tamiya* have provided a bodyshell that is very stylish, unlike some of the other buggy bodyshells available, which are usually 'way-out,' 'Space Age' shapes. *Tamiya* give the buyer something with a bit of character. Technically, the moulding is quite complex and again, plastic kit expertise has made it possible. All that is needed to finish it off is to apply the decals and paint the roof lights and petrol cans, as per instructions. The decal sheet is completely covered with vinyl stickers, apart from the attractive light blue and yellow trim and 'Holiday Buggy' logo, the rest of the space is taken up with enough sponsor decals to virtually cover your buggy. Inside the buggy, or rather the semi-cockpit, is found a driver figure, complete with stetson, looking like a cross between James Dean, John Wayne and Clint Eastwood! In keeping with the tough, off-road theme, I gave them a suitably rugged appearance then fixed 'Clint' into his buggy. Once the bodyshell was complete, the 'Holiday Buggy' was ready for its first run.

Running

To make the chances of enjoyment far greater, I spent a little time setting up the steering linkages properly (there's nothing worse than a car that won't go where you want it to).

Finally, after the *Tamiya* five cell battery pack was charged up it was time for its first run. The moment I hit the throttle the 'Holiday Buggy' was off, the acceleration caught me totally by surprise, to be perfectly honest I had rather expected it to labour its way into top speed. Not so, The lightness of the buggy compensates for the small motor, naturally it's still not as powerful as the 'Rough Rider' or 'Sand Scorcher,' but it's still fast enough to give plenty of fun. The suspension showed no sign of strain even after driving the buggy off the high kerbs outside my house. The GRP spring certainly looked strong enough to cope with the punishment meted out to it.

One distinct advantage that the 'Holiday Buggy' has over the two 'Rough Riders' is the running time, 20 to 25 minutes can be obtained from a full charge. To run the 'Holiday Buggy' on grass we had to find a patch that was short but still relatively bumpy, the local cricket pitch proved to be ideal. The 'Holiday Buggy,' as expected, was slower on this surface but still highly enjoyable.

Below: the Holiday Buggy in action on the grass of the local cricket pitch.

Conclusions

As a budget version of the 'Rough Rider' and 'Sand Scorcher,' the 'Holiday Buggy' will appeal to those contemplating buying a buggy kit, but find the price a little daunting. In fact, many dealers offer the kit complete with *Acoms* radio, battery pack and charger as a special pack deal.

Considering its low price, it's pleasing to see that the 'Holiday Buggy' has features equal to those in some higher priced kits, the heavy duty tyres particularly the rear 'knobblies,' for example, the superb bodyshell and general quality of the moulded parts.

Another point in its favour is that the 'Holiday Buggy' is probably less prone to damage than the 'Rough Rider' and 'Sand Scorcher' (there's not so much to go wrong for a start) and replacement of any broken parts is simple.

Price: £39.95 Battery pack.

Distributed by: Richard Kohnstam Ltd., Hemel Hempstead, Herts.