



THE CHELTENHAM FLYER

A nostalgic
reminiscence
by George Mann

A SUMMER'S DAY IN JUNE, 1930. The place: Swindon Station, up main, Great Western Railway. Standing at the platform the world's fastest train, headed by 4-6-0 'Cardiff Castle', one of the 'Castle' class locomotives of undying fame.

The train began its journey at Cheltenham but it was the run from Swindon which made it the world's fastest. It was scheduled to cover the 77½ miles to Paddington, start to stop in 65 minutes. It frequently did the journey in just one hour.

For a chance to travel on the 'Cheltenham Flyer' I would hoard my pocket money for weeks on end, and, alas, occasionally play hookey from school. Retribution was often painful, but this was as naught to the joy of a run on 'The Flyer'.

But on that lovely summer's day, forty years ago, neither I, the crew or gallant 'Cardiff Castle' knew what lay ahead as, steam hissing from her safety valve, she waited for the "right away!"

Conditions for a fast run were ideal. A dry track, clear air and a tail wind. As always I wished the driver and fireman "God Speed", patted the spotless green locomotive and took up my usual position in the corridor right behind the tender.

Leaning from the window I watched impatiently for the green flag of the guard. The piercing shriek of escaping steam precluded any chance of hearing a whistle. The fireman was also looking back and we exchanged a 'thumbs up' sign.

On the platform men and boys stood close to 'Cardiff Castle', for the "flyer" never left without an admiring audience and many envious glances were cast in my direction. And I must tell you that many an enthusiast was found aboard with only a penny platform ticket!

Logging a run was my particular hobby and I had both a stop watch and what I imagined to be an exact replica of the watches carried by driver and guard. But since my timepiece cost only five shillings I was doubtless in error! None the less, it was accurate enough to record whether we were doing well or not.

Came the magic moment to pull away as the green flag fluttered and the station-men turned towards the locomotive, left arms extended in confirmation of the guard's signal. A blast on the whistle and we were under way.

Proudly the shining green locomotive eased her 300 ton, seven coach load away with no trace of wheel spin, for she was controlled by a top flight Great Western crew, a breed of men admired and respected throughout the railway world.

Accelerating away, regulator wide open, 'Cardiff Castle' took up the challenge with all the pride of her noble breed. Forty, 50, 60, 80, 90 miles an hour!

Impossible now to do more than peep from my window, but I could just observe the characteristic sway of the tender as we forged ahead. Even at speed, the safety valve was blowing and I pictured the fireman shovelling furiously to give his driver a full head of steam.

I began to think in terms of a record run, which, believe it or not, stood at an incredible fifty six minutes for the 77½ miles! The Great Western 'Castles' could sustain high speeds for mile after mile, dependent only on their crews. Magnificent men they were!

And then, approaching Didcot, came the sound I dreaded. The simultaneous shriek of the whistle and the application of brakes. I peered out and saw ahead the yellow fish tailed distant signal. It was against us! By what colossal effrontery was 'Cardiff Castle' being denied the road?

I could have cried in vexation as the brakes continued to slow us down until the crowning indignity of a dead stop became inevitable, for both home and distant signals were 'on'. The run was sabotaged beyond all doubt. Or so I thought. But I had reckoned without the indomitable spirit of two men and a great locomotive.

The halt was brief (although it seemed an eternity), before, once again, the giant pulled away in such a fashion as to make nonsense of accepted standards of steam powered acceleration. She was into her stride as befitted a nonpareil!

A mile or two further revealed the culprit—an express freight rightly shunted onto a slip road, and I wondered how any signalman could have accepted it, knowing that the 'flyer' was due. I hope its crew realised the enormity of their impertinence! As I hoped they might forgive the fist I shook at them!

It was not until we were approaching Reading that I realised we might, at least, maintain schedule and arrive at Paddington on time. As we plunged headlong towards the junction, whistling continuously, I glanced at my watch. Thirty six miles to go. Twenty eight minutes left. Could it be done?

Into Sonning cutting and a chance to check the speed. The quarter mile posts alongside the track are ideal for this and my stop watch clicked. Nine seconds to the next post! One hundred miles an hour! I felt sure that I must have miscalculated and re-checked. Again the magic nine seconds showed. Maintain schedule indeed! We could do it in the hour!

Twyford! Just a blur as we hurried through, never slackening the electrifying dash towards our goal.

Maidenhead, Slough, Ealing Broadway, still eating up the miles effortlessly until the first gentle touch on the brakes heralded the end of an unforgettable journey.

Past Old Oak sidings, slowing quickly now, through Westbourne Park, admiring glances from railwaymen along the track as 'Cardiff Castle' threaded her way into the terminus where she came to rest at platform seven.

Despite a dead stop she had covered the 77½ miles in precisely 57 minutes. Incredible, but true.

There are, alas, no such journeys nowadays. Semi-automatic ugly monsters, seemingly without character, haul our expresses and warrant hardly a second glance. I try to work up some enthusiasm for them but they remain colourless monsters.

For those, like me, who live in peaceful Devon, all is not entirely lost. On any summer day I can proceed to Buckfastleigh, headquarters of the Dart Valley Light Railway, and board a train for Staverton and Totnes. And savour again the sight, the sound and the smell of *steam*. Long may it be so!

CENTIPEDE (continued from page 188)

mounted on the protruding shank of the Bolt lock-nutted in the face of the Bush Wheel. Lock-nutted, in turn, to the end of this Fishplate is another 7½ in. Strip/5½ in. Slotted Strip arrangement 22, another seven Fishplates being bolted to this to serve as the Centipede's legs.

Now mounted in the end holes in Strips 5 and in the rear slots of the Slotted Strips is a 2½ in. Rod, each Strip being spaced from its neighbour by a Collar 23, a Washer also being provided at each side of the Slotted Strips. A ¾ in. Bolt, carrying two 2½ in. Curved Strips 24 to serve as the tail, is screwed into one transverse bore of the centre Collar.

This brings us to the body and, here again, no great difficulty is involved. Four 5½ × 1½ in. Flexible Plates 25 and five 5½ × 1½ in. Plastic Plates 26 are simply curved over and bolted to the vertical flanges of Angle Girders 1, the Plastic Plates being angled slightly by means of their elongated holes to give the "ridged" appearance of the typical centipede. Bolted to the rearmost Plastic Plate are two Flexible Gusset Plates 27, overlapped as shown, to cover the tail and round off the body nicely.

Having seen Mr. Konkoly's Hungarian Centipede

in motion, I can confirm its operational success. Indeed, everyone in the office, watching it whirring and clanking along, found it nothing short of hilarious and the fact that its gait can be altered by changing the positions of Bush Wheels 17 in circular relation to each other, makes it all the more interesting. It qualifies as one of the best totally unusual models we have seen for a long time.

PARTS REQUIRED

2-1a	1-22	4-55	5-189
4-1b	1-26	8-59	4-194d
2-8a	1-27a	2-90	2-201
22-10	90-37a	4-111a	2-518
2-11	70-37b	2-111c	1 Magic Motor
3-12b	62-38	1-115	or 1, 3-12v. d.c.
1-12c	1-48	2-126a	Motor with
1-18b	2-48a	1-188	Gearbox

ADDITIONAL PARTS, IF MAGIC MOTOR USED

2-37a	4-38	4-59	5-111a
			1-186a

ADDITIONAL PARTS, IF MOTOR WITH GEARBOX USED

4-12	1-32	8-37a	8-37b
			4-38

MODELS AT THE M.E. EXHIBITION

The Model Engineer Exhibition is staged by Model & Allied Publications, publishers of ten model/hobby magazines, which of course include Meccano Magazine.

This year's show was the 40th, and there were some wonderful models there, of which the pictures opposite give only a glimpse. The top one shows part of a hand-carved chess set, based on Tenniel's drawings for "Alice Through the Looking Glass," and you will be able to pick out such characters as the Walrus and the Carpenter, Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee, and all the others. They won a silver medal for Mr. S. F. Snedker.

The Aveling & Porter steamroller won the premier award, the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy, for its builder, Miss Cherry Hinds, seen in the picture. It is a working model of incredible accuracy and workmanship; many men model engineers said they'd better take up knitting! Opposite it is the champion

working ship model, the paddle-steamer "Duchess of Fife", built by D. A. Ford.

"Virginia" is an American-type 4-4-0 locomotive in 3½ in. gauge, built by D. C. Piddington and K. A. Hughes, and again a working model of course. The artillery piece and limber was by K. Rains, and the ploughing engine by C. Tyler and J. Haining, one of those which gave demonstrations of steam ploughing during the exhibition. A shipwreck is seen next, the barque "Herzogen Cecilie" aground off Devon; the model is only about 6 in. long and won the miniature ship championship for D. Hunnisett.

At the bottom we have an unusual monorail steam locomotive, 16 mm. scale, by D. A. Boreham, and a very detailed non-flying Spitfire by W. A. Nicholls. These and hundreds more models attracted record crowds to the Exhibition.