

## **A few Hints & Tips based on the experience so far with the new Aster Castle.**

My kit built example runs as well as the production prototypes. The exhaust beat is particularly noticeable even with light loads. Generally feedback from customers has been favourable.

There are a few points worth sharing

1. Wicks. I have found 20 -22 strands of wick material with 10 -12 mm exposed above the top of the wick tube quite satisfactory. Strands should point straight up (ie not fluffed). Wick tubes must be vertical. One customer (MN) has reduced the height of the wick tube to give the fire more space. I have not found this necessary but would recommend an extension to the fuel tank breather of the same amount as the wick tubes have been reduced. However, this is only one customers finding.
2. Fuel. I use 95% IMS with a little colouring and this is fine. Fuel tank can hold enough for a 30 – 40 minute run.
3. Firebox. Although my firebox is lined with mineral insulation per the instructions, I would suggest no lining should be used other than a strip on the top edge where the firebox abuts the boiler and around the rear boiler to make a good flame-tight seal.
4. Smokebox. The sealing of the Smokebox is absolutely vital. Extra time taken will be rewarded. GC recommends the use of black bathroom sealant around steam pipe exits to make an invisible seal.
5. Springing. The rear driver might do a little better with a stronger spring to slightly raise the rear of the loco. If you do this then some adjustment to the coupling bar will be required if the front of the tender is not to be slightly lifted. Comments please
6. Chimney. A number of customers have opted for the lower GWR Castle chimney. It is quite possible to do this from the Aster parts without effecting performance. If you are unsure how to proceed then please ask. I have drawings available and some dimensioned photos. Two customers have said they will do this for others if requested. By the way the use of a little 'Duraglit' on the copper chimney gives a very realistic sheen and is worth doing. But I fancy this is copper plated so eventually it will be worn through so take it easy.
7. One worker (MN) has commented about the over heavy lamp iron above the front buffer beam. I am experimenting with removing the securing 'foot' and soldering the iron in place. This will look much neater.
8. Oil. The Aster Castle has an oil tank mounted under the cab floor with a pressuriser to help the oil forward if required. If you use this pressurising facility then a quick "On / Off" is all that is needed. Always leave the control valve in the fully closed (off) setting. Unlike the Aster Flying Scotsman & Aster Duchess which rarely needs any help from the pressuriser, the Castle does appreciate a couple of 2 second bursts of oil pressure during a 30 minute run.
9. Safety Valve. One customer (MN) has reported a poor closure of the Safety Valve after it has lifted. My example is quite snappy and so were the prototypes. If you find your SV's letting out too much steam before closing then get in touch for a replacement.
10. Loco / Tender coupling. I have drastically shortened the black water tubes to permit them to be less visible. I have also used Tony G's replacement water connector which is a neater job than the Aster knurled nut. I can supply this fitting for £10 inc P&P.
11. More Loco / Tender coupling. I prefer to run with loco and tender in the close coupled position. There is no issue with 10 foot radii with this arrangement.
12. Transfers. The GWR kit is supplied with a set of lining transfers (plus a spare) for the builder to apply. Please read the instructions carefully and be sure to bake the part with the applied transfer before adding to the build! Not all GWR Castles in all eras had all the lining; some had none and others just along the valance. Check with a photo. The BR kit has no valance / tender frame / footstep lining. Some have said that the lining is a nightmare to apply. Well I tried a few pieces and could manage, so if I can then you definitely can!
13. I can supply GWR style lamps. These were first produced for the King George V & Pannier Tank. They are a little heavy looking but look fairly good to me. They also suit the BR 9F / Evening Star. £20 for 3 including P&P.

Your thoughts and opinions warmly invited on the above and any other Aster castle topic.

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