

LIGHTING UP OF A GWR LOCOMOTIVE (much the same for other engines)

If an engine is cold and had not been in steam for some days it would require 8 to 12 hours to get up steam. This would rather depend on the type of coal. If it was a hard sharp coal it would require less time but the soft Welsh steam coal always took longer.

GWR Locomotives were designed to burn Welsh coal.

The lighter up would check the water level of the boiler, preferably about 2" showing in the gauge glass. Water expands when heated.

Shovel coal into firebox leaving the centre open, (a bit like a birds nest). In this central position drop a couple of lighted lighters(a lighter is made up from about a dozen pieces of timber, each being about 8" long and roughly nailed together (usually old sawn up sleepers split up into sticks) making a type of open box in which a handful of cotton waste soaked in paraffin can be pushed.

Cover the lighters with coal, and then leave for several hours. Smoke would go everywhere except up the chimney, more so on a dull miserable day.

When the fire is well alight the lighter up would then push the fire over the grate area and add more coal.

The aim of the lighter up is to get a decent fire going, and about 60 pounds of steam showing on the pressure gauge when the enginemen take over to prepare engine for its day's work.

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