

37890 The Railway Observer
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Numbered D6868, the locomotive was new in October 1963 having been built by English Electric/Robert Stephenson and Hawthorns at Darlington. Works numbers allocated were EE 3346 and RSH 8399. As D6868 it was first allocated to Cardiff Canton Depot (86A) and taken into Western Region stock under a Swindon lot number, 458 – this was the standard practice at that time. At the time of delivery, D6868 was known as an EE Type 3 Phase 2 locomotive. Under the TOPS renumbering scheme, D6868 became 37168 in February 1974.

After a three-year stay in South Wales, subsequent transfers took D6868/37168 to Healey Mills (56B/55C) in December 1966, Tinsley (41A/TI) in July 1970, Thornaby (TE) in September 1973, Tinsley again in March 1975, Immingham (IM) in November 1977 and Stratford (SF) in May 1984.

Throughout this period, it appears that the locomotive carried only the standard BR green and then BR blue liveries, but with the addition of yellow headcode warning panels at some time.

The major change occurred in 1987 when 37168 was called to Crewe Works under the large-scale Class 37 refurbishment programme then under way. It was extensively modified with an alternator replacing the generator, regearing CP7 bogies and the addition of ballast to take its weight to 120tons. The locomotive was outshopped in October 1987 renumbered as 37890.

37890 was one of the early recipients of the new Trainload Freight 'triple-grey' livery applied at the time of refurbishment. It remained a Stratford locomotive allocated to the Petroleum sub-sector, and the appropriate blue and yellow decals were also added. The duties of the Stratford allocation of class 37/7s were mainly centred on the north Thames area oil refineries with the locomotives normally outbased at Ripple Lane depot. Pool code FPLX, later FPFS, was allocated to this fleet. In April 1990, Immingham (IM) took over maintenance responsibility and 37890 found itself in the newly created FPFR pool, still outbased at Ripple Lane. In April 1991, 37890 was loaned to Cardiff Canton based pool FPEK for one week, although not transferred to Canton, and then moved on in the same month to Immingham pool FPCI based on Humberside, returning to pool FPFR at Ripple Lane in September.

37890 was still an Immingham engine in pool FPFR and carrying 'triple-grey' livery with Petroleum sub-sector decals when it arrived at Hither Green Depot on 23rd February 1994 for the unveiling of its new name 'The Railway Observer'. A secondary plate inscribed 'The Journal of the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society Founded in 1928 RCTS' was added at a later date; the text on this plate was all in upper case using a smaller font except for RCTS which was in larger italic font.

37890 The Railway Observer

In March 1994 37890 was transferred to Stewarts Lane in newly formed pool ESBB London area class 37/7 as part of the newly established Trainload Freight Southeast Division, later Mainline Freight, prior to privatisation.

In March 1996, ownership of all freight locomotives was transferred to English Welsh & Scottish Railway (EWS) on privatisation. 37890 was still allocated to Stewarts Lane but was now in pool EWDB Chiltern & Heathrow Infrastructure. In September 1997 37890 was transferred to Eastleigh, on the closure of the EWS part of Stewarts Lane depot, remaining in pool EWDB. Then in December 1998, as part of a rationalisation of EWS allocations and pool codes, 37890 was transferred to Toton in pool WKGN Systemwide class 37/7.

On 11th June 1999 37890 was transferred to pool WNXX (Stored Locomotives) as a result of derailment damage and stored at Cardiff Canton depot. On 2nd July it was transferred to pool WKMF designated Special Projects. This pool was created for locomotives being despatched to Eurre in France for construction work on the extension of the LGV from Valence to Marseilles. The nameplates were removed before its movement to France which took place via the Channel Tunnel on 13th July 1999.

After completion of the French contract 37890 was 'repatriated' back through the Channel Tunnel on 10th September 2000 and was subsequently moved to Tyne yard for storage arriving there on 13th September.

RO November 2001 reported that 37890 has been moved to storage at Crewe Diesel depot, where it was subsequently repaired for potential further use abroad. 37890 was transferred to pool WKGS, special projects, Spain (RO June 2002) and on to pool WKGR, special projects, Italy (RO July 2002). It was moved to Wembley in May where it was joined by two other class 37/7s for planned movement to Italy, after initially being thought to be going to Spain as replacements for two class 37s that had crashed there. That planned movement never took place; it would appear that the requirement for three more class 37/7s in Italy was delayed or cancelled.

On 29th August 2002 37890 and the other two class 37/7s at Wembley were hired (on paper) to pool WKSN for possibly use on Sandite duties. When it had been found that there were sufficient class 37/5s available for these duties, the three class 37/7s were transferred back to pool WKGR on 31st August. All three were moved to Old Oak Common TMD for special tests on 4th September and transferred to pool WNSS EWS locomotives stored serviceable on 11th September.

37890 The Railway Observer

On completion of repairs they were transferred on 4th October to pool WKAD EWS class 37 Midlands and North West, allocated to Crewe Diesel depot. All three left Old Oak Common on 7th October for Acton Yard and on to Didcot where they returned to service. It was again transferred to pool WNSS EWS locomotives stored serviceable on 19th December and stored at Crewe DMD. Then on 13th January 2003 it was transferred to pool WNTR EWS locomotives stored 'tactical reserve', remaining at Crewe DMD.

After several months in store it was transferred on 6th June 2003 to pool WKAD EWS class 37 Midlands and North West and moved inside Crewe DMD for repairs and fitting TPWS equipment, returning to service on 17th June.

37890 arrived at Cardiff Canton TMD for store on 18th December 2003 and was officially transferred to pool WNTR EWS locomotives stored 'tactical reserve' on the 22nd.

On 11th August 2004 37890 and three other class 37s were hauled from Cardiff Canton TMD to Margam LIP for attention and possible reinstatement. It was reinstated to Sandite pool WKSJ at Margam on 27th September. 37890 was stored at Margam on 13th December in new pool WNTR EWS Sandite locomotives stored.

37890 and several other class 37s were temporarily reinstated on 6th January 2005 but remained in pool WNTR. They were used for weekend work and returned to store at Margam on the 18th.

In September 2007, when several stored locomotive pools were disbanded, 37890 was transferred to pool WNXX EWS locomotives stored serviceable, remaining at Margam.

37890 was one of sixteen stored locomotives offered for sale by DB Schenker, formerly EWS, in October 2009. Four of the class 37s, including 37890, were bought by the R.J. Hull jnr., Rotherham in early December. It was removed from Margam by road just before Christmas and taken as far as Allely's yard at Studley, Warwickshire. After the holiday break it resumed its journey on 5th January and was delivered to Hull's yard the following day. 37890 remained at Hull's yard for more than half a year; it was cut up in early August 2010.