

SYPHON!

Newsletter Winter 1999 - Spring 2000

Many of you have questioned where the Winter 1999 issue of *SYPHON!* has got to. The answer is explained in this newsletter and hopefully you can understand the position the Group now finds itself in.

We in the Committee have long known that with the run-down of the Class 37's, interest would start to wane in railways, in general, and we have started to see this coming through. Ken Carr has had serious problems producing a magazine mainly through a lack of information and photos coming in, added to this, his work patterns have changed and as of last year, extra pressure has been applied to his time by the arrival of Madeline. As a father with (now not so) small children, I know how hard that can be and as the Group is only a hobby, and not a full-time job, something has to give. In this case, it has been the magazine.

The other Committee members are carrying on as before, but we really need someone to assist Ken in producing a magazine, who is PC or Mac literate and has time available. I would love to get behind the keyboard again, but as you will see later, I have other projects to consider. If you would like a crack at the mag, either write via the main address or e-mail me at first.generation-traction@euphony.net.

You will have seen by now that the Group has started a Limited company to manage the Group assets, called ***First Generation Traction Ltd.*** I am at present MD of this as well as Secretary of the Group which is keeping me busy as well as working on 37003 at the EARM. This was agreed at last years AGM to secure the future of the locomotive as it gives us the opportunity to raise finance by either non-trading shares or investment to complete the work required. It also protects the membership of the Group if anything should go wrong from being liable from creditors as they were before. Group Treasurer Steve Pizzey has taken the role of Financial Director and is working towards giving the company a good asset base. The Group holds the lion's share of ***FGT*** shares at present, shares are available to buy at £25-00 each and letters of interest should go through the main PO Box or the E-mail address so the necessary forms can be sent out. Personal (non-share) investments are also available at negotiable rates.

FGT is a non-profit making organisation therefore there is very little chance of a dividend on shares held *unless* it is successful.

We are offering you, the members, a chance to be a real part-owner of 37003 instead of just a member of the owning organisation.

37003 restoration: Work is continuing at the EARM with a small team of dedicated followers, Steve Pizzey, Colin Summers, Mike Gibson, Dan Hitchens, Mike Millward and Steve Potter putting in time to get 003 looking externally tidy. This has been assisted by the EARM shifting 003 into the Goods Shed which gave us a platform to cut out the worst of the corrosion on one side and do further re-plating. Steve and Colin have been busy cleaning out the engineroom and painting it and very tidy it looks too; they are now passing to the heavily

contaminated control cubicle end. As for spares, we are still waiting on EWS to come back with a figure for what we require but other avenues are opening for us as I write. I cannot go further until more is known.

Steve Bluett of the 37LA came to see us the other week and pick up some work we had done for them and was impressed with the overall condition of 003. 37075 is now working but has problems with the main generator which will need sorting, as will the engine stalling problem but after five years dumped at Immingham, they are very happy with their acquisition.

The last job done before 003 was removed from the goods shed (for track maintenance) was to letter up the painted on nameplate 'The 1st East Anglian Regiment' on the repaired side. 003 will either now go back into the Goods Shed or will make its way to the main restoration shops now a good amount of stock has left the site (the site was becoming 'stock-bound' so the departure of 3 x 04, 1 x 03 and a 108 DMU has eased the situation a bit, but more is to go soon). This will be better as we will no longer be bound to daylight and dry weather.

Group AGM: Yes, I know it is late. We will be holding the 1999(!) AGM at the EARM, Chappel and Wakes Colne on March 18th 2000 from 1pm onwards, final location to be sorted on the day (the Museum is in a state of change at present so we don't know exactly where will be available). 37003 will be open for inspection (wherever it is). Hope to see you there!

Magazine: Apart from the information above, the most important thing to announce is that the magazine will have to revert to old-style black and white purely through cost. We could just afford to do the colour version and it was very well recieved, but with the slow decline in membership over the last year or so (in direct line with the withdrawal of the Class) we can no longer afford to do it. We envisage a steadying of the membership in the next nine months or so with maybe a pick-up at the final withdrawal, but, we are in a completely different world to previously so we don't really know what is going to happen. This should make life easier for whoever would like to assist Ken.

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The recent spate of withdrawals seems to have eased to present after the storage of the sandite locomotives. Many appear to be stockpiled at depots, maybe awaiting the outcome of trials and delivery of the MPV's for Railtrack, but 37043 and 37012 were whisked to the CRDC at Wigan and have been stripped of bogies and fuel tanks as was 37153, now dumped on flat wagons at the Centre. 37431 and 37371 were disposed of and are now just frames. 37038 escaped on Jan 13th for Ian Riley Eng at the East Lancs, along with 37197 which is to receive the power unit out of 37332 at Old Oak Common. 37242 had one last blast when some berk started it up and moved it around the CRDC over Christmas which has resulted in higher security and 37242 being stripped soon afterwards. 37156 donated its bogies to 37174 at Wigan but these are unusable so 37174 has a bleak future now. At the beginning of February, it was reported 37158 had been sold and work was carried out at the CRDC. 37026 and 37108 are still reported to be intact, 37025 is reported to be in final negotiations with the SRPS and requires a new bearing in the damaged traction motor. 37413 is also reported to be going to the SRPS, along with rumouredly one other for railtour work. 37895 arrived at Great Yarmouth on Feb 22nd with the fertiliser train, a surprise as this is virtually a booked 'shed' turn.

One good bit of news was 37116 was moved from Toton to Doncaster for repairs after its collision last year, but 37707 (ex37001) and 37899 are still out of traffic at Toton. A fleet survey on 28 Feb found, out of only 89 class 37's on the books, 27 actually booked to do anything. 37042 was at St Blazey, probably replacing 37248 on the Moorswater branch, with the latter at Carnforth. 37688 was back on old stamping grounds at Peak Forest and Peterborough SD held a good selection with 37516, 37669 and 37689 present. Even Stratford TMD had a few present with 37114, 37682 and 37895. 37401, 37415 and 37429 were working the coast, with surprisingly, the majority of 4's on Motherwell TMD with 406/411/413/419/424/427/428/430 all present.

Preserved: As seen above, 37075 is now a runner but with faults still to cure. The Growler Group's 37215 is continuing as reliably as before, with 37099 having its engine sent away for repairs to Adtranz Crewe. 37038 and 37197 are both looking to be main line candidates later this year, once 37197 has had its engine swap carried out. 37029 has been in the wars again, this time with traction motor problems. 37032 has been keeping very quiet up on the North Norfolk with rumours of skirts, round buffers and pseudo-doors being fitted. 37190 is nearly ready to grace the rails again, the first one to appear in large logo livery. The sale of 37108 to Steve Benniston has not gone ahead as expected. 37158 has been sold; we are awaiting details of to whom and where it is going.

Once again, sorry things are not as they should be, but hopefully soon normal service can be resumed.

Mike Millward.
