Improving the Bachmann 37/0 (method 1)

*As a follow up to last issues review **Jim Smith-Wright** attempts to improve the RTR Class 37/0 from Bachmann.*
*Photographs **Jim Smith-Wright***

This started out as an exercise to correct the Bachmann 37/0 as simply and easily as possible but as you will see later it didn't end up that way. As I stated in my review of the model (last issue) it is not perfect but is most definitely useable. Many modellers may be happy with it as is but I wanted a 37 without buffer-beam skirts and I also wanted to see if I could correct the nose and improve the locomotives "face".

Bearing in mind that there are some issues with the body side details I am happy to live with those as I don't think they detract from the look of the loco. I also reasoned that I could "fix" the loco without having to completely repaint it.

The easiest thing first, the air horns. A few twists of a 1.2mm drill in a pin vice is all it took to open out the solid fronts. Almost as easy the conversion to P4 gauge, using Branchlines wheels and a pair of stepped axles from the EMGS for the trailing axles.

Since all of the nose detail excepting the sandbox fillers appeared to be about 1mm to high it seemed logical to cut the front of the nose section out and move the whole lot down. Refer to photo 1 to see where I decided to cut the nose. I used a circular saw in a mini-drill to do this as it leaves an extremely fine line where it cuts and thus reduces the amount of filling required later. While the nose was separate I fitted a shawplan marker light panel (actually for a class 47 but close enough - Shawplan have said that they are working on an etch for the 37). Taking it in 2 opposite corners with cyano and then reinforcing the join from inside when I was happy with the position. A piece of 1mm thick plasticard was then used as a filler in the top of the nose and the Bachmann nose front glued back in place. See photo 2. This was shaped roughly with the mini-drill when all was set then the joins filled and it all filed and sanded to shape.

The buffers were removed next and the bottom of the nose marked out and cut off using photos as a guide. At this stage I masked the nose and gave it a light coat of railmatch white primer to check the joins. Any areas that needed a little attention were refilled and then sanded smooth.

Once happy with this I fitted the handrails and lamp irons (suitable thinned down a little) and turned my attention to the bogies. The side-frames were cut off, this time using a razor saw as I wanted a thicker cut than the mini-drill gave me. The side-frames were then glued back on, ensuring that the axleboxes and axle centres lined up in both horizontal and vertical planes. This closes up the gap between the bogies and the body, the thicker cut of the razor saw being enough to correct the over width bogies.

The buffer-beam came from a donor 37/4 and took a fair bit of work to make it fit. It turns out the 37/4 is longer than the 37/0 due to the slope of the nose on the /4 being wrong - something I hadn't realised before now. I discarded the original buffers and used Hornby class 50 buffers in their place. The nose was resprayed in yellow, buffer-beam detail added including the tiny ladders (N gauge etched ones) and the job was done.

Not quite as this was where I got carried away and decided the under-frame tanks could do with more relief. So out with the mini drill again and the moulded gap in between the tanks was quickly removed, followed by the little corners in the tanks themselves which I felt would benefit from being a bit more recessed. Some pipes and other bits and bobs were fashioned for the tank area using photos as a guide. See photo 3a and b.

Despite the roof fan grill being a good fit on both of my examples, it's crude design still bugged me. So it was replaced with a Shawplan etch. The original hole being opened up slightly to fit it. I retained the original fan boss but used the shawplan fan, mounting it higher up than the bachmann original. It doesn't spin round when you blow on it now though! See photo 4 for a comparison.

My attention then returned to the bogies. The speedo on the number 2 end is a pretty obvious detail and is reproduced with micro-strip and some florists wire. It dissappears up into the body but isn't attached to it. I also thought the parking brake chain was a fairly prominent feature of the bogie so this was replicated using some brass strip and 40 links per inch brass chain. When parked the Chains are wound tightly but when running they hang down a fair bit. This allows enough slack for them to be mounted as per the prototype but still negotiate curves.

The Model is fitted with lights, controlled from the decoder but as these are at best my clumsy bodge (design wise) I wont go into details here.

I have tried to show the modified loco next to an out of the box original so that you can judge for yourselves of the work outlined here is worth doing or not. I would guess this is about 5 hours work spread over a week or so, the handbrake chains proving to be the most tricky part to get right.

Photo 1

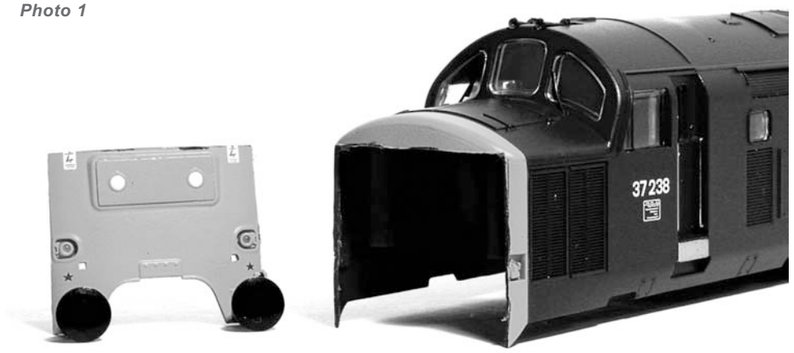


Photo 2

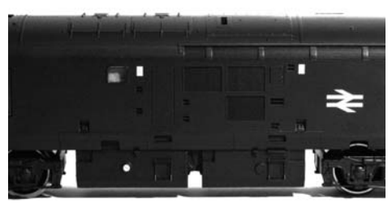
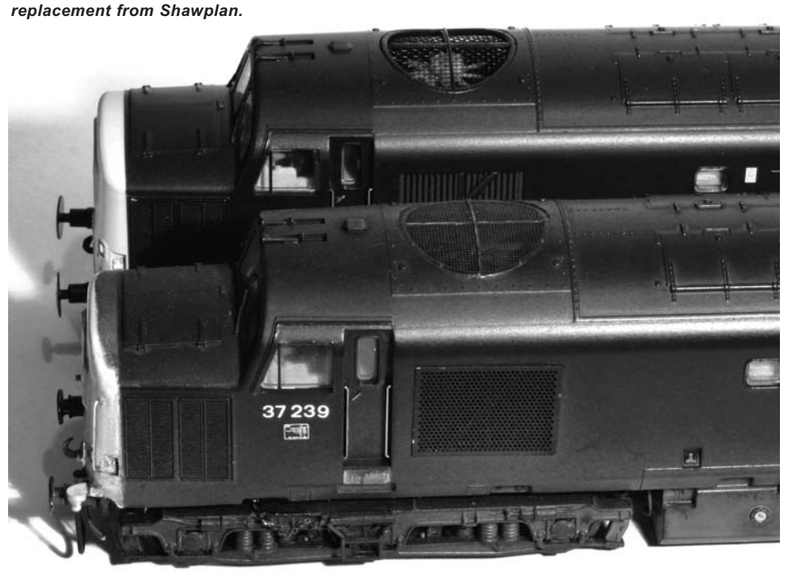


Photo 3a (above left): ***The tanks as they come out of the box.***
Photo 3b (above right): ***The modified tanks as outlined in the text.***

Photo 4: ***The original Bachmann fan grill is shown at the top. Underneath is the etched replacement from Shawplan.***



The original Bachmann Bogie is shown above. Compare this with the repositioned and detailed bogie as shown below.