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The Angle of The Dangle

Adjusting the Gearbox Selector on a Mk VI Manual Gearbox

by Martin Cutler, 2000

After 7 years of painstaking rebuild, I had finally got my Bentley back on the road - B256MD (or Chloe as she is now called) had been sadly neglected. Everything felt fine, except for difficulty in obtaining 2nd gear. I was told that the gearbox adjuster screws were the culprit, so these were fiddled with *ad infinitum* to obtain a smoother action, with no success. With the gearchange in this condition I travelled about 2000 miles, thinking it could be smoother but living with it. Imagine my surprise when one day, taking off from a set of lights, the car travelled backwards instead of forwards! I had selected first as usual, but the gearbox had other ideas! Worse was to come - I couldn't get the gear-lever out of its slot, so reverse it was. Luckily, I was not too far from home, and a \$30 towing fee to the NRMA Road Service later, and the car was reversed into the shed, in deep disgrace.

After fretting over the cost of a full gearbox rebuild, I ventured out into the shed to find out why the gearbox was jammed in reverse. The only way to see everything was to take out the floor, so out came the seats and carpets, closely followed by the floor panel.

Now, with everything in view, I was able to see that the selector was in fact in the first gear slot, but the gearbox was in reverse. I pulled the top off the gearbox, which allowed everything to free up, and extracted the foot of the selector arm from the selector rods.

When rebuilding the chassis, I had simply replaced the shims that were originally on the car, which fit between the gate-change box and the chassis. This was found to be the culprit. With the shims in place, the foot of the selector arm was not located centrally above the selector rods. The adjustment of the gearbox mounts did make a difference, but not a large enough one. A new angled shim was made up and inserted between the gate change box and the chassis. This ensured the foot of the selector arm was perfectly in the centre of the selector rods. The whole lot was then meticulously cleaned and greased, and refitted to the car.

The gearbox is now a total delight to use, extremely smooth in operation, just as the maker intended. Many happy miles have now passed under Chloe's wheels, with many more to come!