



A tale of two gears or A Dickens of a job to sort it out.

Maurice Williams

I tell a tale of daylight robbery.

On our way up to Cumbria for the Fat Lamb weekend, and whilst stationary in traffic on the M6 around Knutsford, a gang of robbers crept under our car and stole 2nd and 4th gears.

I was only aware of the theft when we left the motorway and joined main roads when I attempted to change down into second and found that I couldn't find it.

I was aware of whom the perpetrators might be as Keith had described them to me previously, when a similar robbery had affected Bob Derricott's Plus 8.

The theft was committed by an OCG headed by a Mr Bush (no, not George) who uses the pseudonym Rubber as his first name, along with his seven brothers who also, confusingly, use the same first name. Apparently their mother thought it would be a good way of not forgetting the names of such a large family.

Seven same names for seven brothers - a good title for a film perhaps.

The hills, twists and turns of Cumbria and West Yorkshire proved difficult when only 1st 3rd and 5th gears were available, coupled with the fact that during the raid the robbers had also stolen the clearance between the underside of the remote gearshift and the top of the prop shaft Universal Joint, necessitating holding the gear lever in the forward and left position to recover the clearance and avoid further damage.

We eventually arrived home after spending many hours driving south on the M6 (some of it in the obligatory stationary position around Knutsford where the robbers reside) with Di holding onto my gear lever in forward, left and fifth gear position.

Now for the retrieval of those missing two gears.



It appeared on closer examination that Rubber Bush and his brothers had been unsuccessful in stealing the gears after all, and had simply rearranged them around the outside of the gearbox.

On Keith's advice a quick call to Rimmer Bros, the ordering of eight of Mr Bush's sisters, all named Polly, and the exchange of around £47.00 brought a visit from the postman with the required items – 8 off UKC854POLY.

The problem seems to affect Plus 8's and Plus 4's using the Rover LT77 or later R380 gearbox with the remote gear selector which bring the gear lever back toward the driver's hand.

The aluminium casting carrying the remote linkage is supported by the eight bushes which in their original form are rubber which disintegrate over time, and that's why the replacements are all name Polly (short for Polyurethane) which should last for ever.





The solution.

First remove the seats – easy, six bolts on each, and then the speedometer drive cable from the back of the speedo head, a bit of a fiddle under the dashboard.

Then remove the transmission tunnel covering the gearbox and remote change – easier said than done, as it can be a bit more difficult.

Once all the screws are removed which secures the tunnel to the floor, the sheet metal enclosure should come out fairly easily. BUT when Morgan first build the car this is installed before the dashboard and other items are put in place which gives more room. With the dashboard in place then space is extremely tight and it involves lots of twisting and turning



One useful tip – gained after the event – is to remove the large bolt securing the handbrake lever which would allow the lever to drop by an inch or two and give much better clearance for removal and re-installation. The bolt can be accessed either through the hole in the side of the casing or by raising the rear of the casing slightly once all the fixing screws have been removed.

Once the transmission tunnel has been removed the problem can be easily identified, as with the disintegration of the rubber bushes, the aluminium casting floats around like a feather in a force 9 gale. No wonder I thought that the robbers had stolen two gears.

Replacing the old rubber bushes with the new Poly ones is a straightforward, if fiddly, process and whilst it would be possible for one person to do it, a second pair of hands is most useful. Care should be taken to prevent the front remote linkage joint disengaging with the gear selector, as it's rather fiddly and frustrating to re-engage it.

Once all the bushes are in place and tightened up, it's time to replace the transmission tunnel. This is the difficult bit.

We found that with the handbrake lever in various positions, and the gear lever in different positions too, gave just sufficient room to manoeuvre the tunnel into place, remembering to thread the speedo cable through the hole in the tunnel first of course.

Then it's just a case of putting all the screws back in to anchor the transmission tunnel to the floor, reconnecting the speedo cable and re-installing the seats. Not forgetting to put the bolt back in to the handbrake lever if you removed it.

I found it easier to remove the speedo head from the dash, connecting the cable and then putting the head back in. Reconnecting the speedo drive cable into the head whilst in a confined space under the dashboard is difficult if not virtually impossible.

Time for a test drive and the joy of finding the gears easy to select again and all present and correct.

Conclusion – DON'T PANIC when you find you can't select some gears and think, quite naturally, that it's a gearbox failure. Many Morgan and other marque owners have suffered similar problems and had their cars relayed to their marque specialist for an anticipated expensive repair, when it's relatively easy (!!!) to do it at home.



One problem is that the bushes don't seem to give any advance warning of failure. Our Plus 8 had covered about 53000 miles without any problems or difficulties in the gear-change area, although over the years there may have been some gradual, infinitesimal, deterioration of gear change precision.

Good luck if you decide to carry out this modification or repair.

I am indebted to Keith for his advice and to Simon for his help and patience in the re-assembly process.

Maurice Williams August 2021