

Cautionary tale with a socket ratchet set



Nic Houslip provides a word of warning to those of you who use socket set ratchet handles that you need to push the spindle through and turn over to reverse the direction of operation.

Whilst working on my MG RV8 recently, I removed the clutch slave cylinder and then set out to remove the small bolts that hold the sheet metal cover on the lower half of the bell housing. I selected the nice new 1/4" ratchet handle that I had recently purchased that has a protruding spindle that you push through and turn the handle over to set the direction so that it will tighten or loosen bolts. I then added the correct socket prior to undoing the first bolt.

Working away merrily with the ratchet I noticed that as the bolt was unscrewing the ratchet handle was moving closer to the sump. Hmmm! - I thought if I keep on doing that and the bolt is longer than expected I may not be able to remove it.

By now you will have probably guessed, the bolt was of course longer than expected and with the ratchet handle now up against the sump I decided that I'd better screw the bolt in and undo it by hand. If I had used my old ratchet handle with a lever to reverse the direction of action it would have been easy. Because I had used the nice new one with the precision ratchet that needs to be turned over to reverse the direction of action I couldn't screw the bolt back in more than about a half turn because the crankcase gets in the way of doing a complete turn. Getting a mole wrench to turn the socket did not work either; the socket would not turn in that direction because of the ratchet action and there wasn't enough room to make a full rotation.

I could then see two possible solutions - remove the sump or separate the gearbox and engine. As I was working on removing engine and gearbox to replace the clutch, I thought I would leave the socket in place until that time.

Two days later, the engine and gearbox assembly was out and after separating the two components, the socket was safely back in the rack. The two socket handles lying side by side in the tool chest will now always remind me to choose carefully.