

Motoring

X to Y of registration

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IT'S almost a century since the first registration mark was allocated by the London County Council – one letter and one number, beginning at A1.

This allowed for a possible combination of 260 unique registration numbers. They soon ran out.

The Motor Act of 1903 introduced measures to help identify vehicles and their drivers. The vehicle registration fee was twenty shillings (one pound) and the driver's licence fee was five shillings (25 pence).

Later formats of the number placed required two letters and four numbers, the letters identifying the region from which the car came. Local suffixes for this, the Reading region, included BL, CF and DP.

It was a haphazard system needing to be replaced when the series was exhausted. Liverpool series KA lasted for only two years between 1925 to 1927 whereas the Glasgow series SJ was still being issued as late as 1963.

Between 1963 and 1965 councils began to issue "suffix" registration marks. eg ABC

Motoring history is being made this year with a major overhaul of the vehicle registration system. RICHARD HILL looks at the history and development of the number plate system and gives advice on how to get a personalised plate.

123 A Three letters and three numbers followed by a car suffix. The suffix changed with the calendar year until 1967 when the suffix change moved to August 1.

Until 1972, the style and format number plates were not too strictly regulated. The following year, regulations were introduced that required specific fonts, reflective surfaces and black characters on white at the front of the vehicle, and black on yellow at the rear.

In 1983 a simple and straightforward change was introduced as the suffix series ended – a reversal of the suffix format. The year became a prefix. eg A123 ABC. In 1998 the vehicle registration age identifiers, the prefix, altered from an annual change to six month-

ly, every March and September. Yesterday saw the beginning of the end. 'Y' registrations that came in at midnight on Wednesday are the last in the series of registration in this format, prior to the new Euro-numbers from September.

Personalised Plates

You may have seen them locally, 5 EXY 1 for example. Combinations of letters and numbers can, at first glance make for some interesting and unique results.

However it is an offence to mis-space or mis-represent registrations on number plates. To do so can render offenders liable to a fine of up to £1000, failure of the MOT test and withdrawal of the registration mark. For example, ABU 5E cannot

be represented as ABUSE.

Registration numbers are not items of property, so the legal title to them cannot be purchased. But specific registrations can be purchased privately or from one of the DVLA agencies such as the 'Sale of Marks', 'Classic Collection' or 'Select Registrations'.

The purchaser is granted a right to assign the number to a vehicle registered in his or her name. In addition to the agreed sale price and assignment fee is payable – currently £80.

Did you know?

❑ Fictional registrations are used in film and television drama. These are cleared through the DVLA. eg PAT 1

❑ Vehicles with an indeterminate age, such as kit cars, or that originate from another country are assigned a registration number with the prefix Q.

❑ A vehicle cannot be made to appear younger by assigning a registration number with a more recent year prefix or suffix.

Further information:

DVLA Customer Enquiries
0870 240 0010



■ BUMPER CROP: Even simple numbers can be cherished. 287/20