

How to Identify your 'Australian' MGB

'Caveat Emptor' – let the buyer beware!

There are a variety of methods to assist in identifying the provenance of an MGB; each one of them is flawed! Let me explain.

For the past five years I have attempted to assist many owners and prospective owners in identifying the origins of their vehicles. There is no one method that I could say was conclusive!

After 50 years, a number of owners, modifications, lack of documentation, imported vehicles, the fact that original records were disposed of by Leyland and the somewhat quirky Australian numbering system (to mention but a few), it becomes harder to be certain as to the pedigree of a particular vehicle. Having said that, we will look at five methods (in order of accuracy) that will give you the best possible assurance of the car's pedigree

- 1. Serial Numbers**
- 2. Original invoice**
- 3. Registration papers**
- 4. Heritage certificate**
- 5. Other places to search**

1. Serial numbers

All vehicles assembled in Australia had a variety of serial numbers on the vehicle (body, engine, gearbox and other major components). Whilst these could have been changed over the course of time, they are the best (in my opinion) method of identifying a vehicle's provenance.

All vehicles (I have yet to come across one that doesn't) have a body number stamped into the body itself. This is usually located on the passenger side of the bulkhead, next to the heater location. Many paint coats can often make this hard to see, but a bit of scratching around should reveal it (see photo).



This location is probably the best place for these characters, as a car that would need to replace the bulkhead would almost certainly be a write-off.

Note: The procedure used, if an incorrect number was punched was to fill it with Epoxy and start again. This was changed in June, 1970 when government regulations insisted on crossing out the old number and stamping a new number below.

The next location to look for identification characters is on the 'ID plate' or 'Compliance plate'. There were a variety of plates used (see photos) and a period (second half of 1969) where no identification plates were used at all. In this case you would need to default to the bulkhead.

For those not aware, let's break down what all those numbers and letters can tell us:

Explanation of the symbols

Car Serial Number

Let's take a typical serial number – **YGHN3 1628**

Y - this is an Australian CKD (completely knocked down) vehicle

G - this is an MG

H - this vehicle contains a 'B' series engine

N - this vehicle is a two-door tourer

3 - this vehicle is the 3rd series

1628 - this is the vehicle's serial number.

Codes:

YGHN3 = MGB Mk I (not to be confused with the MGA 1600 Mk II!)

YGHN4 = MGB Mk II O/D. These were made concurrently with the last YGHN3 cars into 1968. It is suggested that 257 of these were produced

YGHN5 & YHN5 = MGB Mk II O/D. From January 1969. Some later in the run were stamped 'YHN5', with the 'G' omitted for reasons stated elsewhere on this site.

YHN6 = MGB Mk II Non-overdrive cars. (Only about 360 in total).

YHN7 = MGB Mk II Automatic transmission

YHN9 = MGB facelift (colloquially termed 'MGBL' in Australia)

YHN10 = MGB facelift ('MGBL') Automatic transmission

All Mk I and early Mk II vehicles were fitted with an identification plate as shown below.



Plate found on all but first few BMC MGBs



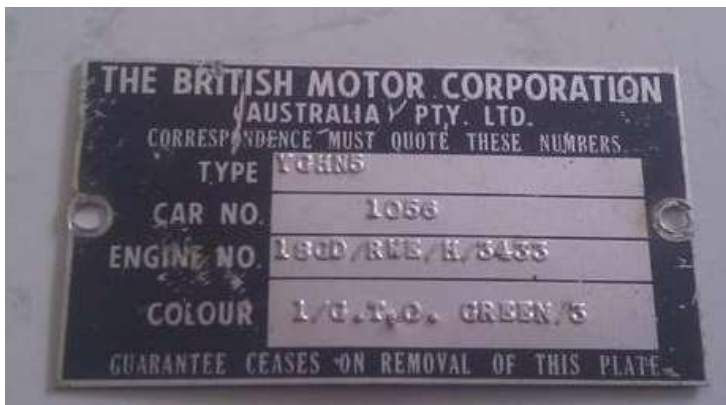
ing ID plate:

Inexplicably, this plate was found on the first few MGBs assembled in Australia

The first approx. 975 Mk I cars had the combined UK/Australian chassis and body numbers on the ID plates (UK chassis number first, followed by the Australian body number)



Early 'Enfield' plate. Note: additional numbers are UK chassis numbers and stamped from the front



'Zetland' plate. Note: stamped from the rear

Note: All cars assembled at PMC, Enfield had their ID plates hand-stamped from the front (rather untidily). All Zetland plant-assembled cars had their ID plates machine-stamped from the rear.

The early style plate was located in the engine bay towards the top of the RH front



These identification plates were deleted from vehicles produced from approximately mid-'69 until Jan '70. For this period, as with all other times, the serial number was stamped onto the LH side of the bulkhead shelf in the engine compartment. In addition, for paint identification, a pressure-sensitive label detailing the paint was placed in the position previously occupied by the ID plate. These changes occurred from cars: YGHN5/1428 (manual with overdrive), YGHN6/621 (manual) and YGHN7/537 (automatic)



Engine number

The engine number is stamped directly onto the RH side of the cylinder block just below the cylinder head joint-face. (this was an Australian practice, as opposed to the riveted plate elsewhere in the world)

Where identification plates or compliance plates are fitted, the engine number is included in addition to being stamped on the block.



Engines used in Australian assembly:

18G/U/H * 18GA/U/H * 18GB/U/H * 18GB/RU/H * 18GD/WE/H * 18GD/RWE/H
* 18GD/RC/H * 18GG/WE/H * 18GG/RWE/H * 18GG/RC/H * 18V582/H

Explanation of the symbols

18 this signifies that the engine is 1800 cc.

G (first listed) this signifies that it's for an MG. (the first series didn't have a 'series' identifier)

A,B,D,G this is the 'Series' identification.

U this signifies 'Centre gear change'

H this signifies 'high compression'.

R this signifies 'overdrive'.

WE this signifies 'Centre gear change + All speed synchromesh'.

C this signifies 'automatic transmission'.

V = Vertical (north south)

582 = Manual + Overdrive, Full Synchromesh, Centre Floor Shift.

1573 this is the engine number.

Compliance Plate

Commencing 1970 production, in addition to the stamped number, Vehicle Compliance Plates were fitted. The serial number, date of manufacture, seating capacity and the numbers of the Australian Design Rules incorporated in the vehicle, are shown on this plate which is fixed to the oil cooler support panel in front of the radiator, as well as a 'colour' label on the front RH valance.



Compliance plate

There were two styles of these plates; the earlier square style, followed by the rectangular one.



Paint codes:

The identification plates fitted to the Mk I and early Mk II vehicles included details of paint finish. From mid '69, when these plates were deleted, the paint details were indicated on a label located on the inside of the RH guard valance. Be aware (1) that many of the paints were unique to Australian vehicles and (2) the stickers on many of the later cars with compliance plates have been removed.



The later style sticker detailing the paint used.

The numbers before and after the paint colour name (on the old ID plates) can be quite confusing. Using the ID plate below you can see that it is **1/NURBURG WHITE /1**



ID plate, showing numbers before and after 'Colour'.

first numeral – Type of paint (1 = enamel, 2 = lacquer, 4 = acrylic enamel)

second numeral – Manufacturer (1 = Balm Paints, 2 = Lusteroid, 3 = Berger, 4 = Brolite, 5 = Taubmans, 6 = Spartan)

Therefore, the car above was painted using **enamel paint**, in the colour of **NURBURG WHITE**, supplied by **Balm Paints**

Gearbox Number

The gearbox number is stamped on the top of the gearbox casing adjacent to the dipstick.

Automatic Transmission Number

The transmission serial number is stamped onto a plate attached to the side of the transmission.



Overdrive Number



the RH side of the unit.

Overdrive

Rear Axle Number

The rear axle number is stamped on the front of the axle tube on the LH side adjacent to the spring seat.



Circle highlighting rear axle number

2. Original Invoice

“Oh, to have one of these!” If you are fortunate enough to have, or have the opportunity to acquire such a record, most of your questions about the provenance of a vehicle should be answered. Unfortunately, a) hen’s teeth are easier to find and b) I am aware of at least one invoice where the incorrect engine number was written down.

from this source. Some people have been given 'approximations' by referring to engine numbers etc. but this can never be conclusive.

5. Other places to search

Beware, the information that follows can only be AN APPROXIMATION and should not be used to reach conclusions about production dates.

Windscreen wiper motors have a date stamped on them. It can be a reasonable assumption that if you add AT LEAST six weeks for shipping, you can be reasonably sure that a vehicle was not assembled before that date (provided it is the original wiper motor!). Be aware though that these items were all placed in a bin and it is not impossible that a particular part kept falling to the bottom of the bin, thereby minimizing its usefulness as an indicator. Many other items, such as starter motors, alternators, etc. also show dates of manufacture that can assist in placing a vehicle in its historical position (again, above provisos apply).

So, what do you do with this information?

As mentioned in the beginning, Leyland, in all their wisdom, disposed of all production records. Some visionary staff, realising their historical importance, managed to retrieve some of these important records. However, the records are incomplete; original Zetland staff are getting older and with the passing of time, a lot of this information has been lost. We can only attempt to fill in as many gaps as possible to give owners/enthusiasts as close an approximation to the position where a specific car fitted into the production line, hence the registry on this website.

Oops!



This YGHN3 car was incorrectly stamped YGHN7

