

The World of Personal Number Plates Spring 2008

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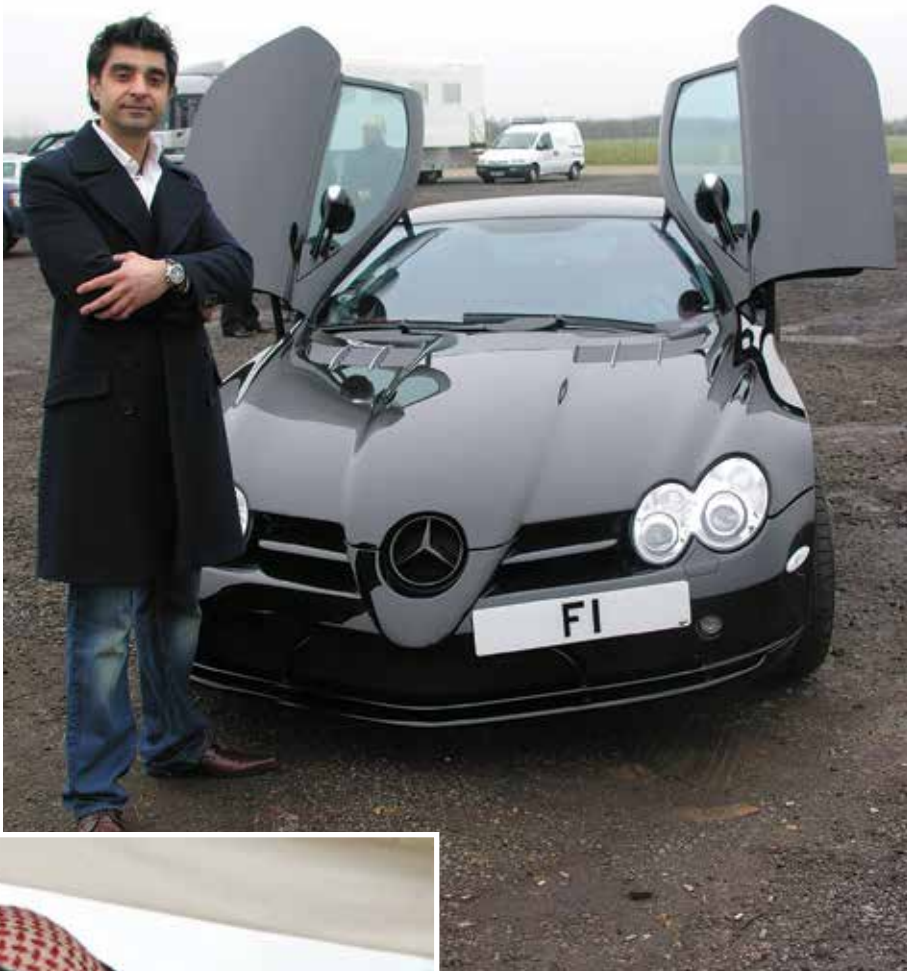
Theo Paphitis
Enter the Dragon



Record Breakers

The first couple of months of 2008 were pretty eventful in the world of private registrations. The first big headline-grabber of the year was the sale of **F 1** for a new UK record price of £440,625. **F 1** was purchased from former owner Essex County Council by **Afzal Kahn** (pictured right), the Bradford businessman behind fashionable auto-styling specialists Project Kahn.

Afzal is a regular Regtransfers client as he often purchases top quality private registrations to further enhance the look of some of his remodelled speciality vehicles.



Essex County Council were sorry to see the historic plate go, but the money raised by the sale is being invested in young driver training, with a view to improving safety on roads in the county, so the sacrifice was made in a good cause.

A few short weeks after **F 1** took the UK price record, a sale in Abu Dhabi similarly shattered the world record for the most expensive vehicle registration number. Emirates Auctions, the house who achieved the previous world record, organised another of their famous auctions of Abu Dhabi's 'distinguished plates'. Last year they sold the single-digit number **5** for the equivalent of £3.5 million, so it will come as no surprise that they expected great things from the star of this latest auction. Under the hammer this time was the ultimate single-digit registration - the number **1**.

Interested parties from all over the world attended, and the excitement in the room was almost palpable. Amongst the guests were representatives from Guinness World Records. Their presence was justified as number **1** lived up to expectations and achieved a new world's highest price of £7.25 million.

As with the UK's **F 1**, the proceeds from this auction are being put to very good use and victims of road accidents in Abu Dhabi will benefit from the projects that are being funded.

Our photo (left) shows **Mr Abdulla Matar Al Mannaai**, Managing Director of Emirates Auction, with the record-breaking registration.

Enter the Dragon



Our fascination with business as a new entertainment medium shows no signs of waning. The level of discussion prompted by shows such as *Dragons' Den* and now *American Inventor* is comparable to that generated by *X-Factor* and *Big Brother* style 'reality' TV shows and soap operas. Entrepreneurs are now

celebrities, and that's not surprising: successful business people usually have an absorbing story to tell, and rags-to-riches has long been a favourite theme in literature and film.

Theo Paphitis is one of the best known of this new class of celebrity. Apart from his appearances on BBC TV's *Dragons' Den*,

he is probably known mostly for his association with a range of familiar store chains, many of which he transformed from impending failures to robust companies with good prospects.

Every article one reads about Theo Paphitis mentions that his career began with a position as tea boy at Lloyds of London

(well, who are we to break with that tradition?). Although he wasn't dressed literally in rags, one must admit that the other cliché, that of starting at the bottom, certainly applied. From that modest starting point there was little for the young Theo to do but work his way up in time-honoured fashion.

It was knowledge he acquired while working his way through progressively more demanding jobs that equipped him for the business career that was to follow. After achieving a position in the finance department of Legal and General, Theo began working with commercial and residential mortgages. His interest and curiosity were engaged, and he quickly gained the experience and skills that enabled him to start up on his own. By the time he was 23, Theo had done just that.

As one might expect, Paphitis is not short of a few quid these days. He likes nice cars, and he chooses to personalise them with top quality private registrations. We were, therefore, delighted when he agreed to spare us a couple of hours for an interview and some photographs. It's not as if he doesn't have anything else important to occupy his time...

Home for Theo is in Surrey. His large house is everything one would expect from the residence of a successful businessman; and then, of course, there is a driveway full of cars. The vehicle that immediately catches the eye of our photographer is a Maybach bearing the registration **RYM 4N**.

Ryman the stationer played a significant part in the development of Paphitis's business in the 1990s. His NAG Telecom company had a mobile phone concession within several outlets in the failing chain of

stationery stores, so Theo had some knowledge of the company. He bought Ryman in 1995 and quickly turned its fortunes around. Since then, the brand has absorbed former competitors Partners and Stationery Box and, when rebranding of those premises is finished, the chain will boast 250 stores.

Paphitis has a reputation for taking failing businesses and turning them into profitable concerns. Another high street favourite transformed by his touch was the lingerie chain La Senza which Paphitis sold to venture capitalist Lion Capital in 2006. His other lingerie business, Contessa, was later sold to the same company, who are merging both chains under the La Senza name.

Another car on the driveway of Theo's house is a Volkswagen with **LA53 NZA** number plates. The VW belongs to his daughter, Zoe, who modelled for La Senza. Although Theo has sold most of his interest in the company, Zoe retains her personal plates.

"I bought two more plates from you recently," Theo tells us. "One 'Debbie' and one 'Theo'."

DEB 131E was purchased for Theo's wife, and it turns out that there is quite a coincidence in the story behind his purchase of **T1 HEO**.

"It's the weirdest thing. I met Ed and Emmy from Gaming Alerts [*one of the Dragons' Den candidate projects in which Theo invested*] for dinner to go through various bits and pieces, and when I was talking to Ed, he said 'My dad's got a "Theo" plate. He's selling it if you'd like to buy it.' I asked what the registration was and he said it was **T1 HEO**.

"So, I rang Kato [*this nickname for Michael, his chauffeur and right-hand man*] and said 'Kato, don't we own **T1 HEO**?' He said, 'Yes boss, we bought it last week'. So, Regtransfers acted as agent for that one, and it was Ed's dad's plate. What a small world!

"Kato often looks at plates and points things out. It was him who dealt with Regtransfers for me Everything went smoothly, tickety-boo."

Theo firmly believes that a nice car should sport a good registration.

"It's an extension of enjoying nice cars and finishing them off properly. One of the ugliest things is having a nice car with a whole load of numbers on it like a serial number. It's horrible and it can spoil the car. But put a decent plate on a good car and it adds to its beauty and its look. I'm very careful about the plates I buy. I've seen plates out there that aren't very good - I've seen some shockers.

"My son Alex is looking for a plate. He just bought a new BMW 3 series convertible. I said I would buy him a number plate for Christmas as long as I could choose it. I managed to find **W411 KER**. For some reason he's not enamoured with it. I can't imagine why. I actually had the plates made up and put them on his car, hoping he would go off to work with them, but he spotted them. They then rested on [*fellow Dragon*] Peter Jones's Ferrari for a while before he realised his plates had been swapped!"

"It's great fun. It's something to collect and do. Looking around to find something to tickle your fancy... When you discover something, it's brilliant."



Theo has owned private number plates for a long time but, surprisingly, he doesn't buy and sell them for profit.

"No, I never sell. I've collected them for 15 years and when I find one I like then I'll buy it. Of course, then I have to buy another car to put it on."

The comment is made with tongue in cheek, but with the amount of travelling Theo has to do, cars are very important to him.

"Seven a.m. is my normal time to get up. Mrs P. gets up about half an hour earlier. I'll see the girls in the morning [*twins, Annie and Hollie*], then they go to school. From that point my day depends on when my first appointment is. Sometimes I go to the gym and have a workout for an hour. I rarely leave here before 9 o'clock because I don't like traffic. Then Kato and I go off to the promised land. If we do more than one day a week in the office it will be quite unusual. We travel a lot. My car's my office. I spend more time in my car than anywhere else, so any money I spend on cars is like spending money on a home or an office or a property. I have to have all the bits and pieces I need in the car.

"I have my diary in there, which is organised by Caroline, my PA, and Kato. He has an electronic copy every day which he will print out and update on a regular basis from Caroline, so we know if things have changed. I've got technology in there so I can browse the web and do what I want to do. And obviously I've got all the other luxuries: TV, radio, DVD, cocktail cabinet, fridge."

We had heard that he likes to keep a bottle of champagne in the car as well.

"Absolutely, and silver goblets. Really, it's an incredibly comfortable environment. Because it's a long wheelbase car, with the front seat reasonably far forward without looking silly, I can stretch out quite comfortably and sleep in it. I've actually perfected the art of teleporting."

Right...

"No, really, we can be in the West End at midnight and I can get home in five minutes. It's very easy because it's such a lovely car. The minute I get in the back I take my shoes off, stretch out and sleep. Next thing I know, we're here. It's like... instant."

The car is not just a mobile office then?

"No, it's everything. In the car I can get any sleep I may not have been able to get during the night. It's such an important part of my life, and the Maybach is probably the best car in the world."

Fortunately, filming for *Dragons' Den* takes place in London, not too far to travel in the comfort of the Maybach. Theo has been with the programme since its second season.

"I was asked to do it. The BBC came round and asked me. It was at the time I stopped football [*Theo is a former Chairman of Millwall FC*], so I had more time on my hands, and it was an opportunity to do something different."

But Theo doesn't expect to be a permanent fixture in the *Dragons' Den* for the rest of the show's natural life.

"I think it will see us all out. It needs to be refreshed. We've already had new dragons, in fact there are only two originals left: Peter and Duncan. I joined in series two, Deborah [*Meaden*] joined in series three



with Charley Farley [*Richard Farleigh!*], and James [*Caan*] joined this last series. So it's always going to be refreshed, it has to be."

The condensed version of each proposal that the television audience gets to see can be deceptive. *Dragons' Den* pitches often go on for far longer than the few minutes that get broadcast. One of the projects from the last series that Theo eventually invested in was the Gaming Alerts website: an online service for Internet gamblers. Some elements in the online affiliate and gaming industries expressed a degree of scepticism regarding the wisdom of the decision. What those people didn't realise, and what the format of the show didn't make clear, was that the website formed only a part of a larger package.

"Some of the pitches are two and a half hours long. On TV you saw ten minutes of



the two hours and forty-three minutes of that full pitch. There was little in it about Ed and Emmie's associated media business that already makes a half-million pound profit."

And despite the surprised reaction from outsiders, Gaming Alerts is also delivering results.

Theo's involvement with Gaming Alerts at this stage is strictly an investment role with, as yet, little of the hands-on approach that has built successful concerns out of many ailing businesses.

The brands with which he has become most widely associated, Ryman, La Senza and even Millwall FC, required substantial intervention to get them back on track, and Theo's involvement had to be with the day-to-day running. Changes had to be made and management philosophies reshaped. After immersing himself in a project and seeing it transform from a receivership case into a vibrant, growing business, selling a revived brand doesn't mean that Theo turns his back on the work he has put into it. With La Senza, for example, although he no longer runs the company, Theo retains a percentage of the company and still sits on the board.

"I've sold quite a few businesses in the last five years, but I've also bought quite a few. The ones I've sold have made quite a substantial profit, but all those businesses have been restored to health and they're back up and running. It gives me a good

feeling, and I have a good rapport with them - even the ones I've sold. I sit on the boards of most of them still, and it can be quite hard to watch someone else running them."

Theo's autobiography, *Enter the Dragon*, which will be published in May, takes the reader behind the scenes at *Dragons' Den* as well as explaining how Theo made his fortune. He describes how his family moved to England from Cyprus and how, as a poor immigrant, he took whatever jobs were available. He talks about the undiagnosed dyslexia that interfered with his education, and describes how determination and common sense enabled him to succeed despite that hurdle. The book is subtitled "How I Transformed My Life, and How You Can Too", and includes a master class in business methods.

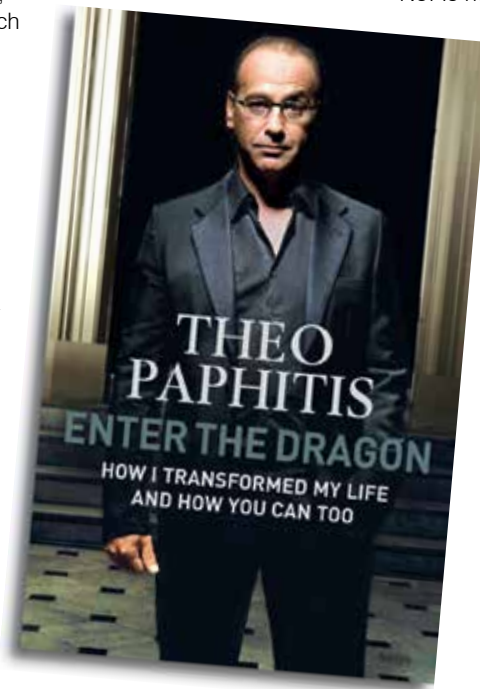
There is clearly a good-natured rivalry between the Dragons and it has become

clear during the interview that Theo enjoys every opportunity to make jokes about his fellow panellists. When we asked him if he had read Duncan's book, the response was typically tongue in cheek.

"No! Is he going to read mine? No!"

It is obvious that Theo gets a great deal of enjoyment from *Dragons' Den*, and from most of his projects.

"I do have fun. I love to make money! Those are the key cornerstones: have lots of fun but never forget to make money."



Story: Rick Cadger

Interview: Angela Banh

Photography: Stan Thompson





Mercury rising

I never really wanted a private number plate before but, as I was getting a brand new car, I thought I would make it ageless and personal to me.

I ordered my car at the end of May 2007 and, because it was a new model, there was a waiting list. I was told that I might get it before Christmas and, as it happens, it turned up in the third week of November. I chose Audi because I like the style and build quality and the TT has all the goodies packed into one fun sports car. All my

friends and family are looking forward to seeing my car and number plate. I decided on **342 FAM** (to include my initials) which I bought from Regtransfers shortly after ordering the car.

I work for Russell Scientific Instruments, a small company who make thermometers and barometers. I will have been there 20 years in February 2008. I put together mercury barometers, which have now been banned by a European Commission, who believe we must keep mercury out of the environment. What I don't understand is that we only use 80kg of mercury a year and recycle it. A drop in the ocean compared to the low energy light bulbs we will have to buy in two years time, which use hundreds of tonnes of the stuff. It doesn't seem fair to me. So I guess that part of my job will be no more, although we still restore antique barometers and thermometers - until that gets banned!

Frances Melton
by email

www.russell-scientific.co.uk

Mad about my M44 YHW

My friend Tom bought a private number plate (**TOM 198S**) from Regtransfers in August 2007, which was his name and date of birth, and it cost him around £2500. It made me look around for my perfect plate but at a much lower price.

I was first looking at things to do with my car, like *pug*, *306*, *sport* and things to make it look fast like *V6*, but these were too expensive for my budget, which was rock bottom and cheap as chips. I also came across **PUG 106** for just over £2000 but I don't have a 106, I have a 306.

Then, I started looking at names and words like *Jamma*, *James*, *Jambo*, *Jimbo*, *Jay* and *Mayhew* and came across a large number of plates beginning with M and ending in YHW (**M*** YHW**). This is when I found **M44 YHW**, which I felt was the second best version of a *Mayhew* plate available. Not only was it ideal, it was cheap - costing me less than £300 including VAT and DoT fee.

So, I fell in love with it and aimed to get it around Christmas, as I couldn't afford it until then. However, I found it on another website that offered 0% finance. I applied, paid the deposit of about £30, and then found out how much more I would be paying. They charged £50 just for the acrylic plates! I phoned them to ask if the plates had to be included, but I didn't think their customer service were on my side and felt they were after every penny I had.

So I phoned Regtransfers who were superb and stood by their slogan that if I could find the price cheaper elsewhere, they would try

to match it. I went to my parents, who knew how much it meant to me and they paid for half of it as my forthcoming 19th birthday and Christmas present, leaving me to pay the other £150, which was fantastic. I brought it right away and, with excellent contact throughout and easy online tracking, I had the plates on my car in under three weeks.

I'm only 18 and have been going strong with my girlfriend for over a year. In the years to come I may have to buy her a **M*** YHW** number plate. We'll have to see.

As you can see from the pictures, I do like to make my car look as sporty as possible and, in the future, I'd love to have my car in

a car magazine with all the facts and figures about it. But I will wait until I have finished upgrading it.

I am so happy to have my car featured in this magazine which may help me get more ideas from other enthusiasts.

Thank you Regtransfers, you are highly recommended.

James Mayhew
Felixstowe





Let's have a party!

The Giant Party Shop was formed in 2000 when my partner, Joanna McKinlay, and I decided that there was room for a party store in Swindon that could cater for everything from balloon decorating to costume hire. The shop was a great success and, in 2002, we opened our second store in Chippenham. This was, and still is, our largest store - with over 3000 square feet and more than 5000 costumes to choose from. In 2003 we opened in Stroud. Unfortunately the store did not work and closed after 2 years. However, in 2005, we opened our fourth store in Bath. All three are doing very well and the online shop is going great guns.

My partner bought **PA53 RTY** a couple of years ago and I had been looking for something for myself. When **G14 NTP** came up, I had to buy it. At the time I didn't really give the plate much thought, but after getting some laughs from the ladies, I realise now what they are laughing at!

Karl Potts
by email

What's the story?

Send **YOUR** stories
and photos to:
editorial@regtransfers.co.uk

Top dog!

My interest in number plates began in 1987 when I bought **JW 3083** for my Ford Escort cabriolet. I sold that plate and purchased **FAZ 33** as a temporary measure because I thought it gave the impression that the vehicle was 'fast'. I wasn't aware of the name Fazir at the time, but I was inundated with offers and decided to sell it. My next purchase was **505 JW** for a classic

Mercedes 280SL. I then changed my vehicle to a 4x4, for which I purchased **M444 FLY** and later sold to a Mr Fly who had a collection of similar plates. I also owned the plate **GOO IE** at one time, which I bought at auction because I thought it was humorous. I then added **44 JW** - my most prized plate - to my 4x4.

I also love rottweiler dogs and could not believe my luck when **ROT IE** came up for

auction and only a few other people were interested. Here it is in the photograph on my Isuzu Trooper and my wife's plate **W1 TSO** shown on her MR2. Also pictured are Nero my 'rotti' and my grand daughter Alix. I'm still looking for a personal plate for her.

John Wits
by email



In a word: **Luxury**



Mention luxury cars these days and the same name seems to be on everyone's lips. From top businessmen to royalty, Maybach is the badge to have on one's car.

Maybach claims that its vehicles represent the ultimate in luxury saloons. Everything about the production of these vehicles is determinedly top-notch, from state of the art manufacturing facilities and automotive technology to the scrupulous attention to detail that begins at the design stage.

Luxury: that word keeps coming up when one discusses Maybach. Indeed, it becomes difficult to write an article about the brand without overusing it and the adjectives derived from it, so you may have to make allowances. But that is what Maybach cars are all about: comfort, performance, individuality. In a word, luxury.



You will see from our interview with Theo Paphitis in this issue that he regards his Maybach as much more than just a car.

He regards it as much more than a

mobile office. It almost seems to be a second home on wheels. Certainly with panoramic views through the large windows and electro-transparent glass sunroof, and fully reclining rear seats which allow passengers to sleep as if in a bed, it is hard to imagine how much more can be done to enhance the comfort of those travelling within.

There is certainly an impressive list of specifications and options available to the customer: televisions, DVD players,

refrigerators, telephones, handcrafted fine wood trim. In fact, Nigel Unsworth, National Operations Manager at Maybach/McLaren SLR, told us that there are over two million bespoke permutations possible with the range of available options.

A far cry from the mass production manufacturers who churn out family cars at the rate of dozens an hour, Maybach's craftsmen produce, on average, just five exclusive saloons a day.

Two million possible configurations of detail, five vehicles a day... It becomes difficult to also avoid overusing words like unique and exclusive. Individuality is likely to be an important aspect to Maybach owners. Again, this is borne out by our conversation with Theo Paphitis, who would not consider allowing such a vehicle to suffer the indignity of a standard issue car registration.

Maybach as a company is equally aware of the aesthetic importance of a striking number plate as a finishing touch appropriate to a car of this quality. The company has secured a selection of registrations, **MAY 11, MAY 222, MAY 555,** and **MAY 888**, which will be displayed on demonstration models.

Nigel Unsworth explained. "Personalisation and ageless grace are complementary factors in Maybach. Acquiring these registration marks will give our own demonstrators the same timeless appeal.

"Maybach customers have a world of choice at their fingertips when they purchase a car, and many customers choose personalised registrations."

www.maybach-uk.com

Lighting the way forward

Ajay Vasdev has always loved fast cars, so it is not surprising that he is excited by the latest addition to his collection of vehicles, a 540 bhp Mercedes CLS 63 AMG. He describes the new car as "awesome". His excitement is tempered with a little impatience as he has a second new sports car on order. Although this one will be "the best yet" according to Ajay, it won't arrive until the summer.

Ajay has long been known as 'Budgie' by his family, friends and colleagues. His nickname, given to him by his late father, lends itself to reproduction on a personalised car registration, and Ajay owns several. Both his Mercedes sport 'Budgie' plates: **BUD 61E** on his CLS 63 AMG and **BUD 611E** on his S320 CDI AMG. The registration on his BMW 645 convertible, **V45 DEV**, clearly represents his surname. A great collection of number plates.

Ajay says, "I think an interesting plate enhances the perceived value of a car tremendously". Certainly the perceived value of his number plates is considerable: just before last Christmas he turned down an offer of over £100,000 for **BUD 61E**. "I'm not interested in selling," he says. "**BUD 61E** was a once-in-a-lifetime buy, and I am keeping it."

Ajay and his wife Shelly are the directors of Asco Lights, a successful lighting company. The company supplies a wide range of unique lighting products, from Swarovski Crystal to Murano hand blown glass. They specialise in cutting-edge modern designs, created with one eye on aesthetics and the other firmly on effective illumination. Asco are proud to distribute the finest products from the very best European and international lighting manufacturers.

Asco Lights offer lighting schemes for both commercial and residential contexts. Individual rooms, entire homes, restaurants, nightclubs: whatever the setting, Asco have the experience to provide tailored solutions to provide appropriate illumination for the environment.

Asco have become distributors of Ecosmart Fires, a new heating concept that requires no hard connections, no flues, gas, or electricity supply. Ecosmart fires run on eco ethanol.

In addition to his lighting business, Ajay Vasdev runs a successful property company with an enviable portfolio of residential and commercial properties throughout the UK. He plans to continue adding to the portfolio throughout 2008.

www.ascolights.co.uk

Tel: 0845 2600 268



Attention to **detail**

Andre Rayson has never been one to sit still for very long. As well as his full-time career as a Health and Safety Consultant, Andre also runs two other companies in his spare time. The first is Armour Party Supplies, which provides everything from bouncy castles to gladiator jousting, and Quads R Us, which offers quad biking for children aged 5-14.

With most of Andre's spare time being used up creating unforgettable parties and involving himself in public events, it was a stroke of luck when one of his customers informed him that he was selling a Range Rover - a vehicle Andre had always wanted - at a very attractive price. It was an offer he couldn't resist.

Andre is used to making parties and events special by paying attention to detail, so it was inevitable that he would want to add a unique finishing touch to his new car. The obvious answer was to purchase a personalised number plate.

Thinking that he may be fortunate enough to find a plate featuring his initials, Andre began his hunt on the Regtransfers website. Unable to find a perfect initials plate, he typed his name into the search box, not expecting a winning result. But, to his amazement, up came the ultimate registration.

"Amongst the list that came up was **AND 2E**, the last thing I had expected to see!" he said.

Despite being extremely tempted, Andre decided it would be sensible to work out his finances and return a week or two later to see if the registration was still there. When he did return, content in the knowledge that he would be able to afford his desired plate, Andre was disappointed to learn that it was no longer available. Unable to decide on an alternative, Andre gave up his search, knowing that he could never find a registration as perfect as **AND 2E**.

But one should never give up too easily.

A couple of weeks later, still attracted by the idea of a cherished number plate, Andre tried searching for his name again. To his great surprise, up popped **AND 2E** once again! The sale that had removed the registration from the Regtransfers site had not completed, and so Andre's ultimate registration was now available.

Andre said, "I saw this as a sign that this plate was meant to be on my car. The lady on the phone at Regtransfers was very helpful and confirmed that there were a number of people currently bidding on it, but I could purchase it immediately for the current asking price." Recognising the interest the registration was generating, he said, "I just had to have it and we did the deal there and then!"

Laura Murphy

www.armourpartysupplies.co.uk

www.quadsrussex.co.uk



Meet the Flynn Stones

Steve Flynn always wanted a personalised number plate, and searched for his perfect registration, **F57 ONE**, for about five years before he finally found it at Regtransfers.co.uk. He has also been looking for **W1 LMA** for his wife Sharon, but to no avail – so far.

Steve has been in the granite and marble business for 27 years and, last year, finally set up his own company in Shefford, Bedfordshire. The company cuts, polishes and installs any kind of granite or marble surface to the highest specification. Steve installed the latest high precision cutting machine from Italy earlier this year in order to cope with demand, and to do all the work in-house.

Most of his business is fitting high-spec kitchen and bathroom worktops. With the contracts pouring in Steve has become a very busy man, but Sharon helps him with the business, despite working full-time at a Luton College. "I would have to work 27 hours a day if it wasn't for Sharon", he admits.



Steve had been thinking of buying **F1 YNN** when it became available, but he is more than happy with **F57 ONE** as his nickname is "Flintstone", and far more relevant to him and his line of work.

"I thought it was an ideal plate to advertise my company, and it's already attracting attention. From some of the conversations I have had about the number plate, I am sure this will lead to additional business, so it looks like my investment has become a great way of advertising", says Steve with a grin.

Last year Steve and Sharon moved to a north Bedfordshire village and the distinctive

registration has helped to make him recognisable to his new neighbours.

"Getting **F57 ONE** has been just about the best thing I have ever treated myself to. Thank you, Regtransfers."

Len Stout



Nothing **scary** here

“The great thing about the Regtransfers.co.uk site is the ‘make your own plate’ section”

Roger Hayes from Nantwich in Cheshire owns one of the more controversial number plates we have featured. It is not surprising that some people cast wary glances in his direction as he drives around in his blue Ferrari sporting the registration **LU51 FER**. But Roger is no devil worshipper or black magician and there is no sinister reason for his ownership of the number.

Roger is used to enlightening the curious: not only about how he came to own the plate, but also on the subjects of history and religious mythology. As he points out, the popular association of Lucifer with the devil has no firm, undisputed basis in scripture. The Lucifer-as-Satan concept seems instead to have arisen from questionable translation of the biblical Book of Isaiah combined with the poetic licence of Dante Alighieri in *Inferno* from his *Divine Comedy* and of John Milton in *Paradise Lost* (these not being written until

the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively).

The path that led Roger to his unusual number was a rather complicated one. He had been searching for a suitable number to display on the Ferrari for some considerable time, and had exhausted most of the options he could think of. He had trawled through listings of registrations containing his initials, but decided that none of them were striking enough to grace his nice car. Next he searched for names: his, his wife's, the children's... eventually, desperation moved him to search for the last family member's name: that of their white Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Lucifer (Luci for short).

Roger says, “The great thing about the Regtransfers.co.uk site is the ‘make your own plate’ section which is where I found **LU51 FER**. I put in ‘LU’ and ‘51’ and then wondered if ‘FER’ was available. I typed it in



and... *click!* up it popped as available.”

So, nothing devilish involved at all. Lucifer is a lovely white dog, and **LU51 FER** is a striking blue Ferrari. Nothing scary there.





Doug's deadly number plate



They say that whatever happens to you in the first years of your life leaves an indelible mark. For

Doug Ellis OBE, the retired 83-year-old chairman of Aston Villa Football Club, this couldn't be more true. The impact of his father's death from pneumonia and pleurisy at the age of 27 was to shape the rest of Doug's life.

Born in the little village of Hooton, on the Wirral, Doug had a harsh start to life. His father's premature passing left his young mother with two small children, Doug, aged three and Doreen, eight weeks old.

"Coming from a farming family, I delivered milk from the age of twelve before I went to school each day. I'd have forty-eight cans hanging on the front and back of my bike, then I'd have to rush to catch the 8.25am train to Chester to try and be in school by 9am. I earned six shillings for a seven-day week – five went to my mother so I'd have a shilling as my pocket money.

"After I left school, I took a job as a clerk at the local station, earning 12 shillings and

6 pence a week. When I became a relief clerk, I got 30 shillings. I also started doing business from home, breeding canaries and budgies and repairing the odd motorcycle. At seventeen I volunteered for The Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy and served for over four years. I was posted to Ceylon. During this time, I had a mild form of malaria. A nurse called Audrey cared for me and later became my first wife.

"I came out of hospital without a job, but a friend of mine, Lieutenant Canavelli, asked me if I knew anything about transport. I told him I'd been a railway clerk and that I could strip Austin cars down. He took me on, giving me the responsibility for starting our own transport section for a stores division of the Fleet Air Arm. I was in charge of transporting stores and distributing them across the island to the three Fleet Air Arm bases, as well as to ships in Trincomalee. Eventually I had around eighty staff including local Cingalese and Tamils."

When the Tsunami struck in 2005, it hit the former Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, very badly.

Particularly affected was the region Ellis had been in. He held a function to raise money for the area and wrote to all his friends, business associates, private box holders and season ticket holders, telling them he wanted to raise £100,000 to buy food and medicine. Doug started the ball rolling by writing a cheque for £10,000. An extra £104,000 was donated on the night of the function alone.

"The Aston Rotary Club went out there on my behalf. They found it wasn't food and medicine the people needed, but a livelihood, which in this particular region was fishing; all their boats had been wrecked. I bought forty-two boats and painted them all in Aston Villa colours, claret and blue, with the Aston Villa name on each, and the name of one of our current players. Every boat provided a living for nine families."

Ellis left Ceylon in 1946 and decided to try his hand at the travel business. He remembered hearing servicemen, many of whom were seeing the world for the first

time, saying how much they would like to travel with their wives and families when the war was over. He took a job with Frames Tours in Preston, at the time, the second largest tourist agents in the country.

Timing is everything, they say, and Doug was in the right place at the right time. Not content with providing travel abroad, he also ran executive, champagne-style sporting excursions to various events, including football matches, boxing and speedway. Within a year or two he fell out with Frames over money. At £30 a week, Doug was earning a lot more than other Frames branch managers. The company tried to reduce his wages but Doug would not stand for it. In the end he left and set up Ellis Travel Agency for an outlay of £2,500.

"I'm the founder of the package-tour industry in the Provinces – I began tour operating in 1955 from Birmingham. I was also the first from Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin and eventually Canada. I formed an alliance with three other travel agents and soon I was able to take people to Spain and Majorca."

Doug's business interests continued to grow and at one time he was chairman of nineteen companies. He has built a total of 600 houses in Birmingham, a block of flats and owns several shops. His 59 year-old son, Peter, from his first marriage manages his brewery, producing a million bottles a week. He has owned an electronics company, a building company, three butchers and even two farms! One of his most enduring passions is racehorses; he has bought many over the years, the most recent being 'Newby Abbey.' In 1976, Doug decided enough was enough and sold twelve companies in a short period of time.

Doug's love of football eventually led him to Aston Villa. He joined as Chairman in 1969 when the club was broke. "I loaned the club £100,000 to keep the bank manager off our backs. We couldn't buy players so we had to breed them." Doug set up one of the first football academies or school of excellence as it was called then. "It was set up for nine

to sixteen year olds and cost us two million pounds a year. When Aston Villa won the European cup, seven of the lads in the squad came from my youth scheme. The moral of the story - breeding is better than buying. That's why the club had no debt when I sold it."

Doug has been criticised by some fans for being miserly, but he makes no apologies for having been a hands-on chairman with 'sensible, prudent housekeeping' as his primary concern. "It's hard to accept the criticism," he says, "at one time there were as many as nine threats on my life in one day. Every day I had a threatening call and one day a huge lorry came up the drive and knocked all the trellis down here." He leans out of his chair to point to the side of the house. "Six inch nails up the side of my Rolls. But I knew I was doing the right thing. Eventually it's proven to be so."

Doug is also sure that Martin O'Neill, the thirteenth and final manager he appointed before he sold the club, will prove to be the right one. With American billionaire Randolph (Randy) Lerner in charge as the new chairman, it is hard for Doug to stand by as an exciting new era unfolds. It was ill health that forced him to sell the club and retire in August 2006, after 38 years service, but it wasn't a decision he took lightly. He always wanted the best for Aston Villa, and turned down two other serious offers before accepting Randy's cash offer, which Doug believes will maintain the financial stability he has built at the club.

Now President Emeritus (Life President), the octogenarian's place in Aston Villa history is complete. "I'm still claret and blue through and through. I still miss being in charge at Villa Park but I have no regrets about who I sold to. I think Randy's a good man and we get on well. He has kept all his promises. I have my row of seats in the director's box, my own office and boardroom table to entertain and the same parking space. For away matches I'm often representing Randy who is away in the States. I'm helping him out, but I'm not interfering."

Doug acquired the number plate **AV 1** about twenty years ago. "A woman contacted me," he says, "the widow of a farmer in Devon called Arthur Vincent. Before he died he said he wondered if the Aston Villa chairman would like it. I paid £18,000 for it but didn't put it on my car for about ten years. Around Birmingham, **AV 1** is so well known, cars flash you – you can't take a girlfriend out," he jokes. "I was coming home from Villa Park once, I'd had a scotch and I saw the blue light of a police car behind me. They pulled me over and a policewoman got out, walked round to my side and I remember putting the window down only a little bit, I didn't want her to smell my breath. She said, 'I'm sorry to bother you Mr. Ellis, but my driver wants your autograph.' My wife Heidi has one too, **HDE 1** on her CL500 Mercedes.

"My grandson Frank, will probably have **AV 1** after me. He's 22 now. About a year ago a man approached me and asked, 'You wouldn't sell it for £100K would you?' I said no, I wouldn't sell it for anything. It's on my fifteenth Rolls - a Phantom. My first Rolls cost me £3,000 but this one was £270,000. I have to build a new garage to house it because the Phantom is six inches wider than a standard Rolls. These days I only take it out to go to Aston Villa."

Doug's wife Heidi says that now he's retired, people wait after matches to shake his hand and thank him for what he's done for Aston Villa. "It is appreciated," she says. "We wish them all the best, we all want Aston Villa to be top."

The *real* Herbert Douglas Ellis - chairman, multimillionaire, the man known as 'Deadly' - has one aim in life: to protect and nurture the ones he loves, whether that is his family, friends or Aston Villa Football Club.

Interview and photography: Ruby Speechley

A mark of **success**

I bought my **1 MS** number plate because I thought a good-looking car deserved a good-looking number plate. The car the plates are on now is a Ferrari 360 Modena, but soon, when I get the time, I am planning to upgrade it to the newer model, the F430. **1 MS** is a great registration and all my friends seem to think so as well.

I have an entrepreneurial background and, in the early part of my career, was involved in the launch of products, usually in a sales and marketing driven business-to-business environment. More recently I have been involved in the acquisition and sale of a range of businesses, including property, catering, music, transport and human resource companies. The most notable of these businesses to date was probably a contract catering company that won several awards, and which was in the Sunday

Times fastest growing 100 UK companies for three years running. It was also voted one of the top 100 companies for employees to work for. That business was sold when annual sales topped £60m and the company had 2,500 employees.

These days I work as an Investment and Asset Manager, mainly for myself, which brings a quality of life that was not available when I was working flat out. I also sit on the board of several companies in which I have invested, in a non-executive capacity.

I am now in the fortunate position where I can choose whom I work with. I often find that the people I work with have similar tastes in cars, and prefer personalised number plates to standard plates. Increasing numbers seem to both have personalised plates and want them.

I think the car and its **1 MS** number plate help give a positive image conveying that I am both good and successful at what I do. I think it is important to be upfront about what you can do for people. I have never advocated hiding one's light under a bushel!

Michael Scott
by email



DJ with an eye for **Investment**

Vince Wright from Newcastle-upon-Tyne became a DJ in the 1980's - the era of big hair and shoulder pads. These days, under the names ABC Wedding Services and All Parties Mobile Disco, Vince has a full time job that takes him throughout the north-east. As well as his discos, Vince provides his-and-hers wedding cars. The 'His' car is a silver Jaguar XK8 and 'Hers' is a white Rolls Royce Silver Spirit.

Vince has become quite well known, and he has been asked to open several Fresh Express shops in Newcastle,

Middlesborough and Hull. The BBC also invited him to appear on *The Car's the Star* hosted by Quentin Willson. In that programme Vince was asked to take his Rolls Royce to Blackpool and to set up his disco in the same way that he would for any other event. They liked the idea that he used a Rolls Royce as transport for his disco business at the time. Now, however, Vince's disco equipment travels in a Mazda MPV.

In 2006, Vince bought himself a special Christmas present. He purchased **1 EOX** (LEO X) which he put on his white Rolls. The registration had no personal significance for him, but as a Barclays Small Trader dealing in stocks and shares he had once read how, if bought wisely, number plates can have good investment potential, something that Quentin Willson has also been widely quoted as saying.

Vince was reading the Linda Lusardi issue of the *Regtransfers* magazine one day when he came across **1 EOX**. He realised the plate had wide potential appeal, and therefore could be a sound investment. Vince knew that number one registrations are highly sought after. He also saw that



1 EOX spells out the name 'Leo', which is also an astrological star sign. Another obvious benefit is that it looks great on a car. Vince's fiancée, Sara, agrees and thinks the plate is absolutely great.

In the short time he has owned the registration, Vince has already had people offering to buy it. A clear indicator that his instincts about **1 EOX** were correct.

ABC Wedding Services and Entertainments

All Parties Mobile Disco

Tel: 0845 6300404



is not enough!

The Albany Leisure Group is a small pub chain owned by **Stephen and Bonnie Wilson**. The business is growing and the couple plan to continue acquiring one or two pubs each year. Their most recent purchase is The Glenisle Inn in Palnackie, south west of Dumfries, Scotland. It's a warm, inviting establishment that was once full of "interesting clutter", but it has been brought up to date by Stephen and Bonnie. The Glenisle Inn now has a cleaner,

more modern look but the welcoming ambience for which it is known has been preserved. There's even a very handy bus stop outside for the convenience of regulars!

Stephen and Bonnie have had an interest in personalised car registrations for some years and, as their business grew, they decided to look for something appropriate for their car. They found **YE51 PUB** on the *Regtransfers* website and decided it was

perfect for their business. They bought the number and put it on their Nissan 4 x 4.

"**YE51 PUB** tends to make people smile, and it gives the police a reason to stop me to see if I have been drink driving," says Stephen, swiftly adding, "There's definitely no chance of that though".

Len Stout



Taking Care of Business

The commercial benefits of distinctive number plates are now well-established and, with the UK's largest selection of quality registrations, Regtransfers has become the first choice of a wide range of businesses eager to find a cost-effective marketing solution.

We are, naturally, delighted to relate their experiences in this magazine. In this issue we are pleased to feature **The Ambe Medical Group**.

A visit to our website at www.regtransfers.co.uk is certain to provide you with inspiration and ideas for the perfect registration to take care of YOUR business.

With stories and video clips you can see how companies just like yours have gained considerable prestige from their distinctive number plates.

Remember, our friendly sales staff are on hand to help you until 11pm every evening - including weekends.

The perfect **prescription**

Sandeep Patel has had an interest in number plates since the age of 17, when he was offered his ideal registration, **P4 TEL**. Although he really wanted it, it was financially out of his reach. "I wish I had had the money then," he says, "especially when I think of how much it would be worth nowadays".

Sandeep is a little older, wiser and far more successful these days. As the owner of **Ambe Medical Group**, a pharmaceutical wholesaler and product management company based in Kent, he might view the offer in a completely different light if it were

made today. His interest in personal number plates hasn't waned over the years, and Sandeep recently purchased **4 MBE** to go on his Porsche 996 Turbo.

"I have been looking out for **4 MBE** ever since I established the company. It's absolutely perfect," he says. "One of the things I have found, is how differently people treat you when they see MBE on the number plate. I'm sure they think that I have been awarded one! So, if the subject is broached, I just breeze over it and leave them guessing. Well, why not?"

> > >



Get YOUR company noticed

Distinctive number plates:

- provide excellent promotional, marketing opportunities
- look great in press releases, newspaper articles, TV, etc.
- raise public awareness of your company
- help to create corporate identity
- are great fun items
- set your company apart from the rest
- are tax deductible
- provide proven investment potential

Here are just a few organisations who have used personal number plates to identify and promote their businesses:

A Better Move **110 ADU**
All Star Limousine Hire **A115 TAR**
And So to Bed **CO51 BED**
Cry Records **2 CRY**
Gowing and Pursey **PUR 53Y**
Fantastic Fireworks **5 NOV**
Fleetwood Computers **M3 FWC**
Floors to Go **2 FTG**
Independent Safety Advisors **S4 FTY**
KMK Electricians **K13 KMK**
Julian Graves **NUT 5**
Ladybird Photography **P777 BUG**
Marston Properties **RE52 LET**
Morrow Brothers Limited **1 KEG**
New Dimension Exhibitions **WH05 NDE**
NKL Automotive **1 NKL**
Pimlico Plumbers **F1 USH**
Progressive Print Services **D13 PPS**
Rack Storage Systems **DEX 10N**
The Accessory People **2 TAP**
Venmore Thomas & Jones **1 VTJ**

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Ambe Medical Group, established in 1999, supplies prescription medicines, generic drugs, and branded diagnostic and surgical products to the healthcare industry. It is now one of the fastest growing businesses in its field. With the emphasis on strong client relations and business flexibility, Ambe Medical are always looking to expand, and Sandeep is always willing to listen to entrepreneurs who might want to invest in the company's growth.

"**4 MBE** is one the best investments that I have made in recent years. Thanks to Regtransfers for making it such a simple and straightforward process. It's definitely got me thinking about others for the business."

www.ambemedical.com

Len Stout





Mark Wincell is a private number plates enthusiast. Over the years he has owned quite a few: **J5 MSW, KBZ 5312, SIL 5312, C4 RDU, H16 ETS** and his latest, **G4 RDU**.

Mark bought **G4 RDU** to help promote his business, **PM Security Ltd**.

"It's perfect for the business, and it looks fantastic on my Range Rover," he says. "It promotes my company and, as it was such a great price, it's the cheapest advertising I have ever had. The very day I transferred it onto my car I had a phone call enquiring about security services after someone saw it parked in Brighton. So I gained a client that quickly."

Mark is obviously very pleased with his purchase. The plate and its price also impressed his friends and family. In fact, some friends who also have their own businesses are regularly searching the Regtransfers website for number plates which might work in the same way for them.

"I have had so many positive comments from my friends, the public and my clients that I've lost count," says Mark.

Mark's security business provides static guards, 24-hour alarm response for home

A great way of advertising

and business, key holding and consultancy. He plans to eventually have a fleet of patrol cars on the road, all with private number plates relating to the business or company name. One registration he has already identified as being of interest is **G11 ARD**: Mark hopes to acquire that some time in the near future. He is also looking for **C4 RDU**

which he used to own. He tells us that he would be interested in buying that one back.

"The registration is worth its weight in gold, and I'd like to thank Regtransfers in advance for any future business it generates! I will be a customer of yours for life."

We are delighted that Mark is so happy with our service.

Len Stout

www.pmsecurityltd.com



The perfect solution

CL Flooring Solutions is a highly successful contract flooring company in Queenslie, Glasgow, which was established only four years ago by **Craig Liddell** with just three vans. It has become one of the most reliable and trusted flooring contractors in Scotland with a fleet of eight vans.

Their excellent standard of workmanship and customer service has led to contracts

for universities, banks and hospitals, plus many other businesses and individuals.

Craig attributes some of their success to the use of personalised plates on all of the company vehicles. He got the idea one day while driving through Glasgow when he noticed a great many personalised plates, some of which were on company vans.

All of the CL fleet now have private plates, ranging from, **S10 CLF** to his latest acquisition **S23 CLF** and have been supplied by Regtransfers.

This has made administration a great deal easier as the vans are easily tracked. "They have been a good investment," Craig tells us, "and really helped as people now

recognise the vans by their respective plates. It creates a great company image and a good means of advertising".

"I can't speak highly enough of Registration Transfers." Craig continues, "The service has been great and each one only took a week to complete. The website was easy to use, especially the spreadsheet showing all available registrations. It made it so much easier to select the plates we wanted. The investment has been worth every penny."


www.clflooring.co.uk



Posh and Posher

Ron Dale ran his Cheshire-based trucking business for 20 years before deciding he might fancy trying his hand at something a little different. One day, while out with his wife Christine, Ron found himself following a stretched limousine, and began to wonder about setting up his own company in that field. Christine, on the other hand, was sceptical. She felt that their time was already fully occupied by their existing temperature-controlled trucking business.

Ron wouldn't be dissuaded, and in March 2007 he set aside the unused plot of land next to his trucking business for the new venture. His first purchase was a stretched Chrysler 300 which he acquired from a local specialist limousine supplier. Ron decided that his vehicle needed an eye-catching number plate.

Ron searched the Regtransfers website and, to his delight, found two terrific registrations: **PO55 SSH** and **PO55 HER**. They were just what he had been looking for so he bought both. Of course, this meant that Ron now had two great plates, but he still had only one car. His next mission was to find another limo on which to display his second private registration, so went back to

All Stretched Out, the company from whom he had bought his first limousine, and purchased a 16-seat stretched Hummer.

Ron put **PO55 SSH** on the Chrysler and **PO55 HER** on the Hummer, but things didn't quite stop there. Ron and Christine also acquired a third vehicle, a stretched Silver Lincoln Town Car. Of course, that meant that Ron had to go shopping for number plates again, and the Lincoln now sports **P20 SSH**.

Ron's instincts proved to be sound and the business has flourished, and Ron sometimes drives one of the limos himself. Much of the work is weddings and special occasions, but Ron says that they also often pick up stars of *Coronation Street*. The cars and number plates obviously create the right impression.

When Ron isn't busy running the trucking business, or driving the stretched limos, he drives around in his Mitsubishi Shogun, sporting the registration **CD53 RON**. "CD" are Christine's initials, and Ron's name is plain to see, so that registration is personal to both of them.

Len Stout



What's the story?

Send **YOUR** stories
and photos to:
editorial@regtransfers.co.uk



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