

The World of Personal Number Plates Spring 2009

Regtransfers

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From TV's Dragons' Den

James Caan





comic relief

Friday 13th March 2009 is Comic Relief's biennial Red Nose Day. The comedy-oriented event always attracts the eccentric and the bizarre, and we are sure that this year will be no exception - at least, the early signs are promising...

Michael Brown is chauffeur to *Dragons' Den* panellist Theo Paphitis. Somehow, Michael persuaded Theo to allow him to use his car for a charity stunt - and not just any car. Michael and his two companions, Ray Winter and Rob Mills, pulled Theo's Maybach for a mile along the Mercedes-Benz World test track in Weybridge, Surrey. Regtransfers.co.uk was invited along to witness Michael's effort on Saturday 14th February.

Just in case having one's spectacularly expensive luxury car towed along a test track by three men dressed as nuns (Yes, nuns... Sorry, hadn't we mentioned the nuns?) wasn't enough to make any Maybach owner squirm in discomfort, Sisters Michael, Ray and Rob decorated Theo's vehicle with Red Nose Day 'splats'. They assured Theo that the splats could be removed easily after the event and that they would leave no trace on the Maybach. Last we heard, Michael was alive and well, and

still employed, so we suppose the car must have emerged unscathed from its adventure.

Regtransfers.co.uk extends our thanks to Michael for inviting us along, and extend our congratulations to him, to Ray and Rob, and driver Tracey Purkiss on completion of their hard work in a good cause.

If you would like to sponsor Michael and the nuns after the event, there is plenty of time to do so. Please visit

www.myrednoseday.com/nunsonthepullmichael

Regtransfers.co.uk sponsored the nuns' car-pulling event this year. Last year we sponsored Theo Paphitis when he completed a 3k run to raise money for the Sport Relief charity. Theo's Ryman stationery company is a Red Nose Day sponsor this year.

Comic Relief is a charity working in the UK and overseas. They describe their vision as "A just world free from poverty", and that is the goal towards which their efforts are directed. Red Nose Day is a Comic Relief event that takes place every two years.

To learn more about Comic Relief and Red Nose Day please visit:

www.comicrelief.com

www.rednoseday.com



mail

email YOUR story and photos to:
editorial@regtransfers.co.uk

Contributions may be edited for style and length



We live up in the North, in a little village just outside of Durham City. A lovely place to live by the way.

Both my wife and I have a passion not just for gardening and holidays, but also for our cars and registration plates.

We purchased **57 NP** and **SU51 ANZ** from you sometime ago and thought you would like to show them in this magazine.

Suzanne loves her plate. We were very lucky to stumble across it and really goes well with her SLK 230. My **57 NP** is very special because I was born 1957.

They certainly are head-turners and really make the cars extra special. It doesn't matter where we go or which car we go in,

it's amazing how many people just stop what they are doing just to have a look.

Thanks for the courteous, informative, efficient and friendly service and for keeping us updated of new plates that are coming on to the market.

Nick Plant
by email



I bought the number plate **L11Y R X** for my daughter Lily-Rose two years ago after searching your website and have been waiting for her to turn 15 so that she could put it on her own vehicle, a Nuffield 10/60 tractor! She has a passion for tractors and will be taking it on tractor runs and rallies down in East Sussex, where her Grandad lives.

The Regtransfers staff were brilliant. There was an 'OK' plate for sale but, when I mentioned that it was "nearly perfect" they asked me for more details. I explained that her name was spelt with one 'L' and not two. They asked for her middle name, Rose, and came up with **L11Y R X** - Lily Rose with a Kiss! Perfect!

The team are so friendly and will help you find the best number plate for you. Don't be afraid to ask! The plates were on her bedroom wall for two years. We kept the registration certificate in a frame and marked on the calendar when it was due for renewal.

Lily-Rose is delighted with her personal registration plate and very proud to have it on her tractor! Happy days!

Fenelly Dowsett
By email



X4 CHS and **X6 CHS** both look fantastic on my convertible car and work van. I chose CHS as it is the nearest to my first name. People recognise me all the time, especially as I now have two.

I am very impressed by the service and would like to say a big thank you to all your staff for providing excellent service throughout my two purchases.

I will be looking to add to my collection and hopefully it will not be to long before I do.

Chris Cowlin
Clacton-on-Sea



Nine years ago I underwent serious heart surgery. I've been a hard grafter all my life and my illness has forced me to change my lifestyle. It's not until you find yourself in a situation like this that you realise how short life can be and that if you have ambitions, you should never leave them until tomorrow.

One such ambition was to own a sports car with its own personal registration. It's taken a few years, but I managed both in last May when I bought a Ford Focus ST.

My registration is only special to me and those who know me, but it has personalised my car. With my lucky number seven, I couldn't have found a better deal.

Paul Moffat
by email

bookatrack.com



It was apparent from a very young age that I was a petrolhead through and through. From the age of 10, I was a passionate Ferrari fan - visiting all the shows, collecting all the models - even painting a five-foot prancing horse on the wall of my bedroom. I passed my driving test four days after my 17th birthday and quickly got into the habit of spending the vast majority of my income on cars -

something that hasn't changed in the last 15 years. I discovered cherished number plates at 21, when I bought my first plate, **R80 JON**, which I later sold for double its original cost. That gave me an idea...

Over the following few years, I bought and sold several number plates by matching up reasonably uncommon names with their perfect (and reasonably priced) matching number plate - always making a profit and

always making the new owner very happy during the process!

I followed my heart 10 years ago when I set up my own company, www.bookatrack.com organising track day events at motor racing circuits. The business has taken me all over Europe to some of the best tracks in the world, including Spa-Francorchamps, Brands Hatch and the Barcelona F1 circuit in Spain. After several years of hard work, sleepless nights and embarrassing visits to the bank manager, the business finally became profitable and it seemed that my life-long dream of owning a Ferrari would become a reality. After a three-year search for the perfect car, I bought a manual Ferrari F355 GTB in Gunmetal Grey.

Having spent so long buying, selling and enjoying cherished number plates, it seemed fitting to buy the perfect plate for my perfect Ferrari, so at the same time I acquired the plate **76 JL** (I was born in 1976 and my initials are JL). The car and plate are a permanent reminder to me that anything is possible if you want it enough and are prepared to work hard enough to achieve it. I only wish cars held their value as well as the number plates!

Jonny Leroux
Director

www.bookatrack.com



James Caan

James Caan and his colleagues from the BBC television series *Dragons' Den* have transformed the way the British public views business and business people. *Dragons' Den* focuses on real aspiring entrepreneurs with real products and ideas, unlike its BBC stable mate *The Apprentice*, which contrives relatively two-dimensional and unrealistic scenarios and exercises for its contestants to endure. The show may be formatted and presented for television, but its unique element of realism is undeniable.

Caan, originally named Nazim Khan, was born into a liberal Muslim family in Lahore, Pakistan in 1960. His father, who was in the 'rag trade' moved to Britain that same year, working hard until he could pay passage for the rest of the family, including young Nazim.

Even as a lad, a certain commercial inclination was evident in James. In an early venture he sold some of his father's jackets to school friends at a good profit. However, James and his father did not always see eye to eye. James's teenage interest in nightclubs was frowned upon, and his disinclination to go into the family business was seen as a further disappointment, as was his decision to shun school examinations in favour of seeking work. James moved out of the family home and into a flat of his own.

He soon found work at a small recruitment agency. His income reached a decent level, and by the age of 17 James had bought himself a car: a second hand MG Midget. At this time, James was still known by his birth-name, Nazim, until a trip to the cinema inspired a change. The movie was *The Godfather*.

"As the opening credits rolled, I noticed the name James Caan, who at the time was one of the coolest actors in Hollywood. I was called Nazim Khan, and it suddenly struck me that I could spell my surname in a different way."

Nazim Khan became James Caan, and what started as a joke with friends soon proved to be a very handy gimmick in his business dealings.

"Presenting myself as James Caan was a great opener with potential clients, so I used it all the time, eventually changing my name by deed poll some years later, much to my father's disapproval."

At 19 James had moved from recruitment into financial services, and the MG had

been replaced with a Mercedes. This was to prove a very significant point in his life, as it was during this time that James met Aisha, the young lady who would become his wife.

The couple first met when Aisha attended an interview at James's office. Although her application was successful, Aisha eventually declined to accept the job she was offered, deciding instead to open a boutique of her own. Aisha had made quite an impression on James and, in his desperation to stay in touch, he offered to invest in the business she was planning. The only complication was that in order to deliver the investment he had promised, James had to borrow £30,000 - a fact he did not share with Aisha at the time.

The business grew slowly, and at the age of 21, James proposed to Aisha. They married two years later.

With the boutique's eventual success came another transport upgrade. James acquired a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit... and the belief that it was time to develop a business of his own.

James decided upon a return to the recruitment industry. He started an agency that he called Alexander Mann. He thought the name sounded professional and credible. Further steps were taken to ensure that the business looked the part and that it would give potential clients the impression of a confident and established company. James rented an office in Pall Mall that he claims was actually a windowless former broom cupboard. Be that as it may, he was delighted with his prestigious business address.

With hard work the business flourished, and by 1987 Alexander Mann had moved to larger premises and was employing a number of people.

The company continued to grow, but James felt the urge to develop new interests.

In 1992 he appointed someone to take over the running of Alexander Mann and turned his attention to a new project. Humana International, an executive headhunting company was co-founded in 1993 by James and American recruitment expert, Doug Bugie.



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Three years later, James started the recruitment process outsourcing company AMS with Dublin-born businesswoman Rosaleen Blair.

Three years after that, in 1999, James sold Humana International. The same year he sold a minority stake in his Alexander Mann Group for £25m.

In 2002, James Caan sold Alexander Mann, which had, by that time, grown into an international business with a turnover of some £130m. The following year he graduated from the Harvard Business

with the added excitement of real businesses dealings involving large amounts of money. Viewers know they may be witnessing the dashing of contestants' dreams or the birth of successful businesses and brands.

In a recent television interview he said, "I love it. I think it's one of the best experiences I've ever had. It's been so much fun."

Throughout his career, James has enjoyed nice cars: Mercedes, Rolls-Royce, Maybach; objects of desire and envy for

For James, the appeal of private number plates is mostly the fun aspect, and he admits that he is, as he puts it, quite a veteran in this area.

"Somebody sent me an email last week with the number plate 'Dragons', saying would I be interested in buying that? I said, well thanks, but actually I'm ok at the moment. I think that might have been a little bit too much really."

James is happy with the personal plates that he and his family own, and isn't seeking anything more ostentatious or conspicuous.

School's Advanced Management Programme, and was named PricewaterhouseCoopers' Entrepreneur of the Year. In 2004 James founded Hamilton Bradshaw, the company of which he is still chief executive: and that brings us pretty much up to date, except for the project for which James is probably best known to the wider British public.

In 2007 he joined the panel of *Dragons' Den*. The show has enjoyed phenomenal success, appealing to a very wide audience including people who have otherwise had no interest in business. Although produced by the BBC in the UK, *Dragons' Den* is, in fact, a Japanese import that has been adopted by at least a dozen countries.

James has expressed great enthusiasm for the show, which combines an entertaining format and a panel of strong personalities

most car lovers. Like many of his *Dragons' Den* colleagues, James is also a confirmed fan of good personal car registrations.

"I think the first number plate I bought must have been in 1979, I think. I used to be in a building called Lime House, and the number plate was 'JC Lime' which I thought was, you know, quite humorous. My [Rolls-Royce] Phantom has got **28 JC** and I've got a Maybach that has got "Caan's" on it - C4 ANS."

The enthusiasm seems to have spread to the rest of the family too.

"My daughter's name is Jemma and she's got 'Miss Jem'. My wife Aisha has got 'Aisha'. We can't really find something appropriate for my daughter Hanah yet, but she is looking."

"I'd like to find something for Hanah really: her initials, or 'Hanah' or something of that nature."

Although his own interest is casual, and something separate from his business concerns, James does recognise that there is a potential investment angle in personal car registrations.

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"If you look back over the last ten years, the value of number plates has gone up quite a lot. You know, there's only one of each plate, and I also think that's the fun thing about it. If I wanted **JC 1**, I'd be the only person in the country who had got it."

James has not yet been tempted to buy plates as an investment himself.

"I tend to stick to businesses I know and understand."

That is a tendency that is clearly demonstrated in his business track record. His long-term interests have been in those industries he knows well. In that context, *Dragons' Den* has been something of a revelation to James. It has, in some measure, perhaps broadened his business horizons and encouraged him out of his investment comfort zone.

"It's allowed me to see opportunities and to meet people that I otherwise would never come across. I mean, do I look like the kind of guy who's going to invest in a dog treadmill? But that was my first *Dragons' Den* investment! I think it takes you into areas that otherwise you might never consider."

James Caan comes across quite differently from some of his *Dragons' Den* colleagues. Where some of the other *Dragons* project rather tough and daunting personas, James exudes an air of calm good humour and

affability. Throughout the interview his responses to questions are littered with jokes. His attitude to life in general seems very bright and positive. His interviews in print and broadcast media often contain the kind of anecdotes and observations that one might expect to find in a motivational talk, but with Caan these things aren't contrived or clichéd. When asked, during a TV interview, if he thought that rags-to-riches entrepreneurs were driven by a feeling of having nothing to lose, he immediately responded that he rather thought that they were driven by the feeling of having everything to gain.

Caan acknowledges the valuable lessons he learned from his father, and says that he learned a great deal about how business might be conducted in an ethical manner. His father taught him that business need not be dog-eat-dog. There is no need for each transaction to involve a winner and a loser. It is possible, and desirable, for both sides to walk away feeling positive after striking a deal.

One trait James Caan shares with his fellow *Dragons* is his inclination towards philanthropic work. He has established the James Caan Foundation, an organisation dedicated to improving the prospects of children, both in the west and in developing nations, who formerly lacked access to education. He has built a school in Lahore,

Pakistan where disadvantaged children, whose families cannot afford to educate them, may attend for free. James is also involved with a number of other charitable trusts including the NSPCC in the UK.

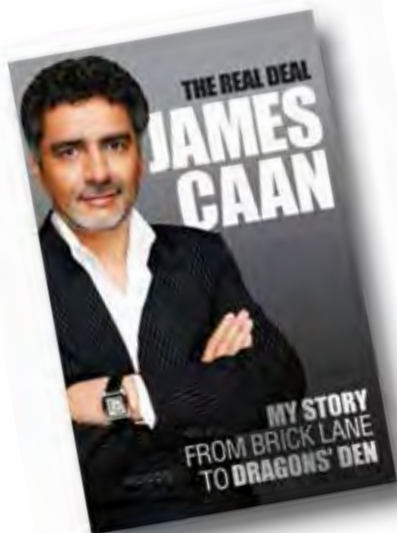
Some have said that the British public resents success, that we take delight in the failure of others. The evidence doesn't support that view. What seems fairer to say is that we celebrate the success of those who we deem to deserve it. As for what makes someone deserving of wealth - well, it seems that we often base that judgment upon what they do with it. Happily, many of the new breed of celebrity entrepreneurs, people like James Caan, are reassuringly in touch with the real world. They are aware of their own good fortune and of the hardship experienced by others, and that awareness moves them to act.

It is hard to resent the success of people who do the right thing.

As James says, "...Money's great - but it's what you do with it that really counts."

Interview: Angela Banh
Story: Rick Cadger
Photography: Steve Gardner

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James Caan is one of Britain's most successful entrepreneurs. Dropping out of school at just sixteen, he started his business life with no qualifications and two pieces of advice: 'observe the masses and do the opposite' and 'always look for opportunities where both parties benefit'. Armed with just these two pieces of fatherly wisdom, extraordinary charm and the yellow pages, James Caan built a market-leading business with a turnover of more than £130m from a broom cupboard.

The Real Deal is the incredible story of James' remarkable life. From his childhood as a Pakistani immigrant in Brick Lane in the 1960s and his decision not to go into the family business, to the phenomenal success of his first company this book traces James Caan's journey to both financial and personal maturity. It deals with his disappointment upon realising his goals too early, and offers

a frank account of what success at 30 really means. *The Real Deal* brings us bang up to the present, including the truth about his role on **Dragons' Den**, what his charity work in Lahore, Kashmir and Kosovo means to him, and how he has come to completely re-evaluate what money is really worth.

This rag-trade to riches story is an intimate account of an exceptional journey. It is a searingly honest exploration of James's journey to success and a source of inspiration for anyone looking to emulate his phenomenal business acumen.

James Caan's autobiography, ***The Real Deal: My Story From Brick Lane To Dragons' Den*** is published by Virgin Books.

Also available as an audio book from silksoundbooks.com

Stranger Than **Fiction?**

What's the story?

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

Newspapers are full of nonsense. If they can't get the information they want, they tend to invent it rather than let the absence of facts get in the way of a good story, as Russell Baldwin, a businessman from Knotty Green in Buckinghamshire, discovered to his annoyance in 2008.

A rumour started that the private car registration **CR 7** had been purchased by Manchester United football star Cristiano Ronaldo and, before long, the story was making headlines in the papers and on news websites. Although the story was widely circulated, it was somewhat premature. Mr Ronaldo had not bought **CR 7**.

Russell Baldwin, on the other hand, did subsequently purchase **CR 7**. The media eventually became aware of the fact, and Mr Baldwin was asked questions about his new registration number. The question he declined to answer was that of exactly how much he had paid for **CR 7**. True to form, the press didn't let Mr Baldwin's reticence stand in the way of news, so they plucked a figure out of the air and promptly reported it as the sum Mr Baldwin had paid. Apart from the apocryphal price tag, the papers reported the details pretty much as related to them by Mr Baldwin.

Mr Baldwin, a property developer, encountered **CR 7** when he went to buy two other registration numbers from

businessman Charlie Robinson of Ayrshire, Scotland. Mr Baldwin took the opportunity to purchase the "Ronaldo" registration, which he does hope to sell at a decent profit.

Although Ronaldo wrote off his Ferrari in an accident in Manchester, Mr Baldwin, whose sons are Manchester United fans, would still love to sell the number to him. In an amusing twist, although initial news reports stated that Ronaldo would be displaying the number on a Bentley, it is actually on Mr Baldwin's Ford Escort.

Why invent news when the reality is much more fun?



If you are interested in purchasing **CR 7**,
please contact Regtransfers by telephone or email.

a **Dead** Good Number!

What can you possibly buy as a gift for someone who has spent 40 years in the funeral trade, if you want the present to have some relevance to that person's profession, yet still be something they don't already have? That was the question that had the Managing Director of L.T & R Vowles, and many of his staff, scratching their heads. In a matter of weeks, director Darryl Farr would be celebrating 40 years service to the company.

The solution was revealed to them when Darryl arrived at work one morning in his car bearing the personal registration **D1 LTR**. His colleagues decided that a slightly more inventive number plate would be an ideal way to acknowledge his contribution to the company and the trade.

The search began to find an appropriate number. They searched the Regtransfers.co.uk website and were encouraged to see the range of options available. Their mission ended abruptly when they came across **COF 1N**. It was, they decided, perfect for Darryl, who is known for his quick quips and ability to entertain and amuse his customers. His colleagues thought that the gift might just help him to do that.

Since receiving the plates, Darryl has not been shy about displaying them. He brings them to the attention of every colleague and visitor to the company who may not yet have noticed. Reactions vary from delight and admiration to stark disapproval. Whereas one funeral director remarked that **COF 1N** was the best number plate he had ever seen on a car, Darryl's wife will simply not drive the vehicle while it bears that number.

Darryl Farr first started work at L.T & R Vowles at 8am on a sunny Monday morning in August 1968. He began by making lids in the coffin shop, working his way up to yard foreman before being promoted to transport manager. One of his ambitions was to exceed his father's fine track record of 20 years service in one trade.

Before long, Darryl was given the responsibility of managing the factory, and was eventually made director of Vowles in 2002. Darryl's years of service have allowed him to gain experience in nearly every facet of the trade, and to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the company's products and a unique understanding of clients' individual and personal needs.

L.T. & R Vowles is a leading coffin and casket manufacturer, supplying products nationwide. Founded in 1937 as timber merchants, L.T & R Vowles has flourished spectacularly since its establishment by two brothers in Bristol Road, Gloucester. The company has seen and survived many national crises and recessions. During the Second World War, the Ministry of Defence commandeered Vowles to use speciality lines of English ash for aeroplane propellers, produce timber for beachhead landings and manufacture coffin boards. Somewhat later, Vowles was able to refine its output, producing wood furniture, railway wagons, mining timbers, and crafted seasoned coffin boards for funeral directors from the ready supply of English elm by 1947.

It was the recession of the 1960's, and the sweeping effects of the diseases that decimated the population of elm trees, that transformed Vowles' into the firm it is today. Due to a declining availability of traditional elm coffin timber and a slump in homegrown sawmills, a market grew for the supply of ready-made coffins to funeral directors, saving the need to source seasoned elm for their personal production. The decision was made that Vowles should specialise as coffin makers, and the current factory at Longdon Heath, Upton-Upon-Severn, Worcester was established.

The company now manufactures coffins and caskets from both solid timber and veneer and has gone from strength to strength, modernising and updating to stay at the forefront of the trade. The company has attracted custom from across the UK, and has enjoyed great success.



In addition to Darryl's fine personal registration, the entire fleet of Vowles vehicles has now been fitted with cherished plates. After the acquisition of **X1 LTR**, so chosen because Vowles' sister companies have all chosen plates starting with an X followed by initials, the plates **X10 LTR** and **X100 LTR** were acquired to complement **D1 LTR**, thus creating a professional looking fleet in which Vowles can take pride. The company's drivers are very pleased with the plates, as the vehicles now have their own identities.

The plates also seem to have publicity and marketing benefits. The company's vehicles are more visible on the roads, and the plates help them to get noticed, while adding to the company's professional image.

So, the choice of gift for Darryl's 40th anniversary with L.T & R Vowles has been an unqualified success. His friends and colleagues hope it will continue to bring him pleasure during his next 40 years with the company!

What's the story?

Send **YOUR** stories
and photos to:
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PL8M8 - GET A DATE THRU YOUR PLATE !!

So, car number plates are romantic.

Yes, we thought that would get your attention. Although Regtransfers.co.uk always finds a nice batch of love-themed numbers for customers looking for Valentine or anniversary gifts, the wider population probably wouldn't include car registrations in their list of the top-ten ways to find the partner of one's dreams.

Little do they realise...

Euan Williamson's car dating website, www.myp18.co.uk, is attracting members and grabbing headlines. No, not car-dating as in dating a car. This is an ingenious scheme that enables people to contact each other with no more than a car registration number for reference. It works like this:

- 1) Girl sees attractive boy (or vice versa) in car
- 2) Girl sends a text message to that car's registration via the special Mypl8 text number
- 3) Boy receives text and replies
- 4) They meet, get married and live happily ever after.

Well, it's not quite that simple. It is necessary to join the scheme before using it, and steps 3 and 4 as listed above are perhaps a little speculative, but the fact remains that it is a clever system, and really quite simple to use.

Euan says, "We are staggered by the take-up of MYPL8 and now have clusters of members in almost every corner of the UK. We don't promise to help people find the partner of their dreams but it is happening. Others are making friends or simply chatting with owners of similar cars, especially vintage and more unusual models, or reporting potentially serious vehicle defects like faulty brake lights to fellow members."

Euan, whose own car registration is, appropriately, **V8 LUV**, is careful to point out that the scheme is secure and that Mypl8 does not ever give out members' personal details. All initial contact is conducted through Mypl8.co.uk, and no car registrations or mobile phone numbers are divulged. Users decide for themselves if and when they want to give out personal information.

All users have to be signed up as members first, and Mypl8 holds mobile phone and car registration details. Members' registration numbers are verified and their true identities thus established. What is more, all member activity is logged, so people can feel safe when they use the scheme. Problem users can be reported and banned.

This innovative 'pay as you go' social tool does not charge members for receiving text messages. Charges apply only for sending. The website is not plastered in adverts and there is no joining or membership fee. It's not surprising that the service is attracting many enthusiastic members.

Euan says, "We've even heard cases of members getting their registration numbers printed onto t-shirts so they can be contacted when they're not in their cars!"

www.myp18.co.uk

www.pl8m8.co.uk





Marketing on a Plate

Only a Cock-Eyed **Optometrist**

[Readers are asked to kindly forgive this infamous pun on the song title, *Only a Cock-Eyed Optimist*, from the 1949 musical *South Pacific*, but it has probably never been more appropriate -Ed.]

Martin Walters is an optometrist with practices in both Wisbech, Cambridgeshire and Spalding Lincolnshire.

After many hours of research and quite a few test drives, optometrist Martin eventually decided that his new car was to be the *What Car* car of the year - a Jaguar XF.

After considerably exceeding any of his previous car purchases, Martin's next thought was a private plate, since his business partner at Coakley and Associates (Opticians) already has a Porsche Cayman and a BMW 330 with personalised plates.

"I went to the Regtransfers website, never having bought a private plate before. I knew that I wanted something a little bit different,

rather than just random numbers coupled with my initials. Having stretched myself a little with the car, I had also decided that it had to be something within a sensible price range."

In the plate search facility Martin, naturally, typed in the word 'EYE' and top of the list came **BO55 EYE**, which was particularly relevant since he was due to become the sole owner of the business in a few months time.

"Anyone who knows me can immediately see the relevance of the plate, whereas the obvious pun of 'boss-eyed' has earned me a few stares from motorists wondering whether I should in fact be allowed on the road!

[Martin would like to reassure his patients that he does, in fact have 20/20 vision in both eyes, and they point in exactly the same direction. Ed].

"My business partner was quick to remind me that I would not in fact become 'Boss' for another few months, but I'm sure I saw a hint of a smile when he saw the plate for the first time!

"I am delighted with the car, plates and the service I received from Regtransfers, who I would have no hesitation in recommending."

www.coakley-opticians.co.uk





Just What the Doctor Ordered

Nigel Bryant from Poole in Dorset endured a slightly uncomfortable introduction to private car registrations. His first purchase, a private transaction, was plagued by difficulties. That early episode convinced Nigel that it would be a good idea to conduct future business through a reputable specialist company, and so Regtransfers.co.uk gained a valued customer!

During the 1970s, Nigel worked for the recently defunct advertising publication Exchange & Mart and, like many people, he would occasionally browse the private number plates listings to see what was available.

"In the pre-Internet days, E&M was the national marketplace for just about anything and everything, and registration plates were a small but fascinating section at the back of the motoring supplement. There were only a few dealers around then and most plates seemed to be traded by individuals. I always hoped that I would have a personalised plate of my own one day."

Some years later, in 1987, Nigel saw **NIJ 31** being offered for sale by a man in Northern Ireland. It appealed immediately, as he is

widely known as "Nige". Unfortunately, complications arose, no paperwork arrived and his calls went unanswered. Nigel feared he had lost his money. At the last minute, just as he was beginning a civil action to try and recover his losses, the seller got in touch explaining various problems with **NIJ 17**. Although the man was unable to supply that plate after all, he offered **NIJ 31** instead. Nigel was understandable wary about restarting negotiations with the seller, but he eventually agreed and this time everything proceeded smoothly. The plate arrived just before Nigel's 31st birthday.

Nigel has transferred **NIJ 31** many times since he bought it.

"I have seen its value rise by at least 1000%, although I could never imagine selling it. It has become such an integral part of my whole life now."

When Nigel met his girlfriend, Linda, she was just about to buy herself a new car - a black Toyota Supra MkIV. Linda had never considered buying personalised plates, so Nigel decided to buy her a registration for her birthday.

"After my previous bad experiences, I was determined not to be caught out again and had already decided to only use a reputable company such as Regtransfers.

"As my girlfriend has both a medical MD and an academic PhD doctorate, we found **X2 DOC** on offer, but sadly, as her Toyota was older than an X-reg, that transfer was not possible. Continuing our search, we found **D8 LOC**, which was perfect for Dr. Linda O'Connell. It was very reasonably priced too. One quick phone call and the plate was hers. It was so much easier this time. Needless to say, the transfer went through without a hitch and her car looks absolutely stunning now!"

About a year later, Nigel bought a second-hand Harley Davidson 1340 'Low Rider'

motorcycle. Despite previously owning some 40-50 bikes over the previous 35 years, Nigel had never seriously thought of putting a personalised plate on a bike, but as the seller wanted to retain his own personal registration, Nigel found that he had the perfect excuse.

"Going straight back to Regtransfers, I immediately found **M1 FXR**, ideal for the 'Harley-speak' model designation of my bike (F = big twin, X = Sportster forks and R = rubber-mounted engine). Still unable to believe my luck, I snapped this up and the plate was soon on the bike where it never ceases to attract attention from fellow enthusiasts!"

Nigel thought that his collection of number plates was complete, but then he bought a smaller Suzuki DR250 Djebel trail bike "for playing about with". He decided that one should also have a personal registration.

"Back to Regtransfers again, of course, to find something small, neat, appropriate... and cheap! After much deliberation, I settled on **N5 BYK** ("N's bike") for only £180. Once again, a simple hassle-free deal ensured that the plate was on the bike within the week.

"So, that's where things stand at the moment," says Nigel. "I think that's it, but who knows?"

"I love reading the Regtransfers glossy magazine and browsing through all the plates available, just as I did in E&M some thirty years ago. One thing's for sure; if I do get another plate, it'll be from the same company that has always given me such great value and efficient friendly service, time after time."

Regtransfers.co.uk is delighted that Nigel has had such a positive experience, and we look forward to helping him with any future quest!



Number Plate News

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The Personal Number Plates Club

£100k for Magnificent Manx Mark!

The perfect Isle of Man plate was sold at auction last earlier this year for £100,000.

The 'MN' series was exclusive to vehicles registered on the island and MN 1 was, obviously, the very first – dating from 1906.

The spectacular price, paid by an undisclosed bidder, came as a surprise to the organisers of the sale, held at the Mount Murray Hotel and Country Club near Douglas.

A spokesman said "I think everyone was about to fall off their chair in amazement".

MN 1 was part of a collection kept by the late John Moore and was originally displayed on a steam car owned by a certain Mr George Drinkwater.

Chinese celebrate New Year in Style with £150,000 plate

The equivalent of more than £150,000 has been paid for a number plate to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

At an auction in Hong Kong on Saturday 7 February 2009, an un-named woman secured the registration '2318' in a battle with businessman, Liang Qiwei after the starting price of a mere HK\$52,000 (about £4670) passed the HK\$1m mark. The plate was finally secured by an impressive HK\$1.7 million – equal to more than £152,000.

The interest surrounding the seemingly innocuous digits arises from their pronunciation "Yee sam yat baat", which means "Easy life and prosperity" in Cantonese.

Mr Liang, who is more used to dealing in racehorses, was not to be outdone and quickly snapped-up both a great alternative in '3218' for HK\$750,000 (£67k) and also 'MY8' at HK\$440,000 (£39K).

He considers the plates, which are intended as gifts for his sons, to be a bargain, saying that "I can easily pay HK\$2 million to HK\$3 million for a horse. So what I paid for the licence plate numbers is nothing in comparison."

The record price achieved at auction in Hong Kong was the HK\$16.5m, or nearly £1.5m, paid by businessman Zhang Chengguang for the registration '18' only last year.

Observers will be quick to interpret these latest transactions as clear proof of the continued confidence in the number plate market displayed, world-wide, by astute investors.

Flying The Flag

A recent amendment to the motor vehicle licensing laws plate laws has officially allowed national flags to be displayed on number plates. Over the last few years this has been the subject of much confusion, with many disputes arising over the legality of national flags on number plates. It seemed that sometimes it was perfectly legal. The next day, a driver could end up with a hefty fine. Now, everything seems to be sorted out.

In 2001, it was decreed that the flag on licence plates would be the 12 gold stars and blue background of the European Union. If a driver displayed any other flag, he or she could have been pulled over by the police and hit with a £60 fine, compounded by the need to purchase replacement plates.

Apparently, there was always the intention to allow for diversity and this has finally been acknowledged within the legislation. It is now perfectly legal to have the Union Flag, the English St. George's cross, the Welsh dragon or the Scottish cross of St. Andrew as an alternative to the European Union emblem. The flags must be accompanied by the approved abbreviations: GB, ENG, CYM or SCO respectively.

Northern Ireland has not been included as yet simply because they cannot decide on which flag they wish to use. Jeffrey Donaldson, the Democratic Unionist party MP for Lagan Valley, said, "I think it is most unfortunate that Northern Ireland should be excluded from this scheme. We have managed to find symbols for the Northern Ireland Assembly and Police Service which have satisfied all sides of the community."

Latest Auction Prices Endorse Personal Registration Market

In the light of the latest UK interest rate cut, which took the value of savings to an unprecedented low, many people may take heed of this comment from 38-year-old Spencer Day, who has just purchased the registration 3 S for £94,000:

"There's no better time than at present to invest money in personalised registrations."

This spectacular sale, on the final day of the Whittlebury Hall auction in Northampton, was just a fraction of the massive £3 million raised over the three-day event. Damian Lawson of the DVLA, which has organised over 100 such auctions over the last 20 years, said: "Forty per cent of our all time top-ten selling number plates have been



bought since September 2008 and more and more buyers are telling us they're investing in our registrations".

Both UK and international clients flocked to the stately home venue 70 miles north of London - one even arriving in true style by helicopter. The highlight of the latest sale was the staggering total of £210,242 paid by an anonymous buyer, who won the minimalist 1 O with a telephone bid.

Close on its heels came the appropriately princely sum of £113,813 spent by a Berkshire-based millionaire on 1 HRH. In language more usually associated with art treasures of national heritage, the un-named benefactor said that he was "determined to keep it in British hands". Last September, Surrey businessman, Rob Harveson, paid £247,000 for the diminutive version 1 RH.

Shorter registrations generally command a higher premium, as demonstrated by 6 B, which also sold last year to an Asian businessman for £130,000.

Amongst the many other great numbers snapped-up over the three days were:

84 JM (£8,734), 18 OY (£18,624), 11 MCR (£17,388), MAL 1X (£12,566), FAR 44H (£10,346), 888 M (£13,432), 888 L (£8,363), RUT 11S (£10,094), H417 NAH (£6,014)

The sale of 1 O puts it well into the ten most expensive UK plate price tags, a record currently held by the £440,625 paid in 2008 for the registration F 1.

Astute observers have been quick to acknowledge some important incidental advantages of personal registrations as an asset i.e. the absence of maintenance and the fact that there is no security risk or insurance to worry about.

> > >

Clearly, 'cherished number plates' are now seen, by a growing number of financial observers, as an increasingly relevant and important addition to any investment portfolio.

1 O raises £210,000 at auction

The 3-day cherished number plate auction at Whittlebury Hall, Northampton threw up yet another spectacular sale, when the registration, 1 O, changed hands for a handsome £210,000 (including fees and tax).

The event, staged on behalf of the DVLA, was the scene of another mega-sale, when 1 HRH raised a princely £113,815.

Not only does this latest recession-busting purchase contradict common perceptions of the economic climate, but it also places 1 O amongst the top ten most expensive plates ever sold in the UK. The registration is very unusual in that the actual digit '1' and letter 'O' appear exactly the same as a capital 'I' and a nought, respectively, in the current, approved, number plate font. Moreover, the plate has never been issued until now, unlike many prized examples which often date back to the early 1900s.

Number plate auctions are generally held, perhaps appropriately, at prestigious venues and the three-day event at Whittlebury Hall is no exception. It is interesting to see how vehicle registrations are now firmly established as real addition to the traditional investment portfolio.

Also among the list of highly desirable plates on offer was the classic 3 S.

Number plate fetches a right royal price

The vehicle registration 1 HRH has raised a total of £113,815 at auction in Northampton.

There had been considerable speculation as to who might snap-up this superb number. It would, of course, be perfect for a member of the royal family, although security considerations would probably rule that out. Alternatively, foreign aristocracy could well be attracted to this most prestigious of plates.

In the event, the identity of the phone-bidder at the Whittlebury Hall sale was not disclosed. The auction, which was held on behalf of the DVLA, also included the numbers 3 S and O.

1 O, which has never been issued before, commands a reserve of £10,000 and experts believe it will easily outdo the 1 HRH price – possibly even going for a record sum - continuing the current trend of spectacular registration sales, which appear to fly in the face of the economic gloom.

Zanzibar To Have New Plates

The government of Zanzibar has announced that the country will have its very own number plates and driving licences. This move has been seen as an act to

reinforce the country's recent independence. Zanzibar is now set to be the first country in eastern Africa to have its own registration system. It has been reported that more than 70,000 people have had their vehicles re-registered under the new scheme, with many more set to follow suit.

The new scheme kicked-off last September, with the registration being Z101 AAA. Perhaps, in time to come, the personalised number plate industry may become popular in the region.

Vehicles and drivers from neighbouring Tanzania will have to pay an import fee or have their vehicles marked with one of the country's new plates - Perhaps a disguised stab at Tanzania who left Zanzibar out of its number plate reformation and treating all motor vehicles coming from Zanzibar as foreign. However, the reason Zanzibar was excluded was that the island could not raise the funds which was asked of them.

The new scheme may have rekindled a certain amount of national pride in its residents and has raised funds for the region through the import charges and other fees associated with vehicle registration.

High hopes for Ronaldo Plate

Beaconsfield property developer, Russell Baldwin, hopes to make his fortune with a number plate destined for Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo.

It was thought that Cristiano had already acquired the registration, CR 7 (which perfectly represents his initials and famous shirt number). He had planned for the plate to adorn his £140,000 Bentley convertible, but the deal fell through and Russell discovered that the plate was still in the hands of Scottish millionaire, Charlie Robinson.

Russell snapped-up CR 7, which was first issued by Southampton County Borough Council in 1903, for an undisclosed sum. The reported £50,000 price tag may be incorrect but, nevertheless, it could still be worth many times that figure. Having put the plate on an old Ford Escort "for a laugh", he sent a photo to Ronaldo. "I'd love to sell it to him," says Russell. "My boys are Man United mad. They'd be made-up if he came on the phone."

The 2008 European and World Footballer of the Year has registered 'CR7' as a marketing brand and already has a boutique of that name back home in Portugal.

Ronaldo had a lucky to escape recently, when he crashed his brand new Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorino in a tunnel at Manchester Airport.

Number Plates Set For Solid Year

The DVLA have speculated that 2009 is going to be a successful year for the sale of private number plates. Several auctions are scheduled for the coming twelve months and are expected to cause quite a stir in the world of personalised registration plates, of course while the DVLA profits as always from it all.

The DVLA intends to use its six auctions this year to capitalise on the launch of the 'O' series at the Whittlebury Hall, Towcester on the 28th of January. One of the main attractions at the event will be '1 O' which is expected to haul in a sizeable sum of cash. A £10,000 reserve has been set on this plate, displaying its estimated value of the plate at the DVLA. This rare plate has been regarded by many number plate fanatics as one of the greatest of all time.

The next auction will be in March at Ardencote Manor, Kenilworth, Warwickshire. The corresponding plate 2 O will be under the hammer at Ardencote, once again it is expected to attract a lump sum of cash. This plate will be followed by the 3 O in June, 4 O in August, 5 O in October and 6 O in December.

1 O was sold just weeks after now retired businessman Rob Harverson bought the 1 RH plate for an impressive £247,000, a price which makes the plate worth more than the average house in the UK at the moment.

While speaking about 1 O plate the DVLA Personalised Registrations' Marketing Manager, said: "1 O is arguably one of the last great jewels in our crown. Its single digit 1 combined with a single letter places it into our 'most desirable' category of registrations and as such I am confident it will exceed its £10,000 reserve price." Subsequent plates in the series are also expected to sell for similar amounts.



History by **Numbers**

The story of Lindsay Windsor-Smith's enthusiasm for fast cars and great private registration numbers begins back in 1974 when a young Lindsay was employed by a large, family-owned, Ford car dealership.

"I was fortunate to have among my clients as a sales executive the managing director and owner of the company located next door. He had a strong passion for new cars – and he rarely kept his cars for more than six months. After exhausting all of the current executive style Ford cars he fell in love with a two-door Lincoln-Ford Continental at a motor show."

The Continental was a very large car, so the customer changed his mind, transferring his attention to a 1974 model Ford Mustang.

"This was a valued client who would often arrive to see me at 9 o'clock in the morning, browse through the showroom and say 'What have you got that would interest me?' as casually as if he were buying a bag of frozen peas." His overriding requirement was always that any car he bought had to be ready the same day.

"Back in the old days that was unheard of, to completely prepare, de-wax, pre-delivery inspect, fully valet and make a visit to the Car Registration Tax Office, all in five hours. But somehow we achieved it every-time. This time, however, we had a real challenge: to find a brand new imported car – and quick!

"Two days later, I was entrusted with driving the beast we had found back to Leamington Spa from Brighton. After that enjoyable, but harrowing, drive I decided that it would be pretty cool to import and purchase a brand new Mustang myself."

In the interim, however, a very attractive Daimler V8 Saloon caught Lindsay's eye. This model had the same body as the Jaguar Mk2 (the Morse type Jag). It was all the more attractive for bearing the registration **LWS 99**, Lindsay's exact initials. One day Lindsay approached the owner and asked if the car was for sale. It wasn't at that time but four months later he successfully bought the car and registration.

"For a 24 year old it was quite a coup," he says. "Over the years I have transferred the number onto a whole host of classic and interesting cars including a Triumph Stag, a couple of high spec Granada Ghia's, a replica of the Racing Ford Cologne Capri, an Aston Martin DBS. It currently resides on a Ford Cougar V6."

More recently, Lindsay finally ordered the Mustang he had coveted since that episode in 1974.

"As I was lucky enough to already have a good number with my initials, there was no need to do the same again. This gave me more latitude to find something interesting or humorous. Luckily, I think I managed to achieve both in the number I found and purchased from Regtransfers. After seeing a selection of Bond-related numbers on Regtransfers.co.uk, I came across the number **0007 JBS**, on the website. That one made me smile – it just jumped out at me. I then went through the usual, faltering 'should I, shouldn't I' and then decided to go for it. Everything proceeded like clockwork – apart from the car taking a little longer than expected – and on July 10th 2007 I collected the new Mustang from Southampton docks.

"The Mustang is very typically American, a brutish 300 horsepower V8 engine coupled to a manual 5 speed gearbox, 0-60 in 5.65 seconds, and a top speed of... well, who knows? The exhaust note is pure music; a cross between a racing powerboat, a dragster and any other large V8 engined racecar. Just like in the film 'Bullitt' the engine actually snarls when you rev it.

"I heard that Ford responded to the wishes of the American public to make the all new Mustang as close in design and engineering as possible to the original 64-67 Classic Mustang, the most well liked and sought after version, which now fetch huge sums all around the globe. The exhaust note was particularly agonised over to obtain the perfect balance both inside and outside of the car."

Lindsay's Mustang has already been featured in the Coventry Motoring Festival where it met with huge interest both from the classic car fraternity and local youths who, to Lindsay's surprise, recognised the car straight away as a Mustang. The number plate also got its fair share of attention.

"The registration attracted all sorts of glances and double takes, many of which ended in a smile of recognition!"

What's the story?

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Andrea's Number Comes Home

Tony and Andrea Leeson have led varied professional lives. Tony worked in financial services for 30 years, while Andrea has worked in banking and also been a successful professional dancer and dance teacher.

Andrea took a break from her career to raise the couple's two daughters, Nicola and Heidi, following which she and Tony decided to move into a completely different area of business. James, who had been an executive director of J. Rothschild Assurance, left financial services, and together they pursued new careers in residential care for the elderly. They purchased their first care home in 1994.

"This was a perfect opportunity for Andrea to get into something that she had always wanted to do," says Tony. "She had a wonderful caring nature, and I had the financial background, which worked incredibly well together.

"We now have three care homes in the South of England, all of which have excellent reputations. All three are fully managed and staffed, so our role now is very much overseeing the business and visiting all homes on a weekly basis."

Tony's interest in private number plates is long established. In 1967, a former school friend of Tony's had a Lotus Elan bearing the number **JF 100**. At that time, Tony knew nothing about private registrations, and wasn't even aware that it was possible to choose or change the number on a car.

"Many years later, when I was director of Allied Dunbar, I was fortunate enough to have a Porsche 911 Targa as a company car. The plate I had on it was **H1 TJL** (Tony John Leeson). This company car did two

things, firstly it renewed my interest in personal plates, and secondly Andrea absolutely loved driving the Porsche, so we vowed that at some time in the future we would stretch the budget and get her one."

In 1997, Tony was looking through the number plates for sale in a Sunday newspaper when he saw **911 AKL**.

"It was perfect for Andrea Kay Leeson," he says. "But we didn't have a Porsche 911 at the time."

Tony knew that there was only one **911 AKL**, so he didn't let the opportunity pass. He bought the number and kept it on a retention certificate until they could afford a second hand 911.

"About a year later we happened to find a 10 year old Porsche 911 cabriolet for sale at the main Porsche centre in Reading with just 2,600 miles on the clock. We negotiated a price, and I covertly arranged with the salesman to have Andrea's personal plate to be put on the car when she collected it. I will never forget the amazement on her face when she saw the car for the first time with her initials on it!"

Some three years later Tony and Andrea bought a house in France. Unfortunately an associated financial issue meant that they had to sell the Porsche.

"It only had 14,000 miles on the clock, so to help sell it quickly we left the plate on the car. This is something we regretted from the day we sold it," says Tony. "Not so much the loss of the car, but the loss of the number plate."

A few years later, Tony began to search the internet for new private plates for Andrea. He was specifically looking at numbers containing her initials, AKL.

To his great surprise, Tony saw **911 AKL** for sale on the Regtransfers.co.uk website. There were also four other AKL options.

"When I phoned, Regtransfers investigated all five options for me. The bad news was that four of them were no longer available, but **911 AKL** was still for sale. We negotiated and bought it again, and it really felt like the number had come home. It is now on Andrea's Porsche 911 cabriolet, and she thoroughly enjoys it."

In 1990, Tony enquired about **LEE 50N**, but he was told by DVLA that it had not been issued. Tony decided to wait in the hope that it would be released in one of the auctions. Sure enough, in 1998 **LEE 50N** was featured in a DVLA auction which both Tony and Andrea attended.

"The price went sky high," Tony told us. "So I was unable to purchase it. I did wonder at the time whether Nick Leeson, who brought down Barings Bank, might have made a bid for it, but I never found out!"

"A few years later I bought **3 AJL** for my Jeep Cherokee, but I always hankered after the plate I failed to get at auction. Out of the blue, in June 2008, Regtransfers sent me a text on my mobile phone to inform me that **LEE 50N** was now on the market. I purchased it without hesitation, and Regtransfers sold **3 AJL** on my behalf.

"It is a long drawn out story, but we are both very happy that we now have our perfect private plates, thanks to Regtransfers.co.uk!"



A Clear **Favourite**

What's the story?

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Trev Smeaton purchased his first private registration about 10 years ago.

"I bought **E22 BEV** as a present for my wife Bev. I remember wrapping the plates up in a package shaped like a large Toblerone. It was quite a surprise for her. The plates now sit on a little MG, and they look great."

Trev's next acquisition was a little more self-indulgent. For his 38th birthday he bought himself **38 TS**, which is currently displayed on his Nissan Navara.

"From the first day it was put on a vehicle it seemed to attract a lot of attention," he recalls.

The next family member to benefit from Trev's long standing enthusiasm for private number plates was his father. Mr Smeaton Senior is known by the nickname 'Smeat', and Trev located the perfect Christmas

present for him when he found the plate **S17 EAT**.

Of all the numbers he has bought, Trev thinks that his most recent purchase, **T12 EVS**, is a clear favourite.

"It's on our family car," he says. "A jeep that is mostly driven by Bev. When she asked why I had bought another plate with my name on it, the answer was simple - it's Trev's wife driving Trev's car!"

Trev says that didn't go down quite as well with Bev as the original gift of her own registration had. We wonder why...

When the time comes for the Smeaton family's next number plate quest, it will probably be for appropriate numbers for their children, Hayley and Jamie.

"I will certainly know where to look," says Trev, "as Regtransfers oversaw my **T12 EVS** transaction."



Smart moves



We run an Energy Performance Certification service in Northern Ireland and we recently purchased **N1 EPC** from Regtransfers.co.uk.

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Mike Rodgers

www.epcni.com



I run **Health Kinesiology UK** with over 100 practitioners throughout the UK.

Once I owned my own Smartie, I had it painted up with my corporate logo and then the icing on the cake was the number plate **HK 04 YOU**

Ann Parker

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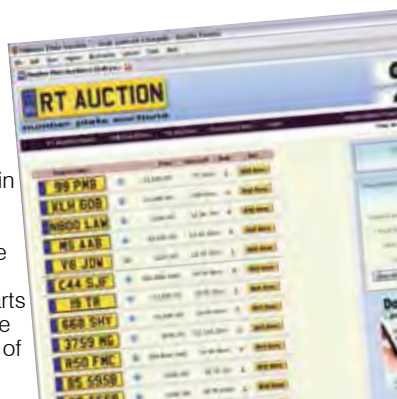
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Mr C P of Ipswich

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