

1930/31

SYMBOL: A colon at mid centre.

COLOURS: White on black.

This was the one and only series where a colon permeated proceedings. But, with its everlasting exclusion from registrations at the lower end of the numeric spectrum and a retrogression to a blend of white on black, a real possibility now surged for those who had not yet discarded their unmarked 1926/27 plates to contemplate some ersatz recycling. After all, here were heaven sent means, thanks to obtuse governmental commissars, for scores of unscrupulous motorists to economise on both money and energy by being given the recipe to circumvent such boring and fastidious subtleties as the shelling out of another registration fee.

And, it bears reiterating, those in the north who had got their mitts on white on black 1926/27 plates unsullied by a hyphen, were just as prone to be domiciled in communes being apportioned all but exact looking 1930/31 clones. Who at the time then, without going to the nuisance of waving down a driver and wresting printed proof off him, could accurately have attested when spying a registration within the bounds of **1** to **999** that it was an authentic contemporary one? So, if it was tough in those days to discriminate between the two, what can a present-day aficionado fall back on when struggling to overcome the same dilemma? In other words, how can



one swear the above three specimens devoid of symbols are kosher morsels from this year's harvest and have no affinity to the vintage of 1926/27? Unhappily, apart from being sensitive to the height of the digits and the placement of an oval around the manufacturer's name, there are no subsidiary foolproof gimmicks. One other straightforward wisdom conducted here was to turn the plates over where it was discerned some well-meaning souls (hopefully the original owners themselves) had the good sense to scrawl or scratch the year of issue on the back.

Tenders were again solicited in the third quarter of 1930 with the upshot Precision was given the nod to push on for another four years.

Passenger - Is it not a safe bet then to assume the privation of emblems on registrations under **1,000** would have colluded in only that very same amount having the potential for misappropriation? Surely, once the colon had joined festivities, would it not prevent any more such heinous considerations? Hmm, not necessarily so, for it is always worth being wary of those whose conniving intellects are never dormant when it comes to nurturing cons to evade obligatory charges or taxes.



This can aptly be illustrated by the plate at left which was stumbled on in the sparsely (even now) populated hinterlands of the South Island. Here obviously a wily and ne'er-do-well yokel who, never having savoured the bonus of obtaining custody of registrations without an annual symbol, reckoned he would have a go anyway at procreating his own 1930/31 interpretations out of two-year-old stock. Even though incontestably not a master craftsman, nor on the shortlist for MENSA induction, he dusted off his still handy 1928/29 plates which he then attacked with a hammer in a boorish attempt to flatten the diamond. After application of a coat of black paint to obliterate the reddish brown base, a couple of not too carefully situated indentations were knocked through from behind to simulate a colon. These in turn were dabbed with white and - abracadabra - he was now the smug owner (from far off at any rate, away from hawkeyed scrutiny) of a set of up-to-date registrations. Would it be too outlandish to insinuate he may not have been the only one tempted into such spurious machinations?

Meantime, on the licit front, 177,800 pairs rattled down the conveyor belt but no overt buttressing (if that is what had lain behind the semi-embossed devices seen the two preceding years) was to become obtrusive on registrations with low serials.

Motorcycle - What had bewitched Precision into serving up dissimilar motorcycle plates, enough to spellbind it these last four years into going down the same trail Kittle had blazed in 1925? Whatever it was this philosophy was now scuttled and



both were made to take on a horizontal shape. But there was to be a bit of a downside to this gambit. Because the pre-drilled boltholes on the edges persevered with finding sanctuary 6½ inches from each other (a shortcoming nominally remedied in 1935/36 when the breach was narrowed by two inches), forward registrations unfailingly needed more perforations before they could be held fast satisfactorily. For the most part these punctures were administered quite recklessly (and frequently liable to repeated tries) which is why heaps of such plates enduring to this day often resemble flat colanders.

Of the 34,000 sets ladled out it is fair game the colon went into exile on those with serials up to **999**.

Large Vehicle Dealer - 2,300 pairs paid their dues where the emblem played possum until a fourth numeral entered the equation. But here the delineation and height of the **D** deviated totally from the tall, spindly letter depicted in 1926/27. Consequently, should one ever bump into a white on black dealer registration which



is impoverished of a symbol, it can painlessly be dated courtesy of the physical properties of the prefix.

Motorcycle Dealer - What shenanigans, pray, did the colon get up to here? The only unmistakable thing one can avow is that anything inflicted on one plate would have been reciprocated on the other for these 450 sets were also now shooed in as two peas in a pod. But if, for the sake of argument, these registrations had boycotted an emblem, how complicated would it be to deduce the year of manufacture of any little black and white **D** plate yet pending discovery? Well, with the proviso one honed in on a pair there should be no impediment whatsoever. For, the moment it was twigged one of them was not perpendicular, there would be no alternative but store them in this issue's pigeonhole.

Exempt - As there is no clue of any stragglers with abridged serials it must be gathered no drastic digressions from past goings-on would have meddled with the primary 999 of the 1,300 pairs harnessed. But at least we can lean on one small benediction for, should a white and black **E** prefaced registration with no symbol be dug up one day, it will unerringly have to be recognised as being a progeny of this issue's lineage seeing exempt plates had not yet been put out to pasture four years ago.



Government - Up to now vehicles understood to be under the governance of His Majesty had never caved in when it came to putting on annual embossed plates of any type. Although given every latitude to conform in 1927/28, when an experimental prefix from the exempt consortium had been dangled in front of them, this was unceremoniously repudiated at the eleventh hour. Instead they tenaciously went on making do with the same old painted registrations they had been blowing kisses at since the pubescent 1920's.

However all this was to become a flitting memory when at last they committed themselves to 1,800 paired plates where the prefix, rather than be subservient to the usual bachelor letter, broke the mould by highlighting an abbreviation of the word 'Government'. But, as not one forlorn registration from this series has to this day overcome the hurdles of time travel, nothing tangible can be determined regarding how this grandiose **Govt** might have been sculpted. In all probability it would have crowed a few (maybe even minor) disparities to the one witnessed two years later when an overall change of die ingratiated itself. Also it is not at all promising an emblem ever rose to prominence on any plates with serials under **1,000**.

And as for state-owned motorcycles, their wants were entirely overlooked and they would never - not then or thereafter - become worthy custodians of their own registrations.

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