

Number Plates from the 1920s

Are your number plates the original ones as fitted in the 1920s? One way of finding out is to look for stamped trade marks on the front or back faces. The plates might be battered and drilled with spurious holes over the decades, but if original they are well worth restoring, rather than replacing with modern reproductions.

Remove the plates and carefully remove all the layers of paint using solvent-based paint stripper with a brass wire brush. **Do not use caustic soda as this will attack and dissolve the aluminium plates!** Look carefully at the corners: you might see a small manufacturer's stamp, see **Figure 1**.



Figure 1 Manufacturer's stamp on a 1920s number plate. Emphasised by blue ink

This one reads: "HOMO LTD PATENT No 233179". You can download this patent from the European Patent Office web site (<https://worldwide.espacenet.com>). It was filed in 1924 by David Rist of Lowestoft who claimed an efficient process to make plate numbers with sharp edges and vertical sides, thus replacing the more expensive processes of casting, engraving or milling. **Figure 2**, adapted from UK233179, shows how a male die can force metal into a female die of the same size to give the sharp edged lettering. Rapid application of high pressure is required. It appears to be a very early example of superplastic formation, a modern high-tec process for making complex shapes from various alloys.

PATENT SPECIFICATION

233,179

Application Date: June 18, 1924. No. 14,750/24.

Complete Accepted May 7, 1925.



COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

An Improved Method of and Means for Manufacturing Embossed or Intaglio Name and Number Plates.

I, DAVID ALBERT VICTOR RIST, British subject, of Waveney Works, Freemantle Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement:—

This invention relates to an improved method of and means for manufacturing embossed or intaglio metal plates, for use as number or name plates.

... the die will push the metal bodily with a semi-shearing action into the counterpart 8, whereby the device whether embossed or intaglio will be formed with perfectly vertical sides 9 and the outlines or edges at the angles will be perfectly sharp and such as would be produced by an ordinary engraving or milling machine.

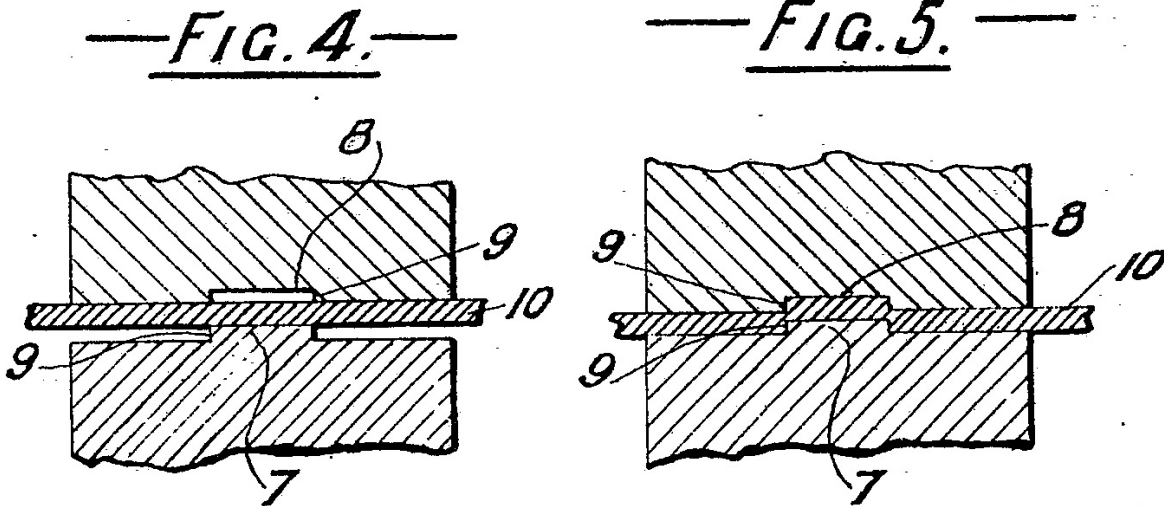


Figure 2 Extracts from Patent No UK233179

HOMO
NUMBER PLATES
HYGRADE

HOMO HYGRADE NUMBER PLATES.
UNTARNISHABLE, UNBREAKABLE, NO RIVETS, NO CASTING.
No brittle letters and figures. The only plate made in one piece from pure aluminium $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick, with sharp letters and figures and a smooth background
"Easily the most attractive plate we have seen."—Motor Commerce.
BETTER AND CHEAPER. Delivery—One Hour.
HOMO LIMITED, 134 HIGH ROAD, NEW SOUTHGATE, LONDON, N.11.
Telephone: Palmers Green 1441 & 1442. Telegrams: "Homoweldo, Phone, London."
And at 42 HYLTON STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
Telephone: Birmingham Northern 2060. Telegrams: "Homoweldo, Birmingham."

Figure 3 shows a contemporary advertisement for Homo Number Plates