

MG RV8 - Japanese Number Plates and their meaning

Having purchased his MG RV8 in late 2017 Ian James' first task was to check it out and get remedial works completed to make it capable of covering long journeys and trips around the UK. As I mentioned in a recent NC500 article my wife Shirley and I decided to try and complete the NC500 as an "Extreme" route via the mainland coast road around the UK. So this has taken up much of my spare time, initially organising a route, preparing and then executing the route. I also decided to record the whole route on dash cam. So, once a section was done then a lot of video footage editing and copying to DVD's once again took up a lot of time.

In amongst our trips we have taken our MG RV8 to many shows and meetings, where we get a lot of interest from the public.

Questions which were and are repeated:

- How many MG RV8s were made?
- Where did they all go - UK, Japan and elsewhere?
- How many survive?

As my MG RV8 was reimported, I started to look in more detail at the Japanese documents that were supplied to me as part of its history to give any "question askers" a little more information.

As much of the documentation is in Japanese this proved difficult (unless of course if you can read Japanese). In the industry I work in from time to time we have projects with Japanese companies, so I began thinking at some point I could use the opportunities to ask someone to translate some of it for me. That was a good idea I thought but then, COVID! This stopped our contracts for work and any chance of an easy fix.

So, having some spare time during lock-down, I started to look at another route – "Google Translate" and a free Japanese translation App "Translate". Digging out my documents again I started to investigate getting the English wording. (I must have some Yorkshire origins in me - sorry, no offense to any Yorkshiremen or women) because I wouldn't pay to use it as I needed. It allowed me to only translate 5 sections at a time/per week.

整理番号	R V M
車名	ローバー E-RA48A
車台番号	SARRAWBMBMG 001555
登録番号	湘南 33 Ta 7009
登録年月日	1995年 11月 7日
特約販売店	ローバー 厚木 志澤
住所	厚木市田村町 11-18

So three weeks later I had the translations I needed. Just focusing on the Registration for the purposes of this article I had this section translated. This came up as this:

Barracks E-RA48A	
Reference number	SARRAWBMBMG 001555
Registration number	Shonan 33 Ta 7009
Date of registration	November 7, 1995
Car name	Rover Model RV8

I also had other sections translated which gave me the Dealership in Japan

Rover Atsugi
11-18 Tamuramachi, Atsugi
TEL (0462) 22-7117
FAX (0462) 22-7118
Rover Atsugi
E-RA48A
9〒254

Also the Name of the 1st Owner with his address:

Kazunori Hara
XXXX
Hiratsuka City,
Kanagawa
Prefecture 2 E km

So using Goggle Maps street view I found the apartment block where the owner lived at the time and maybe still does.

The next task was to understand where all the information fitted into a Japanese Licence Plate. So, following an internet search I found a company called **JLP – Japanese Licence Plates**.



They offer plates made to order (for Show only). JLP's site shows the different types and colours. "Which is the correct one"?



Doing some more research I found this table below. Some JLP plates are pure show types for decoration purposes only. You can research more for types and styles.

Class	Engine (cc displacement)	Plate color	Text color	Plate dimensions
Private vehicle	>660	White	Green	Medium or large
Commercial vehicle	>660	Green	White	Medium or large
Lightweight private (kei car)	<660	Yellow	Black	Medium
Lightweight commercial	<660	Black	Yellow	Medium
Microcar	0-49	Sky Blue ^[a]	Blue	Extra small
Small special vehicle [ja] ^[b]	no limit	Green ^[a]	Black	Extra small
2 wheel	0-49	White ^[a]	Blue	Extra small
2 wheel	50-89	Yellow ^[a]	Blue	Extra small
2 wheel	90-124	Pink ^[a]	Blue	Extra small
2 wheel	125-249	White	Green	Small
2 wheel	≥250	White, green border	Green	Small

a. ^{a b c d e} These plates are issued by municipal governments.
b. ^a Various size and other limits apply, mainly for construction or agricultural vehicles.

Looking at the table above for a vehicle like the MG RV8 3.9 litre, it is a private vehicle greater than 600cc. Then the plate should be white with green text. The plate size being Medium or Large.

Large

44 cm × 22 cm (17.3 in × 8.7 in)

(for over 8 tons vehicle, or capacity of 30 people or more)

Medium

33 cm × 16.5 cm (13.0 in × 6.5 in)

Small

23 cm × 12.5 cm (9.1 in × 4.9 in)

Extra small

about 20 cm × 10 cm (7.9 in × 3.9 in)

(differs according to each municipality)

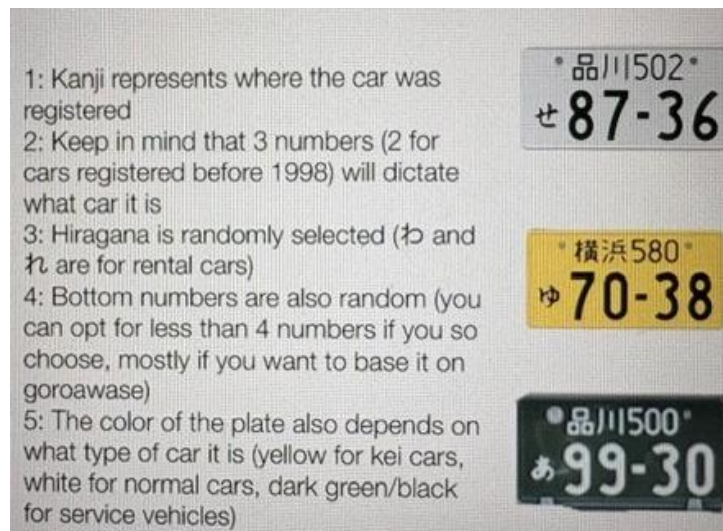
Therefore, I summarised my numberplate should be Medium sized. With all the information I now went back to the JLP website for the next steps.

So scrolling down and clicking on the white plate it takes you through to the plate generation section for that colour. There are 140 area plate codes on offer. This is where the car was originally registered. My translation specifies "Shonan" which is on the list. So I selected that.

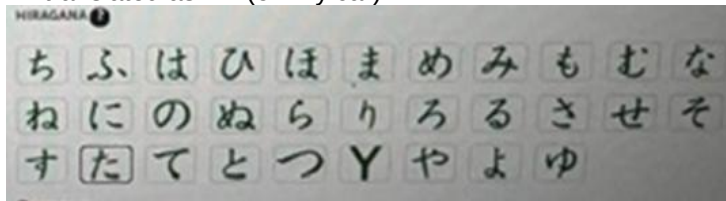


Next it then opens up the areas for you to complete.

Top numbers? I found this on "Redit".



1. Kanji = **Shonan** (for my car).
2. 3 numbers following Kanji or in my case 2 numbers as this relates to cars registered before 1998 = **33** (for my car).
3. Hiragana = random selected symbol, mine being translated as **TA** (on my car).



There are 31 random Hiragana symbols are offered on JLP site. Mine is TA (bottom left on plate below)



Next on the JLP list is a free number text. Mine being "7009" it had to be filled in as 70-09 but as I could not find any examples with out a space or without a "-" in them, so "70-09" it was.

Making my completed Japanese plate:

Shonan

33

TA

70-09

I made my purchase and a few days later the plate arrived. Offering it up on my car I could still see part of the UK number. Having some redunant old private UK reg plates I cut the blank ends off and using some sticky pads added them to the new japanese plates. Also using some rally plate suckers I am now able to show the plate on private show grounds and meetings. See below.



NOTE! - you must not drive the car on the UK roads with this plate covering your UK registration and remember to remove the Japanese plate from your car before you return to the UK roads as you do not want our Police stopping you on your way home!

It was fun and frustrating at the same time to do this exercise, but hopefully this article will help you to source your Japanese numberplate information and then add the translation at least to your car's history.

Here is my car in its UK clothing.



"Arigato" for reading this article by Ian James. (That translates to Thanks).

Recent NC500 "Extreme" article. [Link](#)