

## Supplemental Information for 307-073 License Plate, Stamped Aluminum, UK Style

### Background

Very early English license plates were actually cast in solid aluminum. Other plates were made with riveted-on letters in a variety of slightly different styles. The stamped aluminum type plate with a black background is appropriate for British cars from 1904 to 1972, when it was phased out. The system of three letters and three numbers was introduced in 1932, and was used until 1963, when a letter suffix was added to the end.

### How were they made?

The stamped English license plates were made in hundreds (if not thousands) of small shops in the UK using a press and steel dies supplied by Bluemels, the company that also supplied the aluminum blanks. The other popular plate makers were "Hills". The plates were covered in masking tape to prevent the face from being scratched while being pressed. After pressing, the tape covering the letters was left in place while the rest was stripped off. The plates were then painted semi-gloss black, leaving the letters and numbers in raw aluminum.

### Does Bluemels still make plates?

Sadly, Bluemels went out of business in the mid 1970's.

### What about the size and shape of the letters?

The size of the letters was fixed at 3.5" and six characters were used until about 1963, when the size of the letters was reduced to 3.125" (3 1/8") to squeeze seven characters onto the plate. The smaller sized letters have been used to make the early as well as the late stamped plates. Because several companies were making dies, the odds are that there was some variation on the details of the shape of the individual letters.

### How does Moss make the plates?

Moss acquired a 1960s vintage Bluemels press and the number/letter dies in the early 1980's and we are still using the same press today. (See photo above) We only have the one set of 3.125" (3 1/8") dies, so we are limited to the font we have. Because of detail variation in the dies used in England, we cannot guarantee that the plate we produce will be a clone of the original license plate you have. The blanks we use are 20 1/2" X 4 3/8", and they come to us with a 1/4" wide raised lip around the perimeter.



## Finishing your British License Plate

### Materials & Tools Needed

Single edge razor blade or Exacto knife

Zinc-Chromate primer

Semi gloss black enamel or epoxy based paint. *(The latter will provide better chip resistance)*

Drill & drill bits

Stainless steel screws and Nyloc nuts, 10-32 *(Not original, but they will last forever and never come loose)*

1. The plate may have a slight curve to it from the pressing process. It is easily flattened out.
2. Trace around the border of each letter to firmly bed the masking tape into the corners.
3. With a single-edged razor blade or Exacto knife, cut through the masking tape around the border of each letter.
4. Remove the masking tape from the space between the letters.
5. Prime the aluminum plate with a spray can of standard zinc-chromate primer. Do not apply heavy coats or excessive build-up at the taped edges will result.
6. When primer is dry, apply the semi-gloss black color coat.
7. When the color coat has dried thoroughly, remove the masking tape slowly and carefully.
8. Optional: Bake the painted plate in the kitchen oven at 250 degrees Fahrenheit for thirty minutes.  
*The baking will increase the paint's durability.*
9. British number plates were originally mounted on a steel plate which was original equipment on most British market cars and many American market sports cars. Please check your Moss catalog or [www.mossmotors.com](http://www.mossmotors.com) for the correct plate for your car.
10. If you are re-using your original backing plate, the existing hole pattern may or may not line up with the corners of the license plate. We suggest drilling new holes in the corners of the new license plate and drill new holes in the backing plate as required. We suggest using stainless steel 10-32 screws and Nyloc nuts to secure the plate.



*Photo Courtesy of Terry Horlick. This plate was made for his 1947 MG TC in January 2006*



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Instruction Sheet 307-073\_980-115 February 2006