

## Ho Ho Ho

The festive season is upon us so to make a change from more serious matters, I thought that I would share with you a few amusing tales from my three years dealing with re-registration

Despite having owned and driven many vehicles including cars, motorbikes, scooters (I was a "Lambretta mod" in the 60's, but atoned for this by owning a Kawasaki ZZR bike fairly recently) 7.5 tonners and been in planes, helicopters, air balloons and submarines I probably know no more about cars than the average guy, but just a tad more than the customer who called about a year ago to deal with the re-registration of a vehicle

Outside of his house was a car with the side severely traumatised, which had been caused when a truck passed a little too closely after the customer had stopped on the notoriously narrow hard shoulder of the A7. When asked why he stopped, he said that whilst he knew virtually nothing about cars, he did notice that the temperature gauge was in the red zone, so pulled over to add some water. After adding the water, the truck appeared and made his efforts superfluous

He was looking to scrap the car, but as we have a friend who undertakes bodywork, it was offered to him instead. Whilst looking over the rest of the car, we were invited to listen to the engine, which "purred like a kitten". The bonnet was lifted and the engine started making very soft feline noises. "Look" said the customer, "you can see that I added water, the container is still full". Roars of laughter followed; he had not filled the radiator, but the windscreen washer bottle was brimming over! Incidentally ladies, the car was green

Now my other half is part Irish as her name of Kathleen Mary ably demonstrates and I genuinely believe that the Irish are the most easy going and agreeable race on Earth, but I think that it's fair to say that they do not always approach situations from the same perspective as we Anglos. Only last week, I received a phone call from a man with a very strong Irish accent. He has a motor home on Irish plates that he keeps in a secure car park in Spain and was having problems getting it re-insured so asked if I could re-register it as a Spanish vehicle. "Should be no problem," said I "where is your home in Spain?" "Oh, I don't have a home in Spain he says, I just keep the van there". After explaining that he can't register a vehicle in Spain without an address to register it to, he then asked if he could register it in England as he could then get better insurance. "Do you have an address in England that you can use to register it at?" was my next question. "No, I don't know anyone in England!" I think he's now looking for someone that he knows in Spain who will accommodate his desires

"What did you do back in the UK" is a question I invariably ask my customers "Well" said one. "I started life as an airline pilot, got a bit fed up with going everywhere on auto pilot, so joined the Royal Navy for some adventure. This got a bit tedious, so I went into the submarine service and eventually became the captain of my own sub'. Being underwater all of the time became boring, so I successfully applied to join the SAS". Well he was a customer, so although I didn't wish to contradict him said, "Did you really do all that?" "No, Graham you prat, but have you noticed how every Brit

who has changed a plug is now a fully qualified electrician and the bloke who lays a patio has suddenly become a Master Builder in Spain?” Point taken

Those of you who deal with the general public will know that the vast majority of people are a pleasure to deal with and have interesting and varied backgrounds. For sure you get on better with some than with others, but that just a fact of life. Once in a while and thankfully not that often there are those who are just a pain in the rear end. One of my standard questions is “Are the headlights on your car UK or Continental?” as many cars will need to have the headlights changed and very few have the capability to switch from driving on the left to the right. So one day when I received a call from a customer with a Renault Megane, I knew from past experience that these lights cannot be adjusted and need to be changed. I mentioned this to the customer who said “listen sonny” (I am in my late fifties) I was in the motor trade for 30 years and I know how to adjust lights, so these have been adjusted”. As gently as possible so as not to wound his inflated ego, I asked if the manual indicated that adjustment was possible. “I don’t need no manual, I know what I’m doing” he retorted, so I left it at that. At the ITV, the very first item checked is the headlights and it was no surprise at all when the inspector announced that the car would fail as the headlights were British.

“What now?” asked our expert. When being advised that he will need to change the headlights, he then proceeded to tell me that I would have to pay for them otherwise the price agreed would be greater than he was quoted. Once it was finally got through to him that the whole point of questioning him in the early stages was to determine what the overall cost would be and the price of headlights would have been included had he not been so certain that they had been adjusted, he yielded and asked where he should get them. Oh dear, I am not especially proud of my next move, but I’m sure you will understand why. I can get lights and fitting at preferential rates and most often the lights supplied are high quality copies, which are much less expensive than the notoriously highly priced main dealers. “Yes, there is a Renault dealer near to you, who are bound to have them”. Well can you blame me?

Enjoy the rest of the holidays. Season’s greetings to all readers and customers past and present. I hope that the Three Kings and New Year bring you everything that your heart desires

Graham Shelton

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