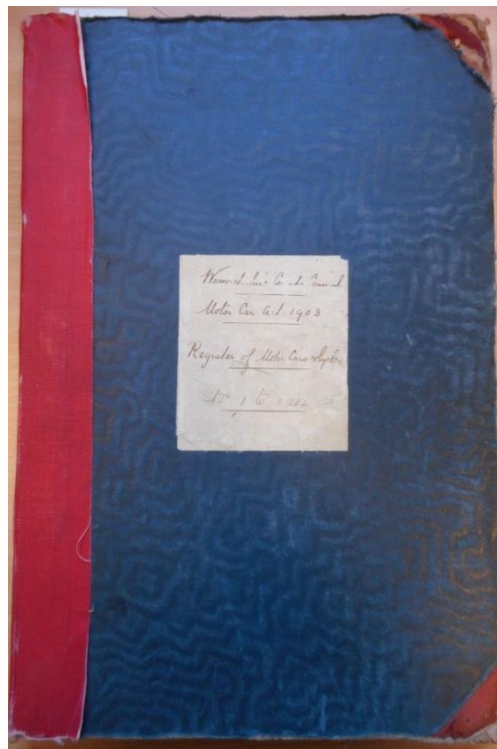


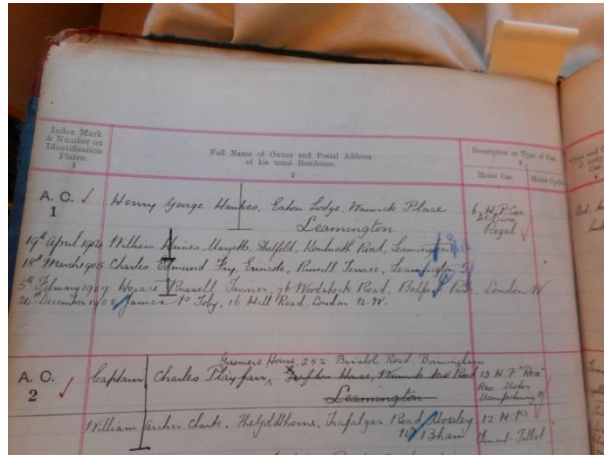
Vehicle Registration – What's on Your Plate? CR1827/2

The first new car registrations for 2017 come out next month but our Document of the Month for February takes us back to the very first vehicle registrations in Warwickshire in 1903.



Front cover of the very first vehicle registration book for Warwickshire.
Warwickshire County Record Office: CR1827/2

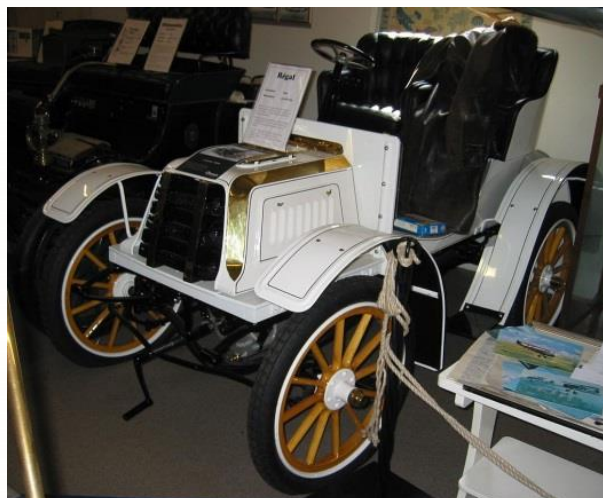
Although vehicles had been a common sight on Britain's road for some years, it was not until 1903 that the Motor Car Act required all vehicles on the road to be registered with a number plate. These were originally issued by the local council, who received a series of two letter combinations that would indicate where the vehicle was originally registered. Warwickshire received the combinations AC, NX, UE and WD.



The entry showing the first vehicle registration in Warwickshire to Mr Henry Hawkes.
Warwickshire County Record Office: CR1827/2

The first vehicle registered in Warwickshire was a six horsepower Regal De Dion two-seater in red, whose owner was Mr Henry George Hawkes of Eaton Lodge, Warwick Place, Leamington Spa. Local trade directories show that Mr Hawkes was an up-and-coming solicitor with the local legal firm, Wright, Hassall and Co. The firm is still in Leamington today, now called Wright Hassall LLP.

The Regal car with a De Dion Bouton engine was a highly desirable vehicle in its day, with more De Dion Boutons imported into the UK during the 1900s than any other make of foreign car, according to the [National Motor Museum Trust](http://www.nationalmotormuseumtrust.org/).



A restored example of a Regal car circa 1903. By Buch-t. Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8784638>

Our Collection

Local councils continued to issue vehicle registrations until 1974, when the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) took over the responsibility. Warwickshire County Record Office holds the complete collection of original registration books from 1903 to 1974. If you have an old vehicle from those years registered in the county, it is fairly certain that the original registration will be detailed within and you can order a copy of those details from us. Like the 1903 version these log books will also give the year of registration, the original owner of the vehicle, and details of the vehicle itself.

Alongside the registration books, the record office also holds an extensive collection of registration surrender cards. If the registration was surrendered back to the authority (for instance at the end of the vehicle's life), a record card was created and occasionally related correspondence attached to it. If you are lucky and a card for your vehicle was created and has survived, it can yield further information about previous owners and the vehicle's history.

Did You Know?

- Unfortunately, we don't have a surrender card for the AC 1 registration, but according to the DVLA, it now resides on a 2014 Land Rover.
- Cherished number plates are still very popular and AC II is currently on sale for over £70,000. Some internet sources say AC 1 might be worth over £100,000.
- The very first number plate ever was, not surprisingly, A1 and was issued in London in 1903. The second Earl Russell (grandson of former Prime Minister John Russell) queued overnight to be sure to get it, and beat someone else to it by 5 seconds.¹

¹

Vehicle Registration Marks Bill, 2nd reading, March 2007