

Back to Basics

# Decode Your VIN

We unravel the mysteries of the very informative vehicle identification plate you'll find under your classic Ford's bonnet.

Words Craig Stewart Photos Classic Ford

The identity of your Ford can be important if you are keen to restore to original factory condition, or if you just want the gen on your paperwork-free new purchase. But you don't need the Enigma machine to decipher the codes on the VIN plate, just our easy-ish guide.

We are going to concentrate on the two main plates found between 1965 and 1980, which takes in the Cortina Mk1 and Mk2, the Escort Mk1 and Mk2 and the Capri Mk1, Mk2 and Mk3. To go into any further depth on the subject would mean

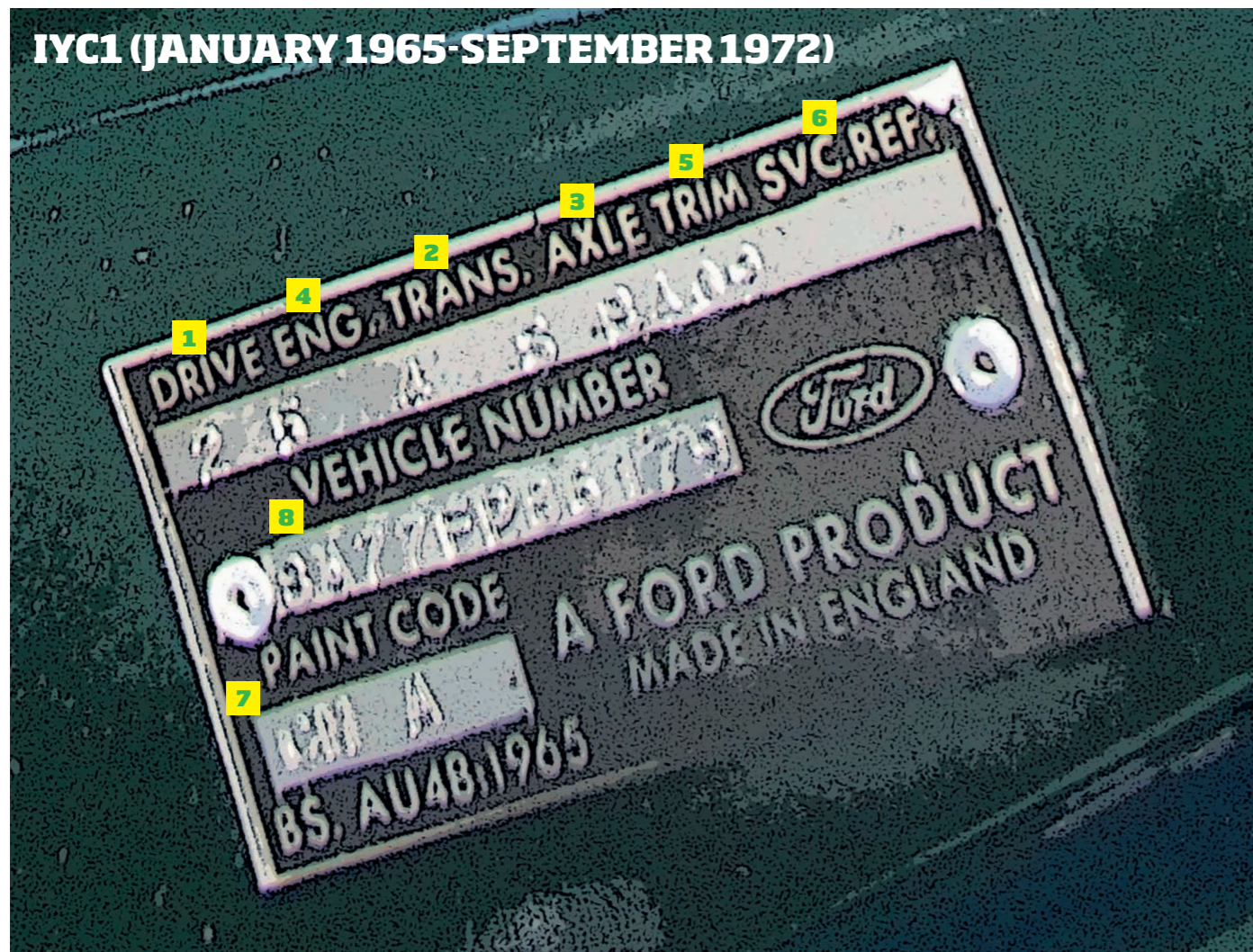
turning this issue into a completely VIN stats-based manual over hundreds of pages, but we want to find room in the rest of the mag to feature some top classic Fords, too!

Anyway, the basics provided here will give you a good starting point, and if you are keen to fill in the blanks then there are many specialist websites, books, owners' clubs and other sources that you can refer to.

These are the two post-1965 Ford Europe plates you'll find in the Cortina Mk1/2, Escort Mk1/2 and Capri; the IYC1 and

IYC2. The IYC1 style ran until September 1972 before it was superseded by the IYC2. In our guide, we focus on the main element of the plate, the vehicle number, but also give you the basics on the other information that you'll find stamped on it.

**"YOU DON'T NEED THE ENIGMA MACHINE TO DECIPHER THE CODES ON YOUR VIN PLATE, JUST OUR EASY-TO-FOLLOW GUIDE"**



## 1 DRIVE

1 or R = right hand drive  
2 or L = left hand drive  
(For British Capris from August, 1970 and German Capris from December, 1968, 1 = left hand drive and 2 = right hand drive)

## 2 TRANS (TRANSMISSION)

A letter or number representing the type of gearbox, for example on Capri and Cortina Mk1:

1 = floor change  
2 = column change  
3 = automatic  
4 = remote floor change  
5 = floor change, manual  
7 = floor change, auto

## 3 AXLE

Tells you the final drive ratio, for example:

**Cortina Mk1**  
S = Standard ratio (1198cc saloons = 4.125:1, 1498cc saloons/estates = 3.900:1, aa98cc estates = 4.444:1)  
1 = 4.444:1  
2 = 4.125:1

**Cortina Mk2**  
A/2 = 3.900:1  
A/J = 3.889:1  
B/4 = 4.125:1  
C/5 = 4.444:1  
D/9 = 3.777:1

The Capri Mk1 and Escort Mk1 use a variety of codes, which can be found out on specialist websites.

## 4 ENG (ENGINE)

A letter and/or number relating to the engine capacity and compression. See below...

### Engine codes

#### Cortina Mk1

1 = 1198cc high compression  
2 = 1198cc low compression  
3 = 1498cc high compression  
4 = 1498cc low compression  
5 = 1498cc GT

#### Cortina Mk2

A = 1297cc high compression (with LC distributor)  
B = 1297cc low compression  
C = 1297cc high compression (normal distributor)  
D = 1500cc high compression (with LC distributor)  
E = 1500cc low compression  
F = 1500cc high compression (normal distributor)  
G = 1500cc high compression GT  
H = 1558cc Lotus  
J/S = 1298cc high compression (Crossflow)  
K/T = 1298cc low compression (Crossflow)  
L/U = 1599cc high

compression (Crossflow)  
M/W = 1599cc low compression (Crossflow)  
N/X = 1599cc high compression GT  
P/Y = 1558cc, Lotus

#### Escort Mk1

B = 1098cc high compression  
C = 1098cc low compression  
R = 1298cc GT  
S = 1298cc high compression  
T = 1298cc low compression

#### Capri Mk1

S or J2 = 1300cc high compression  
T or J1 = 1300cc low compression  
U or L2 = 1600cc high compression  
W or L1 = 1600cc low compression  
R or J3 = 1300cc GT  
X or L3 = 1600cc GT  
N = 2000cc  
H = 3000cc

## 5 TRIM

The trim code consists of a letter, followed by a three-digit number, which relates to the combination of seat and floor coverings and the dates these were used.

These are incredibly complex, and to give you these would require devoting the whole mag to it! However, they can be found in specialist manuals and if you look hard enough, online.

## 6 SVC REF

Date of manufacture, if vehicle was shipped unassembled for assembly in another country. Therefore this will be blank on UK-built cars.

## 7 PAINT CODE

A code representing the exterior paint colour. Again, it would take pages and pages to go through every one, but these are available in specialist books and websites.

## 8 VEHICLE NUMBER

There are 11 figures in this code: the last six are a number unique to that vehicle; the first five break down like this:

**First letter – country of origin:** B = Britain, D = West Germany  
**Second letter – assembly plant:** A = Dagenham, B = Halewood, C = Langley, D = Southampton (left hand drive: A = Cologne)  
**Two numbers – body and gearchange type:** see specialist books or websites  
**Next two letters – year and month of manufacture/date of assembly:** Table below applies to Cortina Mk1/2s, Escort Mk1/2s and Capris between 1965 and 1980

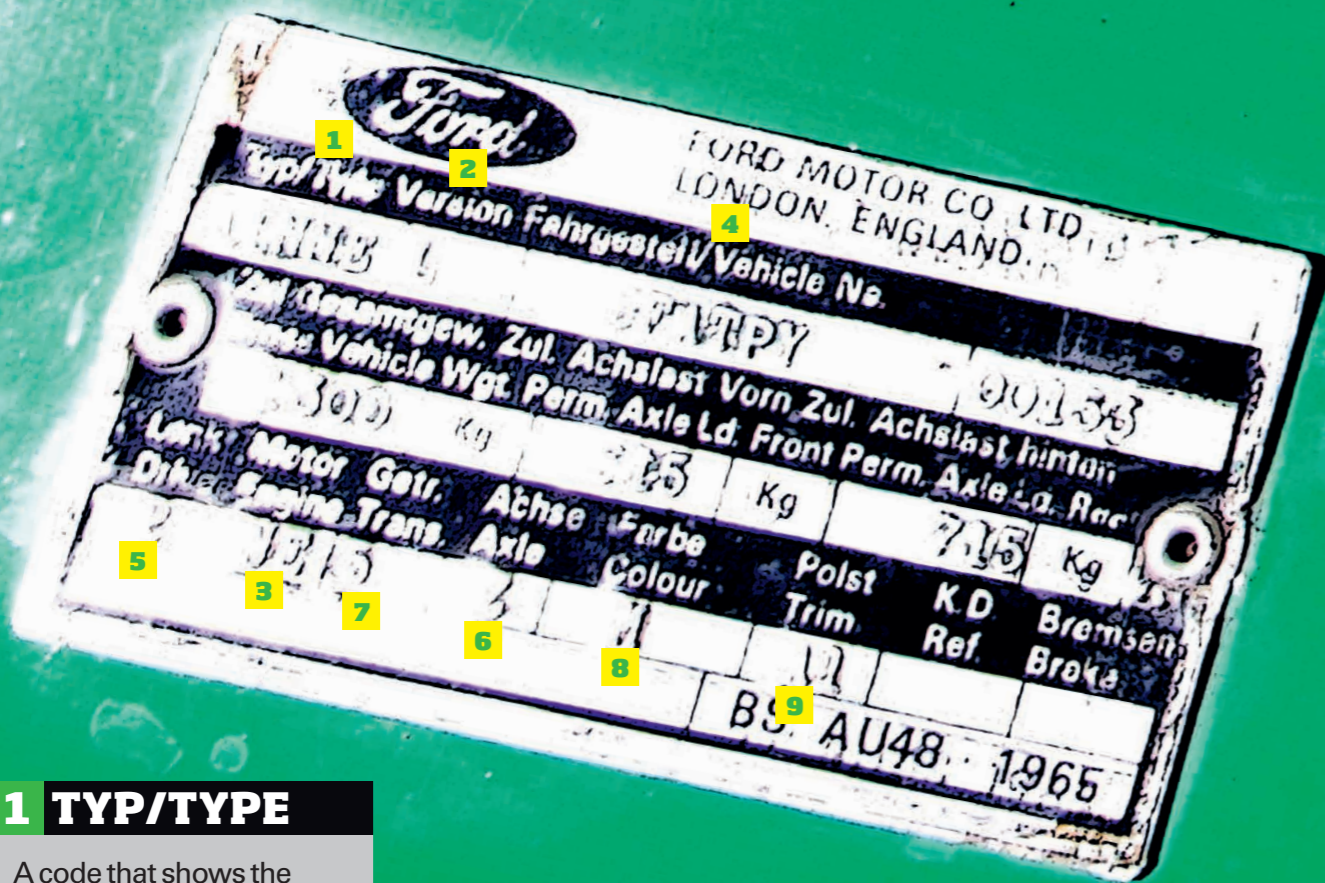
### FORD MONTH AND YEAR CODES

Regletter:	C	D	E/F	F/G	G/H	H/J	J/K	K/L	L/M	M/N	N/P	P/R	R/S	S/T	T/V	V/W
Yearbuilt:	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980

### MONTH BUILT:

January	EJ	FL	GC	HB	JJ	KL	LC	MB	NJ	PL	RC	SB	TJ	UL	WC	AB
February	EU	FY	GK	HR	JU	KY	LK	MR	NU	PY	RK	SR	TU	UY	WK	AR
March	EM	FS	GD	HA	JM	KS	LD	MA	NM	PS	RD	SA	TM	US	WD	AA
April	EP	FT	GE	HG	JP	KT	LE	MG	NP	PT	RE	SG	TP	UT	WE	AG
May	EB	FJ	GL	HC	JB	KJ	LL	MC	NB	PJ	RL	SC	TB	UJ	WL	AC
June	ER	FU	GY	HK	JR	KU	LY	MK	NR	PU	RY	SK	TR	UU	WY	AK
July	EA	FM	GS	HD	JA	KM	LS	MD	NA	PM	RS	SD	TA	UM	WS	AD
August	EG	FP	GT	HE	JG	KP	LT	ME	NG	PP	RT	SE	TG	UP	WT	AE
September	EC	FB	GJ	HL	JC	KB	LJ	ML	NC	PB	RJ	SL	TC	UB	WJ	AL
October	EK	FR	GU	HY	JK	KR	LU	MY	NK	PR	RU	SY	TK	UR	WU	AY
November	ED	FA	GM	HS	JD	KA	LM	MS	ND	PA	RM	SS	TD	UA	WM	AS
December	EE	FG	GP	HT	JE	KG	LP	MT	NE	PG	RP	ST	TE	UG	WP	AT

**IYC2 (SEPTEMBER 1972-DECEMBER 1980)**



**1 TYP/TYPE**

A code that shows the country of origin, body style and, in the case of the Escort, more details.

**Capri**

**Four letters:**  
 GECP = Capri coupe, West Germany  
 BECP = Capri coupe, Great Britain

**Escort Mk1 and Mk2**  
**Five letters and a number:**

**First letter – country of origin:**  
 B = Britain, G = West Germany  
**Second letter – model:** A = Escort  
**Third letter – body type:**  
 P = 'high level', F = four-door saloon, D = estate  
**Fourth letter – year:**

K = 1970  
 L = 1971  
 M = 1972  
 N = 1973  
 P = 1974  
 R = 1975  
 S = 1976  
 T = 1977  
 U = 1978  
 W = 1979  
 A = 1980

**Fifth letter – engine capacity:**  
 G = 1098cc, J = 1298cc, L = 1599cc  
**Number – engine type:**  
 1 = LC ohv, 2 = HC ohv, 2V GT ohv

**2 VERSION**

Denotes equipment level.

**Capri**

Italian cars only

**Escort**

S = 'base'  
 D = 'decor'  
 P = 'high level'  
 E = 'luxury'

**3 MOTOR/ENGINE**

Represents engine capacity and type.

**Capri**

J2 = 1300cc ohv  
 J3 = 1300cc ohv performance  
 LC = 1600cc ohv  
 LE = 1600cc ohv performance  
 NE = 2000cc  
 YY = 2300cc  
 PR = 2800cc  
 HY = 3000cc

**Escort**

G = 1098cc  
 J = 1298cc  
 L = 1599cc

**4 FAHRGESTELL/VEHICLE NO.**

Similar to the vehicle number on the IYC1 plate, but this has six letters followed by a five-digit unique vehicle identity number. The six letters represent the following...

**First letter – country of origin:**

B = Britain, G = West Germany  
**Second letter – assembly plant:**

A = Cologne, B/D = Halewood, C/S = Saarlouis  
**Third letter – model type:**  
 A = Escort, E = Capri

**Fourth letter – body type:**

C = two-door coupe, T = two-door saloon, F = four-door saloon, D = estate

**Fifth and sixth letters – year and month of manufacture/date of assembly:**  
 see table on page 109

**5 LENK/DRIVE**

1 = Left-hand drive  
 2 = Right-hand drive

**6 ACHSE/AXLE**

Like the IYC1, this tells you the final drive ratio.

**Capri**

X = 4.125:1  
 N = 4.111:1  
 C = 3.889:1  
 W = 3.778:1  
 B = 3.777:1  
 Z = 3.545:1  
 S = 3.444:1  
 R = 3.222:1  
 L = 3.091:1

**Escort**

A = 3.545:1  
 B = 3.777:1  
 C = 3.889:1  
 D = 4.125:1  
 E = 4.444:1  
 N = 4.111:1

**7 GETR./TRANS.**

This denotes the gearbox.

**Gearbox type**

B = four-speed manual  
 F = five-speed manual  
 D = Automatic

**8 FARBE/COLOUR**

This code represents the exterior paint colour. There are too many to list here (there are 32 for the Capri Mk2/3 for example), but here is an example from the Escort Mk1 and Mk2.

B = Diamond White  
 C = Sahara Beige  
 D = Carnival Red  
 F = Purple Velvet  
 G = Royal Blue  
 H = Astral Silver  
 M = Modena Green  
 Q = Arizona Spring Gold  
 T = Daytona Yellow  
 V = Vista Orange  
 Y = Special Vehicle Order  
 1 = Miami Blue

3 = Aerosilver/Stardust  
 5 = Jade Green  
 7 = Copper Brown

Some are followed by a single number, representing model year: 4 = 1974, 5 = 1975, 6 = 1976, and so on.

**9 POLST/TRIM**

This denotes the trim colour and type. As with Colour, there are too many combinations to list here, but as an example here are those from the Capri.

**Code**

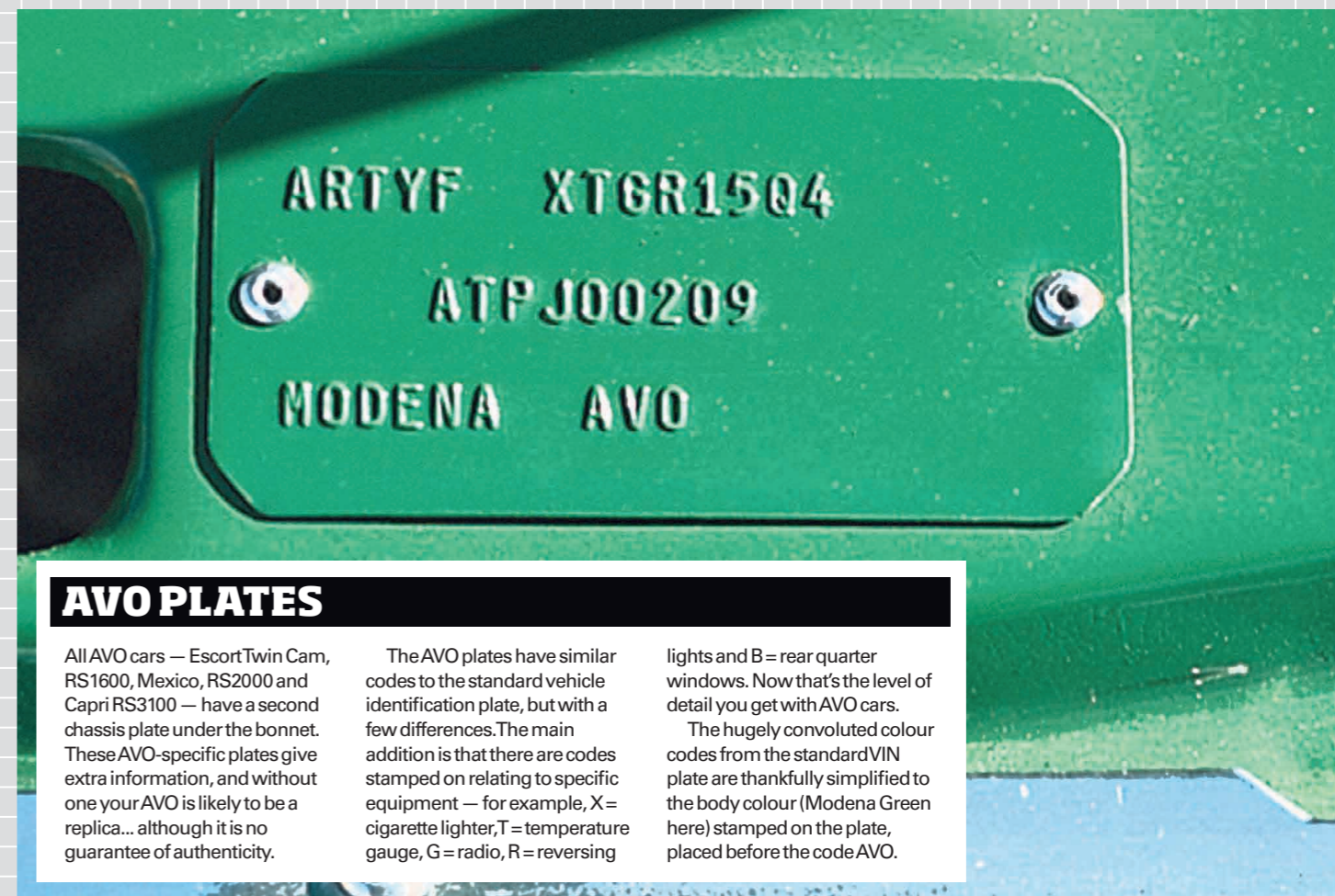
AA  
 AI  
 FA  
 FI  
 HA  
 HI  
 KA  
 KI  
 YA  
 YI

**Colour**

Black  
 Black  
 Blue – marquis 71  
 Blue – marquis 71  
 Ruby – light 71  
 Ruby – light 71  
 Tan – light 73  
 Tan – light 73  
 Non-standard  
 Non-standard

**Material**

PVC  
 Cloth  
 PVC  
 Cloth  
 PVC  
 Cloth  
 PVC  
 Cloth



**AVO PLATES**

All AVO cars – Escort Twin Cam, RS1600, Mexico, RS2000 and Capri RS3100 – have a second chassis plate under the bonnet. These AVO-specific plates give extra information, and without one your AVO is likely to be a replica... although it is no guarantee of authenticity.

The AVO plates have similar codes to the standard vehicle identification plate, but with a few differences. The main addition is that there are codes stamped on relating to specific equipment – for example, X = cigarette lighter, T = temperature gauge, G = radio, R = reversing

lights and B = rear quarter windows. Now that's the level of detail you get with AVO cars. The hugely convoluted colour codes from the standard VIN plate are thankfully simplified to the body colour (Modena Green here) stamped on the plate, placed before the code AVO.