



“Is it a Morris, Mini or a Leyland?”

by Tony Cripps.

1. Introduction

For those interested in vehicle identification, a break-through has been made in relation to what appears on compliance plates from about 1973 to 1977 or so fitted to Australian vehicles. One is often confused by the apparent lack of consistency with the “Make” (the term Marque is usually used in Product Engineering, but registration authorities prefer the word “Make”) stated on the compliance plates. In 1970, when the first compliance plates appeared, the Make would be shown as “MORRIS”, followed by a vehicle identification code such as “YG2S4”. When the compliance plates changed to the smaller ones in 1971, the make “MORRIS” continued to appear until about March, when the term “MORRIS” was inexplicably changed to “MINI”. This persisted until about late 1975, whereafter plates were then stamped “LEYLAND MINI”.

It is well documented that the “Leyland Mini” was launched in March 1973. One therefore might ask the question why were not compliance plates stamped “Leyland” from 1973 onwards? Indeed, why from April 1971 were they stamped “MINI” anyway?

2. Certification Documents

The mystery is now partly solved with the release of certification documents for the Morris Mini Clubman GT at the National Archives of Australia. Spotting this document in the NAA listings.

The revealing letter dated 2/6/1972 from Stephen Mutch of Leyland Australia Product Engineering (who was handling certification of the GT) shows that even he thought that the Make was “MORRIS”, and this would apply to the GT. But no! Someone else at the factory informed him, rather late in the piece, that for certification purposes, for the entire Mini range, the Make was “MINI”. For the Moke, the make was “MOKE” and the model was also “MOKE”!

The Mini 1100, Mini 1100 Van, Mini Clubman and Mini Clubman G.I. are not Morris marque vehicles, but a MINI marque. The Moke is a Moke marque, Moke model, and not a Leyland Moke (yet).

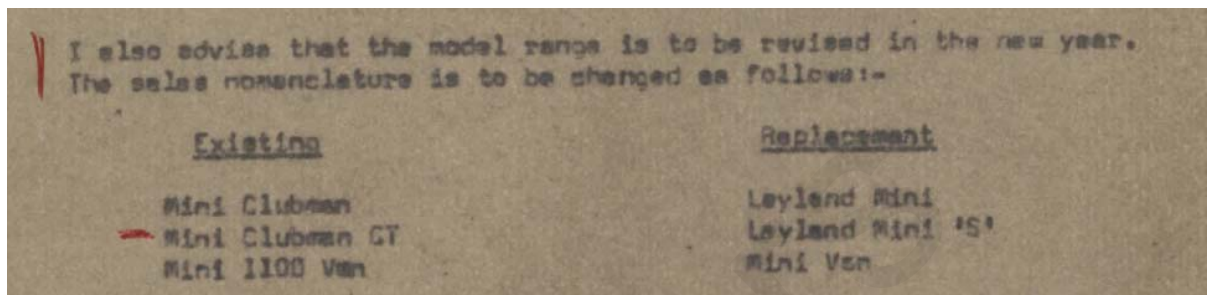
However, common sense will prevail in future, as the P.76 will ^{certainly} be a Leyland marque and the YD0.25, which is by the way, a facelifted six-cylinder Marina (ADR 26 only differs from Marina), will also be a Leyland marque vehicle. ^{probably}

Mutch's letter 2/6/1972

This was mid 1972, and by the look of it, some question about how the whole range was to be marketed was still up in the air. Mutch says "Common sense will prevail in the future, as the P76 will certainly be a Leyland marque" and the YDO25 (Marina) as well.

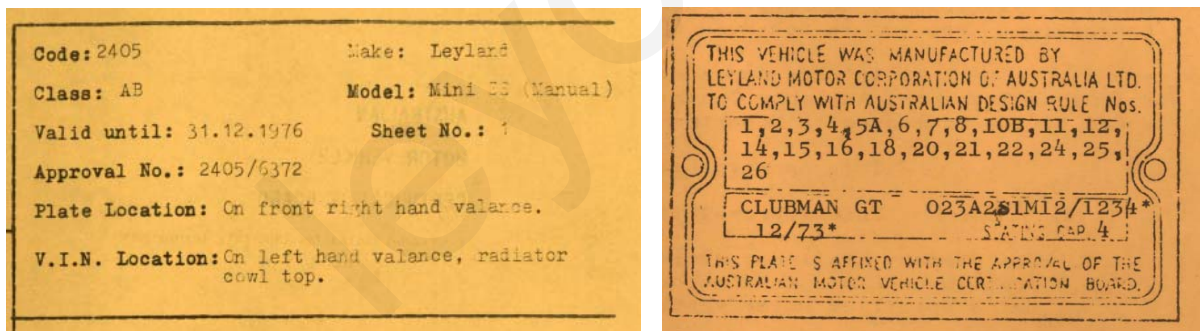
From June 1972 onwards, Mutch writes Make as "MINI" and Model as "CLUBMAN GT" in his submissions to the AMVCB. But the AMVCB (the Australian Motor Vehicle Certification Board), as late as 18/1/1973 still writes "MORRIS" as the Make and "MINI CLUBMAN GT" as the model in their internal memos.

No wonder the AMVCB was confused, because when Mutch tried again in a letter from Leyland Australia dated 13/12/1972 the car is referred to as "MINI CLUBMAN GT" and advises that the names would change yet again to LEYLAND MINI in 1973 with the Mini Clubman GT being replaced by the Leyland Mini S.



Mutch's letter 13/12/1972

So what did the AMVCB do? They show the layout of the plate with Make as "CLUBMAN GT" and then write Make as "MORRIS" and Model as "MINI CLUBMAN GT (Manual)" in the text.



Approval document issued by the AMVCB

What was actually stamped on the plates being affixed to vehicles remained as "MINI" even though the marque, by 1973, had changed to "LEYLAND".



So what happened in 1975? With the introduction of the Leyland Mini SS, new certification documents had to be prepared and by the look of it, the opportunity to update the Make to Leyland was made during this time. The SS certification documents are now also available in digitised form.

Tony Cripps 3/4/2023

leycars