

DAF 33 has mini battle with the DVLA

One topic of conversation that has come up quite a lot in recent years in both the DAF and general classic car world, is the matter of trying to establish which cars are eligible, or not, to qualify for the Historical Vehicle “free” road excise duty.

A few years ago, the law was changed so that only vehicles manufactured prior to 1st January 1973 would qualify for the “tax exempt” status. It is no longer the case that once a car reaches its 25th birthday, it will qualify (which is how the system worked from the early 1990s)



Naturally, owners of vehicles first used and registered in 1973 have most interest here. They will feel aggrieved and disappointed that their vehicle just misses out.

An important point to note is that the tax free status applies to vehicles manufactured prior to 1st January 1973. It is therefore very feasible that some cars that may not have been sold or first used until

after 1st January 1973 might well have been built in 1972, so therefore, would qualify. After all, this was the time of lots of strikes and general economic slow-down, so many new cars were likely to have been standing on disused airfields and fields, waiting for someone to buy them. A bit like today!

This ruling has been of interest to DAF owners, because a high number of DAFs were sold in the UK in 1973 (mainly being “L registration i.e. first registered between 1st August 1972 and 31st July 1973)

If you look at your V5 Vehicle Registration Document, it will show a date that the car was first registered and used in the UK. This is not the same as the date of manufacture – a very important point.



It is down to the owner of a vehicle to prove that their car was made prior to 1973.

Now, if you own a very popular mass-market car or a prestigious make that is still being made today, then it should be a relatively straightforward task to get confirmation from the maker

as to which year your car was built.

But for those of us like we DAF owners where the manufacturer no longer exists so there is no dealer network, for example, to fall back on, then the challenge is made even harder.

The DVLA accepted that there would be situations like this, so agreement was reached that vehicles, especially rare or unusual ones, could be verified by a responsible body that would have to be approved and recognised as a specialist by the DVLA and the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC).

After applying and then being checked, the DAF Owners Club passed the necessary requirements to become the official verifier of DAF cars eligibility – or, to be precise, Steve acting on behalf of the club is the competent vehicle checker recognised by the authorities.

This then, was a significant step forward. However, there would still be the problem that the club/Steve would have, of being able to access manufacturing data to enable him to confirm vehicle details. Think about it – a long gone car manufacturer, foreign as well, that had gone through lots of turmoil and changes 30 or more years ago when it was still trading and making cars. There would be a strong possibility that records may no longer exist to enable checks to be carried out.

Fortunately, though, we had help in the form of contacts in Holland who are guardians and custodians of DAF’s historical data and archives, which also includes the

chassis/build numbers of all their cars. It took a long time to confirm/establish that this data exists and fortunately, such is the trust between the DAF Owners Club and the Dutch contacts that this crucial information is made available to the club when queries arise.

I write with some personal interest and experience of establishing whether or not my DAF 33 might qualify as a “pre 73 car”. My 33 was first registered and used in the UK in May 1973, so I had long wondered whether it might have been built in 1972. Remember, these were the days when car makers would churn out cars that had not necessarily been sold – whereas today, even with top selling cars, they tend to manufacture more to order.

Last year, armed with the chassis number range and other information, Steve formally inspected my 33, and was able to confirm with full legitimacy that it had indeed been built in 1972. This then started the application to the DVLA process. This consisted of the club producing a formal certificate duly signed by the responsible officer, along with independent photographs taken of the car by Steve – all being a requirement of the DVLA.

Once armed with this information, the owner then has to apply to the DVLA.

This is done by visiting your area/regional DVLA office. Not always convenient, but personally not too bad for me.

So I went along with a newly completed V10 form and evidence, and the clerk issued me with a replacement tax disc, but retained the V5, so that a new one could be produced and sent to me.

I did this just before last Christmas. All went very quiet and I put it down to pressure of work that even by early April, I had not received my new V5 Registration Document. However, out of the blue in April, I received a letter from the DVLA claiming that my application had been refused because I had not submitted appropriate evidence and further, that my DAF was first used in May 1973. The letter asked me to submit further evidence if I was to pursue my claim.

I immediately contacted Steve, who confirmed that we had followed the procedure absolutely correctly, and that further, since checking my DAF, he had verified others where seemingly, they had been accepted.



I wrote a firm but polite and factual letter to the DVLA enclosing the original certificate and photos again, and pointed out that the legislation refers to *build* date and not the date of first registration.

A couple of weeks later, I received a polite letter back from the local DVLA office thanking me for sending the material in, and apologising for inconveniencing me, saying that they had now approved the application locally and were referring to Swansea for final confirmation and issue of new V5.

And good news! A few days later, the new V5 form arrived, confirming the DAF as being a 1972, and therefore, Historic Vehicle class.

Quite why things had been rejected, I don't know, but I suspect it might have been down to some local confusion regarding build date as opposed to registration date.

However, none of this would have been possible without the help, support and assistance of the DAF Owners Club, which proved that it is the centre of information in the UK for our DAF Variomatics.

Oh yes, before anyone asks, tempting as it might be, I do not intend to enquire about any refund for years of paying road fund tax, when the car really should not have been subject to it. That really would overload the system, I suspect!

Richard Butler