

EXPORTING A CLASSIC FROM RSA TO THE UK

I have read with interest recent posts from folk who are keen to export classic cars from South Africa to the UK. The process involves a lot more than selecting a freight company to handle the containerisation, and finding a buyer in the UK. I have experienced the process first hand, and pen this article in the hope that it may assist someone considering this option.

I have split the article into two sections:

- My experience, including the South African legal requirements.
- The official UK requirements. Thanks to Brian Drummond - CCC UK Chairman.

Certain terminology is used that varies between the two countries but is essentially the same thing.

South Africa

COR: Certificate of Roadworthy

License Fee

eNaTiS: National Traffic Information System

SARS: SA Revenue Services

United Kingdom

MOT: Ministry of Transport

Road Tax

DVLA: Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority

HMRC: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

My Experience / SA Requirements

Being a South African citizen, relocating to the UK, added a few additional challenges which would be avoided if the vehicle was being consigned to a UK resident. I will elaborate where appropriate.

Prior to export from South Africa the following needs to be in place;

- The vehicle must be registered on the eNaTiS system.
- License fees must be up to date. This also applies to vehicles that do not have a clearance disc, pending COR.
- Original eNaTiS registration documents must be available. A word of caution on the contents is mentioned in note ❶ at the end.
- The vehicle must have DataDot applied, and the relative certificate. This is the process of applying a supposedly invisible series of uniquely identifiable micro dots in different locations of the engine and chassis.
- A police clearance is required. This means taking the vehicle to be physically verified and checked against registration documents, and stolen vehicle records. There is a charge applicable. I made use of the touts that harass you outside these centres – well worth the cost.
- An export permit must be applied for. There is no cost for this service other than time and patience – and you need lots of both.
- Deregister the vehicle from eNaTiS to avoid being liable for future license fees.

As I was relocating my personal effects, I was not liable for VAT on my Citroen DS, however if selling abroad you will need either a valuation certificate from a registered marque club in SA, or an invoice indicating the selling price. More detail on this in the UK requirements section.

Next you need to identify an international shipping agent who ideally has UK premises near to the required destination. A word of warning – ensure there is nothing loose in the vehicle as it has quite a rough ride in transit. The container is scanned by UK Border Officials looking for any illegal imports that may be in the vehicle. Also ensure enough insurance cover is in place for any possible in transit damage – this will be based on the valuation certificate.

When my vehicle arrived at Basingstoke, I was on hand to reconnect the battery, and drive the car out of the container. I had left detailed instructions on the seat of how to start, and especially wait to the car's suspension to raise, before reversing. Of course, this only applies to certain Citroen models.

No vehicles can be driven on public roads in the UK without a valid MOT or insurance, so I had to have it trailered to my home in Devon. I was quoted £800 for this, so decided rather to rent a transporter and move it myself. This was however not possible as I did not have a valid UK drivers license, even though the SA license is acceptable for driving. I ended up having my daughter rent and drive the transporter. Clearly this complication would not have occurred had I a British driver's license.

The next challenge was obtaining insurance before I could drive to the MOT testing station (you can drive an insured vehicle without a MOT, to a MOT station). The challenge is obtaining insurance without the vehicle having been registered in the UK. But you cannot get it registered unless it is insured. I eventually found a company that would insure on the VIN number for a short period of time – at a premium of course. This allowed me to obtain the MOT and submit all the paperwork (and £££'s) to DVLA. At last I received my registration and have since been enjoying driving the lovely country roads in Devon.

UK Requirements

The HMRC NOVA Scheme

In 2013 HMRC introduced the online system known as NOVA (Notification of Vehicle Arriving). There is also an option to make notification using a paper form (NOVA1) and returning it to HMRC.

You must notify HMRC of any new or used vehicle brought permanently into the UK and pay any VAT due. You must do this before you can register and license the vehicle with DVLA. Your notification must be made within 14 days of the vehicle arriving in the UK. The quickest and easiest way to make your notification is online using the NOVA service. By making online notification you will usually receive an immediate acknowledgement from HMRC and calculation of the VAT due, if the valuation of the vehicle is verified. You will need to set up a Government Gateway account if you do not already have one before you can use the NOVA online service. A tax agent, adviser, or freight agent can make the notification on your behalf. To make your notification you will need to have detailed information available about the vehicle, including;

- Make, model, engine capacity, and body type
- Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)
- Existing registration number of the vehicle
- Value
- Mileage
- Import entry number and the commodity code of the vehicle

Registration with DVLA

The next step is to obtain a Used Vehicle Import Pack from the DVLA, which can be done at the following URL <https://forms.dft.gov.uk/order-dvla-forms/> Alternatively you can order the pack by phone on +44 870 850 1285.

Several questions on the V55/5 are irrelevant, and the questions you need to complete (with the answers in brackets where applicable), are as follows;

The boxes at the top right hand corner, and then questions 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (e.g. 2 Axle Rigid), 10, 11 (Exempt), 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 46, 62, 63, 64 (19?? Year of Manufacture), and the declaration. This will all become clearer when you have the form.

The next stage is to obtain a cover note from your insurers, which would have been issued on the VIN. You can now legally drive the car to your local MOT station for a pre-booked test using the foreign number plates. Once you have received the MOT you will need to send all the following documents to; DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1BE (This post code is important).

- NOVA acknowledgement letter from HMRC
- Form V55/5
- Insurance cover note
- MOT certificate. If the vehicle is over 40 years of age and MOT exempt you can alternatively send a form V112 declaring it to be a "Vehicle of Historic Importance". This form is available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/declaration-of-exemption-from-mot>
- Photocopy of your driving license, as proof of name
- Photocopy of Utility/Council Tax Bill, as proof of address
- Original South African eNaTiS registration document. See note ❶ below.

They will require a cheque for £55 made out to "DVLA Swansea" as the first registration fee. You will also have to pay the appropriate road tax, if applicable. They will retain all the submitted documents and write to you with the registration document and a number plate authorisation certificate to enable you to obtain number plates. If you wish to have the documents sent by 'special delivery' you should provide them with a pre-paid special delivery envelope.

Important Notes

❶ A word of caution about the contents of the eNaTiS registration document. This is critical for any prospective buyer in the UK.

A common practise for most of our older classics is to have them registered as "off road" to avoid having to pay annual license fees whilst they are stored, or during the restoration period. No problem with that. However in SA, once you reinstate the vehicle for normal use the eNaTiS system changes the date of first registration to reflect "Built Up". **DVLA will not register any vehicle with this status.** Your application will be rejected until you can produce new SA registration papers that reflect the actual date of first registration.

Anyone who has had dealings with the SA licensing department officials will tell you "Good Luck". There are of course some delightful and helpful officials, but your chance of getting one of these is like winning the lotto. And try doing that from a distance. So, before contemplating purchasing a SA vehicle ensure that the registration papers reflect a date of first registration, or you will not be able to enjoy your new acquisition.