

The New Papers You Need to Race In Europe

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by Martin Emmison

Part 1: The Historic Technical Passport



How many of these will qualify for the new certificates?

If you enjoy competing in historic motor sports events, know that an important deadline is fast approaching. At the end of this calendar year, the FIA will be requiring a new type of paperwork for your car. It's called a Historic Technical Passport, and without one you can kiss goodbye your chances of being accepted in the racing (as opposed to regularity or touring) categories of the major European historic events in 2007.

"But wait," you protest, "I have FIA papers. My national office issued me a Historic Vehicle Identity Form."

Sorry, but these will expire on December 31, 2006, as the FIA moves fully to the new system. At the instigation of its longstanding president, Max Mosley, the FIA decided in 2003 to replace the Historic Vehicle Identity Form (HVIF) with two separate sets of papers.

The first is the Historic Technical Passport (HTP), which is solely concerned with eligibility of the car for historic motor sport and has no relevance to its provenance or originality. Its purpose is to provide a "level playing field" for fair competition by ensuring that the vehicle for which it is issued conforms to period specification.

The other is the Heritage Certificate, which has nothing to do with competition and everything to do with a car's provenance and authenticity. These are issued by the Touring side of the FIA, and are available for all vehicles, whether built for touring or competition. Heritage Certificates will only be issued after rigorous research and inspection of a vehicle and the payment of a substantial fee, but they will ostensibly give an owner some comfort that he has a genuine vehicle with a valid chassis identity.

THAT WAS THEN

If this new system seems confusing, it might help to understand some of the problems that developed under the old one. Prior to 2004, an HVIF was only available for genuine historic cars with a clear and continuous history. Replicas and the like were not welcome—at least in theory. As was stated on the form itself, however, an HVIF was not intended to be a certificate of authenticity, just to verify the eligibility of a car for competition.

In practice, however, traders, auctioneers, and owners came to treat these papers as an important badge, and having them considerably enhanced a car's value. Inevitably this led to some money-driven arguments, where the FIA's national regulatory bodies (Association Sportif Nationale, or ASN) issued, or sometimes refused to issue, papers for a car with a questionable provenance. In two cases in which I was involved, separate sets of papers were issued by different ASNs for two distinct cars, yet both claimed a single chassis identity. You can only imagine the problems this presented.

A further criticism of the system was that being on close terms with an ASN's issuing official may have helped in procuring paperwork. Certainly problems arose from the lack of a central FIA database and the differing standards that were applied in different countries. Indeed, the American ASN, Automobile Competition Committee for the United States (ACCUS), did not always inspect cars before issuing an HVIF.

THIS IS NOW

In truth, the FIA had little control over the papers that were being issued, yet they were still all "FIA papers." It is clear that, by adopting this new system, the FIA hopes to prevent further problems as it effectively splits the paperwork into two categories—the HTP for racing and the Heritage Certificate for provenance.

Qualifying for an HTP is relatively simple: Just meet

the FIA standard for in-period specification. If a homologation form was issued for your car in period, then it must conform closely to that homologated specification today. If no homologation form was issued, your car must conform to a specification that is (or will be) determined by the FIA.

The FIA insists that it will be strict in requiring cars to be to correct specification to qualify for an HTP, warts and all, the bad points as well as the good ones. What this means is that owners of cars that were modified in period or subsequently may have problems, and the new rules will certainly prevent “menu” cars from obtaining an HTP. I have already seen an excellent replica Ferrari sports racing car be refused papers for having the wrong gearbox, even though in period the original type of gearbox was not up to the job.

Let’s look at another example. If you apply for an HTP for your customer-specification 1952 Jaguar C-type, not only must it have drum brakes, but also a 3.4-liter engine, two 2-inch SU carbs, a Moss gearbox, a generator, and the correct gauge of alloy body. Yes, this means no 3.8-liter motor, no wide-angle head, no Webers, no electronic ignition, no dry sump, no alternator, no brake servo, and no Panhard rod.

However—and here’s the interesting part—no part of the car need have been manufactured by Jaguar Cars. The car can be built from scratch entirely from new parts. Yes, you read that correctly. The same criteria will apply, whether the car is authentic and original from that period; an earlier or later one modified to that specification; or a partial or total replica.

This will potentially permit replicas to compete alongside original cars at FIA-regulated historic events—if the event organizers invite them.

FAKES WELCOME?

Many people believe this to be contradictory (some feel even more strongly than that). This change is partly driven

Vintage Racing Acronyms

FIA: The Federation Internationale de l’Automobile, the body that regulates motor sport internationally. The FIA is made up of 128 national motoring regulatory bodies. These are called...

ASN: Association Sportif Nationale. (My apologies that these terms are in French, but 100 years ago the French were fastest off the mark in organizing motor racing, and French was then the accepted international language.)

FIA papers: A term that has commonly been used for the old type of vehicle documentation, called a...

HVIF (Historic Vehicle Identity Form): Up to the end of 2003 this was the form of “passport” issued by ASNs to confirm that a particular vehicle was eligible to participate in international historic motor sport (circuit racing, hill climbing, rallying, etc.).

Appendix K: That part of the FIA’s International Sporting Code which regulates historic motor sport, particularly as to vehicle eligibility and safety.

Historic Technical Passport (HTP): The new FIA-issued papers solely concerned with eligibility of a specific car for historic motor sport, and its conformity to period specifications. It has no relevance to provenance or originality.

Heritage Certificate: Issued after rigorous research and inspection of a vehicle and the payment of a substantial fee, designed to verify valid chassis identity.



Clones can be issued HTPs

by a perceived need on the part of the FIA’s management to be inclusive in its regulation. Possibly it can be traced in some measure to the new language that (at the instigation of the Competition Division of the European Commission) was added to Article 2 of the FIA’s International Sporting Code in 2001:

“The purpose of this Code and its appendices is to encourage and facilitate international motor sport. It will never be enforced so as to prevent or impede a competition or the participation of a competitor, save where the FIA concludes that this is necessary for the safe, fair, or orderly conduct of motor sport.”

The argument may have run like this: How can the FIA best avoid accusations that its rulebook may unfairly exclude dodgy cars from participating in historic racing? Answer: By allowing all cars, old or new, to compete as long as they meet the strict technical specifications laid down by the FIA, and then leave it to the event organizers and participating owners to decide who they want to play with.

APPLY NOW

As a rough guide to numbers, at the end of 2003, approximately 12,500 vehicles worldwide held HVIFs, the vast majority of which were issued by European ASNs, while only around 500 had been issued by ACCUS. Not all of those U.S.-based cars that held the old HVIF will either need or necessarily qualify for the HTP.

You will not need an HTP to compete in those North American events for which vehicle eligibility is determined by the club or event organizer. At present, for instance, you do not need an HTP for the Monterey Historics at Laguna Seca. However, you will need an HTP to race in international historic events such as Patrick Peter’s Tour Auto, Tour Espana, and Le Mans Classic series of events, the Monaco Historics, Nurburgring Oldtimers, the Giro de Sicilia, the Grand Prix Masters/Gentlemen Drivers Series, or similar international events in Europe or the Far East.

If you hold an HVIF for your historic car, it is still valid for 2006, but if you will need an HTP to compete in 2007, it makes sense to get the process underway as soon as possible. The application for an HTP is made to the ASN in the country where the owner (or the car) resides. Since the FIA controls the database of vehicle specifications, which is available on its website for all to see (www.fia.com), this should result in a consistent approach by ASNs in the issue of papers. There should be no need or benefit to going “ASN shopping” for a country that will give a particular car an easier ride.

A detailed application form must be completed, requiring photographs of key components, and your car will subsequently be inspected by an expert nominated by the ASN. ACCUS is now geared up to handle applications for U.S. applicants, and during 2006–07 one of the U.K.’s signatories, Jeremy Hall, will be making periodic visits to inspect cars in the States as a consultant to ACCUS. He may also deal with applications for Heritage Certificates (as mentioned above, these are the other new certificates, which will authenticate a specific car), which are centrally controlled by the FIA.

In the long run, this Heritage Certificate is likely to be the more significant paper for the serious collector, so make sure that you don’t miss next month’s article, where we ask these questions: What makes a car real, and what price a Heritage Certificate for your Hemi ’Cuda?◆

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