

Wyres & Tyres

November 2023



www.memphisbritishcars.org British Sports Car Club, LTD Memphis, TN

Above- Triumph TR-4 Pedal Car

Membership Meetings

*Coletta's Italian Restaurant
2850 Appling Road*

*Mark your calendar—Mon., November 20th
6 pm for dinner—7 pm for our program*

Taco Tuesday—TBA

FROM THE PRESIDENT-

FALL DRIVE EVENT-Saturday, November 4th, a fun drive to Covington hosted by Kevin Childers. Kevin has planned a fun filled day and details are in the “upcoming events” in our web site and within this newsletter.

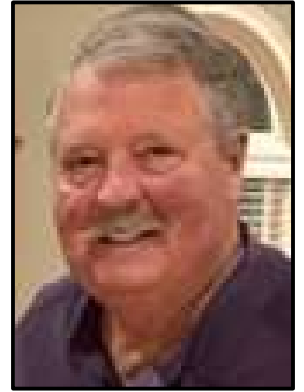
NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING- Per our bylaws, November 20th meeting to elect new club officers. New officers installed in December and start in January, 2024.

CHRISTMAS PARTY- December 16th, Hosted by Lisa and Robin Balton at their home this year. Please see details in our web site.

May everyone have a safe Thanksgiving with their family and friends.

Happy Motoring,

Al



BSCC Officers 2023



President

Al Ross

Co-Vice Presidents

*Chris Irving/
Paul Burdette*

Treasurer

Jerry Farrar

Austin Healey Marque Leader

Jim Hofer

Empire Marque Leader

Tom Wilson

Jaguar Marque Leader

Dave White

MG Marque Leader

Paul Burdette

Triumph Marque Leader

Jon Brody

Lotus Marque Leader

Chris Irving

Club Historian

Carolyn Shepard

Webmaster

Available

Newsletter

Also Available

Fall Drive Event

I'm honored to host the November 4th BSCC Cruise to Covington. The weather is thankfully cooperating - promising us a sunny 70 degree day. We hope you're able to join us for 67 miles of cruising, enjoying fall color, rural roads, scenic sites, downtown charm, historical locations and fun events planned throughout the day.

8 am - Early Cruisers - Wally Hatchet's for Breakfast – www.wallyhatchets.com 6439 Summer Avenue

9:30 am - Late Sleeper Cruisers - Walgreen's / AutoZone parking lot – Gtn Rd / Summer 8119 US-70, Arlington

Scenic rural routes to 1000 South Main Street, Covington where Kevin & Linda's car shop and warehouse that endured the March 31st West TN Tornado's.

11:30 - Lunch on The Covington Square - Old Town Hall & Cafe or Jose's Authentic Mexican or Up Town BBQ. Shop a bit & enjoy the history and intentional preservations of this charming downtown community.

2pm – Resume our Fall Cruise to Shelby County via West TN Miss River bluff roads to the Shelby Forrest General Store to deliver Doug & Kristin Ammons refreshed 1978 MGB. www.shelbyforestgeneralstore.com 7729 Benjestown Road, Millington

This will be their 1st look and drive in their refreshed little beauty.

Kevin Childers (Hopefully everyone got their turn by turn instructions by email. If not, check website)
(901) 574-0442

British Pedal Cars

This issue features several of our favorite vehicles in pedal car form—it was a lucky kid who got one of these now collectible mini-cars!

Of particular interest is the Austin J40, which was a luxuriously decorated pedal car, commissioned by Austin in Bargoed (Wales) as a social employment project. Miners who could no longer work due to dust lung disease could participate in this project established for them. Materials for the pedal cars came from throwaway steel, rubber, and plastic from the actual Austin factory in Longbridge. Apart from providing employment for the ex-miners, the pedal car company provided a good training ground for future managers of the Austin Motor Company in how to deal with personnel. The factory employed around 250 people, and J40 production lasted from 1949 to 1971. These are some of the most desirable & valuable pedal cars ever made.





MGB



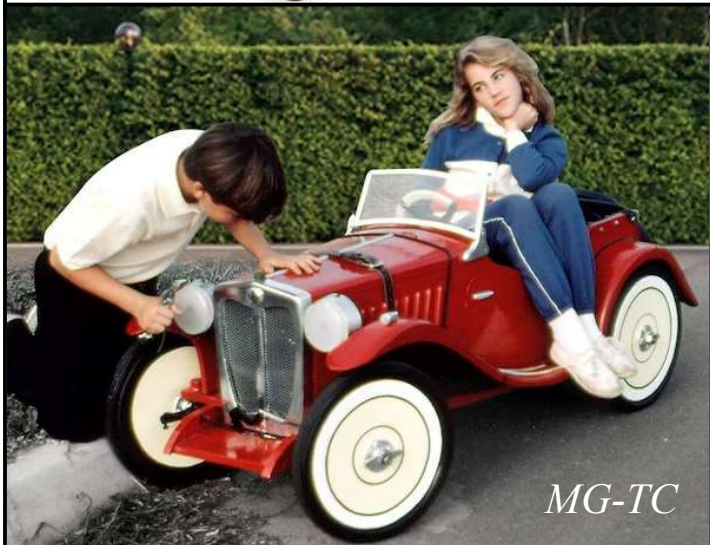
Jaguar E-type



Another E-type



Morgan 3-Wheeler



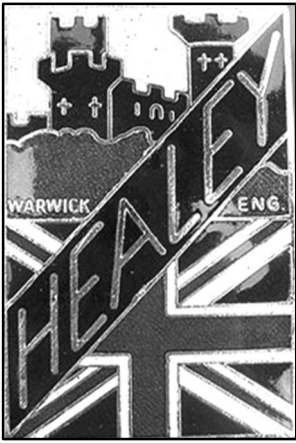
MG-TC



1950 Austin J40



A very early Austin J40 is pictured at left. Mom is the late Queen Elizabeth and the young chap behind the wheel would be known in 2023 as King Charles.

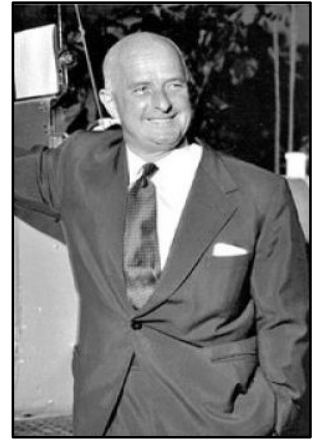


BRITISH OVERACHIEVER

DONALD HEALEY IN THE FIFTIES

BY BOB WATKINS

Any automobile with the word “Healey” in its name automatically becomes the stuff of legends—sporting vehicles of speed and styling that focused one’s attention on the excitement of proper British motoring. Donald Healey wore many hats-- pilot, war hero, engineer, rally driver, world record holder, entrepreneur, salesman, executive, and car builder. He combined all these with a tireless passion that seemed to have no limits.



Born in 1898, Healey was influenced at a young age by his father’s interest in the recently-introduced automobile industry. By the age of 16, he had become an apprentice with Sopwith Aviation. With the beginning of World War I, Healey volunteered for the Royal Flying Corps (later to become the Royal Air Force). Unfortunately, on one of the first night-bombing missions, his plane was accidentally shot down by friendly fire. His injuries from the crash forced Healey, not yet reaching his nineteenth birthday, to be discharged from service.

Healey then took a correspondence course in automotive engineering, opened a garage in his hometown of Cornwall, and soon was entering every nearby road rally, mostly with great success. He was disqualified on his first attempt in the 1929 Monte Carlo Rally, came in seventh the following year, and won it all in 1931, driving an Invicta. In the same car, Healey won the unlimited sports car class at the Brighton Speed Trials in 1932. By 1933, automaker Victor Riley hired Healey to help design and refine their automobiles, and he organized a team that won the Alpine Rally. In 1934, Triumph hired Healey under the title of “Experimental Manager.”

Healey went on to design the Triumph Dolomite, designed to compete with the Italian Alfa Romeo. Healey was very frank about his inspiration: “...we made the thing in about six months. The engine was copied from the Alfa Romeo. I copied every nut and bolt, because Triumph had never built a racing engine in their life.”

After World War II, Healey wanted to build a sports car capable of excellent handling and speed, and, with the help of old friend Victor Riley, formed the Donald Healey Motor Company. The first car, called the Westland Roadster, used Riley mechanicals, and was the fastest British car of its era, with a top speed over 105 mph. The Westland was followed by the Tickford Saloon, Abbott, Elliot, and the car that put Donald Healey on everyone’s radar, the Healey Silverstone. It was at this time that Healey realized he would not make any money selling on his continent—the war had devastated the economies of all the European countries. “After the war,” he said, “everyone else hadn’t any money left, and I decided I had to earn dollars.” Healey turned to the American market, and, almost by total accident, a new sports car was born.

THE NASH-HEALEY

In the fall of 1949, wealthy American racer Briggs Cunningham bought a pair Healey Silverstones for competition. One car, fitted with the new Cadillac OHV V8, was exceedingly fast. Donald Healey was impressed, bought a Cadillac V8 engine, and built a similar car. It turned out the Cadillac V8 was actually lighter than the Riley four it replaced, and had considerably more horsepower and torque. This “Cadillac-Healey” could be just what Healey needed to break into the American market.

In December, Donald Healey boarded the liner Queen Elizabeth, bound for the U.S.A. A meeting had been set up in Detroit with Cadillac engineer Ed Cole about purchasing V8 engines. Healey had concerns, since his company was already heavily in debt, and any deal would have to be made on credit.

On the same ship was Nash president George Mason, who yearly made trips across the water to check out European auto shows. Mason, an avid photographer, was on deck with an elaborate stereo camera when Healey, also a camera buff, struck up a conversation with the portly stranger, who invited him to Kenosha, Wisconsin-based Nash headquarters if the deal with GM didn't work out.

It turned out that GM was already running to capacity keeping up with demand for Cadillac's new V8, and were certainly not selling engines on credit to a company barely surviving, so Healey took Mason up on his offer, extending his U.S. trip to include Wisconsin. The Nash Ambassador 235 cubic inch six wasn't the V8 Healey wanted, but the engine was practically bulletproof, and Mason was willing to advance the drivetrains without upfront payment, and also offered to distribute and service the new Healey through Nash dealerships nationwide.

By March of 1950, Healey engineers had modified the Silverstone chassis to handle the Nash six, which had been upgraded with a revised camshaft, higher compression head, new exhaust manifold, and dual S.U. carburetors. Although not intended for racing, a Nash-Healey with a highly modified body managed a respectable fourth place finish in the 1950 24 Hours of LeMans.



The production Nash-Healey debuted at the Paris Salon in October 1950, and went on sale in the United States in the spring of 1951, after their introduction at the 1951 Miami and Chicago Auto Shows. The aluminum body, designed by Healey, used many Nash components, including grille, taillights, bumpers, and wheel covers. Nash-Healeys designated for competition used the Nash Statesman grille, with fewer "teeth" than the Ambassador grille, which aided in cooling. In the Formula 1 tradition of the day, the accelerator pedal was positioned between the brake and

clutch, which probably provided some interesting moments for novice drivers. Only 104 of these first design Nash-Healeys were built.

Neither Donald Healey nor George Mason was pleased with the first styling, so the Italian firm of Pinin Farina (already a consultant to Nash) was commissioned to create a new steel body. The result was 1952's Nash-Healey, a true convertible with roll-up windows, a modern one-piece windshield, flared rear fenders, and a new grille with distinctive inset headlights.

Even though the styling was well-received, this car did not sell well; shipping costs from the USA to England, then to Italy, and then back to the USA accounted for about a third of the car's \$5,900 price tag. One could buy the faster Jaguar XK120 for almost \$1,900 less.

In 1953, a new coupe body joined the convertible, but sales did not improve. In 1954, only the coupe was produced, with a few leftover 1954 models finally sold as 1955s. With the merger of Hudson and Nash into



American Motors, there was no room or money for a niche market car, and with the introduction of Corvette and Thunderbird, Nash-Healey had priced itself clear out of the market. A total of 504 were produced from 1951-1955. Although not a sales success, the Nash-Healey had served its purpose; bringing in people to Nash showrooms, and getting the name of Donald Healey out to the American public.

The Healey Hundred and Austin-Healey 100/4

At the same time he was creating the Nash-Healey, Donald Healey continued work on another sports car, a low cost, proper British car with a goal of at least 100 mph; hence the name "Healey Hundred." Based again on his Silverstone design, the car was sleek, aggressive, and fast. Its engine, sourced directly from the Austin A90 Atlantic, was nothing exotic or radical, but its 88 horsepower allowed Healey to reach his performance goals.

The Healey Hundred made its debut at the 1952 London Motor Show, and more than 3,000 orders were placed. Leonard Lord, chairman and managing director of British Motor Corporation, LTD (builder of Austin) knew a good thing when he saw it, and immediately bought rights to the Healey Hundred, as well as signing Donald Healey to a twenty year contract, as a design and competition consultant.

The car, renamed Austin-Healey 100, was an instant hit, and spawned a series of "big Healeys" that would continue production until 1967. Though the car would go through many changes and updates over the years (including a six cylinder engine, disc brakes, four speed gearboxes, and overdrive), the basic idea remained the same. Here was a car you could use as a daily driver, race on Saturday, and even use to go to church on Sunday! The big Healey was about as versatile as one could make an automobile, and probably as perfect a sports car as has ever been built. This "poor man's Jaguar," originally designed for European use, would prove to be an outstanding seller in the Americas as well.



Healey, always the competitor, would personally set a land speed record in his class at Bonneville in 1956, piloting a very streamlined and supercharged big Healey to an average of 203.11 mph.

Donald Healey continued to contribute to the automotive world long after the big Healeys, and any car with his name is now spoken with reverence. His accomplishments include the Queen naming him a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E), induction into the International

Motorsports Hall of Fame, and the Automotive Hall of Fame.

Two milestone sports cars created at the same time for two continents by one man is a pretty impressive feat. Apparently for Donald Healey, it was all just in a day's work. There would be other vehicles to carry on the Healey legacy, but it was the Nash-Healey and Austin-Healey 100 that would establish Donald Healey as a major character in automotive history.