



Healey Climax SR being tested at Silverstone Spring 1968

The Last Healey at Le Mans

What's new? A book, a car, a limited edition print (and greeting cards), and a model.

The limited edition CK Lithograph print of the Healey SR testing at Silverstone

David Matthews is in the final steps of preparing a delightful coffee table book about the last cars that Donald and Geoff Healey made. The book will be a definitive piece including photos, drivers and all the history and an introduction by Rob

Harrison who not only has owned the car since 1971, but raced it in many historic events in Australia. Mr. Matthews is also producing a limited production 1:8 scale model of the car and is responsible for the commission of a limited edition print which will all make their debut at Classic Le Mans (6-9 July 2006) with a full size replica SR being built in the Midlands. Here is a preview by Mr. Matthews.

The Healey Climax photographed at Silverstone. Photograph courtesy of British Motor Industry Heritage Trust



Healey Collectibles

Healey-Climax to Healey-Repco *The story of the last Healey at Le Mans*

The three-year assault on Le Mans by Donald M. Healey CBE and his son Geoffrey Healey, from 1968 to 1970, was probably one of the last sole manufacturers' attempts at this event, and it almost resulted in success.

In December 1967 the end of an era was marked by the decision of BMC not to continue manufacturing Austin-Healeys, coupled with the infamous withdrawal by Lord Stokes of any kind of support for competition and also for the sports car clubs, specifically MG and Austin Healey. The in-house-published magazine *Safety Fast* came to an end. The independent MG club picked up the title "Safety Fast" for their newsletter, and the American and English Austin-Healey clubs took over responsibility for their own marque magazines.

In November of 1967 Donald Healey decided to have a last attempt at Le Mans with an all-British-built entry, one that would be built within the confines of the Donald Healey Motor Co. works at Coten End, Warwick.

The car was to be designed using proven automotive engineering techniques. It would have a rigid base construction, and be built up from single-curvature sheet metal panels which could readily be reproduced as a series-production job. By using their in-house manufacturing and locating a Coventry-Climax V8 engine and Hewland gearbox the Healeys would build what history would show to be the last all-British challenge at Le Mans.

The company started work on the project, known as the "Sub Rosa" (secret) car through the winter of 1967-1968. However, before they got more than three months down the road, in anticipation of the published Le Mans entries, they announced the SR Healey-Climax with a press release on 16 February 1968.

The car made its first outing at Silverstone still in its unpainted Birmabright Aluminium bodywork, tested by a number of very experienced drivers including Andrew Hedges, Clive Baker and John Harris.

Time was against the project but due to the now famous (or infamous) "Oui, ou Non?" referendum on the European Union Constitution by Charles De Gaulle in June 1960, Le Mans that year was

postponed from mid-June until the end of September, which must have helped the DHM Co. get the car much nearer to where they wanted to be by the time of the event.

As is well documented, Clive Baker and Andrew Hedges were the drivers in 1968. They practiced with the "spare" engine the week before, but by race day the race engine was installed and Clive Baker took the first session. Within three hours the SR, number 47, was beset by clutch and gear selection problems and retired.

For the 1969 race the SR, now entry number 37, had been modified with a bigger radiator now mounted in the front of the car instead of by twin radiators on each rear wing, the oil cooler radiator had been moved from the front to the rear wings, the air intakes were made smaller, and small aero foils were fitted to the rear.

Drivers for the 1969 race were Clive Baker and John Harris. Again, Baker started the race. During his first session he was in the section where a Porsche had just had a major shunt. Debris from the crash was attributed to blocking the air intakes, and together with the SR having been held up on the circuit, the resulting overheating caused a gasket to blow and the car once again retired.

For 1970, the car was entered as XR37, entry number 34. Donald and Geoff decided to modify the car dramatically and move up to three-litre engine size.

As was the fashion at the time, the car was modified into an open "barquette" by removing the coupé panels. The car was basically cut in half to extend the wheelbase dimensions by six inches to accommodate a three-litre Repco-Brabham V8.

This car was driven by Andrew Hedges and Roger Enever. Despite spending 90 minutes in the pits to replace clutch/gearbox components, being involved in a shunt with a Porsche with Jim Cashmore, the DHM Workshop Supervisor lying in the pit lane bending bodywork back with his legs, and with torrential rain for most of the race, the car ran extremely well.

XR37 at one time was 10th overall. Unfortunately, and with just 14 minutes of the race left at the 23 hours 46 minutes mark, whilst lying in 14th overall, the car had a ballast resister rivet shaken loose and the engine expired.

The new book will include all the press releases of the time, copies of articles from Motor, Autocar, Safety Fast, Rev Counter, and Healey Highlights, letters from works drivers, contributions from Robert Harrison (current owner of XR37), Peter Browning, Les Needham and others involved with or familiar with the effort, and photographs of the time as well as at the Le Mans race itself.

The car and the Healey Le Mans effort will be commemorated with a commissioned painting of SR testing at Silverstone which will be made available as a limited edition print, original photos of the car from BMIHT made into A3 posters and greeting cards, a 1/8th scale model due July 2006 which will make its debut at the Classic Le Mans (6-9 July 2006), along with a full size replica SR that is being built in the Midlands, with exclusive coverage by Octane magazine.

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