



NEW BOOK, MODEL, AND PRINT TO COMMEMORATE HEALEYS

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David Matthews of England is in the final steps of preparing a delightful coffee table book about the last cars that Donald and Geoff Healey made. It is a definitive book including photos, drivers and all the history, with an introduction by Rob Harrison who not only has owned one of those last-made cars since 1971, but has raced it in many historic events in Australia. 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, both of which will make their debut at Classic Le Mans, 6-9 July 2006, with a full-size replica SR built in the English Midlands. Here is a preview by David Matthews:

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 and his son Geoff, from 1968 to 1970, was probably one of the last sole-manufacturers attempts at this event which almost resulted in success.

In November 1967, Donald Healey decided to have a last attempt at Le Mans with an all-British entry that was built at the Donald Healey Motor Company at Coten End, Warwick. The car was to be designed using proven engineering techniques, with rigid-base construction, built up from single-curvature sheet metal panels which could be readily reproduced as a series-production job. Known as the "sub rosa" ("designed and carried out secretly") car, the company worked through the winter of 1967-68, and 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. By using their in-house manufacturing, and having located a Coventry-Climax V8 engine and Hewland gearbox, this was to be

an all-British entry which history will show was to be the last.

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 general insurrection that broke out across France in May 1968, the Le Mans race was postponed from its traditional mid-June timeframe until 28-29 September, which must have helped get the car much nearer to where they wanted to be by the time of the event.

Clive Baker and Andrew Hedges were the drivers in 1968. Having practiced with the "spare" engine the week before, by race day the race engine was installed and Baker took the first turn at the wheel. However, within three hours, the car (number 47) was dogged with clutch and gear selection problems, and retired.

In 1969, the SR (now wearing number 37) had been modified with a bigger radiator, now mounted in the front of the car instead of the former arrangement of 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 this year were Clive Baker and John Harris. Again, Clive Baker started the race, but was involved in the section where a Porsche had a major shunt. Debris from the crash was attributed to blocking the air intakes, together with the SR having been held up on the circuit, and the resulting overheating caused a gasket to blow and the car once again retired.

For 1970, entered as XR37 (now number 34), it was decided to modify the car dramatically and move up to 3-litre engine size. As was the fashion at the time, the car was modified into an open "barquette" by re-

moving the coupé panels and cutting the car basically in half, extending the wheelbase dimensions by six inches and fitting a 3-litre Repco-Brabham V8. This car was driven by Andrew Hedges and Roger Enever, and, despite a 90-minute pit stop to repair to replace clutch/gearbox components, and the car also being involved in a shunt with a Porsche (later causing Jim Cashmore, the Workshop Supervisor, to lie in the pit lane bending bodywork back with his legs!), the car ran extremely well despite torrential rain for most of the race. XR37 at one time was 10th overall, and with just 14 minutes of the 24-hour race left, whilst lying in 14th overall, a ballast resister rivet shook loose and the engine expired.

This preview of the book is supported by all the Press Releases at the time, articles from *The Motor*, *Autocar*, *Safety Fast*, *Rev Counter*, *Healey Highlights*, letters from works drivers, contributions from Robert Harrison (current owner of XR37), Peter Browning, Les Needham, and period photographs.

A commissioned painting showing SR testing at Silverstone, available as a print, and original photos from the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust, made

into A3 posters, greetings cards, and a 1/8th scale model, will all make their debut at Classic Le Mans, 6-9 July 2006, with a full-size replica SR currently being built in the Midlands, and *Octane* magazine will be covering this exclusively. They may also be seen online at www.wwah.org

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