

CLUB HISTORY, 1973 to 2014

In 1973 Richard Hulse and Vic Langkilde, both Healey owners, happened to be sharing a bachelor pad. They thought that if the MG boys could have a club of their own, there was no reason why the Healey boys should not also have one. The problem was to make contact with other Healey enthusiasts. This was expediently done by running a series of advertisements in the 'Second Hand Motor Vehicles for Sale' classified columns of the Star newspaper. This ad said:

"Austin Healey owners interested in starting a club should meet at the Sunnyside Hotel, Johannesburg, on Sunday 29th July 1973".

It was a problem persuading the newspaper to publish such a notice in the 'Cars for Sale' column, however, the ploy worked and 8 Healeys and 24 owners' turned up on that cold winters day for the inaugural meeting of what was to become the Austin Healey Club of Southern Africa.

A Committee was soon established. This consisted of Chairman; Vic Langkilde, Secretary; Richard Hulse, Joe Carpenter, Ron Field, Brian Hudson, Phil Jones, Anne and Martin Searle and Gavin Warburton. From the outset it was decided that the club should cater for all Healey owners in Southern Africa and not just the Republic. Since then the club has included members in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Mozambique, SWA, Namibia, Swaziland and Botswana. Initially club activities centred in Johannesburg and the tradition was soon established of having a meeting on the first Sunday of every month and a noggin on the 3rd Wednesday evening. Contact with members in other parts of the country was by means of a monthly newsletter. The newsletter has always been an important link for the club's far flung membership. Over the years as with any club relying on volunteer input, the newsletter has proved to be somewhat erratic.

Coinciding with the founding of the club was the worldwide 'Petrol Crisis'. The over-reaction of the S.A. authorities was in banning all forms of Motor Sport, threatening the cancellation of the S.A. Grand Prix due in March 1974. The newly founded club rallied to the cause and played a significant part in helping gather a petition of 62,000 signatures to the government for relaxation. The petition was successful and the Grand Prix was saved only to be lost to S.A. eleven years later in 1985 through outside political pressure. At the same time as the founding of the club the Historic Racing Car Register of SA was established. This reflected the growing international interest in 'Classic Car' racing. It was at the Grand Prix of 1974 that the emergent Classic Racing Car Register had its first major event. This was a curtain raiser to the Grand Prix. Representing the new AHCSA in this race were Lance Halligan-Jolly [BN7], Richard Hulse [BN6] and Geoff Whiting [BN4]. This trio acquitted themselves well and Lance continued to campaign his very quick 3000 for a couple of years until he bent it in the esses. Richard raced on for another 10 years, substituting the 100/6 for a very interesting Turner-healey Special in 1977. Family and mortgage commitments eventually forced his retirement. Gordon Eslick latterly campaigned a succession of very quick Sprites and upheld the Healey Club banner on South African race tracks. For the future the club looks to the Father and Son team of Stuart and Allan Cuninghame who are preparing a very special Le Mans Healey Sprite for the track.

July 1976 saw the founding of the Cape Branch of the club under the Chairmanship of Richard Hulse who was in Cape Town on a temporary job transfer. Within weeks the branch boasted 35 paid up members and its own newsletter. A Natal Branch followed suit in May 1977 with Hennie Beyers as Chairman. Natal had a promising turnout of 11 Healeys for their first meeting. Both centres continue to thrive today as Branches of the AHCSA and organise events to suit their local membership.

Over the years many members, too many to mention by name, have served the committee well but two Chairmen, Martin Searle and Bruce Caw have played a significant role in the development of the club. Both unselfishly threw open their houses as club venues.

In 1981 the club played a significant role in establishing SAMCA or the South African Marque

Association which is an umbrella body representing all the One Make Car Clubs in South Africa. SAMCA was formed to give the various car clubs recognition with the appropriate authorities. More importantly SAMCA has managed to organise a favourable insurance scheme for our type of cars. Bruce Caw was very much involved with the founding of SAMCA and has been the Healey club's representative to that body.

Highlights of club activities each year are the *100 MILE RALLY* which is a highly professionally organised regularity run, traditionally held in February. An Economy Run where figures of over 30 mpg and 50 mpg are regularly attained for Big Healeys and Sprites respectively. The Annual Gymkhana, usually dominated by Sprites, always hugely enjoyable. Naturally there is the Annual Concours de Elegance which is of a very high standard thanks to the rust free environment on the Highveld. A cross section of club cars would rate highly by international concours comparison. The event of which the club is most proud of, as originator and as annual organiser, is the Annual National Classic Concours de Elegance de Etat. This is the recognised premier event for the Classic Car movement in Southern

Africa. This event was started by the Healey Club in 1978 and has grown in size and stature. Today, to reach the Masters Class is recognised as the ultimate accolade a classic concours car can achieve. The excellence of the judging system has been recognised internationally, and is being copied in many parts of the world. Four Healeys have reached the Masters Class and must rate on par with the best anywhere in the world. They are Dave McQueen's BN4, Ben Gerber's BN7, Trevor Kilburn's BN7 and Joe Carpenter's BN7.

An event which South Africa was proud to host was the 1986 FIVA World Rally (Southern Hemisphere). The Northern Hemisphere counterpart was held in West Germany. In contrast 'our' event was a sealed odo regularity rally across the country over a period of two weeks covering some 3000 Km. Although it was not an official club event, three members represented the club. They were Wally Bellairs BN2, Vic Hicki BN4 and Richard Hulse BN1. All three Healeys ran faultlessly with Richard coming 13th out of 128 starters with 197 seconds error.

Austin Healeys were assembled at the BMC plant at Blackheath in the Cape between the years 1958-b3. Big

Healeys and Sprites were assembled from CKD Kits. Chassis numbers for Big Healeys commenced with 1001 and Sprites 101. While the number of BT7's made is unknown, the figures for other models were:

1958-59	BN4	105
	AN5	134
1959-60	BN6	33
	BN7	10
	AN5	155
1960-61	BN7	70
	ANS/6/7	44
1961-62	BN7	10
1962-63	BN7	5
	AN5/7	2

That gives a total of 568 excluding BT7's. South African built Healeys are indistinguishable from their English built counterparts, apart from a plate affixed to the L/H inner wheel arch which gives details of the car i.e.:

Chassis/engine no., colour, trim, date built, etc. very useful info when it comes to a rebuild. All Healeys leaving the factory were given an intensive road test to the top of Sir Lowry's pass and back again -something that no other product emerging from the plant enjoyed, not even the XJ6. The factory built 3 'Works' racing Healeys; two Sprites, which have since disappeared and one 100/6 which is still running around Cape Town. To support this local manufacture extensive spares were available from the network of BMC agents. Apart from this local source Healeys were also imported across the range. For example a 100 register has been established within the club and some 60 BNI and 2's are listed. BN4's are common, there are quite a number of 2 seater sixes around and many MK 1's. Mk 2's are scarce but there are about 30 BJ8's. There are no known 100s's in the Republic and the two that were in Rhodesia have returned to England. A 100S is rumoured to be in Mozambique. There are a number of 100M conversions around but no known genuine "works" M's.

A number of long suffering individuals have tried running the club spares operation over the years. After the club ran out of volunteers Richard Hulse bought the stock of spares from the club. This move is felt to have been the right one as the stock has expanded and the motivation is there to run a tighter operation. Many parts are still locally sourced although the official 'agents' have long since expired. Fortunately a lot of stock was salvaged from Rhodesia. Much stock is imported, although an increasing amount is successfully remanufactured locally (and much cheaper too!)

After 14 years the club has established itself as one of the premier One Make car clubs in southern Africa, making an ongoing contribution to the Classic Car movement. The present committee feels that the club should not be insular and should look to the sharing of its events and participation in the events of other car clubs to the benefit of all.

History from 1987 to 2014

In early 1987 Bruce Caw stood down as Chairman and John Reidy was elected as Chairman. This was a new challenge for the Club, in that the new committee had little experience in running a Car Club, let alone one that had the high profile of the Austin Healey Club.

The National Classic Car Concours had since its inception, always been organized by the Healey Club and the decision was made to increase its exposure and bring the cars to the attention of the public at large. The Carlton Centre parking garage was the venue to the National and being held over two days, it attracted a large crowd.

The club continued to compete in Classic Car racing with Bill Dreyer, Bob Osborn and John Reidy competing regularly in Historic Races. The 100 Mile Rally continued to grow and was the forerunner to a Classic Car Rally series that would be started a few years later.

In 1988, the club concluded a sponsorship agreement with Pirelli Tyres that would go onto become a long and mutually beneficial partnership. John Reidy and Vic Hickel met with the MD of Pirelli, Steve Thomas, who agree to sponsor the National Concours and that year saw the first of many successful events held at Kyalami.

In 1989 Pirelli paid for the club to bring Brian (Bic) Healey and his wife Mary to SA as guests of the club and to be the guest of Honor at the National Concours. Whilst here, Lionel Hewitt organized an aircraft to fly them around the country and Tony Haldenby was their guide. We also had a weekend away in the Drakensberg where many of the Durban branch had the chance of meeting the Healeys. That year there were so many people at the Concours event at Kyalami, that the local residents got an urgent court interdict against the club as we were "disturbing their Sunday". Needless to say, by

the time it was served on the club at 14.00 on the Sunday, the event was nearly over but 20000 people had experienced a great Classic Car Show.

1991 saw Pirelli put money into a National Rally, known as the Pirelli Rally. A two day event, starting on the Friday at the Indaba Hotel in Sandton, the event also had celebrities such as Stirling Moss and Paddy Hopkirk as competitors. Peter Arnot and Brain McMahon organised a great event that saw an entry of over 100 competitors. The Saturday night saw a black tie dinner at Escom recreation venue where Stirling Moss was the guest speaker. Sunday, the National Concours was held at WestGate Shopping Centre where Stirling Moss and his wife presented the prizes and needless to say, a Healey took overall honours with a proud Trevor Kilburn receiving the trophy from Stirling Moss.

Jean Manuel Fangio was our guest the following year and once again Kyalami was used as the main staging area. The rally again attracted over 100 entries and the two day show at Kyalami incorporated the Concours on the Sunday. Saturday saw many journalists at Kyalami to see the great Fangio do a few laps in Hugh Gearing's 1938 Alfa. Once again a black tie dinner on Saturday and that year saw Kyalami attract more spectators than at any other event save for the Formula 1 Grand Prix. 40000 people came through the gates that weekend.

By now, although only having a membership of 100, the club had become the most prestigious one marque club in the country. The committee was always hard at work doing something and with the 100 mile rally, the economy run, the club concours and Christmas dinner the calendar was also interspersed with breakfast and lunch runs.

Pirelli continued with their sponsorship of the National Concours and rally until 1995, when the committee decided that they were doing too much for other clubs and not their own. In 1996 the National Concours was handed to SAMCA (SA One Marque Club Ass) to organise after something like 20 years of organisation. Lionel Hewitt took over as chairman of the club that year and proceeded to focus on trying to find out what the members wanted. To this day, he has not been able to get the question answered as members don't seem to want to drive their Healeys on club events.

1998 and 2000 saw Bob Savage organise away weekends to the Drakensberg where, with the Durban members, we saw nearly fifty Healeys and their owners enjoy a great time. Alec Divov, Colin Chick and Bob Savage shared chairmanships over the next couple of years until in 2001 a crisis meeting was organised to decide whether the club should merge with the Sports Car Club or try once again to go it alone as membership had dwindled and the committee were not prepared to organize events where three members showed up.

Chairman Kobus van Wyk

A very successful meeting was held at Fibber M'Gees in Midrand and a new committee was organised to promote the club and get it back on its feet. Kobus van Wyk was nominated as Chairman and his first job was to delegate the job of organizing a tour to England the next year, to Ben Gerber.

Ben spent the next 18 months slaving over the organisation of a fabulous tour to England to celebrate the fifty years of the Austin Healey. Twenty members took their cars with a further four members joining them in plastics. The cars were shipped in May and the members departed in July to spend two weeks in England.

Here the magnificent cars rebuilt by Ben Gerber, shook the Poms when we took the silverware. Franz Pretorius, Anton Roux, Dave Diesel, Henry Cass and Richard Hulse all won prizes in the concours and Anton was elected best clubman of the gathering. The site of seeing 700 Healeys together on the Friday will remain something to remember.

2002 saw the club once again in the Drakensberg, this time at Little Switzerland where we seemed to have lost ten cars as we only had 40 members for the weekend.

2004 – AGM – Kobus van Wyk Chairman

Lionel Hewitt and Stewart Cuninghame organised a ten day tour to the Cape taking in Knysna and the entire Garden Route. It was so well received that it was decided to make the event a bi-annual event with the next event in 2006 being organised by the Cape Town branch. The club also went to Mpumalanga in September for a five day event.

April 2006 - AGM - Kobus van Wyk Chairman

The Cape Tour in 2006 based in Cape Town had members from all over South Africa joining the tour. A very long journey for the Natal cars. There are many wonderful mountain passes in and around Cape Town with the tour visiting Hellshoogte Pass, Franschoek Pass, Viljoen's Pass, Sir Lowry's and a scenic route through Baines Kloof.

2006 saw the last of the annual Healey 100 mile Rally. Though attended this year by 43 entries there was only one Healey (Ian Pollock). It had been getting this way for the last few years with only a few Healeys each time and the hard working course designer and convener John Reidy decided to call it a day.

March 2007 – AGM – John Reidy Chairman

May 2008 - AGM – Tony Haldenby

The biannual Tour in 2008 was organized by the Natal chapter. It coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Sprite, with the Sprite owners arranging a country tour starting in Johannesburg and ending and joining the 2008 Tour. The 2008 Tour started at Salt Rock on the Natal North Coast making it way to the Drakensberg Mountains with numerous ventures on the way.

March 2009 - AGM – Tony Haldenby

March 2010 – AGM – Thys Venter Chairman

The biannual Tour in *October* 2010 was organized by the Johannesburg club. It was during the world cup year and was given the name the e'Goali tour. It started north west of Johannesburg near Hartebeespoort Dam (Amanzingwe Resort) and included a visit to the world heritage "Cradle of human kind" including visits to Hartebeeshoek tracking station, The Kromdraai gold mine, Sterkfontein Caves and a driving test in the car park of the nearby Silver Star Casino while the wives visited the Margaret Roberts center . The second half of the tour was a visit to another world heritage site the "The Vredefort Dome" the largest Meteorite impact zone in the world. We had a Canadian Visitor from the "Austin Healey Owners Association of British Columbia" based in Vancouver, Brian and Brenda Drab.

March 2011 – AGM – Thys Venter Chairman

March 2012 – AGM – Thys Venter Chairman

The biannual Tour in April 2012 was a highly successful tour arranged by Lionel Hewitt from Knysna. The local classic car community really put on a great show. The tour visited all the surrounding great passes and of particular interest was the information given by Lionel on their geological formation. A side interest was that Elna Conchar's sprite from Klerksdorp broke a half shaft outside of Knysna and amazingly Andries Scholtz from Johannesburg was carrying a spare. The tour started in

On route to the tour during a stopover in Victoria West Stewart Cuninghame was awarded Honorary Membership. Stewart joined the club on his return to South Africa from Zimbabwe in 1975 after 20 years. Stewart Cuninghame's motoring interests go back a long way, to before the 2nd world war – He was born in 1922 and has entered the DJ on his 1930 Norton from 1989 and only retired from the event last year (2013). He has owned many classic cars and motorbikes and rebuilt all of them. His interests also includes being an active member of Many other clubs such as MG Club, Vintage Motor

cycle club, Vintage car club and the Piston Ring Club. He and his wife Thelma travel all over the country each year entering, rallies, tours and club outings.

April 29 1914 – AGM – Andries Scholtz chairman.

We celebrated our 40th Year this year and managed to meet and have lunch at the same hotel (Sunnyside) where the first meeting was held. Thirty eight Cars attended. The most we have seen for many years.

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