

News

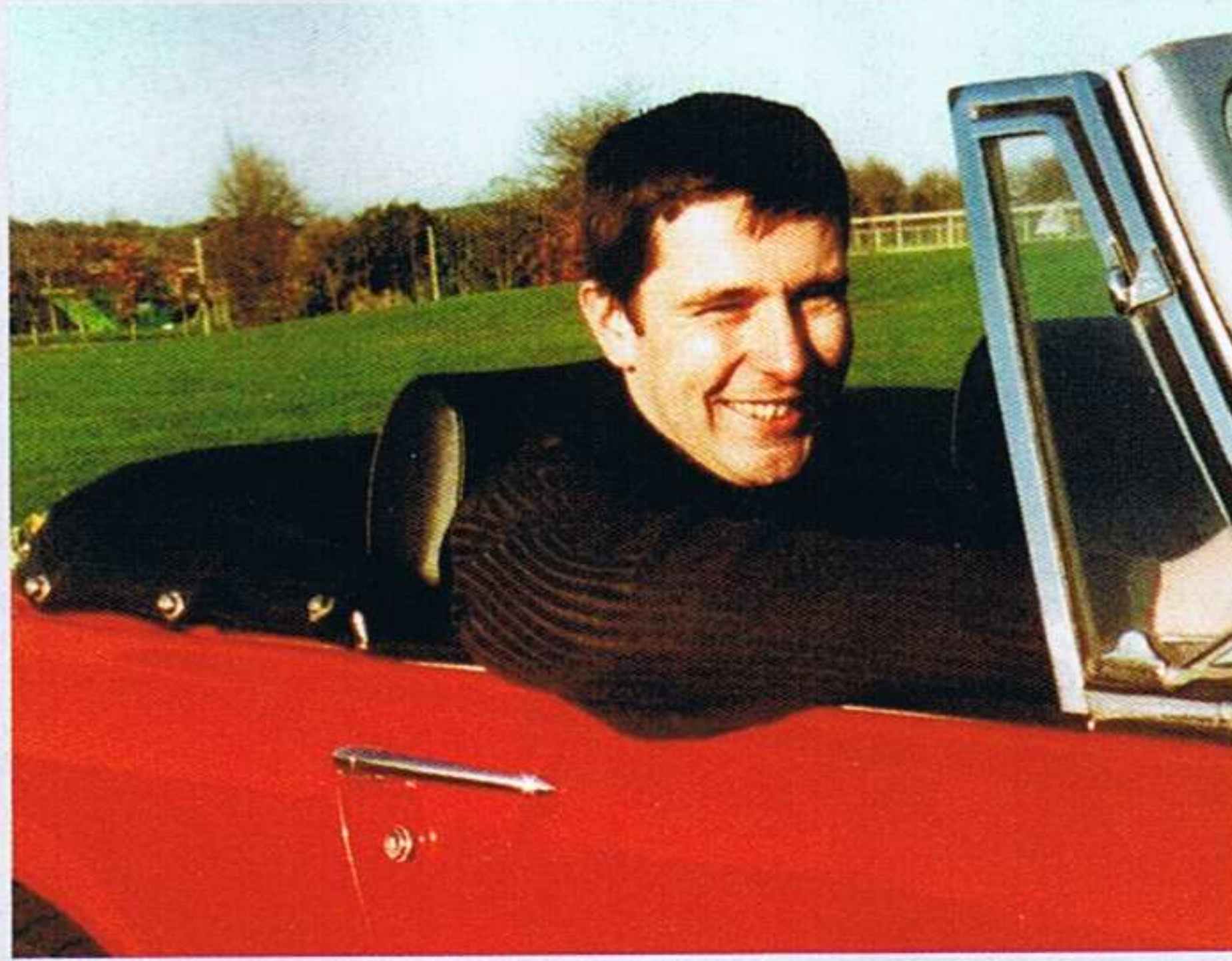
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Custodians of the Healey name:
Margot, with daughters Kate and
Cecilia; former Heritage MD Brian
Cameron has helped negotiate
with HFI's Tim Fenna (pictured
in red Sprite); Donald Healey.

HEALEY RETURNS

Healey family gives its blessing and takes active role as famous British marque prepares relaunch with two new models



The **Healey name** is set to return on a new British sports car. The rebirth of the famous marque will be spearheaded by HFI, an Anglo-American company, and carries the blessing and involvement of the Healey family.

HFI paid a sum, estimated at over £1m, to Margot Healey and her daughters Cecilia and Kate for the rights to use the Healey name, together with the entire shareholding of the Healey Automotive Consultants (HAC) company, founded in 1955 by Donald and Geoffrey Healey. In return the family will have a 'significant' stake in the new company.

The official press release describes HFI as 'an Anglo-American consortium of engineers and investors' and confirms that plans for a new Healey are at an advanced stage, with prototypes currently under test. Managing director of the new company is Tim Fenna, who owns the highly regarded Austin-Healey/MG aftermarket company Frontline Spridget.

The announcement follows earlier claims that Nanjing Automobile Corporation (NAC), the successful bidder for the assets of the collapsed MG Rover (including the marques Austin, Morris, MG and Wolseley), had agreed a deal with GB Sports Cars (GBSC) for the revival of the Austin-Healey marque at Longbridge. This statement angered the Healey family, who have always maintained that, following the cancellation of the licence agreement by BMC successors British Leyland for the use of the Healey name, it could not be used without their consent.

The formation of HFI, with the full support of the Healey family, would almost certainly appear to have ended any hopes of the Austin-Healey marque being reintroduced by GBSC/Nanjing, despite the previous announcement of a deal to build a new model at Longbridge.

HFI's Tim Fenna said, 'Our first car will be the 3000, with an in-line six and a steel-and-

'ALTHOUGH HFI WOULD NOT BE DRAWN ON THE SUBJECT OF A SECOND MODEL, THE PROBABILITY IS THAT IT WILL BE A BUDGET SPORTS CAR'

composite body. The full production model should be ready by 2007 and there is another model planned as well.'

Former British Motor Heritage managing director Brian Cameron has also been involved in the HFI negotiations. He is no stranger to Frontline products, since his own Austin-Healey Sprite was converted to 170bhp K-series power and completely rebuilt with a new Heritage shell and Frontline suspension by Tim Fenna's company back in 2001.

Possible manufacturing locations include a site near Cardiff, where development funding could be available, and another in the Midlands. Warwick (the original home of the Donald Healey Motor Company) has also been suggested, while MG Rover's former plant at Longbridge must also be under consideration. EPM Technology – manufacturers of lightweight bodysells, components and structures, whose clients include Aston Martin, Bentley and Renault's F1 team – has moved into the old North Works and would be a good fit with Healey. HFI envisages a possible workforce of 400 once manufacturing is up to speed.

Although HFI would not be drawn on the subject of the second model, the probability is that it will be a budget sports car bearing the Sprite name: the primary market for both models is likely to be the USA.

Commenting on the rebirth of this great British marque, Kate Healey said: 'It's taken two years to put this together. Now we have something that both our dad [Geoffrey] and

The Healey legacy

- 1931 Donald Healey wins Monte Carlo Rally in an Invicta
- 1937 Donald Healey becomes Triumph technical director
- 1946 Healey Westland launched, followed by...
- 1947 Healey Sportsmobile
- 1949 Healey Tickford/Healey Abbott
- 1949 Healey Silverstone
- 1950 Nash Healey
- 1951 Alvis Healey
- 1952 Healey 100
- 1952 Agreement with Austin sees Healey 100 becoming Austin-Healey 100
- 1955 Austin-Healey 100S introduced
- 1955 Healey Marine boat building operation set up; produces boats until 1960
- 1956 Austin-Healey 100/6 unveiled, followed by...
- 1957 Austin-Healey 3000
- 1958 Austin Healey 'Frogeye' Sprite
- 1966 Rolls Healey 400R prototype
- 1968 Final Austin-Healey 3000 built
- 1970 British Leyland/Donald Healey licence agreement terminated
- 1972 Jensen-Healey introduced
- 1986 Frogeye Car Company is sanctioned to build Sprite interpretation
- 1989 HMC given permission to produce 'Big Healey' interpretation
- 2001 BMW Warwick Roadster concept shown
- 2005 Tempest design proposal put forward by Dr Krish Bhaskar (unsuccessful bidder for MG Rover)
- 2006 HFI launched.

grandfather [Donald] would be happy about. I keep telling people that this is a new car, with innovative engineering. Cecilia and I and our mother will remain involved because we understand the Healey brand so well.'

Margot Healey was equally excited: 'We are delighted with this new venture. We have been committed to developing and protecting the brand and we are very pleased to have reached an agreement which will result in the manufacture of a new Healey in the UK.'