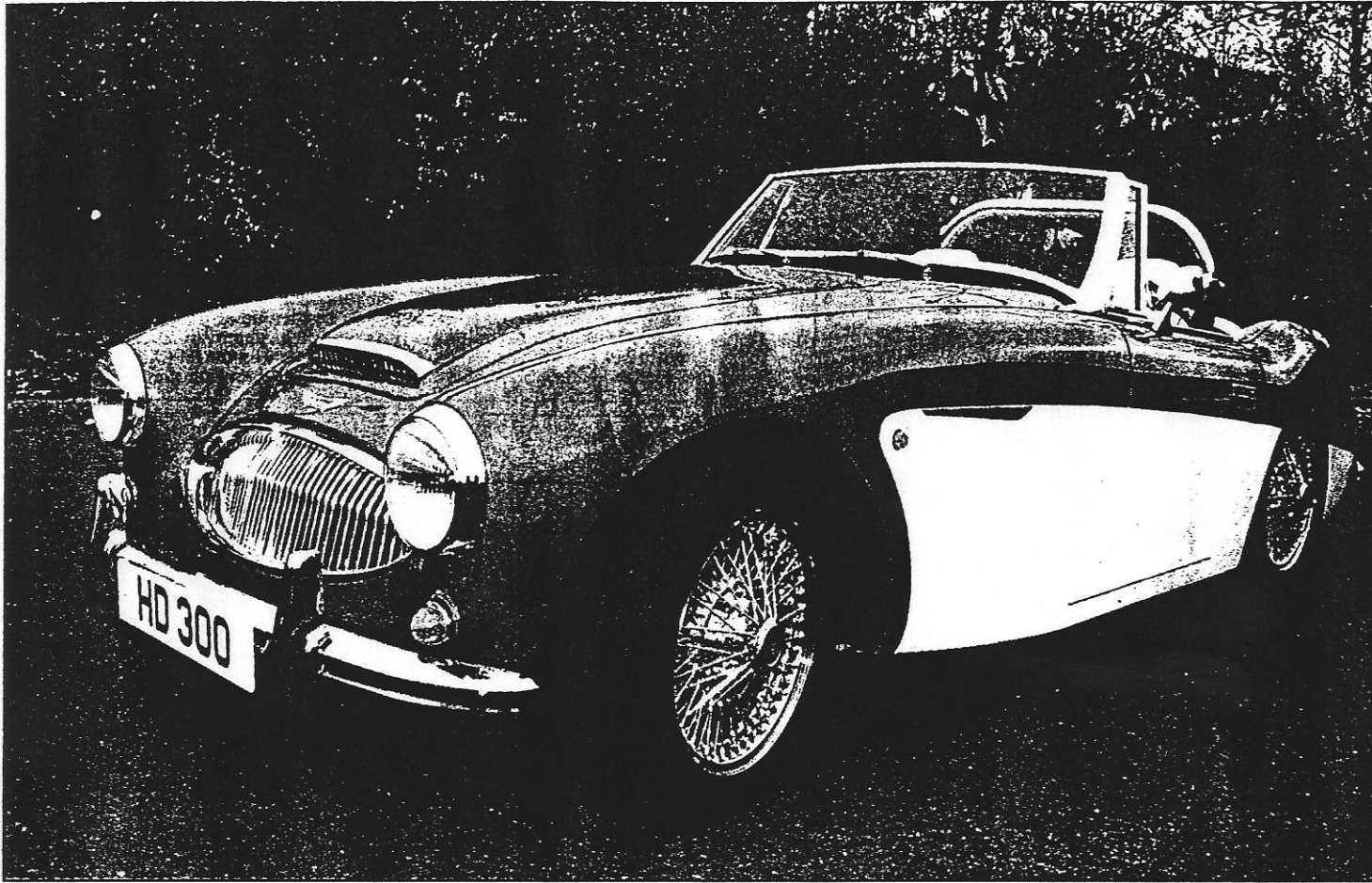


Classical curves



Showstopper: the Haldane H300, built in Scotland, is expected to be priced from £19,500.

UNTIL January of this year, small car companies were often unable to meet the formidable expense of the type approval process. One of its requirements is to crash-test (and therefore wreck) prototype vehicles. Small-scale builders had to be satisfied with selling their products in component or kit form. Now, relaxed low-volume type approval regulations allow them to become "proper" manufacturers.

One of the companies about to benefit from the new legislation is Haldane Sports Cars, the only serious car-building firm in Scotland. Its HD-300 is one of the most appealing cars at the Scottish Motor Show, resplendent in a luscious two-tone colour scheme which features the Rover shade called pearlescent nightfire.

The story of the Haldane started in 1987. Two engineers who were also motorsport enthusiasts, Brian Harrison and Alasdair Scott, began working part-time on a car which would be a virtual look-alike of the now

When two engineers put their heads together the result was a masterpiece in elegance. **Ross Finlay** reports on a car that is the Scottish motor manufacturing industry

classic Austin-Healey 100, first seen in 1952. Donald Healey had produced several types of car before that, but the 100, styled by Gerry Coker, was what Healey himself described as "exactly what I'd always wanted to build".

Harrison and Scott's first car was built with support from Glasgow motor dealer David Haldane. Hence the marque name. The HD-100 was gradually developed, and almost 70 have already been sold.

Then Haldane began working on a more ambitious project, the hoped-for type approval of the HD-300, based on the later Austin-Healey 3000. In the depths of the recession it was not easy to raise finance, and approaches were made to 55 different

funding bodies. That process has borne fruit. There is strong regional and local authority backing, and Haldane is settled in modern premises in the College Milton industrial estate at East Kilbride. Brian Harrison is managing director, Alasdair Scott is technical director, and Michael Bishop, with 16 years' experience at Lotus, is sales director. Haldane's status as a recognised manufacturer should be achieved by the end of the year.

Haldane builds its own neatly triangulated chassis. Ford, which has always been sympathetic to the needs of small car builders, supplies the fuel-injected two-litre engine, transmission and differential fitted to the Granada and Scorpio.

Unusually, Haldane builds its own bodies. A new composite body shape opens this week and, if the show is a fair guide, both panel fit and finish will be of high quality.

The chassis may have been a computer-aided design, but there is no substitute for seat-of-the-pants firm testing. Brian Harrison did 140 laps of the Castle Combe racing circuit in Wiltshire fine-tuning the handling, which, like the car as a whole, is meant to be sporting but not harsh. A short drive in an HD-100 shows that the Haldane has a civilised ride quality, with none of the teeth-jarring effect I remember from Austin Healeys in their heyday.

By the beginning of next year, Haldane should be ready to go with the production HD-300. Prices will be from £19,500. The hope is for a modest dealer network to market a car which, if the engineering, style and finish of the show model are continued, will be a fine product to be proud of. The whole of the Scottish motor industry.



Champion starter

JACKIE Stewart, former triple world motor-racing champion, safety crusader and motor-industry ambassador, will open Scotland's motoring showcase on Friday at noon, when the doors of the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre open to the public.

Running for 10 days, the exhibition filling four out of the five cavernous halls,

Under the bonnet

Making cars safe 2 ● Swiftly into the big league 3 ● Complete show round-up 4 and 5 ● Scots boys show their class 6 ● Lady in the pole position 6 ● Rally sport 7 ● What are