

Ewan Scott returns to the land of his birth to see how all things Haldane are progressing

One of the few kit cars about which I have rarely heard any harsh criticism is the Haldane HD-100. It needless to say pleases me no end to know that this is a Scottish designed, Scottish built and Scottish based product, run by two fellow Scots. That does not however diminish my responsibility to you as readers and I have to tell you about the car that I see just as I would any other.

The original Haldane was Chevette based and its sales were probably held back by the choice of donor car. Today however, you can opt for the new Ford Sierra/ Cortina based car built on a backbone and platform chassis designed by Alistair Scott at Haldane.

The chassis is fairly conventional in the backbone, although I have reservations about the minimal structure around the rear diff. Somewhere around here I would like to see added bracing, not a difficult job. There is no steel scuttle hoop nor steel "A" post or "B" post these are part of the structure of the shell which we will look at later. There is also an extension to the rear of the chassis which holds the Haldane made fuel tanks. This is one area of difficulty which Haldane have to overcome in the future as the fuel tanks will soon have to be within the wheelbase of the car. On the Haldane this is not too easy a task with limited space available but where there's a will there's a way.

Suspension all round is fully adjustable coil over Spax shocks and double wishbones all round. Steering is by way of the Ford column with a rebuilt rack, on this car a quick rack was employed, which endows the car with exciting steering characteristics.

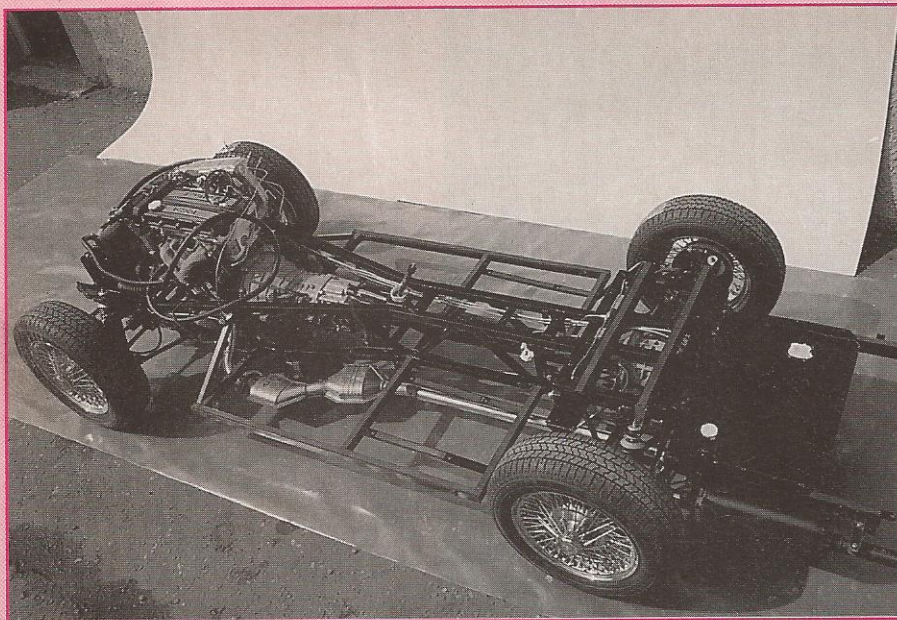
The engine employed is the Ford DOHC 2L fuel injected and complete with engine management and cats. It drives through a conventional five speed box to the Sierra rear diff. The Sierra diff is mounted in a "cage" in the backbone and the drive shafts run through to the Sierra bearings set in Haldane's own welded uprights. The whole set up seems very simple when put this way, and the description probably belies the work which has gone into developing the car to this stage.

The bodyshell remains largely as it was on the earlier Haldane. It is a hand laid GRP structure incorporating coremat on large panels and with

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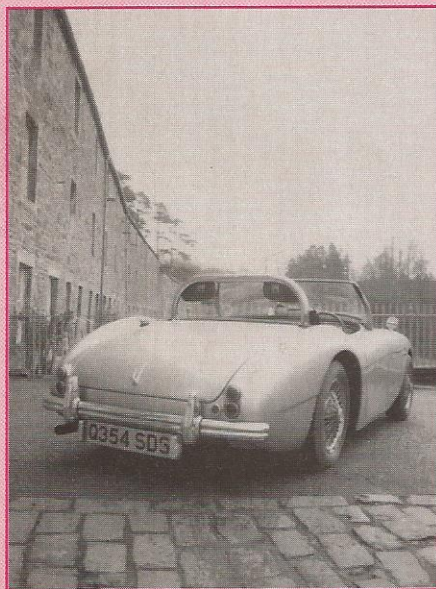




heavier lay up on areas of stress. The actual tub of the car is quite rigid with a great deal of marine ply box section being matted into the body to create strong rigid sections. Thus there is no need for a hoop to steady the scuttle. At the rear the bulkhead is again reinforced with ply and it is again a very solid structure.

Up at the front of the car the new demonstrator sports the latest in louvred bonnets, an alloy panel bonded into the GRP main lid, done so well that you really cannot see the join. That point aside nearly everything else on the body remains as with the original Chevette based Haldane. The car utilises original Grills, bumpers, and trim, with a very close windscreen replication. Problems with cracking windscreens have now been overcome by changing suppliers in case anyone was wondering.

The quality of the GRP work is generally to a high standard. Although from certain angles there are odd little discrepancies on the prototype. There is a bit of a depression in the passenger door; and in order to get the doors to open and close without fouling the "A" post, the leading



edges are radiused and show up badly in certain lights. But having said all that, I have looked at the Haldane on several occasions; I have also looked at an original Healey on several occasions. When I see an original without any flaws it always leaves me wondering if it was ever really played with. If you look at any 30 year old sportscar which has been played with regularly it will almost certainly developed a patina of age which includes distortion of large panels, and the odd "flaw". For me the Haldane has captured the qualities of the original styling and workmanship to a tee.

How then does the Haldane feel on the road with this all new chassis? We left Blantyre and headed down to New Lanark, where I planned on getting some atmospheric mono shots amongst the mills and houses of Robert Owen's paternalistic commune. The last time I visited New Lanark it was somewhat derelict and although still lived in, close to a ghost town with empty houses, broken windows and delapidated mill buildings. All that had changed though and today nearly all the houses seem to have been repaired and the mills and the school are now back in operation as a visitor centre.

The place was crammed with visitors, even in February, and we had to take the photographs in space reserved for turning the local bus.

With the weather threatening to turn nasty, Brian Harrison piloted the car down the Clyde valley. From the passenger seat I noticed the pitching that appeared on the motorway and at higher speeds. The spring rates felt right, perhaps a little soft at the front, but the shockers surely must have needed adjusting. Whilst I was busy taking photographs Brian Harrison played with the adjustment of the shock absorbers and it was a different car that I drove home, although still perhaps needing a little tweaking of the Spax.

Brian commented that the engine felt a little strangled with the Cats in place; to be honest I felt quite happy with the DOHC doing its job as

well as needed for a road car. There was plenty of torque and it would pull from 10mph in top. Yet was flexible and roarty enough to allow a reasonable thrash around the backroads. The steering was exciting, a quick rack always is when you step out of a family saloon, and it was all too easy to overcorrect. As a result the whole car felt twitchy and nervous for quite some time until I got use to just letting it do its own thing and only turning the steering when it was really needed. A quick rack allows you to turn in the corner, rather than to turn into it. Once I got used to it I was as happy as a sandboy. For good measure I drove the Haldane around Wishaw and Motherwell before returning to Blantyre to drop off Brian so that I could go and have some unsupervised fun in the car. The town traffic is the place where you find out if you can actually drive the car on a regular basis or not.

The driver sits low in the cockpit of the Haldane and almost has to peer out of the car. At times the inability to see the front of the car is unnerving, but like most such factors is a point that you get to live with. The Sierra first gear is probably a tad too low for the Haldane, as I found that when using first the revs were often used before the car had actually moved very far and second had to be found very quickly. I put this down to the engine simply not having to work hard enough at these speeds. Rather like using first gear in an empty Transit, almost superfluous.

The HD-100 could be coaxed along very easily in traffic, but it was out on the open roads that it came into its own. The DOHC well able to accelerate the car up to and beyond the limit in double quick time. I really don't think that Brian has to worry too much about the strangled engine. The quick rack meant that nipping in and out of gaps came as second nature and whilst hustling down country lanes there was no need to get held up behind slower moving traffic.

The suspension although not yet perfect was well up to absorbing the potholes in the road. I normally avoid these yawning caverns for the sake of saving the tyres, but I deliberately picked a few to test the quality of the suspension and was pleasantly surprised. On the other hand though I was a little disappointed by another consequence of running into potholes.



The doors moved in relation to the scuttle. Now I at first suspected scuttle shake, but a closer watch on the fascia revealed only minor movement in that area. I turned my attention to the meeting point of the top of the door and the scuttle. There was a definite movement there, especially exaggerated when the rear of the car dropped into a pothole. there was similar movement at the far side of the car.

I mentioned this to Brian Harrison on my return and suggested that it could be chassis flex. So we spent some time looking at the movement and came to the conclusion that since the chassis is little different from many other backbone based frames that it was quite possible that the movement came from the doors moving on their hinges. It was true that the doors could be rocked on the Sierra hangers and this was one of areas where Brian and Alistair have been working to improve the fit and operation.

For my money a little attention is required to the doors, both in the hanging and the bracing fore and aft. Don't worry about the slot in side screens, they are authentic and add to the period feel of the car. The same goes for the draughts that seep in past the top of the doors and the side screens. The same can be said for the seal of the hard top against the rear bodywork. If you

want authenticity, then the Haldane is the car for you. If it is warmth, comfort and all mod cons, then stick with your Sierra and keep the windows firmly shut.

In case any of you are pondering on the apparent contradiction in terms here. First there is talk about quality, then talk about problems, then praise for the car in spite of the faults. Well

really there is no contradiction in terms. A car can have faults but retain enough merit to make it a good car. This is one such car.

Brian has since called me to say that the car has now been set up and the quick rack saved for another non-demo car, as a result he claims that the car has lost its nervousness. we promise to take a look at this as soon as possible.

