

# 1955 Austin-Healey V8



## ROAD TEST

**I**n 1950, Gerry Coker got a job at the Donald Healey Motor Company as Healey's body engineer. A short time into his employ with the company, Healey offers up a challenge: give me a design for a sports car.

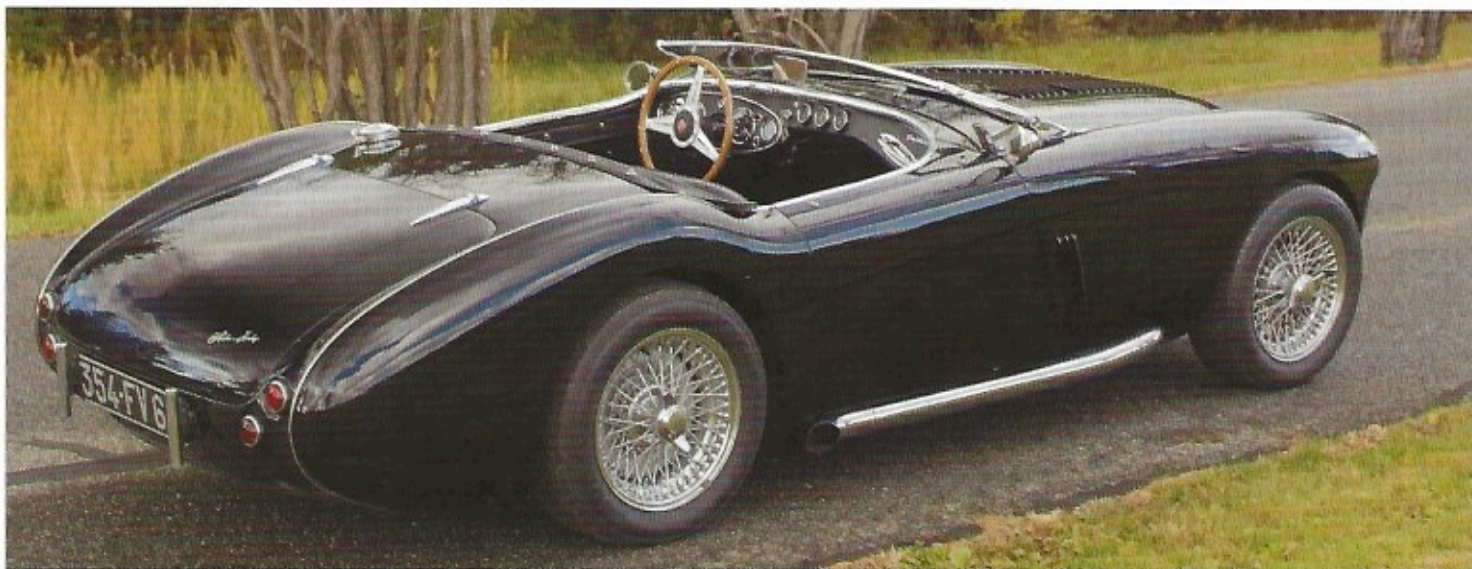
What Coker comes back with is one of the most beautiful and iconic designs for a British sports car, for all times, the 100-4.

The car makes its entrance onto the world stage in 1952, at the London Motor Show at Earl's Court. It takes the automotive world by storm. And the rest is history...well, maybe not.

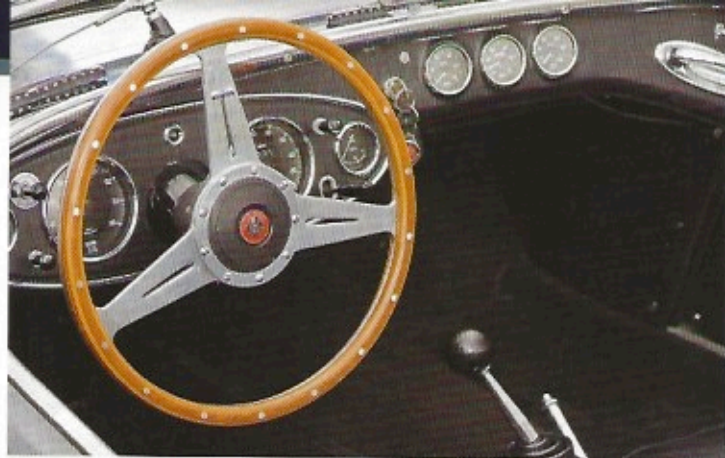
In 1990, Ken Deringer was leafing through the *Pennysaver*. Ken, an

engineer whose CV included design and fabrication of parts for the aerospace industry, was also involved in race support for Dan Gurney's All American Racers team. Ken was the owner of a 100-6, but he was looking to create something special for himself. An ad for a derelict 100-4 caught his eye. The car had spent many years outdoors and unprotected; quite far gone, it was still the perfect starting point for Ken. He bought the car. With a solemn promise to the late owner's widow to save the car her husband hadn't the time to do, he was off on a 12-year odyssey to create his reimagined Healey.

The car was stripped down to bare metal; the frame fortified to be able to take on the abundant power that the extra four cylinders of an







aluminum Buick 215 V8 would produce. An all-synchro 5-speed was used to help get all that new engine power to the rear wheels. Up front, the cam and peg steering was replaced by a custom rack and pinion setup, along with disc brakes to slow the wild Healey down.


Subtle changes were made to the body—so subtle you would have to look twice, or even three times, to realize they weren't stock. Frenched-in driving lights, custom nerf bars replacing the bumpers, front and rear. On the sides, just in front of the doors, are three louvers; below them, exhaust pipes. So perfectly integrated they look like all Healeys had them—though they never did. The trunk lid is cleaned up with the removal of its handle. It is now opened by way of a key behind the driver's seat. For extra convenience, the Healey now sports an external fuel filler.

The cockpit is also massaged by Deringer. A later Healey dash has been wrapped in leather and sprouts additional gauges. Seats from an Alfa Romeo give the passengers a more comfortable ride.

You would think the clan of the A-H would be prone to look down their collective noses, to shun this genetically modified creature, but that is not the case. Ken's creation has gone on to win multiple best-of-show and first places in numerous "Healey Week" events. What really gave this big Healey its ultimate credence, however, was Gerry Coker's comment when he finally saw it: "If we had continued, we would have gone in this direction."

His final blessing was to sign the dash.

My early association with Austin-Healeys started with my mother driving herself to the hospital to have me in her 100-4—in December! This was the start of my life with cars. Having only vague memories of my family's Healey, climbing into this one still evokes a hint of coming home. Start it up and all things change: while most 100-4s have a nice growl, this one has a deep rumble. Normal Healeys were quick—this one is bloody fast! Your hand falls on the shift knob of the 5-speed gearbox like it's part of the original design. Not so original, the handling: it's much tighter and more responsive than standard, and the front discs do everything needed to bridle this sexy beast. Nothing seems out of place—everything reads native. This is a perfectly thought-out, thoroughly modified machine: wind in your face, scenery moving by you at warp speed.

Nothing is much better than that. My thanks to \_\_\_\_\_ for giving me something to dream about. 

--Sean Smith

## DRIVEN CLASSICS AT A GLANCE

### SPECIFICATIONS

Length:	3848 millimeters / 151.5 inches
Width:	1537 millimeters / 60.5 inches
Height:	1244 millimeters / 49 inches
Wheelbase:	2286 millimeters / 90 inches
Front track:	1245 millimeters / 49 inches
Rear track:	1289 millimeters / 50.7 inches
Clearance:	140 millimeters / 5.5 inches
Fuel type:	gasoline
Engine:	Inline 4, 2 valves per cylinder (Now: V8)
Displacement:	162.3-cu.in. (Now: 215-cu.in.)
Fuel system:	2 SU H4 carburetors (Now: Two 2-barrel Bendix carburetors)
Horsepower:	90hp (Now 200+)
Transmission:	4-speed manual (Now: Tremec T-50 5-speed)



### PERFORMANCE

Top Speed	120-plus mph
0-60 mph	NA
0-100 mph	NA
Avg. mpg	NA



### VALUATION

Price at Launch	£850
Excellent	NA
Good	NA
Average	NA
Poor	NA

