

# **The E-Mail Mechanic (Published March 2002)**

## **Archived e-mail messages and Healey electrical systems**

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In the last issue of *Austin Healey Magazine*, I set forth the reasons for my belief that the Internet, and especially the Healey Mail List, is a valuable tool for anyone who wants to keep their car not only in top running condition and appearance, but also to have a meaningful dialogue with other Healey owners worldwide. It is equally valuable for those who just want a daily driver although most who drive a Healey on a daily basis (your correspondent included), agree that the term - "Daily Driver" - should be capitalized because of the pure thrill of driving such a wonderful machine. The examples that I gave last month were of exchanges that occurred in the month of November 2001 and covered several diverse topics composed of questions and responses literally from around the world. They represented a small sample of those that actually appeared on the Healeys Mail List.

The Healey Mail List -- or just "the List" for short -- is also used by many subscribers to keep abreast of Healey-related activities such as the annual British Car Week and meets throughout the country and world, as well as such mundane topics as the latest Healey Mattel Hot Wheel issues or sightings of Healeys on TV and in the movies.

### *Archived e-mail messages*

Recently an exciting addition was made to the list. After an absence of some time, the Healey Archives were reinstated. The archives is a compilation of messages that have appeared in the past and they represent a treasure trove on-line of questions and the many resulting responses. The archives are set up so that one is able to search on a key word such as "Brakes" or "Overdrive" and immediately receive the list of emails that were posted on those particular topics. There is also an index feature in which one can review all of the postings for a particular month. This is particularly valuable for the new List participant as a means of not repeating a question that was posted and answered recently.

One of the more interesting cross features is a search parameter called "Threads" in which, if the month of a particular thread is known, one can look at the original question followed by all of the responses to that question.

The Healey List Archives can be found at <http://www.team.net/archive/healeys>

Over the years some subscribers to the List have saved hundreds of the postings on their computers' hard drives and others have printed them out into fully indexed file folders so that they would have a record of postings of interest. Now, with the Archives, disk or file cabinet space is no longer needed. While it is not necessary to be a subscriber to the List in order to access the Archives, it is very worthwhile to keep abreast of Healey happenings as they occur by joining the list.

### *Ammeter readings*

Turning now to a specific question that was recently discussed on the List, Rich Locasso asked a question about the electrical system as follows:

“I have an ammeter in my BT7 and a new battery. Recently I noticed that the ammeter reads about zero at speed, and with lights on it reads about the same. With lights and heater on it actually reads negative amps, maybe two to four, indicating the system is discharging, if the ammeter is accurate.

Is the BT7 electrical system designed to support engine, lights and wipers without discharge, or is a small discharge like mine normal? If my system is compromised, what would be the best way to diagnose the problem?”

In a response, Michael Salter of Precision Sportscar, Richmond Hill, Ontario, covered this question in some detail:

“The generator in your car has a maximum output of 25 amps. This it will do if everything is in good condition. All the lights together add up to about 130 watts and (guessing) the heater blower on high speed probably around 35 watts. Ignition system and fuel pump (occasionally) maybe 30 watts. Grand total around 200 watts; that is around 16 amps. Of course you may have high wattage headlamps but your generator should be able to handle it although as you can see there isn't the huge margin that modern cars with 120 amp alternators have. If you don't have a problem with dead batteries I would say leave well alone. If you want to be sure, get a diagnostic style ammeter and check the situation with everything on, including the wipers, brake lights and turn signals but remember that the battery provides a fairly good reserve of electrons that will make up a few amps for a very long time. After all not many of us drive at night in the rain with heater blower on . . .”

If you are interested in joining the Haley Mail List, all that is necessary is to send an email message to: [majordomo@autox.team.net](mailto:majordomo@autox.team.net) and in the text field enter: **subscribe healeys** and send the message. Leave the subject line blank. Then follow the instructions in the automated email message that you will receive in return. You will not be disappointed. The procedure for subscribing is also described on page 141 of the 2001 ***Austin-Healey Resource Book***.