



# The science of car care



COURTESY OF HOLTS

## Holts has been solving automotive problems for nearly 100 years

BY GORDON CRAIGIE

THERE'S AN ANCIENT proverb that reminds us that great oaks from tiny acorns grow, and it certainly applies to long-time Costco supplier Holts ([holtsauto.com](http://holtsauto.com)), the company behind a variety of automotive products. Little did Douglas Holt know, when he opened his spare-tyre and car-parts shop in 1919 in London, that his venture would grow into one of the biggest companies in the automotive world, with offices in the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, South Africa, Japan, China, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

Bruce Ellis, global technical director of Holts, tells *The Connection*, "The founder's vision was one of simple solutions to very real motoring problems. Today, almost 100 years on, the mantra remains the same: Holts, problem solved. Our commitment to innovation and product development continues and is the lifeblood of our organisation worldwide."

### The winding path to growth

The company's history has involved many mergers and acquisitions over the years, and today, as part of the broader Prestone Group, Holts is a global company whose products are developed in Manchester and in Danbury, Connecticut, in the US. Ellis explains that, at any one time, up to 30 development programmes are in operation and that Holts constantly strives to improve existing products.

"Our research and development philosophy is testing, testing, testing!" he

says. "Nothing gets out of the laboratory and onto the factory floor until it is fully validated and formulated to the highest standards of performance and quality, without causing harm." The UK manufacturing base in Newquay, Cornwall, creates 20 million products per year, and its 5,110-square-metre (55,000-square-foot) warehousing and logistics facility moves 1,500 pallets of product a day at peak times.

Ellis continues, "We have patents covering everything from cooling system protection to wheel cleaners, tyre repair, cooling stop leaks—it's a long list."

### COMPANY INFO



COURTESY OF HOLTS

**COMPANY** Holts (part of the Prestone Group)

**FOUNDER** Douglas Holt, in 1919

**EMPLOYEES** Holts, 160; Prestone Group, 560

**UK HEADQUARTERS** Head office and research and development lab: Trafford Park, Manchester; manufacturing and logistics: Newquay, Cornwall

**WEBSITE** [holtsauto.com](http://holtsauto.com)

**PRODUCTS AT COSTCO** 5-litre Prestone screen wash (Item #124525); 5-litre Simoniz shampoo (Item #179949); Redex fuel treatment four-pack (Item #96573); Simoniz Back to Black tyre treatment (Item #203052); Prestone coolant/antifreeze (Item #825903)

**COMMENT ABOUT COSTCO** "Holts has been a supplier to Costco since 1997 and has seen huge category growth in that time. The best-selling product from the portfolio is Prestone screen wash [5 litre]. We also have strong base sales with Simoniz car shampoo [5 litre], the Redex fuel additive four-pack and the Prestone antifreeze/coolant [4 litre], that are carried all year round. Seasonally we provide additional items such as de-icer and other car-cleaning products. We also export all of our automotive lines to France, Spain and Iceland, and supply Prestone to US Costcos."—Craig Collantine, Holts' national accounts controller

There are four prestigious brands in the Holts family: Holts itself focuses on repair and maintenance products, Prestone specialises in antifreeze and winter products, Redex is an aftermarket fuel additive and Simoniz is a valeting brand. Ellis observes, "So many of our products have become household names and favourites for the car enthusiast."

**Holts' research and development workshop team, from left: Nick Page, Phil Carruthers, Bruce Ellis, Ross Fielding, Terry Curtis and Richard Hitchman.**

### Great products, lots of fans

Indeed, part of the strength of Holts is the quality of its products. Prestone, for example, is the only coolant on the market suitable for use in any make or model of vehicle and will mix with any other coolant. Redex, the top brand of aftermarket fuel additives for diesel and petrol cars, works by cleaning the fuel system to keep engines running like new. And Simoniz is so ubiquitous that it has entered common English usage as a description for waxing a car.

As to the future, Ellis says to expect significant new product developments soon, and that the innovative, competitive spirit of Douglas Holt clearly lives on. **C**

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