



# North Kent Lotus Group



July 2009

Dear Enthusiast

Well, this month I can take it easy as I've had two excellent articles supplied by Roger and John H.

Unfortunately the Rolling Road day didn't happen as there wasn't enough takers but who knows we might try it again sometime - perhaps a different time of the year? Whilst having a chat with Richard re the RR day he told me about a sprint series he's doing this year. It's run at local circuits such as Goodwood, Brands and Lydden and he's doing pretty well - I've asked him to let us have some dates, so we could perhaps go along - I'll keep you posted.

It's that holiday time of year and Roger and Chrissie had a good time in Italy - more of which later - and John & Joan took the M100 to Switzerland. It didn't miss a beat for the whole journey now that John's solved a little ongoing engine problem. It turned out to be a sticking turbo waste gate, he's now modified the heat shield attached to the body of the turbo to allow quick release access for any future stickiness. So no more lost time at Goodwood!

We had two new members on club night last week, Kevin and Lorraine Wale from Faversham. I didn't get a chance to have a chat with them but they have a blue 1973 Plus 2 Elan which oddly enough is the only Plus 2 we have in the group (correct me if I'm wrong!). So a big welcome to you both.

The event this month is the barbecue at the White Rock although by the time you get this newsletter the booking will probably be closed - if you're quick you *may* be able to do some arm twisting! Anyway it all starts around 12 noon and we'll be having a few rounds of Bat & Trap after the food.

Next month is mid-week run month on Wednesday 26th so make a date in your diary - details will be in next month's letter and

Chrissie and I may have missed yet another monthly meeting in May but that was because we were flying to Pisa early the following morning for the start of a nearly four week holiday in Tuscany, which included a day watching the Mille Miglia make its last stop in Monteriggioni on the return leg back from Rome to Brescia. Originally run annually from 1927 as a non-stop endurance race and famously won by Stirling Moss in a Mercedes 300SLR clocking up an incredible average speed of 99.2mph - on public roads, the event was banned following a fatal crash in 1957, which killed driver, co-driver and eleven spectators. However, the event was revived in 1977 as a more gentle three day timed run for models which had competed in the original race. This year's event was once again dominated in number at least by Italian marques including Alfa, Arbat, Bugat-

ti, Cisitalia, Elmini, Ferrari, Fiat, Lancia, Maserati and Osca. BMW and Mercedes also featured heavily but the Brits were well represented with Allard, Aston Healey, Bentley, Jaguar, MG and Triumph. Not surprisingly, there were no Lotuses, so no entries from us yet in the photograph competition. The cars arrived roughly in marque and period sequence at the bottom of the hill below the town walls, headed by a very impressive array of Bugattis.



As they pulled up, the over enthusiastic crowd quickly surrounded the cars to be eventually coaxed back by the marshalls only to surge forward again every time a new group of cars arrived and stopped. It was all good natured chaos and an opportunity to get very close to some very rare cars, even more rarely seen in the UK.

After a stop, the cars set off again at intervals to appreciative applause, climbing the steep hill to drive through the narrow streets of Monteriggioni, somehow avoiding spectators intent on getting close to the action. There was one final drama as the cars had to simultaneously negotiate a narrow gate on the other side of the village and a left hand bend on a one in four slope downhill paved with worn stone as smooth as glass. Trusting the skill of the drivers, the outside of this

September 27th is the "Harpers Hunt" treasure hunt which will be continuing from last year - not to be confused with the Komosa Cup! Another diary date.

It seems impossible that a year has passed since the new website was launched. We've decided to keep it going and have switched hosting to a cheaper company, in fact we have secured three years hosting for almost what we paid for one with our previous provider. Terry is continuing to look after everything and the only thing that has changed is the email address which is now group@northkentlotusgroup.org so please make a note. It'll be good to receive photo's and some simple info for inclusion in the "Members Cars" pages just to let visitors (and potential new members) know what type of group we are (ie not all Elise owners!).

I've had my first visit to the Goodwood Festival of Speed this year - it always seemed to clash with other things. Anyway, I had a last minute chance to go and went down in comfort with Terry in his Touareg and had a great time. We bumped into Lawrence and had a chat and John H was also there, although we didn't see him - he's provided an excellent report which is coming up with a very interesting Esprit snippet (I'll have to hold over his Evora thing 'till next month - again)

Finally, I'm building up a few pictures to enter into the photo competition - I should really get them printed off and let Pauline have them - I get a feeling we'll have a last minute rush!

I'll leave you in Roger and John's capable hands and see you at the BBQ on the 26th or at the next club night on the 12th August. Oh and while I remember there's the Abingdon track-day on Friday 24th which you're welcome to come along to (I will have spare seat!)

John

bend was a good vantage point for photos before the cars disappeared into the countryside towards Florence and Brescia beyond.



The cars are best seen at the start and finish in Brescia, at the overnight stop in Rome or at either of the intermediate stops or some spectators follow the cars on their run. The itinerary is announced

well in advance on [www.1000miglia.eu](http://www.1000miglia.eu) for anyone thinking of planning a holiday in Italy next year. The website also features a host of other information including a photo gallery of this year's competing cars.

One for the "name the car" section in our next quiz? Negotiating the steep hill up to Monteriggioni.



Lord March drives through Monteriggioni

*Roger*

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Howard recently spotted this advert for a Marcos.

customer, Noel H, expressed an interest in attending on the Friday so I ended up doing the three days after all. No bad thing.

### FRIDAY

The plan was for Noel, who lives in Greenwich, to collect me from Croydon on the way down. He offered a choice of bike or 911, saying the bike would be MUCH QUICKER! A) I am a coward. B) I promised my Dad I would never go near the things as my paternal grandfather was killed on a bike when my Dad was young. C) Noel has a 911. And I have never been for more than a short ride in one and had been on at him for a year or two to do just that! He said he would collect me around 8am and I said that was leaving it a bit late and he said he would try to get there a bit earlier. Apparently it was the third time of knocking/banging on my front door over a twenty minute period from 06.30 to 06.50 that awoke me...

### FESTIVAL of SPEED 2009

There's a little event that I go to each year that you may have heard of. It's called The Festival of Speed and takes place in the front garden of a very nice chap called Charlie March. His Lordship to his friends. There are usually a few nice people in attendance and quite a few interesting cars to be seen, both in the garden and up and down the curious single lane bypass the local council built right by the garden wall. Planners!

It's so good that I usually take the Friday off work to go. I wasn't intending to this year. I felt last time that although one day isn't nearly enough to see everything thoroughly, two days are just enough and three is overdoing it a bit. I have been with Simon D a couple of times and would have done so again this year but things didn't quite come together. I asked if he was going and never quite got an answer so ended up booking tickets for one for the Sat and Sun. Then a friend and

Can't say I was that impressed with the Porker on the way down. I found the passenger position rather "Italian", in that there didn't seem to be an awful lot of legroom (yes, the seat was fully back), my feet were pressed against the footwell wall, despite me not being in the slightest bit nervous and attempting "passenger breaking". My knees were in the air rather than resting on the seat cushion and that was rather uncomfortable, it seemed rather noisy compared to my MR2, not dissimilar to how I remember my S2 Esprit, and I had the start of a headache by the time we arrived. I was glad to get out and walk. I made the mistake of saying so. I also made the mistake of making one or two observations and recommendations about his driving on the way down, and back. On one occasion we were in lane one of a dual carriage way approaching a lay-by from which a 7.5 tonner was clearly signaling and emerging to join the road. I looked over my right shoulder and suggested we should really be moving into the clear lane two to assist the lorry and avoid it. That REALLY gave Noel the hump. I also had a go about the combined Becker stereo/sat nav. And shape of the seats. And the harshness of the ride. Mainly in jest you understand. But I am not sure he did. It may be a while before a ride in a 911 again...

The day hardly improved when, after taking a fascinating sequence of snaps intended for sharing with you dear reader, and after rummaging through a few boxes of old tat on a few trade toy (diecast scale models for the adult collector) stands, I suddenly realised my £200 worth of 8 megapixel Sony camera had, at some point, slipped off my wrist unnoticed, never to be seen again. It was in a black drawstring pouch incredibly similar to the Times freebies for £1 bag I bought on entry for the Clarkson DVD only, and on the same wrist... Ho Hum.

Jaguar veteran Norman Dewis was being interviewed live at the house and gave his account of how he crashed the XJ13 and wrote it off. An inspiring tale and told with

good humour. As a result, I couldn't help but grab him later on in the paddock, when he had a spare moment, and ask if he wanted to hear one of my crash tales, the one where I wrote off my friends Triumph Herald while still on my provisional licence. Noel told me not to be so stupid. Norman listened and apparently enjoyed my tale, smiling wryly in all the right places and guessing what was coming. While I waited to grab Norman, the Jag boys fired up first, the DType (Loud), then the XJ13 (Rather Louder), and then the XJR9 (WHAT DID YOU SAY? I CAN'T HEAR YOU, MY EARS ARE BLEEDING!). And I was stood between them all. GLORIOUS!

## SATURDAY

The Scamera van was parked up on the left as you exited Petworth, as it was the morning before, ready to catch the ungodly (you and me) doing the unpardonable. Went down in the MR8 (Previa) and enjoyed a pleasingly brisk dash along the lanes leading the last two miles or so to Car Park 8. I was tail end Charlie to a string of five or so, and directly in front was a Ford Galaxy of the VW Sharan type. I put my right hand indicator on to test Galaxys' use of mirrors and sense of humour - I had neither the intention or ability to actually overtake! He got the joke, as we exchanged pleasantries in the car park and agreed on the virtues of people carriers as perfect high speed country lane conveyances...

There was a brief light shower but after that the weather returned to perfect and stayed that way for the rest of the event. I found a lost Blackberry during the day and handed it in, enquiring about my own, reported loss the day before, to no avail.

I couldn't quite believe my ears when, toward the end of the afternoon, Tony Mason mentioned there was an Esprit competing on the rally stage. Really MUST buy an overpriced programme in future. I resolved it would be my main mission to investigate further, on your behalf, the following day.

Returned at the end of this Glorious second day to discover Lady Luck had damned me for the second day running by allowing the Previas' offside rear to be perforated by a screw somewhere on the way down. Flat as the proverbial pancake. There were, however, two extremely friendly, helpful and willing AA men in attendance and they put the get-you-home on for me with very good grace, a free service available to all attendees, member or not!

## SUNDAY

With the MR8 incapacitated, and my two vans blocking the garage and access to the MR2, and not wanting to wake my neighbours on a Sunday at 6am with the sound of two diesels and a twin-cam, I took my Extra Large Luton down to Sussex. Ever have problem finding your car in the car park at a major event like the FoS? A Luton with your name on the side is the answer! Although, if we all did it...

I managed to get up and away early again, then somehow missed my regular turn off the A23 onto the A272 to Petworth (The Scenic Route) and ended up going The Long Way Round via the A27 through Arundel. As ever when passing Arundel Castle, I reminded myself I must take a look one day. Still made Goody by 07.30 though.

Straight to the top of the hill then to see the rally Esprit. Things were not looking promising when I found it, in the paddock with the rear in the air suspended by an axle stand and trolley jack, rear clamshell removed, with two mechanics working fervently. One came up for air and I asked what was wrong, and about the history of the car. He explained it had been running well enough on the previous two days, but toward the end of Saturday, six runs and deep ruts had taken their toll on the poor thing, bashing the dry sumped Rover V8 into submission, and now they were having trouble getting gears. He said I really should have a chat with the owner, Terry Maynard, as the car had a Very Interesting History. Terry promptly appeared but was obviously and understandably more keen on getting the car going than talking to a complete stranger, so I took a few photos and sat around for about an hour while they tried to fix it. They didn't. Fortunately, he had a very engaging female co-pilot and I had a chat with her.

If you have ever wondered, as I have, about what happened to the original red Esprit show car, then grab a box of Kleenex. The tale I am about to tell is NOT for faint-hearted Esprit fans, or those of a nervous disposition. When Chapman saw Giugiaros' wedge themed Maserati Boomerang styling study, he struck a deal to showcase GG's talents and flag up his vision of where Lotus was going (away from low profit kit cars and into the realms of Ferrari rivaling exotica) by sending The Maestro a lengthened and widened Europa chassis on which to build the silver dream machine the stylist wanted to christen Kiwi, and which was rightly called Esprit. The first study, known as the Silver Car, was followed by a car far closer to production spec, although there were still a few detail features the well trained eye will spot, easiest being the tail panel, which on this pre-production development car - photographed for the first A4 folded "brochure" - is a full width insert carrying tail lights and number plate. Production cars had three separate "pods" carrying left and right Fiat X19/Lancia Beta Monte Carlo tail lamps, and registration plate holder inserted into three separate cutouts in the tail. This Red Car is the only one I have ever seen with this arrangement. A white production spec Esprit was photographed in exactly the same way for a subsequent and otherwise identical brochure. It is the fate and history of this Red Car I have always wondered about. This Rally Esprit, I was told, IS that car! Oh my God, NO!!!!!!

After doing the rounds at Motorshows it was unceremoniously modified for competition use by Lotus, before being passed on to its current owner along with the moulds for its much modified body. This car sits on a modified Europa chassis. It has been fitted with three engines, Rover V8's being first and last, with something else in between that I was told about but cannot remember. As

mentioned, the rear end bodywork is a one-piece removable clam giving easy access to rear chassis, box and engine (which has Lotus branded cam covers). Headlamp pods have been long removed and a crude multivented bonnet takes the place of the original bonnet and pods. The doors retain the original Marina exterior handles. The interior, as you would expect, has been gutted and kitted in competition mode, and yet what appears to be the original ribbed cloth roof headlining has survived all this butchery! The "rail" running across the top of the windscreen is made of wood, and amusingly and faithful to S1 spec, the original bucket seats have been retrimmed in THAT green from the tartan green and red plaid, complemented by red six point racing harnesses. The current owner has had the car in storage for most of the last 20 years, having campaigned it successfully in rallycross in his - and it's - younger days.

So I never saw it in action, but had a long and delightful chat with Terry, during which it seemed I was able to tell him a lot about about Esprit that he never knew. I gave him my contact details in the hope of seeing it on a future outing somewhere, and was promised further info on the cars history would be emailed.

And the rest of the day was almost an anticlimax after that. I was standing admiring Chris Evans Ferrari collection, which apart from the record busting £5,000,000 James Coburn black car, he has had sprayed white with all interiors retrimmed in a fetchingly impractical shade of light blue, when a voice to my left asked me which I liked best. This delightful petite blonde turned out to be competing in the Renault Clio Cup series, and intends to graduate to the 911 series next year. We spent a very pleasant half hour or so talking cars and then she had to go back to work on the Dunlop stand in The House. I was then pounced upon by what I can only describe as the most excited and bubbly blond of the weekend, also from the Dunlop stand, who asked if I enjoyed watching the Dunlop Interviews over the weekend. Told her about Norman and I exchanging stories and went on to discover she is an artist from the midlands and will be coming to London with her work later in the year, so I gave her a card, as that is what I do (Transport Art, among other things). You wait 53 years and then TWO come along together... I also invited them both to Harpers Hunt in September, and as Andrea (my other half) will be there, this could prove interesting enough to get YOU to attend, dear reader....

John H



### STOP PRESS

JOHN U HAS JUST RECEIVED  
DETAILS OF THE BEXHILL CLASSIC  
CAR SHOW ON BANK HOLIDAY  
MONDAY (31ST AUGUST). WE'VE  
MISSED OUT ON A CLUB DISPLAY  
THIS YEAR SO HERE'S A CHANCE  
TO MAKE AMENDS. FULL DETAILS  
WILL BE IN NEXT MONTHS  
NEWSLETTER BUT MAKE A DATE  
IN YOUR DIARY.