

North Kent Lotus Group



Another barbeque under our belt and probably an all time record for attendance. Lucky again with the weather, the day went well although John U thought he'd let down tradition by forgetting the stands for the Lotus flags. Being the one who usually does the donkey work and brings the club regalia to events, the occasional mishap must be allowed.

I was helping out doing some of the cooking along with Pauline, John C, Heather and Sue and from that vantage point I was able to see the arrival of our mini Lotus show. There was lots of interest around Richard P's Caterhams, so as soon as I had the chance I went and had an investigation. Well, Richard had his R500 and also his other rather less extreme 1400 engined Caterham, being the generous chap he is, a drive was offered in the "tame" one which I accepted as I've never driven one and I've got to say, I can see what the attraction ownership is all about - it's my kind of back to basics, man(or woman) and machine - most enjoyable, a bit like a kart with a long nose. Now, his other beast the R500, would I like to go for a ride? Well yes, I think so! The journey comes in two parts; part one - can be described as a poodling pace along the leafy lane to the the main road with all that "man and machine" clunking, clicking and grinding going on - but at the main road towards Hildenborough (part two), a clear stretch of road, a cog was dropped..... and oh my god, my eyeballs have just hit the back of my skull!!! Anyway, I've had a look in the dictionary and there aren't any words to describe it. A definite entry for one of those "50 things to do before you die" type books

So the barbecue was turning into a demo day - I quickly took up Terry's offer for a ride in the Exige, I don't want to repeat myself, but it's nigh on R500 with

the rain gear! (ie roof and wind-screen!).

It may have been too close to the barbeque, but the White Rock Classic Car Show didn't really come up to expectations, there was a bigger turnout of cars for the bbq! - more publicity next year, I think. A nice day, the rain held off and we did have a few outsiders turn up with their cars. So after a pleasant lunch and a chin-wag - the demo's continued on from the barbeque, starting with a "forest-stage" run up to the main road (no hanging around with Howard) in the Evante - very nice, very comfortable, nice noise and felt very grippy from the passenger seat. And then on to Tim's Cayman, I don't think there's much I could say about the Porsche, it's just got everything; sounds right, goes right and feels solid, and it got me to thinking on the way back - what a nice stable to own; the R500 for summer madness, the Exige for winter madness, the Evante for classic looks with modern connections and the Porsche for all year touring.

It's been quite a year for new arrivals and Pauline is now the proud owner of an S2 M100 in splendid Palacio. I think we have our first Lotus owning couple (one each that is). Correct me if I'm wrong.



The other event, since last month was the karting at Filching which Andy did well to get 24 entrants for a two hour enduro. So as well as Andy and Bill there was Ian, John H, Howard T and me so good support from the group and Andy's team gained a podium.

John and Joan and Magnus and Julie took the plunge and did the Club Lotus Welsh weekend on the last weekend in July and had a good time. Julie has promised a write up and photos for next month. It sounded great apart from the

formal dress code - DJ's are not my scene!

Now, up and coming events; next we have the Bexhill show on Bank Holiday Monday - John U is looking after this and then the Mid-Week Run on the Wednesday and Andrew and Debbie's gathering on the Saturday - all in the same week. I'm looking after the mid-week run so meet-up at the Moat at Wrotham at 9.30. The day will include morning coffee, pub lunch and afternoon coffee - if there's time, so it'll be good to see you there. Andrew's picnic on the Saturday should have plenty to drool over as the GT40 group are invited so turn up any time after lunch and don't forget to bring a picnic. The address is over the page.

Magnus is having a trackday next Wednesday 25th at Brands Hatch in the Fury and I'm sure he'll give you a ride if he sees you there, there could also be some spaces left if you fancy taking part. It's on the Indy circuit with timed sessions so checkout the Brands website.

Latest news on the Harper's Hunt is that Club Lotus have very generously donated a prize for the highest placed Lotus so please see Mr H at the next meeting or give him a ring for full details. (www.harpershunt.bravehost.com)

Lot's going on at he factory at the moment. Would you believe a £600k trackday car - the Exos 125; many strange press releases re mystery car announcements; the end of the 1800 Elise/Exige engine and the end of Elise production?; all dealers receiving two years notice of termination of contracts; Bib Lutz in talks with management. I could probably fill the newsletter several times over. One piece of sad Lotus news which Howard brought to my attention was the death of Peter Cambridge - another of those early Lotus pioneers.

That's about it for this month the next club night is on 8th September - I'll leave you with John H's prolific keyboard over the page.

John

FESTIVAL OF SPEED 2010

The only problem I have with the Festival of Speed is deciding how long to go for. I know I am going to love it. I know there will be cars there that I am unlikely to see elsewhere, have never seen before, and have never even been aware of despite having bought at least twice my fair share of car mags and books over the years. If memory serves me right, the first time I attended was for two days (Sat/Sun) and it wasn't enough to see everything twice, as I like to. The following year I went for the three days and loved it. I did three days again the third year, but started to think I might be "overdoing it" and that two days would do after all, as I have a Social Secretary (Wife) and two sons who I only really see at weekends. This year my Social Secretary asked me if I was going, and when I said yes without saying for how many days, she booked me in for the three, either because she loves me and likes me to know it, or because she is glad to see the back of me, not sure which. And then I received the email that you probably did, via Club Lotus (THANK YOU!), saying if you were quick you could get FREE TICKETS from Lotus Cars for the Thursday, the new "Moving Motor Show" day. So I sent off the required email and assumed I wouldn't get tickets, and then did. A hasty bit of rescheduling and delegating on the work front and I was off for a well earned extra-long weekend.

THURSDAY : The Moving Motorshow - Brought To A Halt!

It looked like a winter's morning as I crossed the M25 on the way down the M23. There was fog, not mist, covering the junction, and it did not look like being a Glorious day at all. But the weather regularly deceives, and by the time I was on the A272, which takes you on the most delightful and enjoyable route to Goodwood, the sun was out and promising a perfect day. It very nearly was.

On the approach to Duncton there were warning signs telling you to stick to 20mph due to the road surface being covered in loose stones due to resurfacing work. It certainly slowed me down, and I couldn't help wondering if the threat of stone chips peppering the nose of your chariot is a more effective deterrent to speeding than cameras will ever be. On the way out of Duncton there is a lovely series of bends that end in a hairpin right hander that takes you up the quite steep Duncton Hill. Despite my best efforts, the MR8 failed to hold on to the 911 in front as it overtook a Fiesta Zetec. To be honest, it had trouble holding on to the Fiesta, but I still think the Previa is a wonderful way of getting to Goodwood! The organisers had closed off a lot of the usual local approach roads to accommodate the Motor Show test route, and we were directed into the parking area and footpath that takes you, after a 10-15min walk, to the entrance near the Start Line of the Hill run. It also took you straight to the entrance of The Moving Motor Show hall, where the participating manufacturers were running their demo cars from, and accepting bookings. Or were they?

I had made the effort to get there early. Dealer and manufacturer staff were either still being briefed or hadn't yet shown up at all. On the Lotus stand, Ken Baird's well known white "Spy Who Loved Me" S1 Esprit sat under a dust sheet, opposite a white Evora, the juxtaposition surely intended to reinforce the marketing departments aim to be James Bond's next set of wheels. There were four other Evoras parked there, two red, a light metallic blue, and a metallic grey. I wandered off for a quick look at the other exhibitors and put my name down on the Mazda stand for a go Up The Hill in an MX5, then returned to the Lotus stand at 08.30 where my particulars were taken down by the lovely Cat, who said I would be one of the first out. "Come back at 10.00 Mr Harper". My first ever ascent of Goodwood Hill was also going to be my first ever drive in an Evora!!!

At 09.30 my phone rang. It was the very attractive Cat, apologising as she told me of her mistake in putting my name down, explaining that she had since been informed that the entire allocation of drives for the day had been pre-booked through Lotus dealers for Lotus dealers and their "Associates". She was sorry, but not as sorry as I was. She wasn't the only one to trot out that excuse. Ferrari, Porsche, even Audi - you had to OWN an Audi to get a go in one! Still, the really really nice lady on the Mazda stand had me down for 12.20, the good folk at MG for a run in a TF at 13.45, and at 17.00 I was with Toyota for a go in their new Auris Hybrid. All was not lost. Yet.

The Moving Motor Show was housed in its own structure, one of those temporary buildings that are erected at events these days to house exhibitions and hospitality areas. This one was the size of an aircraft hangar. There were windows and doors down each side along the length of the "building", and the completely open-plan interior was divided up into display areas for the manufacturers down each side, adjacent to the windows, with a central roadway wider than an average urban street and painted grey, running the length of the structure. Members of the public were being allowed to wander though, from manufacturer to manufacturer, stand to stand, along this roadway, while at the same time those lucky folk test-driving cars (their first ever time behind the wheel of each machine presumably) were being allowed to weave their way through the crowd to reach the hill climb track...

I went to the Mazda stand as arranged and was completing the disclaimer form and showing them my driving licence when the sound of an engine suddenly hitting full revs - and staying there - claimed everyone's attention. The sustained roar was followed by the sounds of wood splintering, plastic and glass cracking, metal twisting, shouts from shocked onlookers and a sickening bang, followed by near silence, as people surged to the Jaguar stand to see what the hell had just happened. The Mazda stand was on the opposite side of the road to, and one or two along from, the Jag stand. I saw one man on the Jag stand buckle at the knees and fall to the floor, then onto his back, possibly in shock. A white Honda Civic Type R had torn diagonally across the Jag stand narrowly missing an E-Type on display. Word quickly spread (too quickly?) that a member of the public, who had presumably signed the "I am in good health and there is no reason why I cannot safely drive one of your cars here today" disclaimer form, had blacked-out or had a fit. His foot had jammed open the throttle and the poor Honda staff member supervising had been unable to gain control of the car before taking out the Jaguar display stand table, chairs, and two members of the public who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whatever the truth was, the damage was done. The Motor Show hall was quickly evacuated and cordoned off, as an ambulance, first aiders, Police and Goodwood officials quickly arrived and the public were ushered out of the hall. The Moving Motor Show wasn't going anywhere.

The girls on the Mazda stand said they thought that would be it for the rest of the day, for the rest of the weekend, and quite possibly forever. But come 3pm, the sound of cars making their way up the hill once again, plus a text from the MG staff telling me I had won something in a draw I had no idea I had entered, drew me back to the Motor Show building. On the walk there I heard the first reference made by the commentators over the PA system relating to the mornings incident, stating simply that only two members of the public had required medical attention and that this had happened on site with no need for hospitalisation. The ever-so-nice Mazda lady said that although they had resumed, Mazda managers had decided to forget those whose allotted drive times had passed, and continue with those booked in for the current and upcoming slots. So I missed out on my drive in the MX5.

On the MG stand they were a lot more accommodating. Although I had also missed my time slot with them, most people wanted a go in the new hatch, the MG6, and the TF I wanted to pilot seemed readily available. So my first ever drive Up The Hill was in an MG TF. And very nice it was too. The car was not exceedingly quick but went well enough and seemed well assembled. My win was an MG shoulder bag containing a baseball cap and a Frisbee, all MG branded of course. Did you see that episode of Top Gear too?

My second drive up The Hill took place a little later than booked, at 17.30, in the latest Toyota Hybrid. It has an amazing (and distracting) schematic info panel in the dash keeping the driver informed about the electrical charging status. Without my asking, after mentioning I was a Lotus man, my Toyota supervisor volunteered the information that the engine from the recently launched Lexus LFA "Supercar" (looks too much like a Supra with an aftermarket body kit on for my taste) will be finding its way into the next Esprit.

FRIDAY : Toy Story

The Supercar Paddock all looked a bit familiar. There was a bright green Tesla Sport, which I think has been revealed since last year's Festival, and the new targa-roofed version of the Morgan Aeromax, an opened-up Reventon from Lambo, the usual handful of Bugatti Veyrons (thought they were exclusive...) which, apart from their performance, do nowt for me. The new small Ferrari 458 Italia appeared in the paddock in the

same sickly metallic yellow seen on its main market rival, the Lamborghini Gallardo, at the time of its launch a few years ago. It was repainted in the more usual (and more attractive on a Ferrari) red for its run up the hill. Lotus' old rivals, Ginetta, were present in the paddock with what barely qualified as a Supercar, their slightly ill-proportioned G40, a little more finished than last year as befits its "daily-driver, drive to a race, win and drive home again" Elise-eater ambitions. They also had a new car that wasn't, the G400. After walking round this twice, thinking "I know I saw you here last year and you were not a Ginetta then" I gave up and looked at the tax disc, which revealed it as last year's Farbio GTS 350. In best foot-in-mouth form, I asked the man in the Ginetta shirt if they had bought the project as no-one had bought a Farbio because of the name (I think "I own a Farbio" would take some explaining!) and he turned out to be the man who founded the project and named the thing. A good friend of Mr Ginetta, apparently. Also new was a "not sure if this works for me" Alfa coupe inspired by the better proportioned 1960's TZ series cars.

The Cartier Style et Luxe was also a mix of "Oh dear, saw that here last year" and some I hadn't. The 1955 Ghia Streamline X Coupe was a new one on me (in the metal at least, may have seen it in a mag) and I jumped to the immediate and wrong conclusion this had been inspired by Gerry Anderson's Supercar. Then I realised that in fact it predated the TV show, and if anything, Gerry and designer Derek Meddings had in all probability been inspired by this show car. If you are as old (12.11.1955) and stupid as me the similarities are obvious and numerous. The Etna was there again, possibly for the first time running as ACBC intended with the V8. Giugiaro's Alfa Iguana impressed as an unfulfilled dream, and had the closest thing to an Esprit dashboard I have seen not in an Esprit. It made the Etna look awkwardly executed, and caused me to reflect what an amazing world we could have lived in if only The Designers had had their way. Having said that, I also took an interest in the Cartier Winner, the 1954 Maserati A6GCS Berlinetta. This looks beautifully proportioned in photos, and is. But what is not immediately obvious is that it is rather smaller than you might think, and the door depth, if possibly not the sill height, looked as if it would make getting in and out of an Exige (or new - now old? - Europa, or a Seven, hood up) appear a paragon of practicality. The info board stated it can accommodate six-footers in comfort. But where does the Chiropractor/Osteopath go?

Having spent Thursday concentrating on the Motorshow element, as it was the new feature and only on for that day, today was business as normal. For me, that was a quick initial tour of the trade and toy stands to see who was here and which toys I haven't yet got in my collection were for sale. I was not disappointed. "Buy Of The Day" was a 1/18th scale model of the Elise based GT1 Presentation road car for £20. I also bagged a 1/43rd red drop-top Elan S2 by Kyosho for £10 and a 50th Anniversary Elise S1 by Vitesse for a mere £3. This model is usually £10. Indeed, others exactly the same were on the same stand at that price. When I queried the £3 bargain price I was told "When they are gone, the others are £10..." I also couldn't resist a Lotus Cortina Mk1 in Corgi Collectors Club packaging with the Corgi Collectors Club decals a feature of the model itself. There goes the Evora deposit fund, again...

I made a BIG MISTAKE by wearing a bright yellow T shirt with a black "smiley" face. Those of you with some dress sense may think just wearing it was the mistake, but no. As a red rag attracts a bull, a yellow T-shirt attracts insects, and it seemed as if I was attracting every single minute black beetle-like creature on the Goodwood Estate. The marshals in their hi-vis yellow bibs didn't seem half as troubled by the things, despite being a similar colour. As far as watching real cars went, I took my trusty directors chair along to some of the best spectating spots on the run, outside Goodwood House and just before the bridge.

I really can't make my mind up how I feel about those people you see and read about every now and then who like to have their photo taken with a "Celebrity". I tend to veer between feeling they are either incredibly brave, confident types, asking for a memento that most of us would also like but are too shy to ask for, and thinking they are some kind of cross between an autograph hunter and a stalker. Nevertheless, when Tiff Needel stopped me and asked if he could have his photo taken with me I couldn't refuse. He seemed like a genuine, well balanced, down to earth guy to me... If you watch "Dragons Den" on the Beeb you may remember the artist who won his bid for money to sponsor the production of a limited edition set of sculptures of Pop Icons. His name is Guy Portelli and he was at Goodwood to promote his work to "The Right People". After introducing myself by saying "I've seen you on the telly..." we spent about an hour and a half chatting about art, life, work, the universe, and Dragons Den. He does his own transport, but as he is based just down the road in Tonbridge, I gave him a card anyway. A very entertaining chat was had. I also met up with The Stig.

Simon D called to say that as well as us meeting on the Sunday as arranged, he would be coming on the Saturday as he had, at short notice, been offered a free ticket by a grateful client. An individual whose company should not be missed as he was extremely well connected. I was told it would be fun, and it was.

SATURDAY : Walking with Giants!

I decided, after the exertions of the two previous days, that getting up at 05.00, being on the road by 05.30, arriving at 07.00, staying till mine was the last car in the car park, and not getting to bed till 00.30, had been a bit much, and that I needed a lie-in. My mental alarm clock woke me with a bit of a start at 06.00 from the soundest sleep I've enjoyed for ages. I rushed to collect the usual things plus a change of clothing, including a pair of trousers, shirt, tie and proper shoes, as Simon thought we may be attempting entry to a GRRC hospitality area. As it happened we didn't, but I was prepared. Getting up late and wanting to be down there early meant traveling a little quicker than some approve of. The Previa's speedo said I was doing a bit more than the national speed limit on the M23. It over-reads by a few miles an hour though and you need to take this into account, please Officer..

I doubt I will ever get bored of driving on the A272, a fabulously twisting and undulating road. I am quite happy to spend my cash on the petrol rather than a BnB or campsite as I regard the trip there and back as part of the day out. On arrival, I dumped my directors chair near the bridge again, reassuring the three marshals present who I had chatted to the previous day, that I would return after going to get a drink and use the loo. After the "pit" stop, I thought it would be a good idea, while waiting for Simon and Co to arrive, to take a walk up the hill to the rally area, just in case the Rally Esprit had returned this year. It hadn't, but there was a Talbot Sunbeam Lotus and a Lotus Cortina Mk1 in Alan Mann Racing livery keeping the Lotus flag flying in the blissfully cool but dusty forest. It is well worth remembering the ample shade afforded to spectators in the wood, when you need to get out of what can be fierce, burn inducing sunshine. My favourite though, was an orange Morris Marina. Sponsored in its day by Top Gear's BBC predecessor "Wheebase", it looked as good as new. It was adorned with various messages including one stating "weight is the enemy of speed" (sounds familiar...) and that "you can't have too many toys". Best of all though was the sticker on the roof. Very clever, very funny, if you are a Top Gear fan.

Simon's client turned out to be Sergio Rinland. A race car designer of some standing, having worked for a time at McLaren and elsewhere on various projects. He was accompanied by a friend and recently retired McLaren engineer who was delighted to come across the Alfa 164 look-a-like Procar racer he built in 1988. Being an Argentinean by birth, Sergio took great interest in the Argentinean designed and built Berta LR racer we saw in the race car paddock. He soon became deeply involved in conversation with its Argentinean owner/driver, who was hard at work fixing a broken engine following its first run up the hill that morning. As they chatted about the LR, which stands for La Razon - the name of the newspaper that sponsored the building of the car - two other visitors to the paddock caught Sergio's eye and stopped to say "Hello". One looked a bit like Sven Goran E to me, and was the father of the other, and both were wearing Pagani (as in Zonda Supercar) shirts. I assumed they were members of the owners club. It never pays to assume. I was informed by Si that they were in fact Mr Pagani himself, and son. It was the same story at many of the other race car shelters we visited during the day. Everyone knew Sergio. At one point he received a text message saying "Ha ha, we

beat you!" in reference to the result of the days World Cup football match between Argentina and Germany. It came from the German head of Motorsport at Ford of Europe...

I returned to the bridge to collect my directors chair after seeing Si and company off, and made a mental note (which for once I remembered!) to apologise next day to the marshals for not returning as planned after planting my chair, German Tourist Towel style, to "reserve" a prime spot, and for being good enough to place it out of harm's way (and the refuse collectors) behind the straw bales where they were stationed. Goodwood attracts that kind of considerate person!

SUNDAY : More Work for Clive

Simon decided that he wouldn't bother with today as he had seen it all yesterday. And then changed his mind and came, and was glad he did. I was down there for just after 07.00 and for the last few miles was behind a new Mini. We parked next to each other in the car park and got chatting when I remarked that I liked his T Shirt. One of those current "Best of British" themed items from Asda, it featured the smiling face of the late, great, Sid James. In similar colours, and style, mine had the image that captured England Captain Bobby Moore's magic moment, holding the World Cup above his head in 1966. Our wives' taste in T-shirts turned out to be the first of many things we had in common. For starters, we were both early and waiting to be joined by old mates. We both had a passion for cars (not too surprising I know) and we both had anecdotes to exchange about our car-owning history. Having had breakfast together (a cup of coffee) his friend arrived and they went on their way. Hi John, if you're reading this!

I made my way once again to the bridge on the opposite side of the track to the house, which offers both a close-up of the cars as they pass and a good view of the large TV screen to the left of the sculpture in front of the house, so one can follow the action all the way up the hill and catch the highlights as they are repeated. I stayed there all day, being joined around midday by Simon, the two of us being offered a space by two guys who had claimed their front line positions before I had arrived. The Goodwood atmosphere once again brought out the best in all present and another friendship was formed with a local (Hello Martyn!) who had cycled there and is also a fan of the Brighton Speed Trials, which is where we plan is to meet up next. It really does attract "The Right Crowd".

The weather was a little more overcast than the preceding three days, and just right for spectating. We saw Sir Jackie Stewart take Jim Clarks Lotus Indy Winner up the hill, twice. It was great that the helmet he wore, as a tribute to his late friend and competitor, was a replica of JC's and not the familiar Stewart Tartan banded affair. Being the Big Day of the weekend we were treated to a first sight of the Aston 177 in action. The Argentinean racer ran in the morning, and broke again, exactly as it had the day before. There was a fly-past by the newly refurbished Vulcan Bomber, the only thing that could challenge the cars for visual and aural appeal. Si and I took a stroll through the Moving Motor Show Pavilion which was open but not offering drives. We had a chat with a man on the Jag stand about the Thursday Incident and the new XJ. Simon was impressed by the car's interior, but we both questioned the exterior looks and whether the lack of enthusiasm for the marque is down to "old fashioned out of date styling" or the brands previously reputedly patchy build quality. We agreed, though not with the Jag man, that they had thrown the baby out with the bath water in abandoning the classic styling cues in an attempt to pursue more sales. After all, looking a bit trad has hardly caused the 911 a problem.

I also had an in-depth discussion with a member of the Lotus Marketing Department, putting forward my belief they are missing out on a large section of the market by not re-occupying the gap for which they rightly became famous in the first place, and which is wide open since the demise of TVR. The immense respect and regard for everything related to the original Elan is, in my humble opinion, being criminally ignored. Think how much better the traditional front-engine / rear-wheel-drive package could offer a solution to the 2+2 market than the Evora. We all know that four seater Lotus cars have never enjoyed the success they deserved. The Cortina/Sunbeam/Carlton cars offered a better solution than the Big Elan/Eclat/Excel. But if Our Company is to expand its range and go after the four seater touring car market on its own, then why not take a leaf out of the current Ferrari Brochure and revert to producing a more practical, conventional design? I am sure a car with a trad configuration and bearing one of the most revered names in motoring would sell well. The usual answer for not doing this, from Lotus Marketing men, is "Mazda MX5". But please don't tell me they couldn't produce a better car, a more up-market car, a special car, a LOTUS! They had the MGB and many other established competitors in the market when they launched the original Elans, and it didn't stop them then.

On the last run up the hill of the weekend, the driver of an F1 Lotus did something silly as he passed under the bridge. I think he put the left side onto the grass. The car spun and stuffed itself into the straw bales, badly bending the left front suspension. More work for Clive and Co? I offered him my services on the Saturday, while wearing the very expensive Classic Team Lotus shirt I had purchased from him in person at Goodwood two years earlier. I asked if they needed anyone to make the tea? He said they "didn't have a kettle with them" and I countered with "not a problem, I can bring one from home tomorrow" but he had other things on his mind. I am sure his Dad would have found me something to do...



John H