



# North Kent Lotus Group



July 2010

Dear Enthusiast

Well, we were in the lucky position to be able to attend both the 24hrs and the Classic Le Mans this year and great time we had too. We went both times with Ian & Heather and whilst we didn't get to meet up with other NKLG attendees at the Classic I did get a rather urgent text message from John H on the Friday night!

He'd had the invitation to go down with Simon on the Friday and jumped at the chance (first-time visit to Le Mans). Anyway, the text message basically said help, we're on fire!! Yes, Simon's green Elite was burning in the middle of France. The weather was as scorching hot as it was in the UK that weekend and the journey down saw dozens (or was it hundreds!?) of British classics stopped at the roadside. But Simon suffered the ultimate with an electrical fire that was only millimetres and seconds from becoming a fuel fire and possibly a total write-off.

By the time I picked up the message they had it well under control (with the help of some valiant bystanders equipped with hefty extinguishers).

So Ian's offer for us to jump into action and rewire the ignition circuit to get the basics going wasn't required - the recovery services had already organised the repatriation of the car and Simon and John managed a lift back via a friend. What you might call an *eventful* Classic LM for Simon (and John!)



We have a new arrival, Terry has sold his 190 Elise via Pistonheads and now has an Exige "variant" it's a bit like the silhouette racers of the early eighties - to all intent and purposes it looks like a standard S1 Exige but underneath it has extensive mods including a 330 bhp Audi turbo motor.

Some car! I'll make a point of joining him on a track day to have an in-car demo.



The above picture is from Roger's Sundridge Fete on Sunday 18th. It was an almost ad hoc affair with most of the attendees being drawn from the club night on the previous Wednesday.

Anyway, it was a very pleasant afternoon with a surprising turnout and variation of cars. Being just an afternoon event made it just right and the "Midsomers Murders" style garden fete in delightful surroundings in the blazing sun was enjoyed by all - one to put in the diary for next year, I think.

Another first seen car at Sundridge - but not new to the group was Howard's Evante and he's supplied some info and photos. It's noticeably larger than the Elan and according to Howard a nicer car to drive. I've had the write up for a while now so this letter is the ideal time to give fuller details which you can find over the page.

Another event which could and should become annual is Jon and Michelle's "Vino Run" It had a lot against it as far as attendance goes - holiday time; a bit short notice; promise of a scorching hot day and last but not least the England match in the afternoon. But despite all that we had a good turnout including Richard and Janet along with his sister each in a Caterham. After Coffee at Poulton Wood Golf Centre we headed off into the Kent countryside with Jon and Michelle again managing to find some excellent *empty* country roads. On to lunch at Chapel Down Winery (the food and service was very good) and then on to the wine making tour at Chapel Down. It was such a hot day and a few of us didn't make the afternoon vineyard visit but there's always next year so a big thanks to Jon & Michelle - let us have the date a bit earlier for 2011! (*stop press - they may repeat the run in the Autumn*)

I unfortunately couldn't make Snetterton but reports and feedback made me feel I should have! John H has provided a write up which is over the page. He also managed to make the Goodwood Festival as did Terry and myself and has once again supplied a full report which I'll have to hold over for next month. It's a great day on the Friday (second time I've been) as the crowds seem just about right - and if you haven't been it's a must go event in any

petrolheads year, as is the Revival.

Up and coming events. Don't forget our Classic show at the White Rock on Sunday 15th August - if you know anybody with anything interesting invite them along too.

It'll be a pretty low-key affair with the display area kindly supplied by Frank, the landlord. Please make a note in your diary. We have the Bexhill 100 car show on August Bank Holiday which John & Joan are looking after and the midweek run on 1st September. Full details of these next month.

The date for Andrew and Debbie's picnic at their home in Ockley near Dorking has been changed to Saturday 4th September as the Sunday has been hijacked by "Chelsea Auto Legends" which will include many of the GT40's that Andrew and Debbie have coming to their event. So don't forget to alter your diary - full details next month. Finally, events-wise, Andy has arranged a 2 hour kart endurance for 8th August for teams of two or more at Filching. Time is tight as the 8th is Sunday week and the starting time is 10am and not 1pm as I told a few of you - but please let Andy or myself know ASAP. Details over the page.

Sorry this letter is a little late - I must try harder next month!!!! I had finishing touches to do and it should have been with you last week - so the Barbeque has come and gone in the meantime, a full report and pictures will be with you next month.

Next meeting at the White Rock is on 11th August so see you there if not before.

John

## Evante

Country of Origin : England

George Robinson of VeganTune thought that Colin Chapman's Lotus Elan was a fine sports car, but he felt that he could do even better.

The result was the Evante, which is quite clearly based on the Lotus Elan, but under the skin is a quite different beast.

The chassis is a more rigid structure made with tubes instead of sheet steel, the geometry is quite different, with different track and wheelbase and the reinforced resin body includes Kevlar (as used in bullet proof jackets) in critical places instead of Glass Fibre and the bumper areas also include Carbon Fibre for a stronger than steel body.

Fitted as standard with 1700 VTA Ford Kent engine, the Evante is a car that out-accelerates and out-maneuvres the Elan.

A new firm was split off from VeganTune in the mid 1980s called Evante Cars Ltd, to produce

the Evante. Cars were produced to order, with each customised to suit the buyer; orders came from all over the world. Alas it was a bad time for a new specialist car company and the recession caused the firm to close.

Only a limited number of these fine cars exist and VeganTune remains the sole worldwide agent for their repair and maintenance.



## Snetterton Festival 2010

The day started like any other car event day: TOO BLOODY EARLY! Mind you, all I am complaining about is getting up at 06.00 to get to Ian B by 07.00 to take up the irresistible offer of a ride in his Steven's Esprit Turbo up to Snetty. Had we been part of John U's plan to meet at Dartford at 6 am to be up there by 08.00 I wouldn't have gone to bed at all! As it was, we arrived at the usual NKLG Dartford rendezvous more or less on time and before Richard, who had his young son along, enjoying his first ever outing in the Elan Sprint thanks to an innovative inflatable booster seat. You have to get 'em hooked at an early age. Must be where I went wrong. We played leapfrog with a few other Loti on the way up, and pulled off for a wee break (in both senses) at the Cambridge Services, parking the Turbo next to an almost identical example in the car park for a snap. The owner of the other Esprit couldn't resist either. Jim Clark's red (and white hardtop) Elan S2 was in the car park too.



The queue for Snetterton off the A11 was back to the bottom of the slip road when we joined it, and a few experienced and crafty visitors shot past us up to the next junction and doubled back thinking they

would jump the queue by not lining up with all the other people from London. Among them were a grey Evora and a red Excell, which I am delighted to say, were still behind us as we inched into the race-track grounds. A moment of indecision about where we were to collect our tickets from saw me sprinting across a field to a signed but apparently deserted ticket booth, while Richard and Ian maintained their places in the queue, just in case. I have my uses! The ride there and back was my first experience of a Stevens Esprit and I think the added refinement over the S2/S3 cars shows. It was all most enjoyable, and once again a big THANK YOU to Ian for taking the risk of having me for company, and to Heather for having some "urgent gardening" to attend to. Their cats are lovely too!!!

It was a typical Norfolk summer day: cold, grey, with a biting wind at times. It was too much for the NKLG gazebo, which was taken down before it could be blown down. Queuing for what little food there was resulted, on reaching the counter, with the inevitable "we're out of that mate". They even ran out of water for tea at one point!

The star of the show failed to materialise. Word spread quickly through the crowd that Ford had refused permission for Jim Clark's Indy Winning Type 38 to be exhibited. Studying the programme when I got home revealed, in Clive Chapman's interview, his apology for the no-show, but without explaining why. Another disappointment was the rumoured appearance of "rarely seen road car prototypes"

which I learned about when reading Ian's print-off info sheets on the way up. They remained rarely seen as far I could see.

And yet it was all worth it, as ever. The rest of the "star" cars, and the fact it was probably a once in a lifetime opportunity to see an example of every Lotus FI car in the same place, made up for it. Mind you, every time I went into the covered "Race Grid" display area it was like entering a rugby scrum, or being at a motor show on anything other than Press Day. It was difficult to get a good look. The on-track parade of the cars being pushed along by willing volunteers looked a bit comical, as though they couldn't afford the petrol, but we were then rewarded by the sight and sound of a few being given their head immediately after. The fly past (it WAS that fast!) by the Type 127 (current) FI car, and the glorious howl/shriek it gave, was again worth the trip by itself. How fast must the other cars/drivers be going to keep our baby at bay?

My favourite car of the day belonged to a man with a similar sense of humour to mine. A single seater racer in JPS livery. I never knew it stood for Just Plain Sexy, did you? Surely the best ever replacement for the frequently banned official John Player Special script, it was a joy to happen across. Top marks to the inventive wit of the man who did it. Was it a Lotus though? cont



Lotus Cars were giving out a nice poster and a Current Range brochure like they were going out of fashion. Well, the brochure was going out of date. It states on the cover that it contains info on the Lotus Range 2010. A good quality, old fashioned, glossy showroom brochure, rather than the single page "spec sheet" we brochure collectors have become used to being handed in recent years, it must have cost the marketing department a few quid. Why limit it's shelf life by putting a year on the cover? The specs do change frequently I suppose. As a follow up to Neil's email about the rumoured deletion of the Europa from the range, it was interesting to note the car did not feature in this brochure, but that it did include the recently faceplates Elise, yet was presumably prepared some time ago.

The official MSV/CTL program for the day had a two page feature (advert) on the latest limited editions of Elise and Exige which celebrate the contribution made by (and the retirement of) Roger Becker. All Good Stuff! By contrast, tucked away on what looked to me like an afterthought, postage stamp sized panel on the Lotus On Track page, there was a brief apology from Mike Kimberley for not being able to be there. You just know that if he could have he would have (been there) and it left me wondering why he wasn't. The panel was so small and easy to miss, and the type so tiny many really would need a magnifying glass to read it, that it was a bit of an insult. The Tall One deserves better. A Limited Edition for example...

Neil made a thorough examination of the paintwork of the three "most famous" Mk I Lotus Cortinas on display, and was not convinced any of them were authentic. I tried to check the contents of the boot of the one that had belonged to Great Train Robber Bruce Reynolds, just in case no-one else had. Only succeeded in bending my crowbar. Never knew Ford locks were that good. It was curious to be in the presence of a car with such an infamous owner and to take on board that

had it not been for his arrest over this crime it may have been less likely to have survived in the low mileage, showroom original condition that it is. Would it possibly have been put to "good" use as a getaway car in a robbery less famous? All of which has started me wondering what Neil intends to use his for...



Having recently wrecked the auto-gear-box on The Wife's VW Polo by demanding she towed my 3.5 ton van for a mile or two, and having been told the car will fail its next MOT anyway on rust near the seat belt anchor points and that it will need to be replaced with another small hatch to go shopping in, and as I am still "Looking For A Lotus", I am wondering if I can kill these two birds with one stone. Anyone got a Talbot Sunbeam Lotus the don't want...?

John H

Dear all

Le Mans - well memorable again. The freakishly hot air temperature on the journey down from Dieppe saw the car run as hot as it ever has (off the 110 degree scale that is). We saw cars at the roadside time after time with bonnets up and steam everywhere. Then a longish queue to get into the Beausejour camping road.

Stop, get out, pay the fee to camp, back to car, start it and reverse 10 metres and a lady points at the bonnet.

Smoke from passenger side of bonnet. Lots. Turn engine off, grab extinguishers, lift the bonnet a little, aim and empty the extinguishers. Forgot the turn master switch in car but remember to disconnect battery - glad it is in the boot. Campers rush to enjoy the fire and/or to help to put it out. Then a Brit drives up sharply and gets out of his van an extinguisher big enough to put out WW2 fires and at last no flames at all and we are in control of the engine bay at least. Then we turn to the massive amounts of smoke from the electrical wiring at the back of the instruments - smoke not flames but the metal was very, very hot so we spray the back of the instruments as best we can and soon again feel in control. Breath again, quite some 3 or so minutes.

The massive extinguisher that did so well turned out to belong to an ex-Land Rover engineer who had liberated several when he was made redundant. But the fact we had taken two, one big and one medium at least kept the fire from getting really going until he arrived.

So lucky. Almost any other scenario sees the car like the famous 1962(?) Le Mans Elite - little bits of metal left in a pile of burnt fibreglass.

So lucky the damage is all repairable with time. It was the starter solenoid. We saw flames coming from it. The underbonnet temp had been 100 degrees plus I think. The air filter of the front carb has a small black area but that may be the burning

horsehair between the inner and outer shell of the bonnet falling on it. No sign at all of burning fuel but the lines well on the way to burning through.

The bonnet halves have come apart but the top one not lost its shape, just some paint. The fibreglass in the area of the solenoid seems OKish. Certainly not all burnt away. Everything in the engine bay looks suspect - of course it does. The master cylinders look black in a most odd way, perhaps because the fluid boiled. Just what one would expect I suppose, not worse.

A rewire will be needed and the instruments and switches must all be suspect. Windscreen seems fine.

Until Paul has agreed the way ahead with the insurers we will not touch the car which is now on the way back as I have the RAC recovery service. Once it is here I will let you all know but thinking caps on please. We are NOT looking for silly favours, just help with ideas. Back on road better than ever by 1 April 2010 or else.

Sleep tight you drivers of plastic cars.

Simon



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