

# North Kent Lotus Group

Dear Enthusiast

You're got to hand it to Mr Harper, he makes a good job of his annual Harpers Hunt. With ever suffering Andrea and his two sons Ben and Tom they ensure the day goes well. His full report, over the page, tells the full story.

We must attempt it one year but I'll admit that I'm not a big fan of treasure hunts. John & Joan were the only NKLG participants - perhaps a few more of us next year? And yes there is a next year - see the new website [www.harpershunt.moonfruit.com](http://www.harpershunt.moonfruit.com)

Just under nine hours, that's how long it takes a gaggle of Elise's and Elise variants to do 1000 kilometers of the Brands Hatch short circuit. Was it a boring unenjoyable day? Well I don't think so, but then endurance racing is my thing. It's been 20 years since Brands has staged a 1000km and if my memory serves me right, that was one of the last of the Group C sports car rounds (halcyon days. I was there!).

To put it into perspective, a thousand kilometers took the big sports cars six hours back then. So nine hours might seem a little pedestrian! But no, it wasn't.

It was very good to see 17 out of 25 starters survive the ordeal. I was an early bird and saw the start at nine o'clock as did Howard E.



So, Howard, Tim, Terry, Howard and Jenny and me enjoyed an excellent day's racing and had time for a relaxing afternoon coffee break back at Howard's place, inspecting his stable.

We returned to the circuit to see the closing laps of the race - it was crazy, pretty well pitch black - Druids certainly was - and one car had a failing alternator so was flying round with headlights barely glowing. Great stuff.

The star performer was the Fox sponsored Exige, which won the race and also provided the fastest lap. Evidently Terry tells me that the "Fox" involved is the Fox fishing tackle company. The "company" car looked a little out of place amongst the Lotuses!



It's that time of the year when things are winding down and the SORN's are on the agenda. Both Terry and Ian reported laying up their Lotus for the Winter at the club night

And talking of the club night it was quite a turn out for a

cold, dismal November evening. Frank, the landlord had moved the pool table and the pool players and our group seemed to co-exist just fine. The main complaint was the car-park with some very dodgy parking going on (not us, I hasten to add!). The Steering Group have to investigate!

Two new Lotus owners arrived - both with Elises but I'm not quite sure if they've both signed up as regular members at the moment. Full details next month.

There's still time to get your booking in for the Christmas meal on the 3rd. Please send your form to John U as soon as possible or give him or Joan a ring.

Now, Howard's always sending me weird and wonderful car related emails and some I don't subscribe to (like a door that disappears into the sill, which defies any laws of physics!) but his latest one had me thinking, why has nobody thought of the design before? (perhaps they have?) It appears that Michelin have come up with the airless tyre. Coming to a Quickfit near you anytime soon!??

Next club night is on 8th December, five days after the Christmas meal. So I'll see you in December.

John



## **HARPERS HUNT 2010 : ANOTHER LOTUS 1-2 WIN!**



We had just eight teams this year compared with twelve in 2009. but the quality remained high even if the quantity was diminished. Everyone present agreed the weather could have been kinder. But it could have been worse. It was all a bit grey and overcast but the rain did hold off until the (not quite bitter) end. It may be the reason a number of expected first time Hunters failed to show (and certainly why no one from NKLG came to see the Trophy Presentation, as some did last year). We had apologies blaming the need to earn a living in two cases, a shunt just days before in another, and a domestic crisis involving a water leak, a collapsed ceiling, an emergency call-out for a plumber, builders and urgent redecorating. And I believe them...!

### ***More of The Same, But Different***

Last years Hunt included a lunchtime break at which the answer sheets for the morning run were collected in for marking and the "Part Two" questions were given out. All a bit much for my mini-Vorderman wife, so this time the teams received a full set of questions/clues at the start and marked each others answers at the end. Lunch could be taken at any of the many excellent hostelry's along the route. More efficient and more fun! Last years winners proved me wrong when I informed all those taking part that there were "too many questions to answer". This year I raised the bar and set rather more. To compensate, there were no Challenges this time, and no Harpers Hubcaps to look out for. Marks were also awarded, as before, for matching the established mileage and marking the correct route on the supplied map. Points were lost for deviations from the intended route and for miles over or under. This years winners were the only team to get perfect 10's for these two elements. Points were also earned for arriving at the finish. First back received 12 points, second back 11 points, third back 10 points, etc. The first three places were taken by the second, third and fourth cars back, and they were the last three to be sent on their way at the start.

It was great to see all three Elans return to do battle. Last years winners were incredibly determined to retain the Trophy. Last years "only did half the Hunt" team were equally determined to take it from them, and with a few events of their own devising behind them, were well positioned to do just that. Our third Lotuseers were the team I thought most likely to win as they have a track record of doing just that, but this was not to be their year. On their arrival, I was informed the Elan+2 of Team Croft was not in the best of health and was unlikely to make it out of the meeting place car park. Clutch problems, and after a £2000 service... ow! They assured me the car had run faultlessly for the past 20 years. I offered to buy it on the spot. They refused. You can therefore imagine my delight (and theirs) when Team Croft became the third car to arrive home at The White Rock car park. All the more

remarkable when you take into account the fact that as last years winners, they were made to start last this year.

Team Richardson, who came last year in their concours Karmann Ghia VW, turned up this time in their Porsche 928, and I am ashamed to say I did not recognise them at first. I would have remembered inviting a Guards Red 928 and knew I hadn't. They have been unable, for reasons still to be discovered, to access the Harpers Hunt website, so we had not received a photo of the Porsche either. They chose to come in it as the weather was not looking promising, and while their wonderful VW has been restored at great expense and is now a "dry days only" car, the 928 is still "work in progress". Next year I hope to see their OTHER VW coupe... Team Parfitt were back in their Boxster, giving this years Hunt a pleasing Porsche v Lotus element.

Once again we had a competitor from the MR2 fold, but not last years Mk3. This time the Toyota flag was waved by Team McMahon in their Mk1 (handling by Lotus!), it's serious competitive intent made clear by the front number plate's type and positioning, improving cooling and performance by adding lightness...Team Howard were back and once again chose to leave their Mk1 MR2 at home and compete in a something-or-other hatchback. A shame, as the extra point earned for turning up in something sporty would have made a significant improvement to their score...!

Last year Team Ney came in a black VW Golf VR6. They couldn't come this year (work) but the white Golf of Team Ashwood stood in.

### ***And they're off - way off...***

This years entrants were sent on their way in order of those least likely to win. First away therefore were last years losers, Team Howard. Despite my briefing, AND my calling out to them once they had jumped into their car and started their engine to remind them READ THE INSTRUCTIONS AND FIRST CLUES BEFORE LEAVING, Team Howard were so eager to get under way that it was only after about five minutes that they realised the first four clues were to be found at the meeting point. They returned as the last teams to leave were being sent on their way. Despite being given their head start, Team Howard were once again the last team to reach the final destination, and then only after a phone call from me to tell them to get to the White Rock ASAP as every other team had made it to the finish and we were about to start marking the answers. They arrived as we finished.

### ***And The Winners (and Losers) Are...***

Another new feature this year was the Results Board for displaying the points scored in each category and the final results. You may have seen something similar on Top Gear when they do their Challenges. The teams couldn't keep their eyes off it, as each set of figures was added. The last numbers to be added were the points from the clues sheets. Totaling-up and final positions was done away from their gaze, adding deliciously to the tension.

In last place (**8th**), because they really didn't try and only came along to wave the NKLG flag and offer me moral support, were Team Underhay in their M100 Elan.

In last but one place (**7th**) were last years losers Team Howard. Once again, they couldn't quite stay on course and got a bit lost. As per last year, using the Satnav eventually paid off (it got them to the White Rock). Team Howard was made up of the owner of one of my client companies, his son and an employee (who did the navigating...) The name of his company is Ashwood Interior Woodcraft.

First to the finish, Team Ashwood was made up of more AIW employees, and despite being first home, only came **6th** in their VW Golf. An all-male team of three, I was delighted to learn this slight disadvantage had not deterred them at the point in the Hunt where, in a Pub, one of the clues was to be found in a Ladies loo (the other was of course in the Gents). They somehow got both right. Now that's what I call trying to win!

Team Parfitt in their Porshe Boxster came **5th** and were most disappointed with their position. This was partly due to going "off-piste" due to a place-name spelling mistake that I made in the clues, and which my back-up team of four (wife, two sons and Aunt) failed to notice when we did a pre-event trial run with them trying to solve the clues and follow the route instructions I had prepared. The mis-spelt place name failed to bamboozle any other team however (including Teams Howard and Ashwood!) all of whom followed the route instructions and realised the spelling mistake for what it was. I compensated Team P for the added mileage but couldn't see a way to even things up further as no other team was similarly affected. Decisions, decisions...

Newcomer father and son Team McMahon in their MR2 (son giving Dad a rare outing in his car) came **4th** and were clearly exhausted but elated by their effort.

**3rd** place was claimed by the team who came so close to winning last year, Team Richardson.

**2nd** were last years winners, a bitterly disappointed Team Croft.

**1st** therefore, in their M100 Elan, were Team Thorpe. Chris and wife, from Club Lotus Suffolk, had organised their own scatter hunt last year, in which I came second.

I think they enjoyed winning even more than organising! As highest placed Lotus, they also received the £30 Club Lotus Voucher as well as - when they return the trophy next year - a cheque for the charity of their choice.

Team Thorpe got six fewer clues but scored perfect 10's for Route and Mileage and one point more for arriving at the finish just before Team Croft. I think you can get some idea of just how reluctant Team Croft were to hand over "their" Trophy by looking at the photos. You will see that Chris T is a bit bigger than David C. I believe the "Intimidation Factor" played a part in the eventual surrender of the Trophy...



I must thank once again all those who entrusted their Sunday to me. As some of you will know, there is nothing worse than organising an event and having no-one show up. I wonder whether we could get more teams out next year if additional alternative days were on offer. Watch this space : [www.harpershunt.moonfruit.com](http://www.harpershunt.moonfruit.com)

And I must again thank my other half Andrea, and my sons Tom and Ben, for tearing themselves away from Facebook, Playstation, and Homework in order to help with checking the route instructions and clues on the test run, and the mileages and scores of the competitors on the day. I think they almost enjoyed it this time.

John Harper NKLG

This months Harper's Mystery Photo is over the page.

# HARPER'S MYSTERY CAR

