

North Kent Lotus Group



Dear Enthusiast

What changeable weather we've had! A wet and dismal Barbecue, a warm and sunny Brands Festival. Luckily the decision had been taken to hold the BBQ back at the White Rock - and Frank the landlord was prepared for whatever the weather threw at us.



I suppose we have had a good run for the past few years - I can only remember one other wet one. So a good time was had by all and thanks must go to those involved with organising the day. The Lotus Festival at Brands Hatch was altogether different, weather-wise. I attended the Saturday with a good turnout of cars and the photos supplied showed Sunday to be the same. Was it a first on Sunday - the first Evora at a club display? I think it was. Jon and Michelle supplied a nice dollop of Norfolk Mustard on both days.



Bargains were to be had at Brands and Roger D found a nice selection of official Lotus apparel. I swiftly picked up a couple of cotton shirts and a gilet at a bargain price, as did a few others. We'll probably see a few on club night!! Vaughn was a bit more serious and secured a complete stainless sports exhaust for his Elise with two spare tail pipes thrown in for a song. He tried to convince me that I should replace mine - but there's years of silencing left in mine!?? Vaughn and Roger R have forwarded a selection of pics from the weekend - see the back page also.



Up and coming events include Bexhill this coming B/H Monday. Vaughn has suggested we meet up beforehand so give him a ring for full details (see panel below).

The following Sunday (6th) is the autumn run finishing at Howard and Jenny's - please see the panel on the back page for full details. The midweek run has been cancelled this year, mainly due to me not having much time to prepare for it but also it might be a little close to Howard and Jenny's and I must admit I fancied doing that instead.

Edenbridge is on 20th September and Roger has supplied details which are also on the back page. We shall be away so won't be able to make it this year.

I'll leave you with Richard C's Lotus visit held over from last time - it sounds like he had a great time. Next club night is on the 9th so see you there.

JOHN

ROLLING EVENTS DIARY

August

31 Bexhill Classic Show

Vaughn

September

6 Autumn Run

Meet at The Moat Wrotham Midday Howard and Jenny

20 Edenbridge Show

A Day Out.....June 26 2015

This year I had the dubious pleasure of celebrating a “significant” Birthday. “So what would you like as a present?”, asks my wonderful Missus. “Well”, I replied, “I think I should do something car/Lotus related... how about a Classic Team Lotus tour?”

Come the day of said celebration, and I am presented with a Gift Voucher to none other than the “Lotus Driving Academy – Licence Level 1”.

“Wow”.

I booked the day to occur in June (which of course subsequently clashed with the Nuclear Power Station visit!) and travelled up the night before from the office (Slough) to meet up with my brother who was attending as a guest. We stayed in Norwich overnight to avoid an early morning rush – as it was going to be an 08:00 start.

Those of you who know me well are aware I don't do Track Days – certainly not in my dear old Elan with its 40-year-old Hubs / Wishbones & whining differential. However, I was looking forward to this day, and we turned up on the dot, to be met in the morning with 3 instructors; 2 Guides; 1 Boss and 1 co-ordinator. There were 12 individuals partaking, with probably another 8 guests or so, so quite a big group. Lotus have a strict “No Cameras onsite rule” so we were all good little soldiers and observed protocol.....(for now). The Tour Guides were Mick Pomfret, who has worked for Lotus since the Chesnut days, and Guy Munday, who used to be involved on the Sales Side, and who most of you may recognise from his regular write-ups in Club Lotus News. The Instructors were ‘Bill-Nighy look-a-like’ Graham White, sometime racer Steve Darbey and F3 2008 National Champion Jay Bridger. All the cars were straight Production Run Elise “S”s – powered by the 220 BHP 1.8 ltr Supercharged engine. The only change for track use was the fitment of Track Day Tyres.

We were split into 4 groups of 3 – there were 3 cars available each go. I was in the fortunate position of being one of the 1st on Track, with Groups 2 and 3 waiting their turn, and Group 4 being the first to have a Production facility Tour. Lotus' track was split into 2x areas for the day – the South Circuit & the North Circuit. The former was twisty, the latter had longer straights and a chicane and hairpin. After some light breakfast, there followed a general track briefing, an initial car briefing, and then off we went – with Graham as my guide. This is now where I think the day was really well devised. The goal wasn't lap times / corner splits / ego-trips or feeling that you were part of a bullish testosterone competition. The focus was on enjoying the car, thinking about your driving and how the car responds to it, as well as understanding lines / braking etc. You got a good 20-odd minute stint in the car, which worked out 12+ laps or so. I started with the North Circuit which is easier to learn, and some initial observations were that the car had plenty enough power, and more grip than I knew what to do with. As I got more used to it I realised just how much more capability there was to come. The chequered flag fell and we popped back in, to let the other groups have a go.



The Driving Academy area operates out of the Control Tower building next to the circuit, so we were fully self-contained with all day Teas/Coffees/Snacks. Highlights included a non-stop loop of Lotus TV adverts which were great the 1st time around, but became wearing over the day(!). As the number of attendees was quite large, there were plenty of fellow enthusiasts present – some had come from overseas (Switzerland; Germany; Holland) as well as elsewhere in the UK, and we all had different levels of driving experience. So even though there were some large gaps between sessions, there were always plenty of people to speak to. Before I knew it, it was time for run 2 – which for me was with Steve on the South Circuit. This had a serious of mini-esses, which again showed the great roadholding of the car. Steve was very keen to ensure I had confidence in the cars' capabilities, and simple instructions like “Just floor it – it'll do it” became as easy as that!! Put the power down, and boom – non-stop acceleration. You soon get used to it, the fact that it just, well, goes..... It was also a great chance to really get to grips with the cars' brakes. They really were very, very, very, good. As it was twistier, this circuit required more concentration, and in many ways was more satisfying. Before you knew it – the chequered flag appeared again and it was time to relax a bit.

As we were based in the Control Tower overlooking the circuits(s), we had a good view of the cars when they returned – preceded by smells of engine; brakes; clutch & tyre rubber. It was also surprising how often they had to be refuelled. We must have been going too fast!

Lunch time included a decent buffet spread – and after a wee break it was our turn for the factory tour of the Production facility. There are now 2x Production lines – one for the Evora and one for everything else. The factory was very quiet, as Lotus Cars are currently undertaking 4 and ½ day working – Friday afternoons off! We didn't see anything too new (Wot, no new Esprit?!), but there were some Evora 400s in prebuild. Some very nice Exiges, as well as some bespoke bored-out 2.0 Litres Elises for the Chinese markets. An interesting aside is that the Lotus badge is amended for Chinese Markets so it effectively says “New Lotus” as there is already a Lotus Company out there. Our guide was Mike Pomfret – who was very open about how the items were built – and what was bought in as opposed to built in-house. You will not be surprised to hear that the majority of items were built offsite & shipped to Hethel for final assembly. In addition, it was pleasing to see the number of checks that occur during the build process, as well as re-evaluation of processes throughout the build cycle. It's not a “1 man with a hammer” approach.

By mid-afternoon it was time for my final run – again with Graham, and back on the North circuit. It was a chance to put into practice what had already been learnt. Interestingly, it was the first time I felt relaxed enough to start looking at the gauges – and I noticed there seemed to be no redline on the Tach. I guess my max revs reached was about 6500 – which equated to about 95 mph in 4th / 5th gear (Can't remember as I type this). The engine really did pull like a train – from slow speed corner exit whilst still in 3rd it will roar from say 1700 revs with no hiccup at all – really, really, torquey.

And before you knew it, the session was over (again). Once everyone had had their last go, it was time for the Instructors to take us out individually (Including guests). I had Steve for this trip – and you can tell he loves his job! However he was very smooth, and had no qualms at letting Jay overtake us. I glanced at the speedo and I think we were getting about 105-110 mph before braking at the chicane. He did leave his braking veeery late. It's only at this time that you realise how much faster you really could go! My brother was taken by Jay – and said he was a compete nutter ☺. (I did have the advantage of course of knowing which way the trick weaved – he didn't). By this time camera use was more relaxed.



At the end unfortunately there was no time to go the shop (Just as well) – and even the journey home was fantastic – under 3 hours door-to-door in Friday evening rush hour !



Once the runs were over (and the cars breathed a sigh of relief) then we all assembled for a quick visit over the road to...Classic Team Lotus ! It was my first visit to Potash Lane, and was somewhat rushed as we had been running later during the day. So Guy gave us his "History in 40 minutes tour....!" It clashed with the Goodwood FoS Friday, so some cars (notably 72 / 79) were not present but there was a good variation of 18, 24, 32B, 49, 82, 94T & 99T. Pride of place, though, had to go to the skin & bones of the very first Type 12 prototype, now being restored.

Once I got back home I looked up some of the people involved. It looks like Lotus has heavily outsourced the whole operation. Although all the bookings are handled through www.lotusdrivingacademy.com , all the instructors are freelance (although they recognise a good gig when they see it). Interestingly Lotus let out the test track to Car Clubs at various times – the latest being 5th July. You can hire it for £79 per vehicle – using your own car.....may be worth something for the club to keep an eye on. More details can be found on www.magnitude-events.co.uk



I hope this has given an inkling of what the day holds. Note if you go to Driving Academy Level 2 and Level 3 then the opportunities increase in both Car types (Exiges and Evoras come into play) as well as opening the circuit up into a merging of the South & North circuits. You need a large cheque book though. (It is Lotus, after all).

If you want to see footage of the full test track being used, then check this YouTube video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLJbraAe-uQ

Richard C



**WEBMASTER/NEWSLETTER
EDITORS REQUIRED**
Please contact Roger



Autumn Run

On Sunday 6th September the Autumn Run will be taking place with a start at midday from The Moat at Wrotham. Jon will be leading the run through the Kent and Sussex countryside, with a stop for coffee, ending at Howard and Jenny's for further refreshment at around 3.00 pm. The Kent and Sussex Lancia Group have been invited to attend and in addition, to introduce a further challenge to the afternoon, you are invited to bring photos cars you have owned to illustrate your past motoring history. Please contact John P and advise him if you would like to participate or attend by 1st September.

Best wishes

Howard and Jenny



Edenbridge Motor Show 20th September.

I need to let the organisers know who and how many by the end of the month, so please let me know if you'd like to attend asap. If you wish, just let me have your details and I'll complete and return the form on your behalf. Ref. the question of whether you are insured for the event, I called my insurers (Flux) for advice. They were a bit surprised by the question, and rightly took the view that we would simply be parking in a field, so they confirmed I was covered for the event. Unless you indicate to the contrary, I shall assume you are covered. As previously suggested, we'll have a convoy from Riverhead to Edenbridge on the day, if you want to join it.

Best regards.

Roger D

