

# North Kent Lotus Group



## Editorial

Our illustrious editor has now decided to reduce his paid work to four days per week in preparation for his retirement later this year. However, he tells me that his workload has unfortunately not reduced pro-rata hence his working days are now a little longer and his spare time is still in short supply. On hearing this, I thought I would help him out and produce this editorial.

Other than the monthly "Zoom" gathering there is little to report although I am sure other members must be doing something of interest Lotus wise but apparently keeping the details to themselves. I note that two more members have added photographs of their cars to the web site, but still no Elites or Esprit's.

Richard L is progressing with his Elan restoration but due to his other commitments not as fast as he would like. At the April group Zoom meeting I was able, on his behalf, to outline Richard's unexpected difficulties with his engine to bonnet clearance and that stimulated various ideas as to the root cause and how to overcome his problem. He has subsequently investigated various possibilities to improve the clearance but how he solves the problem is worthy of an article all of its own so I will not elaborate here. He tells me that his restored seats and interior trim have been returned from Option 1 and are now awaiting the right time for installation, possibly one of his last jobs on a long list!

Roger D took his Elise to Maidstone Sports cars for a cam belt change and service and was told that one of his newly fitted wheel bearings is showing signs of distress and will soon need replacing. Apparently, the hub torque values are questionable and he is currently investigating prior to using Richard L's hydraulic press again.

At the recent "Zoom" meeting, Neil W mentioned that in a recent television program the mechanic lubricated the spark plug threads which Neil said should never be done. I have appended some useful information gleaned from the NGK web site that support his views.

In preparation for the lifting of lock down and travel restrictions, Jon is taking bookings for the Hever Castle event on 19th and 20th of June.

Another show Jon is suggesting is the KMS Motor show event at QUEX Park in Birchington on the 24 and 25th July.

If you wish to attend either event, please contact him as places may be limited.

Vaughn

## A Review of Three Books

Last month I addressed the careers of some of the lesser-known Lotus F1 drivers but thought I would keep the continuation article for another newsletter. Yet again, I have managed to find something of interest to offer the editor by returning to the topic of books. Having already exhausted my current collection of Lotus car-based books, I have now turned to my non-Lotus book collection.

I may have mentioned in the past that my sister is a journalist and has close contact with other professional journalists/authors. One of her long-standing journalistic friends is Richard Williams who was the chief sportswriter of the Guardian, having previously worked for the Times and the Independent.

Richard has authored several motor related books including "The Death of Ayrton Senna" (1995), "Racers" (1997), Enzo Ferrari (2002) and "The Last Road Race" (2004).

Whenever when one of Richard's motor racing books is published, my sister kindly obtains a copy and gets it autographed/dedicated for me. I have recently received two such books to add to my collection, the first being "A Race with Love and Death" and relates to the life of Britain's first Grand Prix driver, Richard Seaman.

Seaman was born in 1913 into a very wealthy and privileged world consisting of living in houses, both London and the country, having servants, parties and generally mixing with high society.

Like many sons of wealthy people, he was educated at Rugby Public Boarding school prior to in 1931, being sent for additional tuition in Orpington in order to help him pass the entrance examination to Cambridge University.

Although he was at Cambridge University, by accessing the family's wealth it enabled him, in the 1930's, to start his racing career, firstly at a hill-climb at Shelsley Walsh driving a 1100 cc Riley nine. Not unexpectedly, he "dropped out" of Cambridge to concentrate on becoming a racing driver.

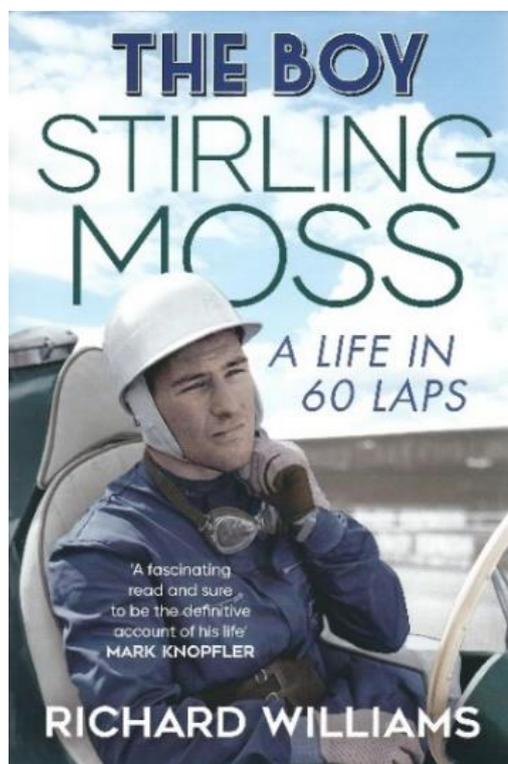
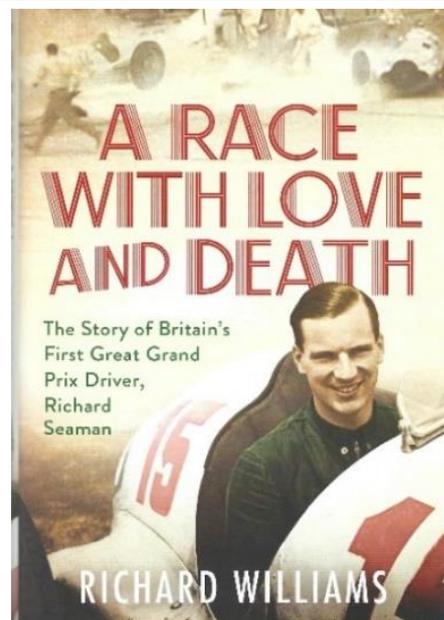
The book is not just about his racing career but is full of details of his life, his marriage, travels and how he and privileged society lived throughout Europe in that period.

His racing career developed, progressing through a selection of racing cars including MG K3, ERA, Maserati 8CM, Alfa-Romeo 8C-35 and a Delage. Then in 1937 he was offered a contract with the Nazi sponsored German Mercedes Grand Prix team and drove the powerful W125 alongside other Mercedes drivers such as Caracciola, Rosemeyer, Lang and von Brauchitsch. The book contains many early photographs which illustrate the story being told.

I shall not spoil the story for potential readers by revealing much more except to mention his fatal 1939 Spa crash at the age of 26 whilst leading the race in his W154.

A most enjoyable book that would also be appreciated by the less fanatical racing car readers.

It is published by Simon & Schuster under ISBN 978-1-4711-7935-8 @ £20.



The second book I received is entitled "The Boy, Stirling Moss, A Life in 60 Laps". Again, this is not a book just full of minute details of his racing results but a wide-ranging insight into the private life of the real man behind the wheel.

For example, it is well known that Stirling Moss was possibly the first truly professional driver and unlike Richard Seaman needed to earn money to survive and hence was very careful where money was involved.

Moss even built up a property portfolio which he rented out and undertook the property repairs himself to save money. According to various newspapers and internet web sites his estate was worth £16 million upon his death.

In one section of the book, it mentioned that he realised that autograph hunters were asking him to sign photographs and books simply so that they could immediately be put up for sale for profit so he insisted on adding an individual dedication to deter this activity.

As a schoolboy I started attending Goodwood with the official photographer in around 1956 and subsequently helped him develop and print his professional photographs. I was allowed to keep some of the poorer quality prints, some of which I managed to get autographed at later races.

In fact, I have a photograph of Moss driving a Vanwall at Silverstone which I managed to get him to autograph sometime in the late 1950's which must now be very collectable as it does not have a personal dedication, just "Best wishes – Stirling Moss".

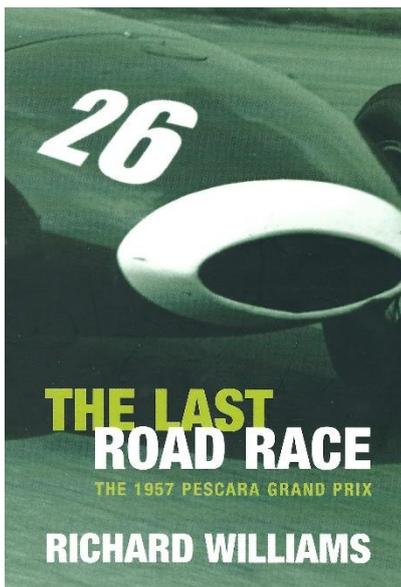
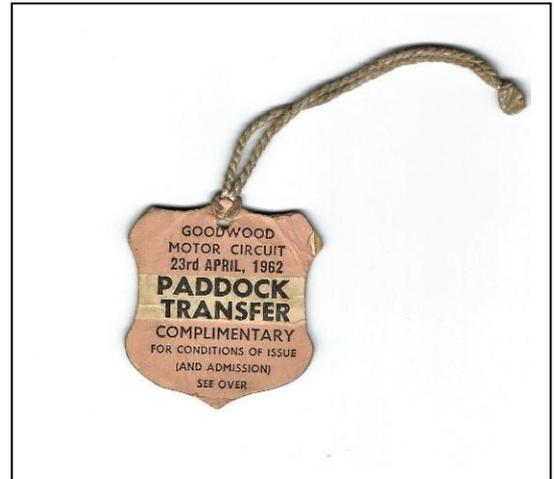
The book devotes a whole chapter detailing Moss's 1962 Easter Monday crash at Goodwood's St Marys corner. I was in the pits during that race and remember hearing an announcement over the address system calling for some bolt cutters which were needed to cut Moss out of the car.

According to the book it took quite a long time to extract him from the wreck and for some reason or other I have kept my pit pass from that day but I am a bit of a hoarder when it comes to such memorabilia.

If you look closely at the book's front dust cover, you may notice that Mark Knopfler, who was the lead guitarist, singer and songwriter for the group Dire Straits has appended his approval by stating "A fascinating read and sure to be the definitive account of his life".

Following Moss's death, Knopfler - who was a close friend of Moss - played "Going Home" at Moss's tribute meeting at Goodwood in October 2020. Knopfler is a real car enthusiast/fanatic and owns a collection of classic cars which he has raced and exhibited, including a Maserati 300S and an Austin-Healey 100S.

The book is published by Simon & Schuster in 2021 under ISBN 978-1-4711-9845-8 @ £20



Another of Richard's books is "The Last Road Race" and again Stirling Moss is featured in it. The book describes the 1957 Grand Prix race on the Italian Pescara circuit.

The circuit was over fifteen miles long and comprised of public roads running through various villages and straw bales were used to block off side roads. Spectators could not be excluded from watching and many sat in their doorways and windows watching the cars race by.

Stirling Moss won this last Grand Prix race on the circuit driving a Vanwall beating Juan Manuel Fangio, Tony Brooks, Roy Salvadori and Jack Brabham in the process. The book quotes Jack Brabham calling the circuit being "B.... Dangerous"

All three books are enjoyable to read and hard to put down as they are not full of minute details of racing results, other books do that, but reveal more about the drivers than most books do.

The book was published in 2004 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson under ISBN 0-297-64558-7 @ £9.99.

Although I have never met or spoken to Richard Williams, I suspect he would be a very interesting person to meet and I hope to one day.

### Spark Plugs, Threads and Torque

Following on from the editorial, in a recent television program a presenter had coated the threads of an engine spark plug with what appeared to be anti-seize grease. Neil W said this showed a lack of knowledge and technical correctness and led to a discussion about the effect and the potential problems arising. As this subject may not be fully understood I searched the internet and found some useful details on the "ngksparkplugs.com" web site which I have summarised below: -

#### 1. Anti-seize

NGK spark plugs feature trivalent plating. The silver or chrome coloured finish is designed to provide corrosion resistance against moisture and chemicals. The plating/coating also acts as a release agent during removal. Spark plus should be installed dry and without any lubrication or anti-seize grease.

Anti-seize grease can act as a lubricant, altering the torque settings by up to 20%, increasing the risk of spark plug thread breakage and/or metal stretch. Metal stretch changes the heat rating of the spark plug and can result engine damage due to pre-ignition.

## 2. Corona stain

Corona stain is a light brown or tan coloration on the outside of the ceramic insulator and is created by the high voltage traveling through the plug and attracts dirt or oil particles. This stain is completely normal.

## 3. Torque

Torque is critical to the ability of a plug to dissipate heat. Always follow the manufacturers recommended torque specification when installing a spark plug.

Over torquing may cause thread damage/breakage, compromised internal plug seals leading to gas leakage, metal shell stretch leading to poor heat dissipation and pre-ignition.

## 4. Copper spark plugs

This term is commonly used to describe a standard spark plug. However, this terminology is incorrect as standard spark plugs do not have electrodes made from copper. Copper is a soft metal with a low melting point and cannot be used as electrodes and wear very quickly. Standard spark plugs use a nickel-alloy that may include a small copper core which is used to increase heat dissipation and lowering the electrode temperature. Special nickel alloys, Iridium and platinum electrodes together with copper cores are all used to enhance durability.

Vaughn

## Group Activities

Due to the current Coronavirus 19 restrictions some activities will need to be arranged as and when circumstances permit.

### Contacts

Regalia & Clothing: [www.arktrading.com](http://www.arktrading.com)

Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday each month, The Moody Mare, Seven Mile Lane, ME18 5QY

Web Site: [www.NorthkentLotusgroup.org](http://www.NorthkentLotusgroup.org)