



Editorial

Following on from the last editorial, there's little going on and therefore little to report, but once again I do hope this finds you well, and in some cases inoculated!

Last editorial I was looking forward to the vaccination programme and 2021. Both are now under way, and there's cautious optimism that in due course things will get better (that is to say, more 'normal'), and hopefully we can look forward to attending events and meeting one another again. With that in mind, you will have seen that Jon & Michelle have sent out invitations to the Hever show on 20th June, with hopefully more events to follow. One annual event that's due soon is the AGM, which is always planned to be on the March club night. We're obviously not in a position to run that at this stage, so the plan is to hold it on the June or July club night. Indications are that lockdown rules will have been relaxed by then, but equally importantly I think we'll all need to feel comfortable with mixing with other people, irrespective of what the Government says we can or can't do, so we'll see how things develop before firming that up.

In spite of the lack of current news, as ever, Vaughn has come to the rescue with another item to entertain you in the newsletter. As is always the case, my thanks to him for that. Facebook has revealed to me that some members have repairs and restorations under way, so I think there may be a source of some future newsletter input there, and some of you will be aware that in one case the restoration was triggered by a mishap on the drive home from taking delivery of the car, so there's definitely a story to be shared there!

I look forward to all that content flooding in

Roger

Judi Couldrey.

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of another of our members. Judi passed away peacefully on 17th January. Chris requested that the Membership was made aware, she had many good friends amongst you all. On behalf of the Membership, we do of course send our sincere condolences to Chris.

A Simple Task!

By the time you read this contribution NKLG members will have consigned their Lotus cars to the garage for yet another winter but some may be thinking of doing various maintenance tasks in the hope that spring 2021 will allow a return to driving for pleasure.

In the August/September issue of the newsletter (No. 288), I mentioned my next task was to replace my Elise tyres which should be a very simple job. My Elise has spent most of its life parked in the garage but I have always understood that car tyres can last up to 11 years maximum but that is apparently very dependent upon the tyre's storage conditions and usage. According to the experts, car tyres degrade even when the car is stored away or rarely used, so classic car owners and low mileage users need to be aware.

According to the European Tyre and Rim Technical Organisation (ETRTO), tyres are considered "new" for 5 years from the date of manufacture when stored in optimal conditions, but how can a prospective tyre purchaser determine if they have been stored correctly, I wonder?

They also state, that a tyre sold as being new, even after five years of storage, may be safely used for a further 5-6 years (hence giving a maximum life of 11 years from date of manufacture).

Most car manufacturers seem to recommend replacing tyres after just six years of use on the road whatever their condition (just being ultra-cautious!). I also understand that with age, the rubber becomes progressively hardened with a resultant gradual loss of grip etc.

Another web site goes on to confirm that tyres degrade when oils and chemicals in the rubber compound start to evaporate or break down due of UV light exposure. The rubber then loses its flexibility and begins to crack at the surface, and the structure becomes more and more brittle (like a really old rubber band), leading to eventual failure.

Cars parked outside are particularly susceptible as exposure to water and sunlight which can break down the tyre rubber and hence cause those dreaded cracks to form.

On the basis of all of the above information, it now seems sensible to replace **my thirteen-year-old tyres** even though there are no signs of cracks or delamination and the front tyres had hardly worn with very good tread depths remaining. The answer to all of this is simple, just buy new tyres, but please read on.

Searching for a rear replacement Elise S2 performance tyre (225/45xR17) is not a problem BUT finding a matching front tyre (mine are 175/55xR16) suddenly became an issue as this size is apparently no longer popular. There are a range of "shopping grade" tyres of the correct size available but in my opinion, they are just not really suitable for a performance-based Lotus.

My internet search revealed that Hanger 111 were offering a full set of Yokohama AD07 (LTS2) performance tyres of the correct sizes at £408 plus VAT and delivery, BUT their web site states that these tyres were **last manufactured** sometime in 2018. The LTS2 code indicates that they were made specifically for use on Lotus cars and may have a different construction or rubber mix to the standard product.

Tempting, but had I had purchased a set of these tyres, it would have raised several potential problems for me, (a) Hanger 111 only advertise full sets and (b) a single replacement tyre may become unavailable in the event of a puncture or damage in the near future and (c) these tyres are at least two years old but just how old and how and where have they been stored, I wonder?

This may not be a problem for a Lotus owner who covers a high mileage or use their cars for track days as being a very soft rubber their wear rate is high, as I found out myself when doing track days in my son's Citroen AX GT. High degradation with small strips of rubber hanging off the tread surface were clearly visible after my very enthusiastic driving around Goodwood, Silverstone etc.

An alternative tyre of choice for me was the Yokohama AD08R or RS type, which I would have liked to have fitted, but these are also not available in 175/55x16 size and Yokohama have told me that they have no intention of producing any in the future. Elise S1 owners do not have any such problems as they use fifteen-inch diameter wheels on the front which are available.

The narrowest width tyre available in the AD08 range for my size is 205/55x16 BUT according to Yokohama these should not be fitted to the normal Elise S2 front 5.5J rims and 195 tyre width is their recommended maximum for that rim. This was not good news, so I did some more research which led me to a web site that allowed me to compare various tyre sizes, widths and aspect ratios.

It was obvious that if 175/55 size tyres were unavailable, I needed to find an alternative size but not exceed the 195 profile but I needed to make sure of retaining the car's ground clearance and keep the chassis/cham shell to tyre clearances to a safe level.

This web site stated that a standard 175/55x16 front tyre had an overall tyre diameter of 23.6 inches and 23.7 inches for a 195/50x16 tyre so that was a good starting point.

The change to 195/50x16 would cause the tread width to increase from 6.9 to 7.7 inches (0.8 inches equally divided either side of the wheel rim centreline) so I needed to carefully check that such a width increase would not foul the suspension, the chassis or body whilst on full lock or during enthusiastic cornering (the latter being difficult to establish unless the tyres are fitted and by then it is too late).

Careful inspection of the existing tyre to suspension component and body clearances whilst on full lock suggested it was possible to safely increase the width so onwards in my search for a pair of 195/50x16 performance front tyres.

The Yokohama web site stated that their Advan A052 tyres were fitted to the Elise Cup 250 (very expensive) and that Advan V105 tyres were now standard fitment on the Elise Sport /Sprint 220 and that seemed to be my best option. I know that in the past Lotus fitted Bridgestone tyres that had a different construction but I could not find any reference to selected or special Yokohama tyres for the Lotus Elise on their internet pages.

A telephone enquiry to a well-known official South East Lotus dealer near Guildford resulted in confirmation that they had recently fitted 195/50 profile V105 tyres to an Elsie but they quoted me £618 plus Vat for a full set - Ouch!

It could be that Yokohama do supply Lotus with special tyres but do not advertise the fact and hence the price quoted but I have been unable to find out.

Searching on-line for the same tyres, revealed that KwikFit was very competitive at £307 per set including Vat, fitting and balancing. I found it interesting that the smaller front tyres (size/width) are more expensive than the wider and larger rears (£80 front, £73 rears), possibly due to volume of sales?

However, if you just arrive un-announced at your local KwikFit branch, the price charged goes up by some £40 plus per tyre, shades of what the customer is prepared to pay for pop-in convenience!

I questioned the Sevenoaks Branch manager as to why KwikFit had two prices (Local branch and on-line prices) as they are the same tyres but he claimed that he did not know. It could be due to the local branch having high operating costs and is run as a separate business compared with the KwikFit on-line distributor, or can Sevenoaks residents just afford to pay more?

Naturally I ordered my tyres on-line and two days later (purchased in late October 2020). When they arrived, I carefully checked that all the tyres had a recent manufacturing date. The rears were marked late 2019 and fronts early 2020 so not very old stock.

The tread pattern is not as visually attractive as that used on the track biased Yokohama AD07 tyres or even the AD08 tyres but as you will appreciate, in my situation, beggars cannot be choosers.

I can now report that the wider front tyres have not caused any suspension/chassis or body clearance problems but there is slightly more of a side bulge than the originals as shown in the attached photograph, but this may help to protect the alloy rims.

Accidentally rubbing the tyre walls against kerbs is not recommended as there is no rubber anti-scuff protecting rib.

After careful running in, the steering, with the wider/lower profile front tyres seems to be slightly heavier on turn in but that initial feeling may be misleading as the old tyre rubber must have become hardened with a resultant lack of grip after all those years.

It must be near impossible to sense how much the tyre grip diminishes as they age, unless you do timed laps of a race circuit, hence it is a revelation when old tyres are replaced.

Even though I was only able to cover about 300 miles since they were fitted, these tyres gave me so much more confidence that they are gripping the road, together with a good steering feel.

I may experiment with small variations in the front tyre pressures to fine tune the steering feel but that will be a task for the summer.

My impression is they are less likely to cause understeer than my old “hardened” tyres” and the car can now be pushed harder into corners. In my opinion these new tyres have transformed my cars handling compared with the old ones.



To avoid winter storage causing flat spots, several internet sites suggest increasing the tyre pressures by about 3psi max from normal which seems quite a small increase so I will move the car’s position on a regular basis and hope for the best.

So, the simple task of replacing tyres on an Elise S2 turned out not to be as simple as I first thought.

But I just hope this article provides some reassurance to Elise S2 owners when the time arrives when their front tyres need to be replaced.

So happy motoring, when the LOCKDOWN has been lifted !

Vaughn

Group Activities and Meetings

Due to the current Coronavirus 19 restrictions some activities and the Monthly meetings have been suspended and will need to be re- arranged as and when circumstances permit.

As an interim solution, a monthly “Zoom” meeting is being organised and attendance is by invitation.

Regalia & Clothing: www.arktrading.com

Web Site: www.NorthkentLotusgroup.com

Meetings@ 2nd Wednesday each Month @ Moody Mare, Seven Mile Lane, ME18 5QY #