

# North Kent Lotus Group



## Editorial

The signs remain hopeful that we'll be able to get out and about a little more in the near future, and the improving weather will likely entice us out in our cars, but in the meantime, there remains, once again, little to report. With little else to do earlier in the year I had a browse through the Group's Facebook page, and it's been a long time since I did that. What I found was a lot of new members who I've yet to meet, so welcome to all of you! Some are fairly far-flung, so it may be a while before we meet some of you, but I do hope that, as circumstances improve, we'll be able to find opportunities to meet in person, if not at club nights.

With that in mind I gave some thought to how we might be able to organise a 'big' event to get as many of us together as we can. The one event in a normal year that has always been very popular is the barbeque, and this is perhaps the one we should develop. I would suggest that although we wouldn't organise this until we all felt at least 99% comfortable in company, an added benefit, aside from historically producing a good turn-out, is that such an event would also take place in the 'space' we're all now encouraged operate in. Whenever I ask for opinion or suggestions in the newsletter the response tends to be limited (well, non-existent in truth), but if you have any thoughts on this, or other suggestions for a get-together event or location, do please let me know.

On the subject of events, and in anticipation of us actually being able to arrange and attend such things soon, there has been some discussion recently about how we publicise events across the Group. The events list that's usually attached to the back of the newsletter provides notice of long-planned events, but activities that arise at short notice (as may frequently be the case this year) are often flagged-up on the Facebook page, and many Members don't see these. Emails too are circulated, but again these are often missed, so if anyone has any thoughts on how they would like to be made aware of events, again, please let me have your thoughts.

Following my Facebook exploration, I had a look at the Group's website. One thing that hasn't changed there is the number of Members' cars on it. I'm as guilty as anybody, and I shall endeavour to lead by example and put some photos and details of my car up there, but it wasn't very long ago that we made an appeal for Members to upload their cars and, I may be wrong, but I think there was zero response to that appeal, so let's try harder this time!

I have now got the Elise back on the road after its winter hibernation, and the first thing I did was get the cam belt replaced. Many Members, myself included, have always used Norman in Dartford for any maintenance work we didn't fancy taking on ourselves, however when I last spoke to him, he indicated that he was looking to retire, and I was recently unable to get in touch with him, so I assume he has now packed up. That appears to leave us with the option of the two independent Lotus specialists in Guildford, Maidstone Sportscars at Headcorn or the main agent in West Horsley as our closest choices for Lotus care. Having an older car, my personal preference is to use a good independent garage, but we don't now appear to have such a facility in our immediate area. I had the cam belt done at Maidstone Sportscars, and I was very happy with the standard of service, but I, and I think many others, would be interested to hear from anybody who knows of any alternative options near to our patch.

You'll note that this newsletter is, once again, rather late, but as a benefit this editorial is a bit longer than usual, and reading back over it I realise that this edition has become a participatory event in itself, which under present circumstances is a real bonus!

Finally, as is always the case, my thanks to Vaughn for his contribution, and for compiling the newsletter, and, as ever, if anyone out there wishes to make any contributions to the newsletter, it would be gratefully received.

### **Lesley Marchant**

It is again with great sadness that we have to report the passing of another of our long-standing members who sadly passed away peacefully on the 6<sup>th</sup> March.

As you are aware she had many good friends amongst the group and on behalf of the membership, we do of course send our sincere condolences.

### **Scraping the Barrel**

A strange title for an article, but let me explain: -

According to the Internet, the expression "Scraping the Barrel" was derived from a very old American practice of storing food in wooden barrels. When the food in the barrel ran low what remained had to be retrieved by scraping the inside.

I found myself in the same situation, when the editor wanted a contribution for this newsletter and I needed to think of a suitable topic. So, I have looked into the bottom of my own proverbial barrel and resorted to "scraping" around in the hope something interesting emerges, hence the title.

Eventually I found some professional photographs taken of me driving at a track day event some time ago. Over the years, my son and I drove on most of the UK's leading racing circuits in his stripped-out track day prepared Citroen AX GT – sorry it was not a Lotus but risks/costs came into it.

On one memorable occasion in 2007, Bob Evans, an ex F1 B.R.M driver, gave me a personal driving lesson and attempted to teach me how to drive around the Goodwood circuit fast but safely. This driving lesson was initiated by the circuit safety supervisor, following my spin onto the grass at St Mary's, I suspect I was just trying a little too hard!

Initially, Bob looked a little concerned when he first saw our car, but the full roll cage and racing seats/belts/tyres etc. seemed to convince him it was safe to drive, although the AX was rather small compared to the other track day cars there.

After several quick laps of the Goodwood circuit with me driving, Bob, although unfamiliar with the car, took over the driver's seat and showed me just how very fast and incredibly smooth a driver he was.

Bob told me how important it was to "settle the car at the entrance of the corner and not upset the car's balance by constantly playing around with the steering wheel or accelerator".



He also said “don’t worry about hitting the apex, just aim for the corner’s exit point as that is where the accident will occur”, advice that I have always remembered and have endeavoured to put into practice ever since (slow in, fast out).

Being driven at speed in your own car by a stranger, even one who was obviously highly competent, is a very strange experience and the professional photo above shows Bob at the wheel with me as his passenger.

Having recalled this memorable occasion, I searched the internet and found that in addition to driving for B.R.M in eight F1 championship races, Bob had also driven for Lotus and I realised that with luck, this link to Lotus could be a suitable topic for this newsletter.

According to the internet, Bob drove a works entered Lotus 77 twice, the first time being the 1976 South African GP where he finished in 10<sup>th</sup> place and only one lap behind the winner, Niki Lauda who was driving a Ferrari 312T. The other Lotus works entry in that race was driven by Gunnar Nilsson but he retired on lap 18 with clutch failure.

The second occasion was for the same years USA – West GP which was held in Long Beach.

Wikipedia states that Bob did not qualify for the race and only the fastest twenty cars were allowed to start the race due to the race being on a street circuit, which may explain his DNQ. The photo is of Bob at Long Beach, getting a little out of shape over a rise during practice.



Whilst looking at the Classic Team Lotus web site, I discovered what I first thought was a comprehensive list of Lotus F1 works drivers, including all the well-known names such as Clark, Ireland, Hill, Peterson, Rindt, Oliver, Andretti, Fittipaldi and Senna etc.

However, the list also included some less well-known names such as Cliff Allison, Alan Stacey, Peter Arundell, Richard Attwood, Trevor Taylor, John Miles, Dave Walker, Reine Wisell etc. etc. but I noticed that the list did not include Bob Evans.

Following my research, I discovered that some of these lesser-known driver’s careers revealed something of interest, so I have prepared draft newsletters for future issues. The name I have chosen for inclusion in this newsletter is: -

### **Cliff Allison (1955 to 57 & 61)**

He was born in 1938 and was a farmer/garage owner living in Cumbria. He first raced a Cooper 500 in formula 3 in 1953 prior to being spotted by Colin Chapman and invited to drive for Lotus.

#### Lotus Mk 9 & 11

According to [www.f1grandprixdrivers.com](http://www.f1grandprixdrivers.com), his Lotus debut took place in August 1955 in a Goodwood Nine Hour race where he co-drove a Lotus 9 with Ron Flockhart. The car was fitted with an 1098cc Coventry Climax engine and in practice Allison was only one and a half seconds slower than Chapman, who was also driving a Lotus 9, but Chapman’s car was fitted with a more powerful 1500cc Climax engine.

As a side note, Ron Flockhart shared a Jaguar D type at the Le Mans 24-hour race, winning twice (1956 and 1957). He also raced a works Lotus 18 in the 1960 French GP finishing in 6<sup>th</sup> place.

Wikipedia web site states that in the 1955 RAC Tourist Trophy race held at Dundrod in Ireland, Colin Chapman/Cliff Allison set out to win the index of performance, again in a Lotus 9, but this one was fitted with disc brakes and Borrani wire wheels. As we know, Chapman was a very competitive driver so he must have had confidence in Allison’s driving abilities to agree for him to be his co-driver.

Whilst leading their class, Chapman noticed an oil leak and dived into the pits but it took eleven minutes to affect a repair. However, they were then able to catch up with the class-leading Cooper-Climax T39 of Ivor Bueb/Mike MacDowel but were unable to overtake it and had to be content with 2<sup>nd</sup> in class and 11<sup>th</sup> overall.

Stirling Moss/John Finch won that race with Manuel Fangio/Karl Kling in second place all driving the works entered Mercedes Benz 300SLR's.



There were eleven crashes during that race, including three which were fatal. According to F1grandprixdriversclub.com this photo (car no. 46) was taken during that race.

For the 1956 Le Mans race, Allison was paired with his friend Keith Hall but when Allison was driving at high speed a hare dashed across the track chased by a German Shepherd dog. Allison decided to steer around the back of the dog only to collide with it when the dog turned around, resulting in a badly damaged Lotus. The internet does not report what happened to the dog although we can hazard a guess.

In 1957 the Allison/Hall driver combination won the Le Mans 24-hour index of performance driving a works Lotus 11 fitted with a special 744cc Coventry Climax FWA engine. The engine had a shorter stroke producing around 60 bhp. It was timed on the Mulsanne Straight at over 114 mph and covered a total of 259 laps. In addition to winning the Index of Performance it also won the 750cc class, no doubt to the annoyance of the French, and finished 14<sup>th</sup> overall.



There were four other Lotus 11 entries that year all fitted with 1098 cc Coventry climax engines with the best result being the Jay Chamberlain / Herbert MacKay Fraser entry finishing in 9<sup>th</sup> place with 285 laps completed. By comparison, the overall winner was the 3.8L Jaguar D Type of Ron Flockhart/Ivor Bueb who covered 327 laps.

#### Lotus Mk 12 & 16

In 1958 Cliff Allison drove in eight F1 races mainly driving a Lotus 12 and once in a Lotus 16, with his best result being 4<sup>th</sup> in the Belgium GP.

For the 1960 racing season he drove for Ferrari and on the 8<sup>th</sup> May whilst driving a 250TR sports car he skidded off the road during practice for the Targa Florio race in Sicily. It was believed that he was travelling at over 100 mph and was approaching the end of a five-mile straight alongside the sea when a tyre burst and he crashed. He escaped from the wreck without injury but it was reported at the time that his face was ashen with fear.

Only twenty days later he suffered yet another major crash while practising for the Monaco GP when his Ferrari Dino 246 crashed into a straw barrier. Numerous photographs on the internet show him in mid-air after being thrown out of the car. He was unconscious when taken to hospital and had sustained a broken left arm, rib fractures, facial cuts and concussion and it took him nearly a year to recover.

He suffered yet another crash, this time in 1961, whilst driving a privately entered Lotus 18 during practice for that years Belgian GP. He broke both his knees and fractured his pelvis when his car left the track and overturned in a field. It is not surprising that this last crash ended his racing career. He died in 2005 at the age of 67.

Details of the other drivers' careers will be included in future newsletters assuming the editor needs further contributions, so watch this space

## The Best Seat?

I had a telephone conversation with my long-standing friend John the other day, who told me about an article published in a Scottish newspaper that involved a Lotus. John has always maintained an interest in Lotus as in the late 1960's he owned an Elan S3, registration No. NNS489F, which he purchased for £850. In about 1983, by then he had a young family but no garage, the Elan's condition had deteriorated somewhat and he reluctantly sold it for £1000. At around the time he sold it, John was led to believe that many Elans finished up in Japan and the DVLA confirms it was exported.

The article in question was published in the "The Herald" newspaper dated September 2020 and was all about a new Highland cinema that was about to be opened. It stated that millionaire businessman Angus MacDonald has footed the entire cost of this independent Fort William cinema as a gift to the Lochaber area where he grew up.

Built on the same site as the old town hall, the cinema has two-screens, a restaurant, cafe, bar and a small performance space.

The real difference between this cinema and other Cinema's is it has a Lotus parked inside.



The Elan was specially commissioned for the cinema and is thought this is the first cinema in the UK to incorporate a real car into the seating area for an authentic "drive-in" experience (*without the cost of Insurance and maintenance!*).

The article did not mention if this car was created from a crashed example or even if the original chassis/floor pan was used but hopefully this was not a car that was suitable for restoration.

Most Elan owners would think this is an unfortunate use of an Elan as it can no longer be used for its original purpose, but at least it is now kept in the dry unlike my friend John's, hence his interest in the article.

## Johnny Dumfries

I recently read in the newspaper that ex Lotus F1 driver John Colum Crichton-Stuart, 7th Marquess of Bute, who drove under the name of Johnny Dumfries, passed away in March at the age of 62. I have always felt that in 1986 he had a bit of a rough deal when he was controversially selected by Lotus to support Ayrton Senna driving Lotus 98T's. Prior to that year he had been a Ferrari test driver.

The book "The Life of Senna" by Tom Rubython, states that Senna vetoed Lotus managements choice of Derek Warwick as their number 2 driver as Senna wanted all Lotus resources directed towards himself. Senna felt the F1 Team would struggle to run an effective two-car operation but also saw Warwick as a threat to his dominance within the team. This veto caused some resentment within the other F1 drivers who thought Warwick should have got the drive on merit.

Lotus management was powerless to resist this veto as Lotus needed Senna more than Senna needed Lotus, hence Johnny's appointment. He only drove for Lotus for one year with his best result being 5<sup>th</sup> in the Hungarian GP.

Subsequently, Johnny took part in five Le Mans races (between 1987 & 1991) scoring his biggest racing success when he won the 1988 Le Mans 24-hour race driving a Jaguar XJR 9 alongside Dutchman Jan Lammers and Andy Wallace.

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.

### 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)