

# North Kent Lotus Group



## Editorial

This year seems to be passing very quickly, as always seems to be the case, and if this newsletter seems to have come around quickly, I'm happy to say you're right, it has, it's only been a month since the last one.

You may recall that the decision was made some time ago to produce the newsletter bi-monthly, rather than monthly, due to the lack of material to put in it. The thought at the time was that we may revert to monthly production in the busier summer months, but the restrictions of the last two years put paid to that, however we now find that contributions have picked-up, so in the short-term at least, we will endeavour to turn out newsletters on a monthly basis.

There have been a number of well attended events recently. I was not at the Eastbourne or Bromley shows, but I understand they were very good, and last week we had 21 cars attend the Hever event. Hopefully an attendee at one or other of these will produce a report that we can include in a future edition. (Note that, as previously stated, Jon & Michelle put a lot of work into arranging our attendance at such events, and it should definitely *not* be incumbent on them to produce a show report too!). It would be good to publicise the events, and it may entice some of those who didn't attend to endeavour to get to the next one.

I think also that it may in some small way go to thanking Michelle and Jon for their not inconsiderable efforts, made on everyone else's behalf. I am aware that brief notes and photographs are often uploaded to Facebook, but many members do not use this, and the newsletter is definitely the place to put such things on record.

Roger R has kindly provided two articles, having recently visited the Jim Clark Museum and attended the Ypres Lotus trip. I shall leave it to my hard-working publisher (Vaughn!) to fit those into this newsletter or the next, along with an article from Paul K. My thanks to them both for these.

Talking of events, it is proposed that an evening fish & chips run on either 15<sup>th</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> July, subject to suitable weather, and a Halloween run on 29<sup>th</sup> October are added to the events calendar, look out for further details.

As previously promised, I have produced my 'Lotus story'. (Having read it, you may think it's my Lotus ramble on & on, but hopefully you'll enjoy it). I am aware of at least one other Lotus story in the pipeline, and I remain hopeful that others will follow, being members of NKLG, we all have one. It doesn't matter if it's long or short, it may just be 'I like them so I bought one', but please keep them coming. Come the Christmas meal we may even be able to present an award for the most bazaar reason for owning a Lotus!

There's still a lot of summer motoring to be done yet, but talking of Christmas, please note that an email has been circulated on the subject of the meal, so please respond to that asap.

Roger D

### **Simon Davies.**

We are very sorry to report the recent passing of Simon Davies.

Simon was a very long-standing member of the Group, and throughout that time he conducted an heroic fight against illness. Although never one to complain about it, that fight is now over, and he now rests in peace.

On behalf of the entire NKLG membership, we send our condolences to Pat and the wider family.

Roger D

### **Diary of a Lotus On-Track Day at Snetterton Circuit.**

Sign on is 8am so I travel up the day before. Usual queue at Dartford crossing & then straight up the A12 as the M11 is shut. Sods law strikes again.

Stay overnight at The Sunshine House b&b in a village called East Harling. Recommended. Some of the British Touring car drivers stay here.

15 min trip to the circuit the following morning after a lovey breakfast. Noise test passed at 92db. Limit is 105. 9am start delayed an hour due to fog. Our session is the first 20 mins of every hour. The other two sessions are for MSV cars & bikes. A mixture of Elise, Exige & Evora in our session including McLaren & Porsche Cayman whose owners are LOT members & also own Lotus.

Three sighting laps then our session. Build up pace allowing the tyres to warm up before pushing. At the end of the session, I check the tyre pressures. They are hot & I reduce them to 29psi all round. Second session is better remembering my lines & breaking points from my visit last year. I am now in a rhythm & flowing nicely until I have to let the V6 Exiges & Cayman GT4's past every few laps as they are a lot faster than me. Usually have to do the same for Caterham 7's but none here today.

I have an instructor with me for the last morning session. He confirms what I am doing right & gives me a few tips on how to improve. He is a large gentleman & I have to make allowances for the extra weight by breaking earlier & reducing my cornering speed. Weight makes a big difference to the performance of the Elise as do tyres & tyre pressures as we will find out.

Lasagne for lunch in the paddock restaurant & then head out on track again circulating with an Elise S2. He is faster than me in the slow corners due to his lighter weight, I am quicker through the fast corners due to my aero package. Also lapping at the same pace as an S2 Exige driven by a guy who used to work for Lotus but never owned one!? He finally bought one after various Porsche & does not regret it. Is impressed with its performance on track. Much more fun!

On my penultimate session I spin the car coming out of turn 7 on to the back straight, the same corner I spun out on when heading towards a podium position in my Formula Ford racing days.

The rear of the car has suddenly lost grip. No warning. Before I know it, the car is heading towards the barrier on the inside of the circuit. Feet down on the clutch & brake pedal, the wheels locked up I use the cadence braking technique I learned years ago at the Jim Russell Racing Drivers School, manage to spin the car around in the opposite direction, missing the barrier & now facing up the track. I sheepishly return to the pits for a change of underpants where I recheck my tyre pressures.

I find the rears are very hot & have shot up by 5psi in the afternoon sun. Fronts are ok. The rear Yokohama AD07's are no longer fit for purpose even though there is plenty of tread remaining. I have been told they are not suited to a lot of track days as they deteriorate with the heat cycles.

Will replace with Avon ZZS. The front tyres were replaced last year with Avon ZZS as the Yokohama's were understeering badly. Should have replaced them all at the same time. False economy not too. The Avon's provide excellent grip in both dry & wet conditions, on track & on the road & offer more ride comfort. The Yokohama's were on the car when I bought it so do not know their history. I almost lost the rear without warning coming out of Clearways at Brands Hatch last year & have also suddenly lost the rear on roundabouts in the wet so definitely time to replace.

I go out again for the final session to regain my confidence with the traction control switched fully on this time to save me as it did on my previous visit when a Caterham dumped oil on the track. No further problems.

The day is finished & I have had a great time & one scare. I have a clear run home down the M11/M25.



Roll on my next track day at Brands Hatch for another learning experience.

Paul K

## Ypres Lotus Day

After two years of one-off planning and two Covid postponements, some of our more intrepid NKLG members and their navigators finally got to this year's Ypres Lotus Day.

### Day 1

Joining Chrissie and me were Colin B and his friend Mike, Steve and Jane B, and Matt C and his dad, Barry. Steve and Jane took a later shuttle but the rest of us met up at the Folkestone terminal before boarding the train. Our planned run to the La Coupole V2 launch site near St Omer can best be described as a learning experience as Colin and Mike arrived there first despite getting off the train last and, with all due respect being in the slowest car. Matt and Barry finally found it after unwisely following us for a while and we gave up after driving round in ever decreasing circles. Chrissie and I headed off to the excellent Hooje Crater Museum instead, which was only a few miles from our B&B in Zonnebeke.

Matt, Barry, Chrissie and I met up for an early supper in the Groot Markt, the main square in the centre of Ypres and we all met up at the Menin Gate to watch the moving last post ceremony, which is held every evening except Christmas Day and watched by hundreds of locals and visitors. There was an informal get together in a nearby bar for all participants on the run but, as we were staying out of town, we were party poopers and headed back to our B&B for a drink instead.

## **Day 2**

We all met up again in the Groot Markt the following morning to register and pick up our rally book and plaque and our meal and drink vouchers. There was plenty of opportunity to chat over croissants and strong coffee in the museum café and to wander round the square to admire the hundreds of Lotus cars assembled for the run, which started at 10.00am.

It's fair to say that everyone started with great enthusiasm. The route was a mixture of minor roads and twisting country lanes that tested our driving and navigational skills and sometimes our patience and ground clearance. You can be sure that all but a very few got lost and found themselves on their own in the middle of nowhere at least once. I'll own up and say that, about half an hour before our scheduled lunch stop at 12.30pm, the rally book was replaced by our sat nav and we drove straight to the conference centre.

There was a welcome drink and a very good two course lunch and plenty of time to swap tales of our morning's adventures before setting off again at 2.00pm. Great enthusiasm was widely evident again in the afternoon session and we probably managed more than half of the proscribed route – an improvement on our morning's efforts – before setting our sat nav for the mid-afternoon stop at a local brewery. Our performance was still probably about average at worst as it seemed like only about half of the cars that had set out in the morning made it to the brewery.

For those who did, it may not have been the wisest choice of venue as we were scheduled to stop for only thirty minutes but we were by no means the last to leave after about an hour. We set off with slightly less enthusiasm for the planned route and the sat nav was employed again to guide us to the last stop with Matt and Barry following. By coincidence, while we were on route, we picked up a convoy of about another six Lotuses so that our finish looked more impressive than it probably should have been.

There was a drinks reception for all participants before everyone who had booked the optional dinner sat down. As with lunch, the food and service were both excellent and the setting, a glass walled modern restaurant overlooking a lake, was the perfect spot to end the day. All of us managed to sit at one table and a good time was had by all.

## **Day 3**

We each had our own plans for the day before heading back to Calais but Chrissie and I met up with Matt and Barry at the Hill 62 Museum after we had visited the Brothers in Arms Memorial and Tyne Cot Cemetery and Visitors' Centre in the morning. We all stopped at the picturesque Lone Pine Crater, which is now a lake, before heading back to the coast. Chrissie and I paid a flying visit to Carrefour so that we could cram bottles of wine into every available space in our car before checking in.

Ypres and the countryside to the east of the town were on the front line for almost all of the First World War and evidence of that war is everywhere and Ypres Lotus Day provided the opportunity to visit some of those places before and after the run. Probably most of us have family connections with that theatre of war but, what struck me from talking to some of the local people was how much living among the reminders of that war affects them on a daily basis, even more than a hundred years after it ended. The trip was one we can recommend for a lot of reasons.

Roger R



### Another 'My Lotus Story'.

You may recall that in the last newsletter editorial I said I'd set myself the challenge of producing my Lotus story. Having previously suggested to all and sundry that we all have such a story, and that you should all contribute to the newsletter with yours, I thought it only right that I should lead by example and provide mine, however Paul K and Mark B have already beaten me to it, as seen in the previous editions of the newsletter. I hope you enjoyed those, and to continue the theme, here's mine.

I refer to producing this as a 'challenge' because I have always felt that I have a very poor memory, but having dredged through the very murky memory banks I have found it to be a very worthwhile exercise, although it did cost a significant part of one night's sleep, having woken up in the middle of the night and started thinking what, indeed, my Lotus story was.

As Mark noted in his piece, I too was car-mad as a child, and I could identify just about every car on the road at the time, but my real interest was in sportscars and racing cars. This was in the early 1960's, and motorsport coverage on TV was fairly limited (as I recall, it spanned from the two extremes of rallycross and cyclocross to (a little) F1, with nothing in between). In terms of manufacturer and F1 team allegiance I think patriotism played a big part at that time.

Vanwall had by this time gone, so the choices for me were BRM and Lotus, and since it was only Lotus that also produced road cars, the die was cast for me. Although I was oblivious to it at the time, looking back it is clear that aesthetics, form and function of a car's design was also important to me (culminating in me becoming a design professional much later in life) and cars of that era had that by the bucket-load.

As an aside, current F1 and endurance prototypes are the pinnacle of form following function within the constraints of the regulations, designed largely in response to computer analysis. To my eye, these are not things of beauty, as I thought the early 60's cars were, possibly due in part that I could understand how those early cars worked, the complexity of modern cars being such that this is impossible to follow, wondrous though it is. For the record, in my opinion the best-looking racing car of all time is the Lotus 49, the last of the breed before they sprouted those awful wings (with the Porsche 917 and Lola T70 fighting hard for a close 2<sup>nd</sup> place).

My father was a sign-writer, and he had a lifelong friend with a car body repair business in Chislehurst who prepared Lotuses and Rolls Royces for concours d'elegance events. Dad would often go to the workshop on a weekend and put the gold-leaf pinstripes on the Rollers, and sometimes I would go with him and spend the day poking about the various cars. I had no time for the Rolls Royces, but the Lotuses were fantastic. It was like having full size models to play with, and at the age of about 10 I knew the cars inside-out. My memory is a bit vague on this, but I know that the vast majority of the Lotuses were Elans, so further ingraining them into my psyche.

Some years later, in the 1970's there were a couple of monthly used-car price-guide books on the market, and one of them (Parkers I believe) ran a feature on a particular model in each edition. I must have come to have a copy because I was nearing the point of taking my driving test, (and in my fantasy world I would be able to get a car straight away) and in the copy I happened to have the feature was on the S4 Elan. The feature contained a number of photographs which reminded me that internally and externally I had found perfection (and in function and technology as it happened). I was smitten. I still have those pages! (I kept them in the back of the Elan Workshop manual that I bought when I eventually got the car. Cost of the manual? £6, the receipt's still in the manual too, how things have changed).

Fast forward a few years, my first employer, in London, wanted to relocate to Swindon, and any staff willing move with them got a fee for doing so. The sum seems small now, but £600 then was enough for a deposit on a house, but obviously the sensible thing to do would be to get a good car. For £650 I got my first car, a six-year-old S4 Elan. (In case you're worrying that I had to live in the car, I didn't, I shared a two-bed flat which was the top floor of a farmhouse, the rent was £7/week, and I got central heating and a free loaf of bread a week thrown in for that too, I also had use of other facilities.

Can you imagine, I was 20 years old, with a flat with a tennis court and a swimming pool, and a Lotus on the drive! It's been downhill ever since. In the period that I spent living near Swindon I got myself involved in rallying, and so the Elan had to go, to be replaced by an Escort. (Some may point out that Elans were used in rallying, but that's far too brutal a use for such a beautiful car in my opinion).

Fast forward again for many-many years in which I've been side-tracked with life/career/houses/family and my mind returns to a long-held thought that I might one day restore an Elan, exactly like my first car. Sadly, I didn't immediately act on that thought, because the time I spent thinking it over coincided with the time the values of such cars shot upwards, but I persevered and in the course of my 'research' I went to the Lotus Festival at Brands Hatch. The Elans were now largely out of my budget range, but I was able to have a good look at a number of Elises. These ticked all of the form follows function/technology boxes, and indeed were perhaps even more pure to Chapman's ethos than the Elans (S1 Elises don't have electric windows or even a brake servo) so I aired the thought of getting one when I got home. I was told I should get one, and my ums and ars were cut short by one of my sons pointing out that if the Elise prices went the same way as the Elan's, I wouldn't be getting one of those either. Hence, in 2013, I returned to the Lotus fold with an Azure Blue s1 Elise, which in turn prompted me to join NKLG that year.

Happily, the story doesn't end there (although you may not agree with that if you're getting a bit bored with this) because a work colleague, who knew I had an interest in Lotus, had a relative with two Elans that had been in a barn for 30 years, and the barn was to be redeveloped, so the cars had to be disposed of, quickly, and he asked if I was interested.

The outcome of that was that I now have the S4 restoration project that I first thought of years ago. The body is off the chassis, and the engine and gearbox are out and separated. That will be another story, if you can bear it!

Roger D

## Contacts

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

Web site: [www.Northkentlotusgroup.org](http://www.Northkentlotusgroup.org)

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

## 2022 Group Activities, Events

	Date	Event
June/July	June 30 <sup>th</sup> - July 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Le Mans Classic
July	15 <sup>th</sup> or 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Fish and chip run– short notice, nice weather *
	Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Warlingham Classic Car Show (10 Places)
	Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup>	NKLG BBQ *
August	18 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>st</sup>	The British Motor Show
	26 <sup>th</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup>	Silverstone Classic
	Monday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Bexhill Car Show
September	Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Salon Privé Club Trophy
	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Kent's Classic Car Show, Aylesford
	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Edenbridge Car Show
	Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup>	Goodwood Revival
October	Saturday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Halloween run (Proposed)
November		
December	Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Christmas Meal *
* Organised by NKLG		