

# LOTUS NOTES



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF LOTUS CLUB VICTORIA and LOTUS CLUB QUEENSLAND



- Member Profile: Kevin Neville
- Lotus Club Queensland Grand Tour 2020
- Lotus 7 Restoration
- The lure of the underrated Evora

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Photo: The sun is finally setting on a difficult Covid year

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Lotus Club Queensland also have a Facebook group page:

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# Victoria ADDING Lightness

by Vicky Rowe



Goodwood Speedweek livestreaming and Bathurst on local TV, all in one weekend. Petrolheads were spoilt for choice this year. But we missed the start of the V8s to tune into announcements from our Premier. Like most Victorians, we were anxious to hear if we'd be free of our 5km confines, be able to open our businesses, and get back to work.

It may have been a bit of an anti-climax, but the immediate extra 20km radius is very welcoming. I'm sure there will be more Lotus on the roads as a result. At the very least I recommend you lift the hood, check the fluids, and see if she's going to start. It's time for a drive!

With all the Covid numbers heading in the right direction, and the intention for further easing in the coming weeks, we've decided to pencil in an 'anti-social' EMR for Sunday November 15th 2020, subject to prevailing restrictions. Your diary may already have this date saved as it was originally the date of our Christmas party. Make sure you update these details in your calendar so you don't miss this much-anticipated run.

It was clearly a prudent decision to defer our Christmas party to Sunday December 13th 2020. Killara Estate will be the perfect venue. All we need now is some beautiful weather.

We enjoyed another virtual club meeting in October. In fact, it was one of the longest sessions yet. Ric Kemp from Race Technique Engineering educated us on different types for shockers and the pros and cons of suspension setup options. He also kept us captivated with numerous stories about his international motorsport experience as a racing driver and professional engineer. The video we captured is in two parts and you'll find a link on the website or via Facebook.

Another quick thing to mention is that we are still looking for a volunteer to help co-ordinate content for the magazine next year. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you want some further information.

I look forward to seeing you out on the road, or at the Christmas party, very soon!

# Queensland President's Report

by Steve Lennox



The Grand Tour was a huge success and a great weekend away with the Club. Ken Philp, as always, found some of the best driving roads in the regions. He also managed to find accommodation for some 40 people and 20 cars with undercover parking, great restaurants and interesting stops along the way.

Ken also identified some great charities and managed to raise \$1,000 for Budburra Books and Cherbourg Junior Rugby League Club (Hornets). Both of these charities focus on the local indigenous community. All I can say is great work Ken and a big thanks from all of us for this event and hopefully future Grand Tours. Check out the articles in this magazine.

The motorsport group took most of the honours in the sports car classes at Morgan Park B series, seems if it isn't a Lotus best not compete. It is good to see a group within the club seeming to almost have a series to themselves. As always Geoff Noble and Garry Pitt seem to lead the pack.

Coming up in November is the Noosa Summer Hillclimb, with some members upgrading engines, others working on diffs, plus a lot of talk on tyres. Another group of members enjoying a different form of motorsport.

Then of course there are the Targa members who competed in the Targa Great Barrier Reef, in particular Tony Seymour and his unique off-street parking, which meant he missed out on a podium. Better luck next time Tony.

## Club Christmas Dinner 2020

The club Christmas Party has been booked at the Greek Club again on Saturday the 28th of November. We have reserved the terrace again with that delicious Greek banquet, (although it will be plated rather than share plates). There will be a limit of 60 to meet the restaurant's COVID safe plan. Further details and prices will be announced this month.

## Lotus Notes 2021

For those who read the Victorian President's report last month you would have noticed that LCQ will be taking over the production of *Lotus Notes* in 2021. Thanks to LCV for their many years of producing the magazine. We intend to keep the same high standard and content that LCV have been publishing to date.

Keep safe  
Steve





by Steve Lennox



## Greg Bray Rehab Drive



Chatting at the start



Greg Bray arriving at Canungra



Barrams & Coopers at lunch



Greg, Chris & Colin at lunch

Over the last few months club stalwart and mechanic, Greg Bray, has had some health challenges, resulting in him losing strength in his arm. Greg has not let this slow him down and has taken the time to upgrade his motorbike (and modify the clutch) to make sure he can still ride, AND done a minor modification to the Elan gearshift to enable him to still change gears.

Once he got a proper diagnosis the treatment started, and he is improving to the point where he is getting strength back into his arm. But he has not been allowed to drive through all this, which in his words is "the biggest blow".

While all this has been happening, he has been absent from his usual club events, such as Morgan Park Sprints, the Day Runs which he and Chris frequently attended, and he was disappointed to miss the Grand Tour.

The Medicos in their professional opinion suspended his license for a while, but Greg wasn't going to let them get away with that, and after a lot of effort with his GP, physios and Queensland Transport he has managed to get his license back.

So when I heard he had his license back I made a couple of phone calls to rally some members to have a mini day run to Canungra – with Greg leading the way, of course.

Once everyone arrived was a good half hour before we got going, as it took a while to get Greg and Chris back into the Elan. To further add to the slow start, Mal Kelson turned up, having snuck out from his wife's (Chris's) birthday to have a quick catch-up with Greg, he wasn't brave enough to come on the run, but that made Greg's day.

Once we arrived at Canungra we were straight into Greg's favourite café (The Outpost) where Greg had his usual – eggs benedict with salmon. Much better than hospital food so I've been told – you may notice that he didn't even look up from his meal for the photo. We must have been there for at least an hour and a half having a great social. Greg seemed to really enjoy himself and Chris commented that this was a huge morale boost for him. We all went our separate ways, Greg and Chris taking the long way home, with a promise to meet again when Greg has finished his next round of treatment.

What a great day out and special thanks to Colin McKay, Giles Cooper (and Janet), John Barram (and Penny) and of course Chris Bray. Plus, Mal Kelson, sneaking out to meet us at the start.

Get well Greg, hope to see you at club events with your friends again soon.



# Member Profile

## Kevin Neville



Kevin Neville & wife, Barb

by Peter R Hill



When Kevin Neville was a teenager, he might not have had an easy time of it from his mates. They were predictably either Holden or Ford followers, while he liked open-wheel race cars, with the Lotus 72 and Jochen Rindt his favourite car and driver. He was a fan of Lotus, but didn't think he could ever own one. While living in London in 1979-81, he attended the British Grand Prix and travelled to Europe, taking in the Monaco Grand Prix. By then Lotus had fallen to the bottom of the heap, but there was some consolation for Kevin in that Alan Jones was on the top of the heap and heading for his World Championship with Williams.

Kevin's boyhood dream of owning a Lotus became a reality on his 40th birthday after Barb had arranged the surprise delivery of a new Lotus Elan M100. After seeing an advertisement for the Lotus club in *The Age* newspaper, Kevin joined the Victorian branch of Club Lotus Australia. He was delighted with his experience with the club.

"The one thing about the club, it's always had people who are interested in what you do, engaging, and helpful, particularly for me as I'm mechanically hopeless. Along the way a number of people have helped with the bits I could never do on my cars – they've been fabulous."

In 1997 Lotus Club Victoria was established. As a chartered accountant, Kevin stepped up to become the club's first treasurer, a role that he held

for six years. In 1997 he saw an advertisement for the Duttons Rally and suggested to Barb that it could be a good holiday. She was all for it, so the M100 was entered with little knowledge of what they were in for.

"We knew nothing, but the other Lotus people were great and we had a ball. Mike Wilson and son, Aaron, were very friendly and helpful to us newcomers. We actually won our class, which was primarily due to Barb being a brilliant navigator. It was the most exciting holiday I've had in my whole life!"

Such was Kevin's enthusiasm, there was even a time when he owned shares in Lotus, which might sound like a recipe for financial pain but when GM bought the company he actually ended up with a modest profit.

A professional career disrupted his club involvement for seven years between 2003 and 2010. During this time Kevin had roles as the Managing Partner, Head of Assurance, Chair of the national Moore Stephens network and on its international leadership committee. Even though there was little time for club activities, Kevin enjoyed his M100 as his everyday work car.

"It was a joy at the beginning and the end of each day. No matter what happened during the day, I could jump in the car and forget about the events of the day. It was always enjoyable."

Despite his work commitments Kevin did find time to purchase a Series 2 Lotus Super 7 with the idea that he might use it on the track. Although he has enjoyed the Seven it has not had a great deal of use, with only a few track days at Phillip Island, Calder and Winton.

With the all-consuming work commitments easing, in early 2010 Kevin was able to get involved in the club again. He said Barb and he received a friendly and warm welcome on their return. "It was as if we had never been away." 2010 was also the year he purchased his yellow Evora which satisfied an ambition he had harboured to own a mid-engined Lotus. This was the car that he and Barb enjoyed, back as regulars at club events.

Perhaps there was an ulterior motive behind the warm welcome on his return to the club as in 2013 Kevin found himself reinstated as the treasurer, a job that he did for the next five years. In 2017 he was Chair of Lotus 2017. He had actually never been to a national meeting so this was diving in at the deep end. Of course, a whole team of people are needed to organise such an event, and Kevin is quick to point out that the event's success was due to all those involved on the Lotus 2017 Committee. Ian d'Oliveira organised the historic tour, Iain Palmer the Concours and Alec Spyrou the track day. "It was so enjoyable putting it all together – hard work but good fun."

In 2016 Kevin and Barb headed to England to visit their daughter, Courtney. They managed to sneak in a visit to the Lotus factory and Classic Team Lotus. In the future Kevin would love to go to the Goodwood Revival but doesn't like his chances of getting there.

Despite the Evora dominating the garage, Kevin still owns his M100 which he says he will never sell, and the Series 2 Lotus 7 which he thinks might have to go at some stage as it rarely gets used. All three cars have been used at track days at the four Victorian circuits.

Semi-retirement for Kevin doesn't involve hours pottering in the garage, golf or fishing. With a string of directorships, he's not likely to join the armchair and slippers brigade anytime soon. One of his most satisfying roles is that of President of the Old Colonists Association of Victoria. This is a 150-year-old not-for-profit organisation that provides safe and comfortable retirement accommodation for 600 Victorians, primarily for those who may have suffered hardship in their lives.



The lock-down has meant that Kevin's Lotus have not been getting regular use, which has not been good, especially for the Evora, but after some fettling at Stedfast Motors in between lock-downs, Kevin felt that the Evora had a new lease of life. A flat battery recently caused a few issues prohibiting access to the boot, but as soon as we are allowed to go motoring again Kevin and Barb will blow the cobwebs out of the yellow peril at club events.





# Lotus Club Queensland Grand Tour 2020

by Daryl Wilson

As our Caterham 7 is less than ideal for touring, Moira and I decided we would take our new daily driver, a Jaguar E Pace SUV, on this three-day Grand Tour. I am pleased to report that our first long drive was not only comfortable, but the car performed beautifully. The Jaguar's 2-litre Turbo petrol engine purred like a kitten (pardon the pun) and managed to keep up with the Lotus pack, albeit in air conditioned comfort!!

I opted to vacate the driver's seat on Friday morning and jumped in with Colin McKay, in his beautiful Elan, for the drive up to Maryborough. Robyn McKay hopped in with Moira and cruised up to Maryborough in air-conditioned comfort. Colin has done a beautiful job of restoring and improving his Elan over many years and, apart from a little sun burn, it was a very enjoyable ride.

On Saturday we departed Maryborough, and were off to Kingaroy, via Goomeri, to the Moffatdale Winery for lunch. This time I jumped in with Ken Philp, and Margie Philp went with Moira in the Jaguar down to the morning tea stop at Goomeri. Moira and Margie missed

the turn off at Tiaro, however we waited and they quickly caught up, then we were all off down some very interesting Lotus roads. I have driven Ken's Europa before and I was very impressed. This time as a passenger I was equally impressed, and if I was younger and more supple I would consider buying one, they are a great car. After lunch it was on to Kingaroy to book into our motel for the night, and enjoy dinner at the local RSL.

Sunday saw more interesting roads on the drive down to Blackbutt to visit the bakery for morning tea. Shortly after morning tea most headed off via Esk to Brisbane, while we headed to Brighton via Caboolture and the Bruce Highway to pick up the dog and see our grand daughter, Lola. Home by mid-afternoon after a very successful weekend with a great bunch of Lotus people.

Special thanks to Ken and Margie Philp who, once again, organised a fantastic long weekend event, and to everyone who went along and made the weekend so successful.



Driver briefing



Arriving at the start





All aboard the Mary Ann

**Alex Molocznyk:**

I had trouble deciding on my favourite part of the weekend – it was all great! But the “Targa road” on Saturday morning on the way to the winery probably receives the award. It was noted as “CAUTION!! parts of the roads are narrow. Exercise caution at all times. Especially on corners! If you fall off you may not hit the ground for a long time.” Then arriving at the magnificent scenery and lunch of the winery topped it off.

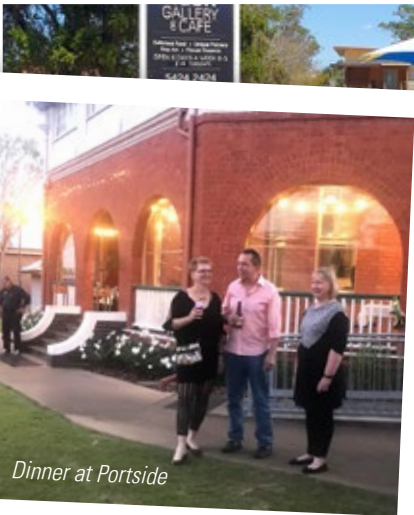
**Carol Molocznyk:**

When I heard that the Grand Tour weekend was going to Maryborough I suggested to Ken that we might like to visit an old steam engine named the Mary Ann. A very disappointed Ken told me he had looked it up already but it only ran every second Thursday. Ah well, a long standing friend of mine lives in Hervey Bay and is a member of the Maryborough Steam Association, so I contacted him to see what could be done. When I phoned Leigh, I found he is not just a member, but the Secretary of the Association and they were having a committee meeting the next week. If the committee agreed, perhaps they could get a special permit from Qld Rail to run Mary Ann on Friday 2nd October. The result was that LCO not only got ‘taken for a ride’ on the Mary Ann (for less than half what the general public are charged) but we also got access to the Association’s Shed and complimentary entry into the Rail Museum (which was kept open late especially for LCO). So the old adage applies – it’s not what you know, it’s *who* you know! LOL.

The whole weekend was great – good food, great rides (train and car), great scenery. And most important of all – great company!



Lunch at the winery



Dinner at Portside





Sneaky breakfast at Whipbird

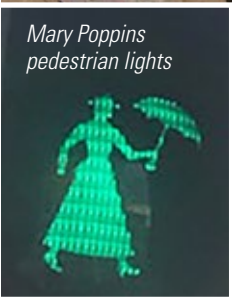


Arthur eyeing off dessert



Mary Poppins pedestrian lights

Mary Poppins



Wade's Esprit



A quick regroup



Steve presenting our cheque to Aunty Annie

**Andrew Row:**

Being my first Grand Tour, I had high expectations based on rumours of Ken's past trips, and was not disappointed. Maryborough is a town retaining plenty of its historic buildings, giving it an old world charm. During the afternoon, a few of us sampled a number of the pubs on our way to dinner at Portside Café and Restaurant, which began with drinks in the twilight on the front lawn overlooking the river, before moving inside the beautifully restored restaurant. The kitchen worked overtime to serve up fine food to such a big group. Fantastic food, good company and a few drinks had the conversation flowing. Being such good food, we were all back the next morning for an equally sumptuous breakfast. A wander of the Maryborough streets to settle our breakfast before the day's drive saw a bunch of us playing with the pedestrian crossing lights. Mary Poppins showing the way across the road, a lovely touch to remember a special lady of the town.

Great to meet some new faces along the way, with plenty of time to chat as we sampled all the fine foods along our scenic run. Must say I like Ian Wright's style at the lookout at Mt Wooroolin where a handful of us headed for a sundowner with a view on Saturday evening. Most of us with a beer in hand, Ian being somewhat better organised pulled out a bottle of whisky and some sturdy mugs, and nibbles to share. Lesson learnt for next year.

The Mary Ann



**Steve Lennox:**

Although only slightly delayed from the usual time of the year due to COVID, the 2020 Grand Tour still went ahead. This time the three-day two-night adventure toured through the Fraser Coast and South Burnett regions. The Grand Tour is the work of Ken Philp, whose philosophy is to tour regional areas and spend our tourism dollars there, plus we also run it as a charity drive. Ken chooses local, worthy charities to support, and it's my job to collect (extort) donations from the group.

We raised \$985.10 from our generous members, which the club rounded up to \$1,000. This year we supported Budburra Books and Cherbourg Junior Rugby League Club (Hornets) with \$500 each, and Maryborough City Whistle Stop, who benefitted from train ride fares, plus money that members stuffed in the donation boxes at the Steam Train Museum.

Now South Burnett is "Joh" country (Joh Bjelke-Peterson, previous premier renowned for the brown paper bag government), so I took it upon myself to offer the option of paying all fines in one lump sum, into a brown paper bag of course. To make it interesting we had three options for the bags:

- BRIBES
- HUSH MONEY
- PISASALE PAYMENTS  
(Google Paul Pisasale)



So how did the touring members prefer to pay their 'corruption' money? Interestingly, 66% went to the Pisasale payments, 20% was Hush money and 14% went to Bribes. Now I'm not sure what that says about us ... Do we like our politicians corrupt? Or don't we like paying bribes? All that aside it was fun, and a big thanks to everyone for their generosity.

**A bit ab out the charities**

Ken takes great pride in finding worthy charities that generally do not get a lot of help, yet deliver real support to the people who need it. This year, two of the charities are aligned to the Cherbourg Aboriginal Mission, and support, in particular, the youth growing up in the area.

Budburra Books is an indigenous early literacy project, that celebrates indigenous culture and teaches literacy. They publish great books and if you are interested, see their website:



<https://budburrabooks.com.au/>

Cherbourg Hornets is the local footy club and is actively involved in encouraging participation in team sports. Aunty Annie, who met us at Moffatdale Ridge winery to accept the donation, explained how important the club is to the community and was really appreciative of our donation.

Maryborough City Whistle Stop is a local group of volunteers that keep the age of Steam alive in Maryborough. They have a working Loco "The Mary Ann" that was used for a demonstration and run through the park.





# Aston's Grand Tour

by Aston Greensill

My Lotus journey has been amazing so far. Progressing from child seat passenger up to 4 years old, then a Sonic 7 racer until I was 12, at which point my head had become the roll bar, DTC competitor at age 15 in the Lotus Elan M100, and now finally allowed to let loose (not very loose) in a 2003 Lotus Esprit V8. There was also a short drive in an Audi R8 before Dad saw the light and returned to his Lotus roots. I was lucky enough during the Grand Tour to be able to drive two stints in the Esprit which with Learner plates front and back seemed to be quite entertaining to the older folk (sorry older folk). I heard some drivers complaining about their female passengers being hand brakes. Try an old, follicly-challenged guy in the passenger seat when you're driving his new car! It was great fun and I think I did ok, as on Sunday I was permitted to avoid the highway traffic, but thankfully not the hills, bends and fast straights via Mount Mee on the way home. The challenge is now to get in as many drives in the Esprit between now and my 17th birthday in May, as there will have to be a torturous three-year break while unable to drive the Esprit on my provisional licence (dad doesn't seem so upset about this). Although of course I could still drive it on the track. Could someone please tell Dad?!



All British Day 2005



Sonic 7 at Gympie skid pan



Me telling the Carter's to keep up



Lotus run with the Carter's grandson, Clayton



Lotus 2011



Elan M100



Russ & Derak talking dad into a purchase



Impatiently waiting for the ladies in the Jag



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# Lotus 7 Restoration

by Simon Henbest

I bought my 1965 Series 2 Cosworth Lotus 7 from John King, in May of 2010 and enjoyed many outings in the car.

In 2012 I attended my first track day and was having trouble with the electrics – the engine kept cutting out. I managed to limp home in the dark and parked the car outside, went to restart it, completely dead. In the light of day an inspection showed the wiring needed attention – really, it needed to be replaced. Also, I found corrosion on the chassis region under the supporting mount for the brake and clutch master cylinders. This was not good. I took stock. There were also a few other issues as is to be expected with a 47-year-old car:

- On the front suspension, the upper vertical ball joints were worn, as were the lower trunnions, and the anti-roll bar linkage system did not work effectively.
- The Standard 10 differential had been replaced with a stronger Ford Escort one. The consequence was that the stud pattern on the front wheels was different to the rear wheels, so the spare tyre could fit one or the other but not both.

- The engine had been moved about 150 mm rearwards, and the starter motor side of the bell housing sometimes rubbed against the pedal box.
- Aluminium body work had bog in several places and also dents/holes repaired with glued aluminium patches. Additionally, the aluminium cover over the gearbox and tail shaft was made up of many bits cobbled together.
- The cooling system struggled in summer.
- There were oil leaks from the gearbox.
- The windscreen wipers struggled to work effectively.

What should I do? What are my skills?

I'm a mechanical engineer. I have tinkered with cars over the years, replaced clutches, rebuilt heads and a gearbox, and refurbished brakes. I have never undertaken any sheet metal work or repair of body panels, but I have always been willing to have a go. I feel it was a brave move to decide to undertake a complete rebuild and I gave myself a year or so to complete the job!

I started removing the aluminium panels by drilling out the rivets – more areas requiring attention were revealed. The easy part was stripping the car down to the bare chassis.

## Chassis

Inspection of the chassis showed that it had been modified to accommodate moving the engine rearward and several sections had been strengthened at known weak spots. There were numerous issues: corrosion in several places including near the pedal box and rear suspension mounts; cracks around the lower rear suspension mounts and the brake and clutch master cylinder mounts; some other tubes were rusted through from the inside.

The first job was to repair the chassis and to fill in the hundreds of rivet holes. My friend David helped me transport the chassis to Rob Bennett in Glenburn who welded up the rivet holes and replaced or repaired suspect chassis sections. He did an absolutely terrific job.

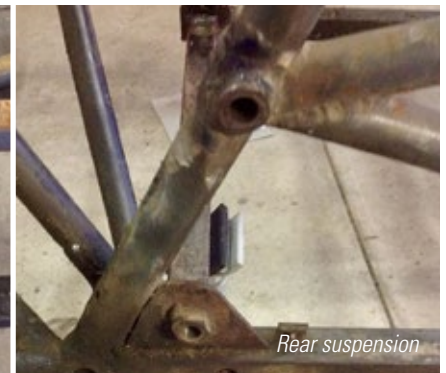
Next the chassis was sand-blasted, and I painted it by hand with POR 15 in light grey.



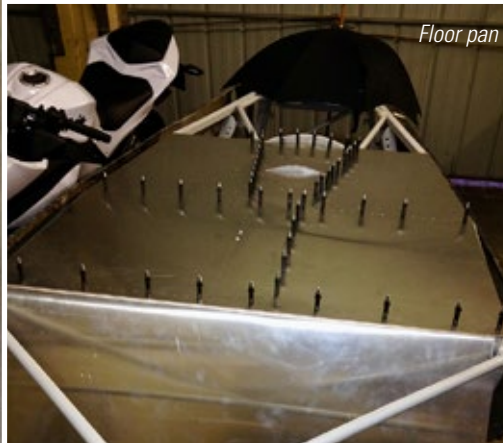
Bare chassis



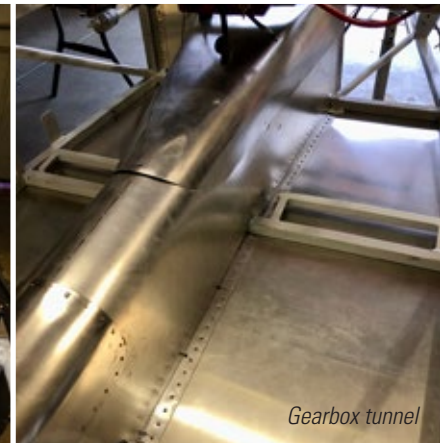
Corrosion on pedal box



Rear suspension



Floor pan



Gearbox tunnel



Painted chassis



Side panel

## Aluminium bodywork

Having never done any metal work I thought I needed some training and enrolled in a metal fabrication course at Automotive Centre of Excellence in Docklands – some years ago we had a club night there. I bought a metal small folder, a shrinker-stretcher, a swage and jenny, an air pop rivet gun and some metal fabrication tools – hammers, dollies, aviation grade tin snips and clecos. I ordered a 1.6mm H38 hard aluminium sheet for the floor pan and 1.0 mm softer H34 sheets for the rest of the body. Before I completed my 10-week course at ACE, I took the opportunity to use their cutting and bending machines to shape the floor pan. I decided the scuttle would be too difficult to fabricate at home and one was ordered from the UK.

Next the curved side panels by the seat back were made. These involved compound curves so I made them in two halves and had them welded together. Most jobs took several attempts to get right and generally a good result was obtained by the fourth attempt.

The aluminium body work at the rear of the car proved to be more difficult than I could handle and was completed by Vintage Restoration in Blackburn.

Next was the gearbox and tail shaft cover comprising of three separate parts. The lower section attached to the floor pan had rolled edges around the top opening to provide more strength. This was attached to the floor pan using aircraft rivets so as not to have protrusions under the body or into the cockpit.

The Seven “boot” is extremely small and previously loose objects in the boot slid into the rear panel denting it. To prevent this happening in future I built false internal panels lined in red cowhide, the same colour as the seats and dashboard.

Next the pedal box, flat tray firewall in the engine compartment and side panels were fabricated in my garage. To shape the lower front regions of the side panels I made formwork out of wood to shape the panels over. This worked well.

There was a lot of debate in our household and amongst friends as to what colour I should paint the car. Most said BRG, some said with a yellow stripe. I preferred a bright colour as I wanted to be seen. On searching the history file of the car I found that it was delivered out of the factory painted Lotus Yellow, L07. Decision made.

The fibreglass parts required repair and preparation for painting. In addition, the LHS and RHS sweeping front mudguards were found to be different shapes and this was corrected. Fortunately, my son in-law, Nathan Mill is a spray painter par excellence, and he etch-primed the aluminium, then undercoated, painted and applied a clear topcoat to the panels off the car.

New stone guards for the rear mudguards were made out of thin, polished stainless sheet, replacing the old tattered, aluminium ones.

The old grill was rusty and didn't fit the nose cone properly so a new one was manufactured by Alan Bisset at AM Raceparts and then chrome plated.



Boot



Arm rests



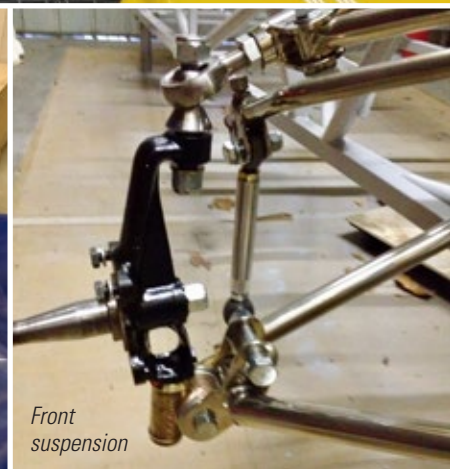
Nathan undercoats



In yellow



Stainless guard



Front suspension

## Front suspension

The car's front suspension is not the standard Lotus 7 design that uses the anti-roll bar as a top suspension arm, rather it has an upper wishbone comprising of an adjustable horizontal link to control camber, and an adjustable forward arm for castor control. The old upper ball joints were worn and looked like they came from a tractor, and I was unable to find a replacement. I asked Alan to modify the Triumph vertical strut and make new horizontal arms to suit LH and RH aircraft grade rose joints.

The front stub axles are a known weak point in Sevens. I found that Canleys in the UK made a replacement all-aluminium front hub and

with an uprated steel stub axle for Triumphs that used sealed for life bearings and could be supplied with a Ford 4 ¼ inch stud pattern, part number CCS3/3. The anti-roll bar mounts on the front of the chassis and were metal to metal contact. To improve this the mounts were bored out to fit nylon bushes.

For the last twenty years, Matt, at Paul Dan Automotive in Hawthorn, has serviced all my cars. While he is not a Lotus specialist, he is an excellent mechanic, thorough and fastidious, and he did a lot of the mechanical work. The coil over set-up on the front springs was difficult to adjust and he worked out that the lower A-arms had been swapped over, i.e. RHS

had been turned upside down and placed on the LHS and vice versa, this meant the springs were highly compressed and extremely stiff, and the suspension sat high which resulted in severely inclined steering rods and associated bump steer. When we put the A-arms on the correct sides, the steering arms returned to horizontal and the suspension was more compliant. However, the previous anti-roll bar linkage system now fouled, and a new design was required. Several new anti-roll bar designs were made out of aluminium plate and tested. Once refined, the final design was laser-cut out of steel plate, polished and nickel plated and fitted.





# Vale – Ian Simmons

5 April 1947 – 3 October 2020

Ian died suddenly on Saturday 3rd October and a live streamed funeral service was held for him on Thursday 8th October.

He was a man with an easy smile and a good sense of humour.

I first met Ian in 1981 at GMH's Fishermans Bend Plant after I transferred from Adelaide. Ian worked in the Personnel Department and our paths occasionally crossed. I left GMH in 1987 so didn't see Ian again until he came to a LCV club night in 2001. He was still with Holden and retired in 2006 after some 40 years service.

At the time he joined LCV he had an Amaro Clubman and later bought a green M100 Elan which he and his wife, Sonia Goubran, also a former GMH person, brought to most early morning runs. He attended many club nights and, together with Sonia, our restaurant nights. They also competed in a couple of Goldfields Tours. Ian wrote about his early motorsport attempts in the June issue of this magazine. (See *Lotus Notes* June 2020 p.15)

For some years Ian hankered after a Reliant Scimitar coupe, but there's not many of those around. He did have a test drive of LCV member Gary Parnaby's Scimitar GT but didn't go ahead with a deal – maybe it didn't meet his expectations or maybe he lacked the garage space as he didn't want to part with the Elan.

Always ready to offer to help with club activities, Ian frequently volunteered to help me with magazine packing many years ago, circa 2006 onwards, and later joined with Simon Henbest each month to pack our magazine – an unseen labour of love for well over ten years.

I'll miss the chats we had most months before an EMR .

Peter Murray





# THE LURE OF THE UNDERRATED EVORA

“So 2019 was always going to be a big year for me. I planned on marrying the partner of my dreams in September, turning 35, and trying to work out what I wanted in my garage.”

by Syd Balachandran

At the time I was the custodian of a 1989 Citroen 2CV 6 and a 1974 Citroen DS DSpecial. But I really wanted a genuine sports car. Something that I could use every day, but for every journey, no matter how short or long the journey was. I wanted a car that would be fast enough but, more importantly, interactive with fabulous steering, great engine noise and relatively lightweight. I had explored the usual suspects including various Porsche 911s (my affinity for Porsche goes to my childhood and living about 80 kilometres from Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen), Porsche Cayman 981, and Alpine A110. I recalled fondly owning and running a 1971 Alfa Romeo 1750GTV and I knew that I wanted a similar type of car (albeit with some allowances for creature comforts such as A/C). I even considered going for an Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

Then I saw that Lotus Melbourne had a Lotus Evora for sale. I was very curious about the Evora because I recall it being launched with wonderful reviews by the UK press, but I was not aware of much else. It looked very nice in the photos, and so I started my research on them. After seeing the said car, and the fact it was a good deal cheaper than anything else I had seen, I gave Bruce Astbury of Lotus Melbourne a call to organise seeing and test driving the Evora. Upon inspection, I realised that this was one of the 2009 Launch Edition vehicles, but had a Black Vinyl Wrap roof and mirrors mimicking the erstwhile Evora Sport Racer. As someone who values ride quality, I heard that Lotus had this unique ability to be a thrilling drive and yet not a hard riding car that would destroy my back. Bruce gave an introduction drive in the Richmond/Cremorne area before handing me the keys. Within 500 metres, I realised that I needed to have this car in my life. After convincing my ever-supportive partner Mia, I thought life is too short not to own a sports car, and so I became the owner of the 2009 Lotus Evora Launch Edition.

Having owned the Evora since November 2019, each time I start to drive the car, the more enamoured I am with it. The handling is just wonderful, but particularly the steering wheel feels just right to me. The performance





is substantial enough for my needs (again, driving old French cars allows me to redefine what is considered “adequate” performance). But on the country roads of Victoria, the Evora comes alive with its wonderful balance in its handling and ride. I can drive it for hours and get out of it feeling like I could drive for another few hours. It is fuel efficient on a freeway, a bonus, and with its upgraded cold air intake and after-market exhaust, it sounds pretty spectacular (for a Toyota Camry Engine). But equally importantly, the Evora has some room for two child seats, so one day, I can share a journey with children and inspire them to be motoring enthusiasts. One of my favourite memories so far was in Dandenong, and having children gather around the Lotus thinking it was a Ferrari.

At the time of purchase, Bruce mentioned the Lotus Club of Victoria and how lovely its members are. Having attended the Concours d’Elegance in December 2019, and the Early Morning Run, I can genuinely say that the

Club has been so very welcoming and accommodating to me and Mia. It was also a nice change to see that in the Early Morning Run there was near 50:50 gender representation. Further, the Evora is just joyous to drive, and has allowed me to obtain my CAMS licence. Driving it around Phillip Island and being blown away by its performance meant that I was looking forward to 2020 with higher than normal anticipation. Sadly, it has not turned out to be the case.

One day, when we can drive our Lotus (or any other enthusiast car), I cannot wait to get in and go for that drive. The drive that allows you to achieve what you wanted as a 5-year old. That sense of meditative mind where you can be at peace with your car (or to channel your inner Jim Clark or Ayrton Senna). For me, the Evora does that. Plus it has put a lot of smiles on the faces of adults and children (and most importantly on mine!). As my first Lotus, I think I have done alright.

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Jason's very quick Caterham



The tail end of the field



# SEPTEMBER DTC



A rather mixed turn-out

by Evan Molloy  
photos: Dick Reynolds

The September DTC, hosted by Lotus Club Qld at Lakeside Raceway, held a special significance this year, as this round made up part of the hotly contested Inter Club Challenge (ICC). As such there were nearly 50 entries, along with some very special machinery on display, and all were vying for the title and round win for their respective club.

We were greeted by another glorious SE Qld day at Lakeside, and for this round we kicked off a little later in the morning which was welcomed by those coming from far away, and those that take a little more time in the morning to get warmed up (yours truly). The threat of rain never eventuated thankfully. So the scene was set for another great day of competition. Although it's all just for fun I'm told.

Once the vehicle scrutineering and driver's briefing were done, we headed off for a sighting lap. A vital part of the day because the Lakeside management felt more tyre bundles were needed at each apex to stop any short cutting. Hardly sporting, I thought, as short cutting is all part of the fun, and now the penalty for a locked brake or an over ambitious turn-in could be quite severe. Fortunately though, the tyres only claimed one casualty for the day, and the damage was light. With extra deterrents in place, lap records were

unlikely to be threatened, but it made for an exciting day of racing ahead.

We started with the challenging short track and after the first run I held a slight lead with a 46.0, followed closely by Pauline and Ken Graham in their incredible Datsun 1600 SSS. After four runs on the short track the competition was tight. I finished up with a 44.8, then it was Jason McGarry 45.24, Pauline Graham 46.084, Lindsay Close 46.233 and Graham 46.407 rounding up the top 5.

The 7 gang were having a bang up battle as usual, and it was Dick Reynolds in his hot rod out front by a tenth from Jon Young and Shane Murphy. Dick gets a special award for his "spirited" driving style and earns "hoon of the day" honours.

Next up we moved onto the very fast long track, which is a good fit for those with lots of hp on tap.

A typical lap for me would start with a big acceleration up the hill trying to limit the wheel spin, up into the top of second gear. Then a slight brake into the tight, right hander. As soon as the front is there, big acceleration down the hill, smashing the rev limiter for a split second, big brake again then turn into the carousel, feather

the throttle around the carousel understeer/oversteer then full acceleration out of the carousel, hoping you don't unload the inside too much as you shape it left into the esses. Through the tight esses, then more shaping right and right again with some big braking, hoping not to lock a wheel as you head back to the carousel. There's a left into and then a left out of the carousel which, when done right, feels so fast and lots of fun! We then get to the main tyre danger on the outside of the left after the carousel. A little feather there just to be sure, then back down the hill, another big brake, through the esses and over the line, hopefully facing the right way up!

We had three runs on the long track the result came in with myself at 54.495 then Gideon Street with a 55.108, then Jason McGarry 55.386 followed by Pauline Graham 55.777 and Ken Graham with a 55.854.

A special mention to Gideon who was absolutely flying in his stock V6 Exige, amazing work!

Another fantastic day out at Lakeside, and a massive thank you to everyone involved with the organising of the event. It was terrific to see the mix of machines and representatives from the various clubs. Best of all though, another win in the ICC for the Lotus Club QLD.



# MGCCQ

## Interclub Challenge Hillclimb Round

by Shane Murphy

The 2020 championship has regained traction in the second half of the year, and in quick succession we have had the LCQ DTC round, the MGCCQ Hillclimb Round and the HSCCQ Khanacross round, all on successive weekends.

The Mt Cotton Hillclimb track is one of the most challenging and always promises to deliver a thrilling "seat-of-the-pants" experience. In a COVID environment all but a few spectators adorned the venue, so the fans were few and far between.

Representing Lotus were the usual stalwarts, Jon (Smokin) Young, Dick (lumpy cam) Reynolds, Shane (Ace) Murphy and Jonathan Jones in his beautifully presented Europa.

Fellow traveller Phil Hart was a Lotus Ghost in the background representing Porsche, in his flat 6.

The format was super efficient with a pre-registration and minimal contact with officials, well done to the MGCCQ for thinking through a simplified entry system, the day ran extremely well.

Competition kicked off with the usual red mist and reasonable times were recorded, albeit well below everybody's personal bests.

Soon the times began to tumble, as well inching towards the track's limits.

Check out Jonathan's snazzy bit of driving on the club's Facebook page, Jonathan exited the first loop, generally and unintentionally at a nearly ninety-degree angle to the direction of the blacktop, a great save.

Dick decided that his engine rebuild was not delivering on the uphill pulls, so with a bit of basic manipulation he advanced his timing by

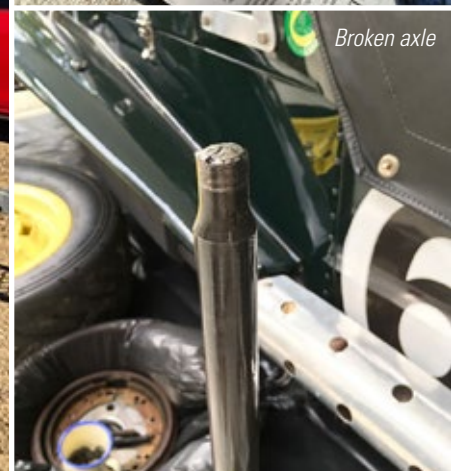
5 degrees and immediately started to get his times to somewhere respectable.

Jon plugged away all day delivering a steady performance, however much to his annoyance his times were slightly below par, as reported at previous events he was jammed up.

Shane, in the usually reliable green machine managed to break down coming out of the second loop, the problem correctly diagnosed by Phil was a broken axle, so after two runs the day was over for number 68.

The hot conditions proved to be to the competitors' advantage, as the track warmed, the times dropped.

With so few of us competing, we probably did not bag enough points to challenge the championship, but a great day, yet again, Oh, did I mention that in the final analysis Dick posted a faster time than Phil?





Filing out for the next run

by Andrew Row  
photos: Cris Johansen



## Morgan Park Sprints



Andrew with a tow-rope on Darryl



Martin chasing Barry



John Flynn



Barry's turbo



Geoff & Garry

The last round of the year was certainly a good one. The long track being the favourite of most, and all in attendance keen to make the most of our last motorsport event for the year. Quite a few faces missing for various reasons meant a much shorter wait time between runs, and an early start on the beers on Saturday night.

Yve, Chris and Maree put together a fantastic BBQ. Chris was seen hanging out near his mans' shed with smoke wafting from the door. Couple of sneaky webbers inside with both roast beef and pork smoking over the coals. Turned out to be a good place to hang out and have a beer. Warm, smelt great and full of old world gadgets. The ladies put together a mountain of roast vegies and salads, and a feast was had by all. Some eating inside, others outside by Chris's raging camp fire. Chris seemed on a mission to burn all the old timber he had lying around, with the warmth being of benefit to all as the days tall stories were told.

Great to see John Barram bring his Cheetah back to the track after a long restoration. Beautifully presented and going nicely until a minor oil leak halted his testing on Friday. John choosing to head home to ensure it was race-ready for the historics the following weekend.

Barry Mather was getting his turbo Honda-powered S1 up to speed. An impressive install, all of his own handywork in the home garage.

Some minor boost cut niggles, but when on-song it is so quick. With the development work nearly done it will be interesting to see what it's good for next year.

Everyone pairs up with someone on track to have someone their own pace to pick on. George Row and Peter Quinn pushing each other all weekend, Gideon Street and John Flynn doing the same until Gideon ran out of rubber and had to sit out. Gideon was lucky enough to get an invite into the control tower to watch to action from above. Came back quite chuffed with the experience of seeing all the equipment that monitors and controls the day.

Being paired up off the grid with Darryl Ringuet seemed like a tough challenge for the weekend. A TVS1900 V6 Exige seemed well out of my league. Not letting reality stand in the way, I pushed hard trying to keep in touch. Seems all the dusted knuckles changing out my very tired OEM suspension bushes for solid bushes was well worthwhile. Somewhat more predictable handling built the confidence to really lean on the car. Trying hard to get a tow from Darryl lead to cutting over 2 seconds from my PB. My enthusiasm lead Darryl to a PB as well, making sure he left me behind. Turns out Dick Reynolds is right, if you want to do better times, just drive faster. Who would have thought it was that easy. Such a perfect weekend at the track, by far the best fun I have ever had in my Lotus.

# Recent VicRoads Club Permit changes

There have been some recent changes with respect to the Club Permit Scheme which aren't readily found on the VicRoads website. The two documents are reproduced here.



## Recent changes to the Club Permit Scheme

October 2020

### The Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2009 will be replaced by the Road Safety (Vehicles) Interim Regulations 2020, which will take effect from 4 October 2020.

The new Regulations include the following changes that apply to the Club Permit Scheme

#### Use of Club Permit vehicles

The vehicle operated under the Club Permit must not be used for hire or reward for the carriage of goods or freight or to provide a commercial passenger vehicle service as defined by the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017

#### Club conditions

VicRoads may, from time to time, vary or remove a condition that an approved vehicle club must comply with. Internal review rights apply.

#### Club Permit number plates

When applying for a Club Permit, the applicant will now be required to pay a fee for the issue of standard Club Permit number plates (\$38 for two number plates, or \$19 for one number plate).

#### Requirements of club membership

To be eligible for a Club Permit, the club member will no longer need to be a "financial" member of an approved club, they will simply need to be a "member" of an approved club.

#### Obligations of Club Permit holders

A Club Permit holder must notify VicRoads within 14 days after a change in vehicle details or modification of the Club Permit vehicle.

#### New permanent or temporary operating conditions

VicRoads can now impose, vary or remove permanent or temporary operating conditions on a Club Permit if the vehicle does not meet the standards for registration. Internal review rights apply. For example, a vehicle with non-compliant headlights may have a condition of no driving at night.




The permit holder will be notified and sent a Certificate of approved operations if this occurs.

A Club Permit holder must not use a Club Permit vehicle to which a temporary or permanent condition has been applied without carrying the Certificate of approved operations in the vehicle.

#### Reassignment of a Club Permit

A Club Permit can be re-assigned to the surviving spouse/domestic partner when the permit holder is deceased. The surviving spouse/domestic partner of the deceased will also need to be a member of an approved club. An application must be made by the authorised representative within 90 days after becoming the authorised representative.

For more information visit [vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au)



01 October 2020

## VASS Bulletin 16: Eligibility of Left-Hand Drive (LHD) Vehicles on the Club Permit Scheme

### Introduction:

Around 2018 the eligibility of vehicles that are 25 years old or older for entry to the Club Permit Scheme (CPS) with a Left-Hand Drive (LHD) steering configuration was amended to align with the requirements of vehicles obtaining full registration.

The instruction in this Bulletin is applicable to any Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS) Signatory who is inspecting and approving vehicles that are 25 years old or older but less than 30 years of age, for entry to the Club Permit Scheme (CPS) with a Left-Hand Drive (LHD) steering configuration.

### What's Changing?

VicRoads will now allow eligible vehicles with a LHD steering configuration that are 25 years old and older but less than 30 years of age to be issued with a club permit (provided all other club permit requirements are met).

### Effective Date:

The requirements of this Bulletin are effective from the date of publication and remain in effect until further notice.

### Requirements:

To be eligible to access the CPS and to ensure vehicle safety and compliance items are addressed, these LHD vehicles will require a VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label to be issued by a VASS Signatory.

### How should VASS Signatories inspect and approve these vehicles?

Your inspection will be as per the requirements of VSB14 LO1 for import vehicles, with the only exceptions being:

- The vehicle will not have to comply with the steering configuration requirement in ADR 42, being "The centreline of the steering control must not be located to the left of the centreline of the vehicle."
- The vehicle will not have to comply with the requirement in ADR 61 to display an Approved Compliance Plate.

The vehicle must be compliant with all other applicable requirements. Other modifications that you observe will require approval or rectification if they cannot be made compliant, as per an import vehicle being inspected for the purposes of registration.

If the Vehicle Import Approval (VIA) includes a 17-digit VIN, this must be permanently stamped into a substantial part of the vehicle body such as the firewall or suspension tower.

You will issue a standard VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label to the vehicle.

The VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label must state in a location that is easily visible that the vehicle is for "Club Permit Use Only". VicRoads will be implementing measures at Customer Service Centres and within the administration of the Club Permit Scheme to ensure these vehicles are not eligible for registration.

### LHD vehicles that are 25 years old and older and less than 30 years of age will only be eligible for the CPS.

Vehicles that are 25 years old and older, but less than 30 years of age will not be eligible for registration in the LHD configuration even though they have a VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label.

### When will vehicles with a LHD steering configuration be eligible for registration?

A vehicle that is 30 years old or older is eligible for registration with a LHD steering configuration.

### Will a vehicle with a LHD steering configuration that has been approved for use on the CPS need another VASS inspection when it becomes eligible for registration and registration is sought?

Yes. A new VASS inspection will be required, and a new VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label must be issued.

A VASS Signatory approving a LHD vehicle that is 30 years old or older for registration that was previously approved for use under the CPS before it was 30 years old will be required to replace the blue modification plate/label which was previously issued to the vehicle.

### Does this change also include LHD Personal Import vehicles?



VicRoads will only accept a Personal Import vehicle that is 25 years old and older and less than 30 years of age with a LHD steering configuration on the CPS if it is given a VASS Approval Certificate and blue modification plate/label stating that it is for "Club Permit Use Only". A yellow plate must not be issued.

A personal import LHD vehicle that is 25 years old and older and less than 30 years of age which has been imported under the Federal Personal Imports option is only eligible for registration in Victoria when it is converted to right hand drive, and a Commonwealth yellow plate issued.

### Will a Personal Import vehicle with a LHD steering configuration that has been approved for use on the CPS need another VASS inspection when it becomes eligible for registration and registration is sought?

A VASS Signatory approving a LHD Personal Import vehicle that is 30 years old or older for registration that was previously approved for use under the CPS before it was 30 years old will be required to replace the blue modification plate/label which was issued to the vehicle with a Commonwealth yellow plate.

The vehicle will require the 17-digit VIN that is on the Yellow Plate to be permanently stamped into a substantial part of the vehicle body such as the firewall or suspension tower, if not already done.





# THE EUROPA MANN

## PART 20

by Richard Mann



Back in February I had the club meeting at Shed 2 and, if you attended, you may have seen George's S2 Europa all primed up and ready to paint. Many hours of preparation work go into bodywork, and I decided years ago I'd rather repair fibreglass than spend my time chasing rust in steel bodied cars like Alfas or Jaguars. There is nothing worse than placing a jack into the jacking point of your newly purchased classic Alfa project, and watching the jacking point carve its way through a crusty and rusty sill. A proper repair would generally involve three new sill sections and a piece of new flooring. That's lots of \$\$\$ for parts and lots of hours for labour. A carelessly placed jack under a classic Lotus might result in a damaged sill or holed floor, but the repair is infinitely easier and quicker.

### George's car in February

With fibreglass cars, time is consumed undoing old repairs that were badly done. And filling bonus holes. I'm not sure why, but most of the classic Lotus Elans and Europas I've worked on were full of bonus holes. Added lightness? Added drain holes? Or just added work for a bloke like me?!

What became increasingly obvious to me early on with George's car is that the body panels seemed very lightweight. Interesting! The first thing I did was get the complete shell bead blasted, to remove the 50 years of grime and old paint. Old repairs are suddenly revealed and the thin fibreglass becomes wonderfully translucent.



*Cars side-by-side, not us*



*George's car in February*



*Shell blasted clean prior to paint*





Bahama Yellow

### Shell blasted clean prior to repairs and primer

It would be tedious to go through the endless list of minor jobs, but what did continuously grab my attention is the thinness of some panels. I'm talking less than 1mm! Very light-weight, and very hard to repair and shape. In some areas I had to apply an extra layer of fibreglass to the back side of the panel so that it was stiff enough for me to repair and sand smooth.

Meanwhile Krishnan had purchased an early 1970 S2 Europa, and it was quite obvious the later car was considerably thicker and stiffer! Using the bathroom scales, George's doors were about 4kg each, while Krishnan's doors were just over 5kg each. That's a 20% weight increase.

Krishnan and I have been side-by-side (metaphorically, of course, in lockdown) for many months getting both cars ready for the final paint. Again, it was obvious during man-handling, that these two shells were different weights.

### Cars side-by-side, not us

I've got to weigh this thing! Coincidentally, Greg (that very tall Porsche bloke) just had his corner-weight scales delivered from South Africa, so a proper technical analysis could be made.

I took detailed notes of the hours spent on George's body shell, and Krishnan did a quick tally as well. If you're planning to do a body restoration, expect to spend 100 hours repairing the glasswork, getting it to a point

at which primer can be applied. Then it's another 50 hours of wet sanding the primer, minor blemish repairs, base coat and clear coat. A final wet sand and polishing will be at least another 10 hours.

But the result is worth it!

### Gulf Orange S2

Here's Krishnan's car. It's fab-o! I cheekily sent this pic to George and asked him what he thought of the colour. He commented it was a bit orange/red. He also probably thought "that Richard Mann is bloody colour blind!" and "WTF has he done to my car?!"

Here's George's car. The only Bahama Yellow Europa I've ever seen in the flesh. It's magic!

### Bahama Yellow S2

There can't be too many places in the world where two Europas were painted within a couple of weeks. The last few years have seen a number of Europa restorations completed in Australia, and there are at least five underway in Victoria right now. I'm hoping this lockdown will result in a lot more classic Loti hitting the road, sooner rather than later.

Ah yes – and the big weigh-in competition! Which shell is lighter and by how much? And the answer is ... I have not done it yet!



Gulf Orange



# Mathilde

## The story of how not to restore a 1902 Dutch barge

by Matthew Arnold

### CHAPTER 7: PINBALL WIZARD

Dear Readers, so, having amused some and bored many with our tales of how not to buy and rebuild a 30 metre barge, I thought it might be time to share some experiences of actually travelling on one. After all, after 10 years of work and who knows how many dollars, actually using it to go somewhere was something we thought would be a nice thing to do.

So this year we finally found a valid justification to leave Fort Victoria, and we headed off to France.

The plan was clear. Get to France, put Mathilde on the dry dock for a bum clean, then head off for our first solo cruise around the area before the canals closed, then come back and fix all the stuff we broke.

So, step one: get to dry dock. This involved going down a series of locks.

“What is a lock?” asked a land-lubbing fibreglass loving member? Put simply, inland canals are perfectly flat. The land they lie on is not. So, at some point, you need to go from one flat place to another flat place. A lock is basically a water elevator. You go into a concrete tank with a set of watertight gates either end, one stays closed, the other opens. You go in, press a button, the gate closes behind you, then the lock either fills up or drains to get you up or down to the next flat bit. “No real problem,” you say. Well, Dear Readers, while not necessarily a problem then certainly an issue to pay attention to. Let me explain.

Mathilde is 30 metres long and 5 metres wide. The locks around here are about 35 metres long and about 5 metres plus a bee’s dick wide. Oh, and the entrances to the locks are guarded by sandstone blocks that have a similar effect as icebergs on the Titanic.

So how to get in and out without crashing and crunching? Well, Dear Readers, I have no idea because to date I haven’t managed it. But the theory goes as follows...

Start straight and slow. Get yourself nicely lined up, slow down. As you near the lock entrance, make sure you are nicely centred, guide in through the entrance, put a rope on a bollard, bring the barge to a halt and tie up. It looks easy when you watch an experienced pilot effortlessly guide big hotel barges into locks, with not a paint scuff to be seen and barely a ripple in the guest’s Chardonnay glass.

However, my initial experiences were more like this.

The initial line up – not so much of a problem. Concentrate, slow right down and stay straight. All good. Sides of the barge lined up with the sides of the lock. Then a puff of wind pushes you off-line. Remember the bow thruster from last month’s article? Well now you thank god that you have one. A bit of bow correction. All good again, back on line. Then a bit of reverse to slow you down. Hmm, it slows you down but you also get something called prop walk which acts to pull the stern over to the left. So you put it in neutral and try and steer yourself back on line, but with no propeller pushing water across the rudder, not an awful lot happens.

So stick it back in gear and get some steering back. Then there is a shout from the bow “Slow down, slow down!”.

By this time, Dear Readers, you are about 20 metres from the lock and all out of shape. Then another fun thing happens. The height of the bow on



Mathilde completely obscures your vision of anything at water level for, you guessed it, about 20 metres. Where the f\$@k did that lock go? You can’t see it. If you haven’t already memorised some other alignment point on the horizon – a tree, a building, anything – then you are steering blind. At this point one of two things happens. You chicken out and put it in full reverse. This then at least minimises any loud bangs but has you at best perpendicular to the lock entrance. Alternatively, you pucker up and hope somehow you are somewhere near where you should be, and trust the rest to chance. This inevitably results in you starting a game of barge Pinball Wizard. No little silver balls and those bouncy things that go ping! No, just an 80-tonne hunk of steel taking on the sandstone blocks of the lock that goes crunchhhh. The game starts when the barge hits one side of the lock then ricochets to the other, then back again, and again, until the friction of grinding steel against stone brings you to an undignified halt. All the time the local canal lock keeper and a few tourists are watching you with those disdainful eyes and a few chuckles.

So now you are in the lock and hopefully still floating. No need to check downstairs. You already know all the crockery and crystal is toast. Now it’s time to tie up. If you are going downstream, then the bollards are easy to reach because you are high and then dropping. You tie up front and back, putting a nice secure knot at each end. Happy the boat is nice and secure, you hit the button to release the water from the lock. The water level and the barge start to drop pretty fast. Except how about those ropes? Well they are getting tighter and tighter as the barge descends. Undo the knot? No way, it’s now just a ball of nylon. I always wondered why barges have a big machete or axe close to hand ... Much better to remember to progressively loosen the ropes so you don’t have a barge hanging mid-air in an empty lock.

Going up is just as much fun. Entering an empty lock is a bit easier, as you are low and can see the lock walls and gates. So you ricochet your way in a bit more smoothly this time, the lock gates close and you are faced with a 5-10 metre wall of slime in the middle of which is a rusty battered ladder. Grab the rope in one hand, climb up the slimy, slippery ladder one handed, get the loop on a bollard above, get back down, tie off and do the same on the back. Then hit the button to start the fill. Then, Dear Readers, you see a torrent of water coming at you from the front gate as the sluices open. Shit, I am going to drown! But you don't, 'cos boats float... usually. You relax as you feel the barge rise in the lock. But as you go up, the ropes slacken, don't they? This then starts another game of Pinball Wizard as the force of the incoming water bounces the barge around in the lock because you can't balance and get to the ropes to tighten them. More laughter from the tourists watching above. Finally the flow slows down, the bouncing stops, the water levels equalise, the gates open and you leave with as much dignity as you can muster.

So, variations of the above informed my learning of what not to do entering and exiting locks. I started to get the hang of it over time, learned a few points from old hands and headed off to navigate through the five locks to the dry dock with a sense of, "well the old girl will get a few bruises, but it should be ok".

So lock number one approaches. All lined up, a bit of reverse with the necessary, learned counter-measure to slow down. Add some more revs to slow down more. Nothing – the engine would do nothing but idle. So now I am gliding toward the lock essentially with no brakes. Pucker moment. It's slow motion but it gives you plenty of time to visualise the end result. Then I remembered what the ever grumpy Francois said to me.

"When you are in ze shit, pick ze shit option with the least painful outcome."

Great advice. So faced with a solid and very expensive lock gate or a muddy reedy bank next to it I steered into the bank and ground to a relatively uneventful halt. Spuds down, barge secured, no serious damage done. Deep breaths then into the engine room to sort out what was going on. The culprit seemed to be a fuel flow problem, 'cos after pumping the priming pumps a few times the engine came back to life. Excellent. Off we go again.



*Lots of metal to stop successful arrival at dry dock*

Lock number two – about 300 metres out, the engine starts to die again, so I dived down to the engine room, leaving the barge to just do its own thing and steer itself, furiously primed the fuel line again, got the engine revs back up, raced back up to the wheelhouse – by which time I was all out of alignment – corrected, got in the lock, wiped my brow.

Dear Readers, the above repeated itself for every bloody lock. Engine was all fine until a point of maximum inconvenience and then it would just splutter and die requiring another frantic visit to the engine room and then back up to try and recover the situation. Not cool.

"You look a bit flushed," said Mrs A upon arrival at the dry dock.

"Indeed". Sometimes less is more, Dear Readers.

Once in dry dock we discovered the problem was blocked filters restricting the flow of fuel.

The moral of the story: reverse on a barge is equivalent to brakes on a car. Make sure they work before you go anywhere.

Next month we progress out of dry dock and cruise serenely through the beauty of Southern France's waterways. Or not!

Until next time happy motoring (within 5km of your home)!



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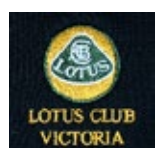


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