

ACROSS THE POND

By Gordon Morris

The first Lotus I ever owned, rather than drove regularly, was a very early Lotus Cortina in the late Sixties. In the early and mid sixties, I was a bachelor Air Force officer. We all lived in the Officers' Mess, at that time a sort of first class hotel, and most of us had sports cars of varying vintages and conditions. The car park was full of Austin Healeys, Triumphs, MGs, Jaguars, Aston Martins and so on, with the occasional Alfa Romeo as well. There were also a few Lotuses too; I remember a Seven or two, with an Elan or an Elite for those with lots of money.

We all went away on duty for weeks and months at a time, so it was normal for those going away to ask those staying behind to look after their cars during their absence. But first, you had to establish your credibility as someone who knew about cars. This wasn't always easy to achieve. So it was that, one sunny Sunday afternoon – a week after I arrived at this base – that a few of us were enjoying the sunshine outside the Mess when one of the older hands drove up in his latest acquisition. This was an early Turner – a small open sports car which predated the Sprite – it had a BMC A series engine and gearbox and went quite well according to the standards of the day.

But this Turner looked decidedly strange. It sat at an odd angle and its new owner admitted that it seemed to handle rather peculiarly. I soon discovered that he knew next to nothing about cars but thought his Turner was quite the thing to have. I took a quick look at the wheels and discovered that my colleague's pride and joy wore three 14 inch and one 16 inch wire wheels. Everyone wanted to go off to have tea at that stage, so I told him that I'd fix his problem for him by the time he returned. It took me a few minutes to jack up the car, replace the 16 inch wheel with the 14 inch spare and to reset the tyre pressures (they were all over the place) to the same as I used on my Sprite.

A quick run up the road and back revealed that the car handled as it should, so I gave the owner his keys back and told him that all was now well. He did his own test drive and my credibility, and source of beer for the next week or so, was assured. I never did tell him what I had done to his car and such was his lack of interest in the mechanical side of things that I doubt if he ever found out. However, this very easy quick fix assured me a steady supply of cars to "look after" when their owners were away – and some of those were Lotuses. I well remember a very early Elan, with rubber mats on the floor (just like my Sprite!) and windows that wouldn't stay up, as well as a lovely Elite that looked magnificent, went much faster than a 1200cc car should, but was as noisy as a piston engined aircraft inside.

Which brings me to the late Sixties, by which time I had met and married Jan and she presented me with daughter Joanna. For the time being at least, sports cars were out, so I traded in my trusty TR3A for a 1275cc Mini Cooper S. Just the thing for a family like us, I thought, but I was wrong. The Mini, fast though it went, was not for us. There was precious little room inside and the ride was uncomfortable. Good fortune was just round the corner, though, when I met a fellow officer

who had just bought a fine Lotus Cortina. He told me he hated it, because it wouldn't start, was unreliable and he really fancied a Cooper S. So a deal was struck – perhaps I should have told him how to start a twin cam with Webers – and we swapped cars and I now had a Lotus of my own.

A few hours work sorting out spark plugs and points soon had the Cortina running well and I enjoyed three years happy motoring in that fine car. It had plenty of room inside and a vast boot (trunk) – just the job for all the paraphernalia required for a baby girl. The snag was that it did only 20 miles to the gallon and it had only an 8 gallon tank – but one of its many extras was another 8 gallon tank in the boot. That gave a range of about 300 miles, so I had to refuel on our regular trips from North London to my parents in Scotland.

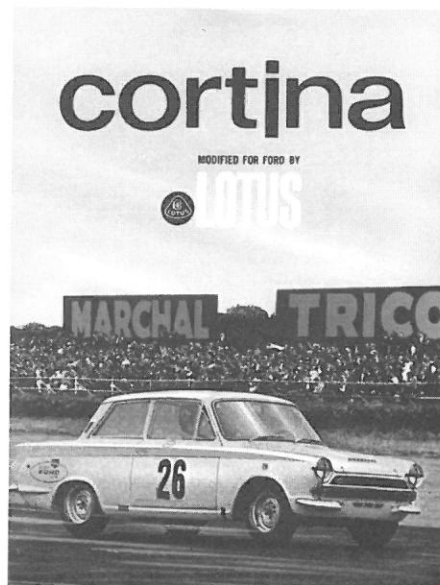
AJG 925B was an early 1964 car, with alloy bonnet (hood), doors and boot (trunk), as well as alloy bellhousing, gear lever extension and diff nose piece. It also had the notorious A bracket rear suspension, but I had no problems with oil leakage – I'd been forewarned so I checked the diff bolts for tightness regularly. It also had a hot engine – with Cosworth CPL2 cams – allegedly producing 125 bhp. The standard car had 105 bhp so my engine was about the equivalent of the Sprint which came six years later.

The point of all of this is that my journey to LOG 25 will be by Continental to Cleveland and by Cortina from Cleveland to St Louis – the latter courtesy of the David Lotus Collection in Macedonia. Gary has generously agreed to lend me his Cortina to drive to & from the LOG; previously I drove his Europa to LOG 19 in Corning and the Cortina to LOG 23 at Grand Island. On that occasion, I managed to run out of fuel at the bottom of the ramp from I 271 at Macedonia – right by a gas station and a mile from the David Collection. This time, I'll try to remember that tiny 8 gallon tank sitting behind me; that will mean three fuel stops on 71 and 70. But this time, I'll have a spare fuel can as well – I can't rely on being that lucky twice.

My Seven also has an eight gallon tank, but manages to get 25 or so miles from each £4.27 (\$7.70) admittedly slightly larger imperial gallon. The Elan does between 30 and 35 mpg and I pay no road tax on either car – thanks to a Government concession a few years ago. Agreed value, limited mileage insurance (3,000 miles a year for each car)

costs about £250 (\$450) for both, so the Elan and the Seven amount to economy cars in our harsh taxation regime.

The French have a saying "*Plus ça change, plus la meme chose*" – roughly translated meaning that the more things change, the more they stay the same. So it will be that I drive Gary's Lotus this August on a different continent. This time, I'd like to think that I know a little more about these fine cars that I did before – enough, perhaps, to put right a wonky Turner, but still not enough to avoid running out of fuel in a Cortina. 🍷

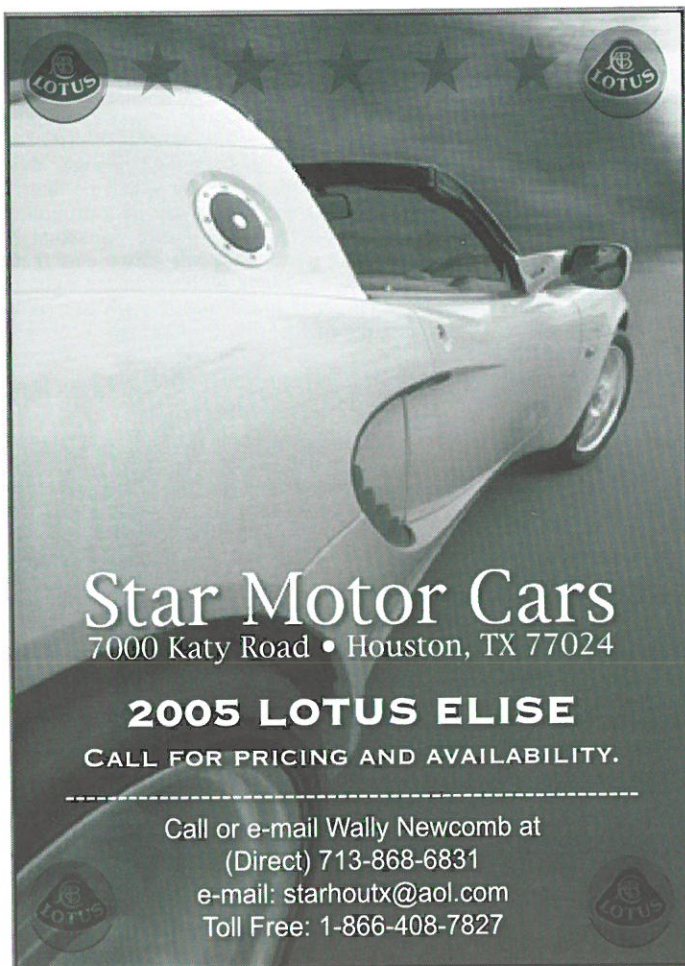


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Preparing for the LOG 26 Track Day

By Andrew R. Barron

Track days are fun. They are the perfect opportunity to find out what the performance of your car was designed for without the Draconian restrictions of the Federal and State Governments. They are also an ideal chance to gain experience handling your car under relatively safe conditions. Track days are not about being the next Jim Clark or Mario Andretti, they are to be enjoyed. You do not have to prove how fast your car is – even experienced racers know there is always someone faster.

The LOG 26 track day will be held at Gateway International Raceway which is a complex consisting of a 1.25 mile oval, an infield road course, and a 1/4 mile NHRA dragstrip, located in East St. Louis, Illinois, across the river from St. Louis. The track configuration for LOG 26 track day will include the infield course.

The LOG 26 track day will have four run groups. As is typical of most track days, these will be divided with regard to drivers experience and the level of the car's safety equipment. Group 1 will be for novices and people with little track experience (for this group instructors will be on hand). B will be an intermediate group, for those people with some experience who are using cars not equipped for racing. Group C is for experienced competition license holders and experienced drivers. Group D is for open wheel race cars (including some F1 cars!).

If this is your first time to a track day, don't worry there will be instructors on hand with experience of racing in general. They will try and help you feel comfortable at your own pace. Prior to getting out on the track, there will be a driver's meeting to make sure everyone understands the procedures. So the organizers will ensure you are prepared to have a fun day. But what about your car?

While all the track day entrants will undergo a technical inspection at the track, to ensure the safety of you and your fellow drivers, there are a few things you can do prior to any track day and before getting on the track. These are divided into two parts; those items for your car and those for you.

First of all, what equipment will you need? Those in Group 4 will be required to wear full fire suits and associated safety equipment. If you are in Groups 1 - 3 and do not have a race suite don't worry, track days usually simply require you wear long sleeves and pants (no shorts).

All drivers will be required to wear helmets. Helmets should be SNELL 95SA or SNELL 00SA. Motorcycle helmets (SNELL M) will not be allowed. Full-face helmets are required for open cars, and are advised for all drivers. However, if you are using an open helmet, eye protection (such as goggles) is required. If you are buying a helmet, get a good one from a major manufacturer such as Simpson or Bell. It is not a good idea to skimp on your helmet. Think of it this way, "how much is your head worth?"

Race gloves are a good idea but not essential for those in Groups 1 - 3. However, good shoes are something you must bring. They should be comfortable, with soft rubber soles (so you can feel the peddles), and make sure they are not too wide. Remember most Lotus cars have pedals close together just like a race car.

So you are ready now what about your car? The final preparation for any track or autocross event can be performed on the day (these are discussed later), but there are some things that you can do prior to arriving at the track. The following is a checklist of things to do before arriving at track.

- Make sure seats are secure and seat belt anchors have no play.
- The windshield should have no cracks and the wipers should work effectively.

Track Day (Continued on page 7)



Photo courtesy of David Nagler



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