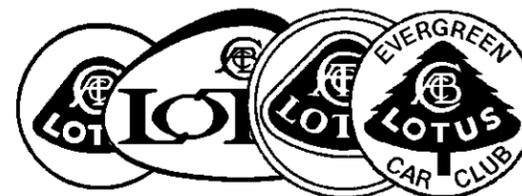




Evergreen Lotus Car Club
P.O. Box 40481
Bellevue, WA 98015-4481



Lotus Lines

Newsletter for the Evergreen Lotus Car Club
March/April 2004

ELCC Invades SyKart

On March 20th, another motley crew of ELCC members arrived at SyKart in Tukwila to hone or show off our driving skills. Ten of us arrived bright and early, including Atchi (Prezaboy) and Bradley (Yao), who finally had enough birthdays under their belts to pass SyKart's stringent age requirement. They both had big and nervous grins as we got ready for the track. Other drivers were Lin Hayashi, myself, Maury Montag, Jon Lexau, Charles Conti (taking a short break from tax season), our Chairman Tom Miller (Blank), and Tim Holmgren (MRE28M5). I've included each driver's preferred "handle" above, except for Chuck, who just went by Charles, but really **was** taking a break from his very busy tax business. Andre Samson, ever the gamer, arrived, but with a head so full of allergies that he chose to be a spectator and coach some of us on the best line.

SyKart set us up with 2 sessions each, and we watched the "really informative video" yet again. The track was modified once again from last year, making it a new experience for everyone. The track record is currently just under 29 seconds, but we were all lapping in the low- to mid-30's. SyKart also has a new set of karts, which were great and appear to be pretty consistent with each other. There weren't any complaints about a dog-slow one among the group.

Lin Hayashi proved to be the fastest in both sessions, with a 31.56, then 31.33. I was 3/4 of a second slower in the first heat, but pulled to within 0.06 in the second. There was a tussle for the middle positions between Maury, Tom, Charles and Jon, with Tom going from 6th in the 1st session to 3rd in the 2nd. Obviously, he must have been balked in the first heat. In the rookie category, Atchi, Bradley and Tim all had a great time learning the line and the karts. It was a reminder that these really are quick machines that take a few sessions to wrap your brain around. Everything happens so quickly.

I hope that next year we can get enough drivers to fill 2 grids. The event was a universal success, so put it on your March calendar for 2005. I think that might even be our 5th Annual ELCC Karting event. As for now, I'll see you at Autosport in May.

Visit to Autosport Seattle

When: Saturday, May 1st, 10:00pm
Where: Autosport Seattle, 2121 Westlake Avenue, Seattle, WA 206-621-1940
Host: Tom Miller, 206-783-9716

The guys at Autosport Seattle are opening up their shop and giving us a tour of the facility. The last time that we were there (three years ago, I think), this was a very well-attended event and very informative as they explained how they go about rebuilding a Twin Cam engine. You won't want to miss this one.

Directions:

From Interstate 5 South, towards downtown:

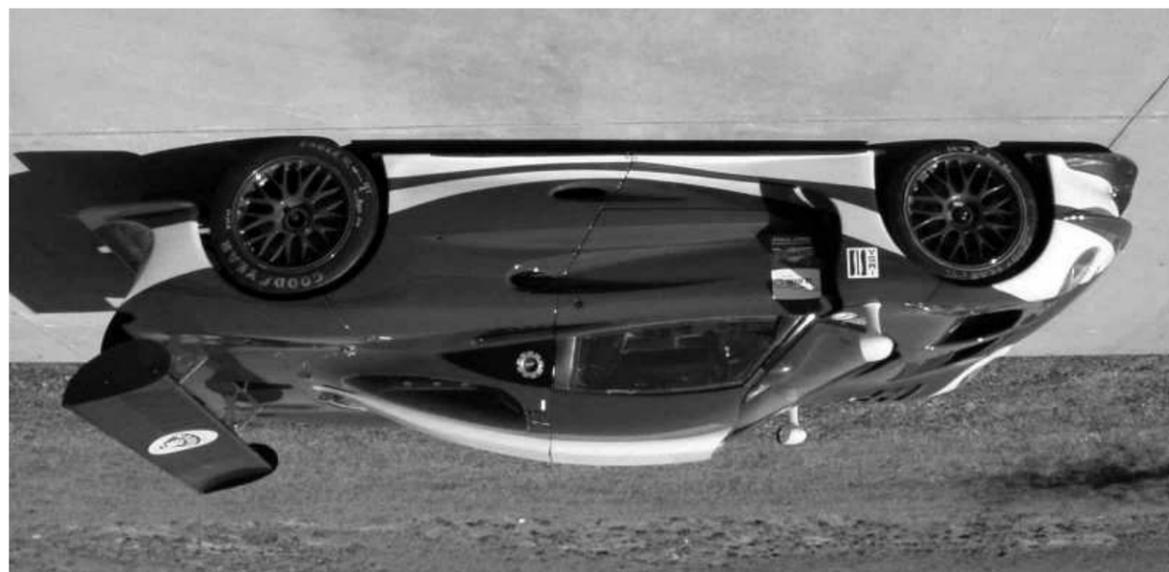
- Take exit 166 (Stewart St./Denny Way) off of I-5.
- Get into the right lane and cross the intersection onto Stewart St.
- Turn Right onto Denny Way.
- Continue with the Denny Way and I-5 directions below.

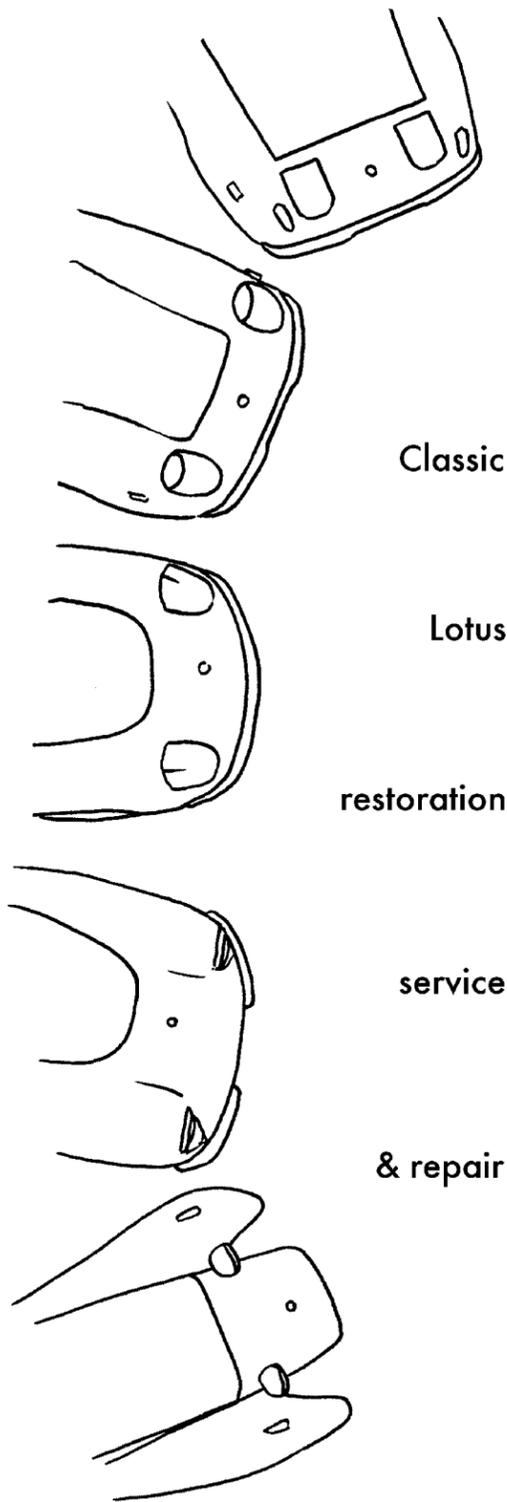
From Interstate 5 North, towards downtown:

- Take the Olive Way exit off of I-5.
- Turn Left onto Bellevue Ave.
- Turn Left onto Denny Way. Continue below.

From Denny Way and Stewart:

- On Denny Way, turn Right onto Westlake Ave. Left turns onto Westlake are not permitted at this intersection.
- Turn Left onto John St. (the first left from Dexter).
- Turn Left onto 9th Ave. at the Stop sign.
- Get into the right lane and cross Denny Way.
- Turn Right at the traffic signal.
- Autosport Seattle is on the right, immediately after the traffic signal.





Classic

Lotus

restoration

service

& repair

Randall Fehr Restorations

**30 South Horton Street
Seattle, Washington 98134
206-622-7469**

seanet.com/~rsfehr/restorations.html

Editor's Note

Sometimes having too much time to do something is just as bad as not having enough.

Normally, the newsletter is event-driven, that is, it comes out a week or so before the next club event. However, there was not enough time to do the newsletter before the karting event in March, so I decided to do a combined March-April newsletter. The next event was (is!) May 1, so I had plenty of time before it. I started working on a special April Fool's section and was shooting for having the newsletter in the mail on 1 April. Then some material that I needed for the newsletter got delayed, so I missed that date (and am saving the April Fool's material for next year). Then I started working on the newsletter again and didn't like the way it was going, so I stopped working on it.

If this had been a normal month and a club event was right around the corner, I would have just cranked out the newsletter and not thought much about it. Instead, I had time and figured I would try and make this issue particularly nice.

Now, it is mid-April. The newsletter still isn't done (as I type this) and the May 1 tour of Autosport Seattle is coming up fast.

Sometimes I just don't know what to do with this newsletter. There is only so much going on to write about. Club events. New Elise stuff. What else? I think I will try ...

No time. I gotta get the newsletter done and in the mail.

Lotus Lines is the official newsletter of the Evergreen Lotus Car Club. Opinions expressed in *Lotus Lines* are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the ELCC or its officers. Use all technical information at your own risk. Please submit all articles, art work, advertising, and photographs to the Editor. All other official business should be directed to the Chairman. Other Lotus clubs are welcome to use the material printed in *Lotus Lines*, provided that the ELCC, *Lotus Lines* and the author are duly credited. The ELCC is not affiliated with and does not represent Lotus Cars Ltd., Group Lotus, Team Lotus, or any Lotus related organization.

Membership in the ELCC is \$20/year, with the membership year starting in January, and is prorated in three month increments. Membership includes a club roster and a subscription to *Lotus Lines*.

Contact the Editor for business ads rates in *Lotus Lines*.

Contact ELCC at:
Evergreen Lotus Car Club
P.O. Box 40481
Bellevue, WA 98015-4481
<http://www.elcc.org>

The ELCC officers are elected bi-annually and those officers are currently:

Chairman:	Tom Miller	(206)783-9716
	labtrm@vmmc.org	
Membership:	Jim Taylor	(206)232-2237
	jimtaylor@seanet.com	
Treasurer:	Dave Billings	(206)241-2116
	dave@bilcoh.com	
Editor:	Alan Perry	(206)855-9464
	alanp@snowmoose.com	

Book Review - Colin Chapman Lotus Engineering

Hugh Haskell's book analyzes the technical accomplishments of Colin Chapman and Lotus. The book was first published about 10 years ago. Haskell was a Lotus employee in the early 60s and worked for Colin Chapman and Mike Costin.

This book could be looked at as a counterpoint to Mike Lawrence's *Colin Chapman Wayward Genius* (reviewed in the January newsletter). Whereas Lawrence tends to downplay Chapman's contribution to areas where he is regarded as THE innovator, Haskell's engineering background enables him to point out exactly what Chapman did that was innovative. And Haskell is backed up by remarks by folks like Gordon Murray and Stirling Moss.

I highly recommend the book to those who are technically minded.

(978) 851-8370 easygo@tingleslotus.com
www.tingleslotus.com



TINGLE'S LOTUS CENTER

1615 SHAWSHEEN ST., UNIT 8
TEWKSBURY, MA 01876

Classified Advertisements

Classified advertising for ELCC members is free. Pricing for non-members is available on request. To submit ads and for business ad rates, contact the Editor. Also, please remember to inform the Editor when you want the ad to be removed.

Parts Wanted: for 1968 Series III Seven. Engine brackets for crossflow, front lower a-arms, handbrake lever. Andre, 206-528-8141, ags58@earthlink.net.

For Sale: Motorsports Elise. Red. Alignment & ride height changed. Gel cell battery. Spare splitter. Spare alternator. Custom exhaust with optional Supertrapp tip (for quiet days). Custom lower motor mount (lighter and stronger). Set of rain tires. Fuel container and filler. \$67500. Colin, 425-417-3862 or <http://www.lotussource.com/lscclassified/MotorsportElise/summary.htm> for more information.

For Sale: 1969 Elan S4 DHC. White daily driver. 122,500 mi. rebuilt engine and transmission by Schlossnagel racing at 116,568 mi. in 1995. Full service records since 1982 purchase at 66,3887 mi. and can be e-mailed as attachment. Never wrecked or restored. Always garaged. Stock except Crane Cams optical ignition system, adjustable ZC needles, thermostat electric radiator fan, Michelin X 165/70R13. Factory Service Manual. Black top (never used). Black Tonneau. Felt car cover. Hemmings list good as 14K, CPI list at 12K. Chuck Botts (non-member), cbotts@san.rr.com, 858-292-1480, San Diego, CA.

For Sale: 1963 Lotus Elan Series 1. 45700 miles. Red with original gray top and gray center console. Original teak 3/4 dash. Original style steel wheels and hub caps. A great

Haskell does not limit his discussion to Chapman's efforts with cars. There are sections on racing boats (that his son Clive raced), Moonraker boats, microlight aircraft and engines, furniture and anything Chapman could think of that was made out of injection molded fiberglass, including coffins. When he talks about cars, he breaks it down by topic - aerodynamics, suspension, engine. The book also has some biographical info on Chapman.

My favorites parts are "Chapman's Theory of the Compressibility of Bums" (where he was able to get the driver (and his weight) lower in two seats occupying the same area by flattening the area where the buttocks go) and an article that Chapman wrote for *Motor Racing Magazine* in 1958 called "Why Lightweight Cars Are Safer".

Brooklands British Car
www.brooklandsbritish.com

**Austin • MG • Triumph • Lotus
Sunbeam • Morris**

Parts - Service - Restoration

8235 So. Tacoma Way
Tacoma, WA 98499 USA
1-253-584-2033

example of the earliest Elans with low miles. Would prefer to sell to a good, local home. \$20,000/Make offer. Maury Montag, 425-391-5359.

For Sale: 1962 Jaguar Mk 2. British green, 3.8 liter, AT, power steering, power brakes. \$23,000. Scott, 206-723-5094, Seattle, WA.

For Sale: 1979 Eclat, Black, 40k miles, Automatic, \$7000 obo to good home. Joe Terry, 425-885-0637.

For Sale: Two Solex carburetors for Series One or Two Europa, \$85 for the pair. Bob Cross, 360-652-9260.

Parts Wanted: for Type 14 Elite. Any spares you have. Building a car from a bare shell. John Schneeman, 206-854-6706.

For Sale: 1997 Caterham Super 7 Live Axle, 1700 cross-flow/150hp, Quaife 5-spd, Quaife LSD, 4 pt harness, Scholarship Adjustable Suspension, Clamshell Wings, Green/Yellow/Aluminum, Tonneau cover, Some spares. See www.unibrain.org/forsale for more info. \$25,000 negotiable. Jim Boone, 503-246-7541, forsale@unibrain.org.

For Free: Box full of used Stromberg parts, including adjusting tool. One yard of black vinyl. Alan Perry, 206-855-9464.

For Sale: 1969 Europa S2. Type 54. West coast car. Electric fuel pump. Weber 32/36 DGV carb. ceramic coated header. Rebuilt master cylinder. New motor mounts. Gotti wheels. New starter motor. Rebuilt radiator. Electronic ignition. Frame/suspension upgrades. \$7300. Mike (non-member), 425-398-1022.

Upcoming Events by Alan Perry

By the time you read this, the deadline for registering (without a late fee) for the West Coast Lotus Meet will have passed. That shouldn't stop you from going. To be held May 20-23 in the Lake Tahoe area, this WCLM should be interesting because customer delivery of the Elise will have started by then and Lotus Cars USA is bringing some cars for you to check out for yourself. Aside from that is the usual track day, autocross and concours. Check out <http://www.gglotus.org/2004wclm> for more details.

If you don't want to drive to Tahoe, there are a bunch of things going on locally.

The local Delorean club (Deloreans are Esprits underneath) have invited us to join them for a Car Care Tech session at Griot's Garage on May 8. The Delorean guys want a headcount if any of us will attend and Chairman Tom will be taking that headcount at the Autosport Seattle event.

ELCC Movie Night by Alan Perry

Way back in February, Randall Fehr hosted Movie Night. Not only did he offer his home, but he selected a program of titles rather than just showing whatever folks brought. Before the featured program, there was a choice between old 8mm film of Seattle International Raceway in the 70s, more recent video at SIR, uh, er, Pacific Raceway, munching on food and chatting with the numerous attendees.

Elise Update

Before you get the next newsletter, the first delivery of Federal Elises to customers may have occurred.

A dealer launch was held at Road Atlanta at the end of last month. Representatives of various dealers had an opportu-

Event Calendar

ELCC events are listed in **BOLD**

May

- 1 ELCC Visit to Autosport Seattle**
- 2 NWARC Track Day at Pacific Raceways
- 20-23 West Coast Lotus Meet, Lake Tahoe**

July

- 2-4 SOVREN Vintage Races and Lotus Corral, Pacific Raceways, Kent, WA**
- 24 Western Washington All-British Field Meet, Bellevue, WA**

Car Clubs

BMWCCA: BMW Car Club - Puget Sound Region
425-481-9571 <http://www.bmwpugetsound.com>
CMCS: Corvette Marque Club of Seattle
425-486-2309 <http://www.corvettemarqueclub.com>
NWARC: Northwest Alfa Romeo Club
360-766-4405 <http://welcome.to/nwarc>
WWSCC: Western Washington Sports Car Council
206-255-0658 <http://www.wwscc.org>

Over Father's Day weekend in June, the Classic Yacht Association is hosting Classic Weekend on the Waterfront and are looking for 200-300 classic cars to display on Piers 54 through 70 in downtown Seattle. If you would like to participate in this, contact Tom.

IRDC is having a track and driver's education day at Bremerton Raceway on Friday, April 23. Check out their web site below for more details.

NWARC is having a track day at Pacific Raceways on 2 May. Their website is listed below.

What else?

Georgia Conti has suggested that some club members may want to go to the IMAX showing of NASCAR as a group.

Then again, we don't yet have a planned club event for June. Stay tuned.

Randall sent me the list of titles for the featured program and, of course, I misplaced it. There was an odd French theme, including Rencouvous and some film that had a car passing a bunch of now-obscure European cars stopped in traffic because of an accident. The evening went interactive as the audience went about guessing what the cars were. I am pretty sure that Andre won.

nity to learn more about the car and to try it out. Lotus had cars in each of the standard colors available.

If you didn't get on a dealer list, check out eBay. A spot for April/May delivery went for over \$20,000. That's on top of the \$45,000 sticker price.

Racing Clubs

BSCC: Bremerton Sports Car Club
360-697-1761 <http://www.bscc.net>
CSCC: Cascade Sports Car Club, Portland, OR
503-543-8161 <http://www.cascadescc.com>
IRDC: International Race Drivers Club, Seattle, WA
206-781-8199 <http://www.irdc-racing.com>
ICSCC: International Conference of Sports Car Clubs
425-226-1338 <http://www.icssc.com>
SCCA: Sports Car Club of America, NW Region
206-292-0500 <http://www.nwr-scca.org>
SCCBC: Sports Car Club of British Columbia
604-824-7277 <http://www.sccbc.net>
SOVREN: Society of Vintage Racing Enthusiasts
206-232-4644 <http://www.sovren.org>
TC: Team Continental, Portland, OR
503-645-9058 <http://www.teamcontinental.com>

From The Chair

Another month, another column. Alan, who edits the newsletter, has his deadlines and I'm fast up against one. My life has been a haze of rewrites, pots of hot black coffee and smoking cigarettes like they were candy (or was I eating candy like it was cigarettes?). Anyhow, I had a great idea for this month's column but it fell through this time due to my schedule. Let me tell it to you.

I know many of you have a very high opinion of your fearless leader and hang on his every word. Contrary to this, your leader does not always have important stuff to say yet must fill a column each month. Now add to this an interesting fact, there are about 100 members in the club and I only know a fraction, even fewer by name (I have a horrible memory for names). Sometimes I'll say to someone, "you know, the guy with the yellow Europa." to confirm someone's identity. My thought was to combine these two problems, my having to write a column and my ignorance of the membership, into a solution. I would like to profile an occasional club member in this space in order to introduce them to me and to the club in general.

Dennis Wu was to be my first victim. He's working on a top secret project which, at the moment, I'm not at liberty to divulge. My schedule, as I've stated before, has hosed this all up but look for his profile soon. I'm looking for further victims. If you know of someone in the club who would be will-

Member's Notes Compiled from members

BILL RABEL let us know that he has a new grandson. Mateus William Rabel was born on Feb 26 in Eugene, OR. 8 lbs. 12 oz. Mother and baby doing fine.

DICK BUCKINGHAM of SOVREN had a serious accident while racing in New Zealand in February. He was in a coma for some time and was eventually transported back to Seattle. He has since emerged from the coma and is recuperating at a facility on Mercer Island. His condition continues to improve.

DAVE BILLINGS wrote in: "The other evening, on the way to an appointment, I saw an open auto-transporter parked on Fautleroy Way SW here in West Seattle. It was the standard double-decker that might be used to deliver Chevy Impalas to

ing to tell us a little about themselves and their cars, drop me a line. If I don't hear from anyone I'll start cold calling members so watch out.

I've had another idea and it pertains to organizing group drives. We already have one system which requires planning ahead by months and getting the drive mentioned in the newsletter, getting out an E-vite to everyone's e-mail and so on. This is a good system and I like it. That being said, sometimes I think a more informal, immediate method could work on other occasions. Our e-mail coverage of the club is pretty good and I think this would be a great way to announce a drive on the spur of the moment. I'm sure you've been in the position of suddenly finding you are free next weekend and wouldn't it be nice to get a few folks together and drive somewhere? What to do? Why you zap off an e-mail to everyone in the club and say meet me here or there for a day of driving fun, that's what you do. I might try this in May and see how it goes. Nothing fancy, just a Snoqualmie river drive or such. The object is to have a few more reasons to get out your car and enjoy it by driving it. To be honest I'm not expecting big turnouts but we'll see what happens. It's all an experiment.

Thanks for your time and I'll see you next month.

Tom

the local dealer. The cars on board, however, were a mix of several makes. Something, however, caught my eye, and I almost crashed while doing a triple take before being certain that there was a silver or gray Elise with a black soft-top on the upper deck.

"My appointment was very short, and when driving home, I passed the same transporter on the road, this time minus the Elise. The only conclusion I can derive is that someone only blocks from my home has taken delivery of this car, and that I'll likely never know who it was. I drove the streets in the area, but I'm sure it was already tucked neatly into a garage. If anyone has a lead on this individual and/or car, or if they're already a member getting this newsletter, give me a call. I'd love to hear the story.


dave bean engineering

 Official **Lotus** Vintage Parts
Distributor for the US & Canada 

www.davebean.com

636 east saint charles street • star route 3 • san andreas ca 95249 • usa
Phone (209) 754-5802 Fax (209) 754-5177
US & Canadian TOLL-FREE FAX ORDERS (800) 469-7789


rdent enterprises Ltd.

Lotus Parts Specialists
Raymond D. Psulkowski
290 Raub Road, Quakertown, PA 18951
Phone (215) 538-9323 Fax (215) 538-0158
e-mail rdent@rdent.com
<http://www.rdent.com>

Factory Tour by Sean Lane

This last December we noticed that Scandinavian Airlines was running a web special, offering many European destinations at the bargain price of \$299 round-trip from Seattle (excluding airport taxes). As we have friends in London, we thought it would make for a great trip to visit them along with a side trip out to Norwich for the Lotus factory tour, and indeed it was.

We booked the trip for early March and in the weeks leading up to the trip I was put in contact with the person at Lotus responsible for arranging factory visits -- Annette Lancaster (alancaster@lotuscars.co.uk). At the current time I believe they only conduct tours on Wednesdays, one group at 10am and another at 2pm, maximum 15 people per group arranged in advance. We chose the 2pm time slot as it was made for a leisurely trip from central London. The train ride takes about an hour and a half, and cost us about 30 pounds each for our tickets.

In the weeks leading up to our visit, it would have also seemed that we had selected the wrong dates. You see, beginning in late March (after we'd arrive back home), Lotus conducts "Scare Yourself Sensible Days" twice a month. A SYSYD itinerary includes a factory tour, and then ... a ride around the Hethel track with a Lotus test engineer (!) and then ... you will drive around the track in an Elise or Exige! All this for a mere 99 pounds. If I do make it back to Hethel, I'll certainly be booking my itinerary around one of these events!

All this said, it turns out that we couldn't have planned a better time to visit the factory -- I'll keep you in suspense 'til the end of this article.

Should you be planning a trip to Norwich yourself, I would highly recommend a bed-and-breakfast just around the corner from the factory (5 minute walk) called The Old Thorn Barn (www.oldthornbarn.co.uk). The rooms are comfortable, reasonable, and they'll serve you a full english breakfast that you will most certainly fancy, colloquially speaking. Lastly, you must go to the local pub for dinner, Bird in Hand, for steak-and-ale pies and cask-drawn local ales (served warm and flat), the walls are adorned with Lotus paraphernalia.

Upon arriving at the factory and checking in with reception at the edge of the parking lot, they confiscated our cameras and led us back to the gift shop to wait for our tour guide. I was expecting that several other tour-goers would join us -- but, as the time approached, it was just the two of us and our guide, Annette.

We started in the body panel fitting area. It turns out that the body panels for the Elise (and Vauxhaul VX220) are actually manufactured in France. I can't recall the composition and process exactly, but do remember that they are a mere 2.5 millimeters in thickness and extremely light and strong. In this area, they were also sanding out any blem-

ishes and fitting the panels to *mules* to be sure that the panels all fit together, having gaps within specified tolerances. Oh, and yes I did say Vauxhaul above. Lotus is manufacturing the VX220 model for Vauxhaul (which is getting rave reviews). Much of the process is the same as with the Elise, including the composition of the body panels.

Next we moved to paint. After being fitted to the mule, all of the body pieces for a particular car are kept together and painted together for consistency. Because paint is typically a bottleneck in the entire process, the paint department has a second shift -- one of the only departments to work outside of normal operating hours which are Mon-Thurs, with a 1/2 day on Friday.

After paint, we moved to the area for mechanical construction, beginning with the brilliant extruded aluminum honeycomb chassis. The chassis apparently is manufactured by a firm in Denmark and shipped over. The extruded aluminum is *glued* together with an epoxy designed specifically for this use. This is advantageous over welding for at least two reasons. 1) It difficult to weld aluminum and 2) Rather than a single point or line of strength that you'd get with a weld, the entire surfaces are bonded when using an epoxy, giving maximum stiffness. The chassis construction apparently is the same method used for that of fighter jets. Mounted to the front of the chassis is the *crash box*, a piece made to collapse in a collision, perhaps made of carbon fibre. Our tour guide said that they manufacture the crashboxes on the premises, and that Lotus develops crashboxes for other companies, including some of the latest Aston Martin models. Another function of the crashbox on the Elise is to suspend the radiator parallel to the ground, perpendicular to that of most cars.

As the bare chassis move down the line -- electrics, suspension, and engines are dropped in. We were shown crates con-

Use Tax by Alan Perry

In Washington, one is supposed to pay use tax on items that sales tax is not collected on, including private party transactions and Internet sales, according to the Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR). When one buys a car and registers it, the Department of Licensing (DOL) collects the use tax for the DOR.

The reason that I am writing this (and someone like Chuck Conti isn't) is that in January, I got a letter from the DOR explaining that I may owe use tax on my Elise and requesting a bunch of documentation on it. Someone suggested to me that I might receive such a letter at the SOVREN vintage races, where I had my car on display, back in July. It may even had been the DOR Tax Agent who was handling my case.

I bought my car as a collection of used parts and I bought more parts in the next couple of months to finish it off. When

taining both the old Rover powerplants as well as the new Toyotas. The new Toyotas produce 190 horsepower and are mated to Toyota's six-speed gearbox. I believe the engine management and gear ratios are to Lotus' specifications.

Mating the body panels to the car is one of the last things to be done, before the final product sent to QA. QA is part of the process all along, but the final QA is highly scrutinous. One station in the final QA process is a sprinkler bay simulating a torrential downpour, making apparent any leaks before the car leaves the factory. I was quite impressed by Lotus' focus on quality and genuine commitment to producing an error-free product.

Our tour guide said that current production numbers are about 2,200 cars per year, 50 cars per week. With the launch of the federal Elise and the new Exige (not for US), they are hoping to ramp up to around 4,000 cars per year.

And now I'll tell you why we couldn't have planned the dates of this trip any better. As an Esprit owner, I am quite sad that the supercar's run has come to an end after more than 25 years of production. Just days prior to our visit, they had finished constructing the VERY LAST ESPRIT and were preparing it for shipment after a small press release. Our tour guide took us the old Esprit manufacturing building and we saw her, in all her beauty, in yellow, destined for her new owner in Atlanta, GA. As consolation, our tour guide divulged that they are working on an Esprit replacement, to be launched in 2-3 years, she was unsure if it would carry the Esprit name.

Additionally, parked next to the Esprit was a new-model Exige, in olde english white, the very car that was to make the model's debut at the Geneva auto show the following week. Wow, talk about timing!

I got it, I called the DOL and was told that the use tax would collected when I went to register the car.

The DOR told me that this was not the case. The tax comes due when the item first comes into use. Not only that, but I could face penalties and interest on top of the tax. It seems that the DOR has been looking for items of high value, including collector cars, artwork and jewelry owned by Washington residents to determine if the use tax has been paid.

How did my case end up? Well, it turns out that there is a statute of limitations on payment of use tax and it had expired. I "cannot be compelled to pay use tax" on my Elise, says the letter from the DOR. I am keeping that letter.

For more info, check out <http://www.dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/use/>.

Lotus responds to the call from China

Lotus PR

Hethel, UK 1st March 2004 Lotus Engineering announces today the opening of a dedicated office in China in response to the increasing demand for its services from manufacturers in the world's fastest growing automotive market.

Lotus Engineering China will be based in Shanghai and led by Ben Boycott, an English automotive engineer with nine years experience in the region. His team includes staff from Lotus Engineering's base in Hethel, UK, and experienced local engineers with a wealth of knowledge of the Chinese automotive industry.

China is the world's fastest growing automotive market, with forecasts suggesting over 30% annual growth of light vehicle sales over the next few years. "We already have positive ongoing relationships with the Chinese vehicle manufacturers who seek to exploit substantial opportunities in the rapidly expanding domestic market," explains Ben Boycott, general manager, Lotus Engineering China.

"With a new team in place, Lotus is now in an excellent position to more effectively provide domestic producers with advanced innovative solutions for the development and production of modern, world-class automotive products."

Lotus Engineering's activity in China has been steadily increasing over the last decade, most significantly in the last 2 years. It is currently working with several clients on a range of powertrain and vehicle engineering programmes, and is in detailed negotiations for further high value projects totalling in excess of Rmb770 million (£50 million).

"The level of discussions with current and potential clients in China has exceeded that which can be managed from the UK," explains Simon Wood, director of Lotus Engineering. "It's very encouraging that we've now reached a point that requires a local dedicated business development and project execution team to field that demand."

Lotus is awaiting completion of its permanent offices in Shanghai's prestigious new hi-tech Jin Qiao business park. In the interim, from 8th March, it will occupy temporary offices in the Jin Mao Tower, also in Shanghai.

Team Elite's Sebring Cut Short

Team Elite's Lotus Elise, featured on the back of the newsletter, ran at this year's Sebring, part of the American Le Mans Series. Unfortunately, the car suffered persistent oil leaks and withdrew after seven laps with gearbox problems.

Team boss Keith Smout noted, "The car was fifth fastest through the speed trap ... We think that there was another 10 to 14 seconds in the car around Sebring given the right prep."