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June 9, 2017

Miles,

First, I'd like to thank you for the time and effort you put into creating the Twin Cam Engine "Bible". My copy of that book contains more greasy fingerprints and dog-eared pages than anything else in my library, attesting to the amount of use I get out of it.

That said, I'd like to ask you about a passage in that book:

*"Other interesting work carried out at Cheshunt included a one-off redesign of the Elite rear suspension based on a Jaguar rubber system (this was done by Brian Luff in 1962) -- apparently if felt like driving jelly and was not a success. Victor Grimwood who stayed with Lotus carried out a private 1558 cc conversion to his elite in 1963 ...."*

I would like to know if your description was based on first-hand knowledge, or if there might be anyone still around that might have been familiar with that car.

The reason I ask, is because I believe I now own it.

According to the Warren King records, Elite #1559 resided at the Cheshunt works for two years; from December 1961 until it was delivered to a customer on December 19, 1963. Therefore it would have been there when Brian Luff made the modifications you described.

I have enclosed photos of the differential mounting found in Elite #1559.

In addition, the car was delivered in 1963 fitted with a Lotus Twin Cam engine.

The Warren King ledger lists #1559 as having been delivered with engine #31. This had been a mystery until the discovery of the number 31 stamped in the side of the twin cam engine block.

(I'm not certain of the meaning of these numbers, but have seen them stamped in a number of Twin Cam blocks.)

The actual engine number (LP326) was stamped in the normal location over the RH engine mount, but was so faint as to be illegible.

In addition, we can assume that whomever was transcribing the engine numbers into the King ledgers was accustomed to finding the number on the front right side of the block, very close to where they found the number '31' stamped in the twin cam.

Elite #1559 was imported into the U.S. in 1971, showing about 11,000 miles and having been described as a "Factory Test Mule".

It then spent most of 45 years essentially in storage until I bought it last November. It was shortly after I began the restoration that I discovered the "missing" engine number.

Another interesting indicator of its "Test Mule" status is the disclaimer plaque and the monstrous oil pressure warning lamp located near the shift lever.

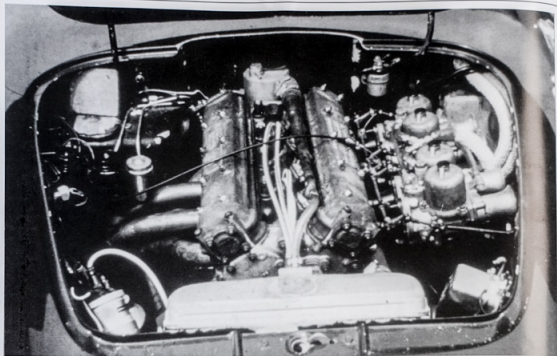
Thank you for your patience, and I sincerely hope you will be able to shed a bit more light on Elite #1559.

Kindest regards,

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Lotus Elite #1559 history and progress: [www.blog.dougfraser.com](http://www.blog.dougfraser.com)



## Twin-cam Elites – Fact or Fiction?

**In recent weeks, I've been copied in on a very interesting transatlantic email discussion relating to the bona fides of a Lotus Elite with a Lotus/Ford Twin-cam engine. No conclusive result has yet been achieved and the identity of the car in question is still the subject of discussion between the owner and the Club Elite registrars.**

There was, your correspondent believes, only one genuine Twin-cam Elite – ie. a car built at Hornsey, Cheshunt or Hethel with the approval of ACBC. This is the well known chassis number 2001 which Lotus Components Manager David Lazenby built at Hethel in 1967. Lazenby convinced ACBC that he could fit a Twin-cam engine and gearbox into one of the thirty odd Elite chassis/body units that were cluttering up the old Cheshunt works, and then use the resulting mongrel as his company car. It seems that this car was something of a success; it appeared in UK road tests and led to unfounded rumours that the Elite production line would restart. These rumours were little more than wishful thinking, as Lotus had plenty to do with the building and selling of Elan, +2, Europa and Cortina – together with the move to a new factory at Hethel. Lazenby's Elite was registered MPW 804E and has been in the hands of its Swiss owner for many years.

However, Stirling Moss and Jim Clark both had Elites with works approved Hobbs Mechamatic automatic gearboxes in the early sixties. The Moss car, chassis no. 1789, is shown in contemporary Lotus records as being delivered with a 1216cc Climax FWE, while it is also recorded in other records as having a numbered, Lotus Ford Twin-cam. Your

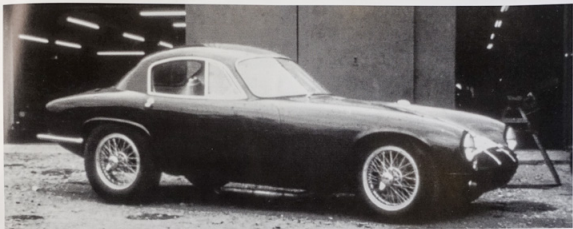
**column**  
**ACROSS THE POND**  
by Gordon Morris  
Images © www.cotterlepress.com

correspondent believes that the Twin-cam engine may have been fitted some time after its delivery in February 1962, as #1789 was registered for the road with East Sussex County Council in 1966. This car is now recorded as being in the hands of a US owner, with a FWE engine.

All that said, for many years there have been rumours, on both sides of the pond, of discoveries of 'genuine' works twin cam Elites. Myth and legend has it that there were a number of Elites with Lotus Ford Twin-cam engines – some of which may well have had some connection, albeit unofficial, with the factory, in the early/mid sixties.

This situation is best summarised by the late Dennis Ortenburger, Elite historian extraordinaire. "No doubt there were others [twin-cam Elites], with some passed off as works conversions to further confuse the situation. Suffice to say that there was only one official works-built Elan-engined Elite, with the rest being no more than well-intentioned efforts to get another Lotus Type 14 on the road."

So much for the Lotus Ford Twin-cam engine. There were, however, two other Elites that were raced, with little success, in period, with twin cam engines. The first was the Two-litre Elite, entered in the 1960 Le Mans race with a view to scoring an outright, rather than a class, win (seen in the two pictures above). This car was fitted with a Formula Two, four-cylinder,



Coventry Climax FPF twin-cam engine, bored out to 1960cc and rated at 180bhp. Bearing in mind that the Elites at the 1959 race had achieved an average speed of 94mph and a fuel consumption of 19mpg with 1216cc and 95bhp, a reliable FPF engined Elite could be a reasonable contender for an outright win.

The theory of this entry was much better than the practice. Nominated drivers were Formula One racer Innes Ireland and newcomer Jonathan Sieff; the former was horrified by the car's overweight, strange handling and poor brakes that sent him into the hay bales at Mulsanne corner in practice. Sieff never drove the car; he practiced in a standard car and suffered a puncture at top speed on the Mulsanne straight. The car was a write off and the unfortunate driver suffered serious injuries when thrown out of the Elite. Unsurprisingly, the two-litre car was withdrawn from the race.

The two litre car surfaced about twenty years ago when a well known US owner of interesting Lotus had it restored in the UK. Your correspondent was present when it was tested at Goodwood by Sir John Whitmore, who drove the Border Reivers Elite with Jimmy Clark at Le Mans in 1959. The restored car was clearly in better trim than it was at Le Mans over three decades earlier; indeed Sir John was on record as saying that the car's handling was well up to standard – on a par with the famous red and white DAD 10 Elite that he had driven at the Goodwood Revival Meeting a few weeks earlier.

The second Elite twin-cam engine was quite different to the three engines previously mentioned. The prize money for the Index of Performance and the Index of Thermal Efficiency – typically Gallic class divisions, calling for small, fuel efficient engines – was almost as much as that for the outright winner. Hitherto, the Indices had been the preserve of small French and Italian cars such as the DB, Osca and Abarth. The works Lotus Eleven, powered by a 750cc Climax FWC – in essence, a short stroke 1098cc FWA – won the Index of Performance in 1957. For the 1961 race, Climax produced a quite different small bore entry for the Index of Performance; this was the twin cam, four cylinder FVMC of 750cc – developing a healthy 81 bhp. Driven by Cliff Allison and Bob McKee, the little Lotus overheated when battling for the Index lead with the works Abarths and was withdrawn. Development work on the FVMC was not wasted; it emerged two years later as one half of the very successful Climax FWMV 1500cc, V8, which powered Lotus Types 25 and 33 to World Championships in 1963 and 1965.

So much for the Elite and twin-cam engines. It must, however, be remembered that, in the 50s and early 60s, Lotus was much more interested in winning races and selling cars than keeping detailed records. Until the Elite came along, records of cars, chassis numbers, engines and first owners was either sketchy, or non-existent. Book keeper, Australian Warren King was anxious to ensure that every car leaving the works was properly invoiced, so he introduced a handwritten record for that purpose. That record remains as the only contemporary detailed list of Elite production and is consulted regularly by historians and authors. Warren's other claim to fame was that he fitted practical side screens to his own Seven by pivoting them on the uprights of the windscreen. Soon after his modified car appeared at Cheshunt, works Sevens were seen with identical side screens. Warren told me some years ago that he never received any form of financial reward for his two practical and significant improvements to Lotus.

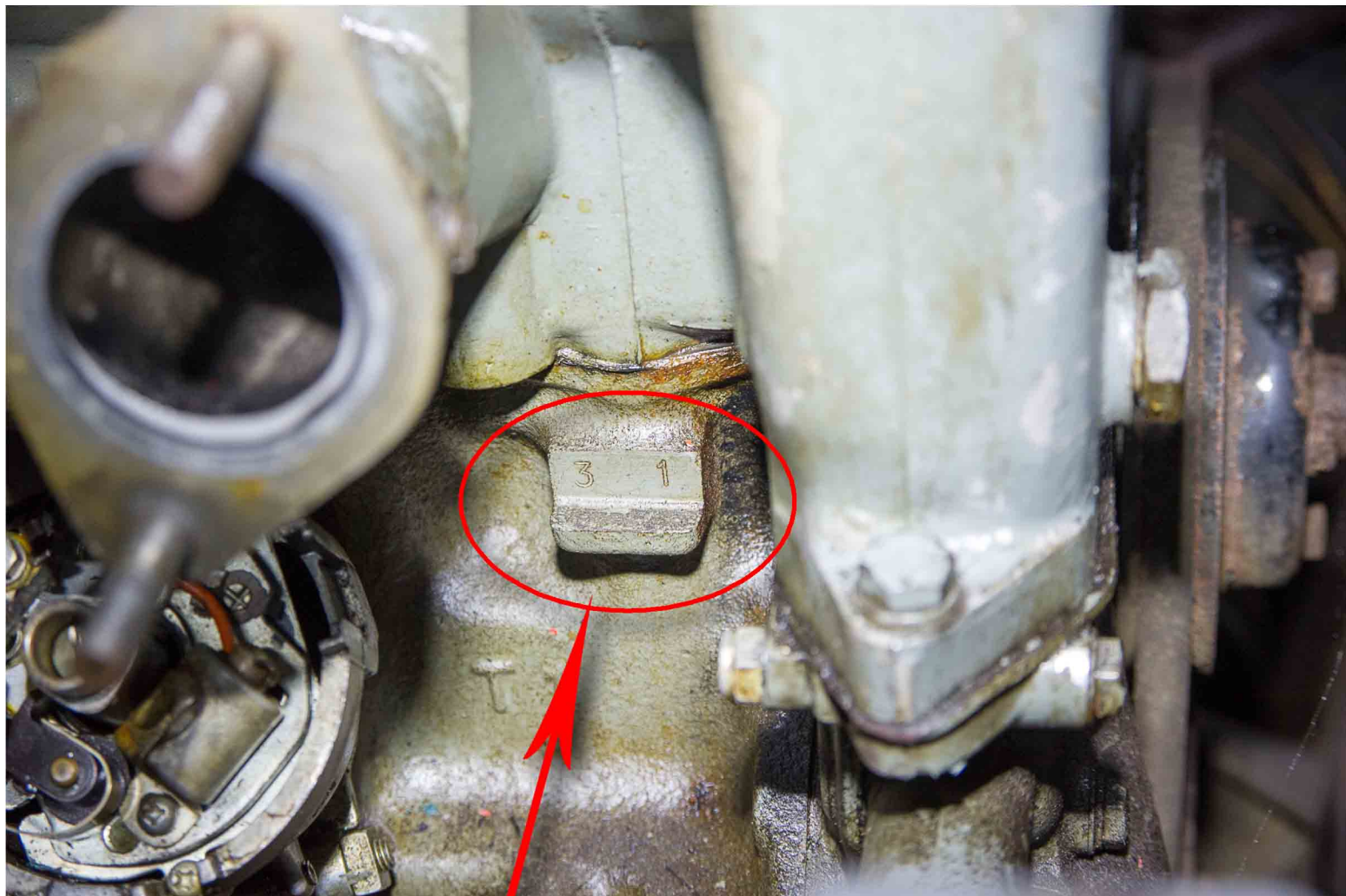
I believe that much of the confusion about which cars were, or weren't works twin-cam Elites, arises from rather vague record keeping – even the King records have many crossings out and amendments – as well as quite deliberate changes of chassis plates to avoid the costs and inconvenience when cars move in and out of the country. As explained earlier, there were almost certainly a number of 'unofficial' twin-cam Elites around in the sixties; the temptation to produce another Type 14 from the many available CBUs must have been irresistible! None of this, however, makes the historian's work any easier.

The highlight of the forthcoming summer is the celebration of the 60th birthday of the perennial Lotus Seven, with events planned at Donington Park in July, and Silverstone in September. The former event will probably see our 'real' Sevens submerged in a sea of identical Caterhams, while the latter will be a more exclusive affair in the British Racing Drivers' Club enclosure overlooking Woodcote corner on the Grand Prix circuit.

**Gordon Morris**  
Winterslow, Wiltshire

*Gordon Morris*





	1534	10477	EK 50488	28.5.62	JA Horton
	1534	9191	ELC 918	9/2/61	Elite Cars
	1536		ELC 1060	22/2/62	Dutchess Auto Co.
	257	9175	ELC 914	2/1/61	Elite Cars
	1538	9329	RK 50128	5/12/61	J. Cummings
	1539	31	EK 50066	19.12.63	R.T. Fucell
	1539		ELC 51774		
	1539		EK 51027		
	1539		RK 50346	14/2/62	T. M. Graden
	1539		EK 50333	13.6.63	Spain Inc.
*	1532B	10813	ELC 1206	24.7.63	hotus Souchevost.
*	1532C	10832	ELC 1219		

