

Elite by Lakeside



I'd spoken to Max at Lakeside Engineering towards the end of last year about a Type 14 Elite they were working on. The car was in good sound condition - especially the bodywork as can be seen in the photos - but had been idle for over 20 years and during that time hadn't even been started never mind driven. I knew this would make a good story and would be a very useful insight into how to tackle this type of job - something we're often asked about. Max called recently to say the car was now ready and would I like to pop in and have a look.

Lakeside was founded in 1996 by Max Hurst and Tim Baker who between them have vast experience of Lotus Cars backed up by many years at Lotus main dealers. They're much more than just very good mechanics though - they're engineers whose instinct is to repair rather than replace and who routinely and intelligently look at how components and cars can be improved at the same time. Although the majority of their work is with the Elise/Exige, their experience and knowledge is regularly utilised on a steady stream of older Lotus' with Esprits in particular being something of a speciality. They're also good, honest guys.

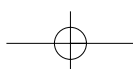
The task with the Elite was one of re-commissioning rather than restoring. The car had been bought new in component form in 1962 by its current owner who now unsurprisingly wanted to get back behind the wheel again.

The first job was to ensure the Climax engine wasn't seized. The spark plugs were removed and oil poured down the bores every day or so for a week. The engine was then gently turned by hand without plugs to free everything up - all appeared to be fine which was very good news. Next up was to recondition the ignition system and fit new plugs and points. Setting

the timing on an Elite is far from straightforward as there are no timing marks on the front of the engine - they're only on the flywheel. However once TDC had been established Max was able to time the engine and move onto the fuel system.

Although the car came to Lakeside with a fuel tank it wasn't fitted so that went in together with new fuel lines. The owner had brought in over £800 worth of replacement items supplied by David Mousley of Mark 14 Components (dmousley@perrin.ads124.co.uk Tel. 01494 880583). The electric fuel pump (a

manual pump was supplied on production cars) had seized so that was rebuilt and refitted. Once petrol was flowing the next issue was with the twin Weber carburettors. Old petrol residue had varnished and glued them solid necessitating a full strip and rebuild. They were re-assembled and a new airbox was designed and beautifully fabricated to custom fit the narrow and tapered gap between the Webers and the wheel arch. The engine was started but had very poor throttle response - quickly traced to sticking accelerator pumps which were duly rectified.



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Lakeside tracked down a new brake master cylinder and fitted this along with a new servo and pipes. The calipers were checked and freed off but new pads were not required. New clutch slave and master cylinders were supplied by the owner and fitted - the slave first having to be carefully machined to fit cleanly under the cylinder head. Both hydraulic systems were bled and carefully checked for leaks.

Although the radiator was sound the coolant pipes were beyond saving and so were replaced. The heater matrix was also unserviceable and although some say you have to first remove the engine and gearbox to replace it, Lakeside managed to remove and recondition it with the Climax still in place.

The electrics were checked and tidied up and a new period switch panel neatly fabricated to take the ancillary switches. The rear screen was also replaced. Lakeside specialise in all Lotus glass replacement - particularly windcreens which take time and expertise to fit properly. Many are bonded in and it takes time and care to achieve the correct alignment and a good finish. With Elise/Exige the front clamshell also needs to be released to allow good access to the bottom of the screen to fit a replacement.

The rear bumper - a pattern part from 20 odd years ago - was also supplied separately and Lakeside spent a fair amount of time fettling the mounting points to achieve a good fit. Apparently they were all like this - on every Elite the distance between the rear wheel arch and the back of the car is different on the right and the left! Two neat little mods in the shape of an aluminium boot stay and a natty wooden bonnet prop were designed and built and both look a million times better than the piece of oily wood often used to hold the bonnet/boot lid open!

After all this care and attention the very least the Elite could do was to pass her Mot test - which she did with flying colours - and I understand that the owner is delighted with the work Max and Tim have put into re-commissioning his 47 year old car.

It's clear to see just how much Max and Tim have enjoyed reviving the Elite and meeting the various challenges she presented. They're both dedicated Lotus enthusiasts with a genuine feel for the marque who get an infectious buzz from developing new ideas with great attention to detail. For instance, they can supply and fit heated front windcreens for Elises and with the S1 they fit an original matching switch to the blank in the right hand switch panel; on the S2 the switch is fitted to the steering wheel cowling.

Lakeside have also developed a superbly engineered baffled sump for all K-series Elise/Exige and 340R - an essential piece of kit if you race or do trackdays and good value at £195 complete with a modified oil pick-up pipe/filter. In addition to regular servicing and repairs, they offer rebuilds on twin-cam, 900 series, K-series and V8 engines and all Lotus gearboxes. You can find them at Capital House, Woodham Park Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 3TG. Tel: 01932 340003, email: info@lakesideengineering.com web www.lakesideengineering.com

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