

Visit to Europa Engineering and Paul Matty Sports Cars, Tuesday September 8th 2009

I was visiting Germany on business and then England on vacation from August 29th through September 13th. During the England part of the trip I made time to visit Europa Engineering and Paul Matty Sports Cars. Photographs of my visit to both places are located on Jerry's website. The information below is based on my memory; I took no notes during my visit, only photos, so I hope my recollection is reasonably accurate.

I recently purchased some \$600 of parts from Europa Engineering, which was a smooth uneventful transaction so I decided to see if Richard Winter would entertain a visit. Richard was very accommodating; I called him on Friday and arranged to visit the following Tuesday around midday (175 mile drive). Europa Engineering is located near Southport Lancashire about 20/25 minutes off the M6 motorway.

Using my GPS I found Europa Engineering relatively easily, just missing the narrow entrance at the first attempt.(see the photo) I arrived around midday after a 3.5-hour drive. I was made very welcome by one of the part-time retiree staff and offered a cup of tea while they found Richard. Richard was in the machine shop and soon came out to meet me with a welcoming handshake and another offer of a cup of tea. While Richard and I had talked on the phone a few times and even exchanged a few e-mails we had not met. I found him very friendly, enthusiastic and open to talking about his business, his interest in Europa's and his personal collection of mainly Lotus cars. I asked him if it was OK to take photos and he said sure, take as many as you wish. I took around 36 photos during the visit of all aspects of his business and his personal collection of vehicles. Please check out the photos on the Jerry's website.

Europa Engineering is really a "one man show" namely Richard Winter. There are two full time younger employees, one part time retiree and no administration. Richard is the only person that can perform certain operations of the business, using his practical skills, engineering ability and business decisions.

Richard asked me to explain to the group that the reason he prefers phone calls to e-mail is that makes more efficient use of his time. He typically gets in around 6:30 AM and spends the next 3 or 4 hours answering e-mails. Often potential customers do not explain clearly what they require in their e-mails and it can take many iterations back and forth to get an order finalized. A single 5-minute phone call can sort most of these issues out far more efficiently. Richard advised that if you send him an e-mail with a cell phone number or home/work phone, where you will definitely be available to answer it, he will be happy to call you back to sort out your questions or order details. Richard explained he can't afford any more time at the computer because he needs to be out in the shops supervising and working on parts and cars.

Just about everything Europa Engineering sells is made on site, being it fuel tanks, swirl pots, chassis, suspension parts, etc. They also supply many of the other Lotus parts suppliers with much of their stock. They can make complete chassis for any model of Europa including a version for transversely mounted engines. See my photos of some of the chassis' and Richard standing behind one of the transverse versions. There is also a photo of the chassis build/alignment tool.

The bright orange car, not officially a Europa, has a transversely mounted and tuned 800cc Smart Car engine. Total weight of the car is around 600Kg (1320lb) Richard claims it is faster than an Elise on a cross-country back road trip but not as quick in a straight line. Richard was taking this car to an endurance event in the south of France, leaving on the Thursday after my visit. The car is equipped with abs brakes, a/c, paddle shifters and a navigation system. Note the carbon fiber bucket seats. I was given a conducted tour of the machine shop, metal fabrication, body preparation, paint shop and general assembly areas.

Richard lives in a house immediately adjacent to the site and also keeps his personal collection of cars at the facility. I had a very enjoyable 2 plus hours talking to Richard, taking the full tour and photographing cars/facilities. I have no connection to Europa Engineering but I would highly recommend them as a source of parts and information.

Leaving Richard around 2:30 PM and heading back to the M6 hoping I still had time to visit Paul Matty Sports cars, just south of Birmingham in the West Midlands. I stopped for a late lunch at the canal basin, see a few photos taken in the rain, and then headed south on the M6.

I made Paul Matty's by 4:30 PM and checked with the shop reception to see if it was OK to take a few photos. I made my rounds of the front showroom and then headed back to the rear showroom and parts department. Paul Matty Sports Cars is much larger than Europa Engineering, employing two people alone in the parts department. Paul Matty deals with all Lotus models, both old and new. See the range of photos, around 28 total.

I didn't get a personal tour but was allowed to walk around and take as many photos as I wanted. I did talk to the two parts department employees and they said they do ship worldwide. I talked with Roy, who I assumed was the shop foreman/manager, and he showed me some of the cars that were currently being worked on in the shop. He was very friendly and very knowledgeable about Lotus history and Lotus cars in general.

They were working on 23B's as well as Élans, Europas, Elites, Sevens, and more modern Lotus cars. In total I spent a little more than an hour at Paul Matty's before leaving for dinner at my bothers house about a 100 miles away. Paul Matty's has a full online catalogue of parts for all Lotus cars. I was told the prices are a little out of date.

My brother's house is 30 miles from my parent's house but I drove around 400 miles via Southport and Birmingham to go to dinner but it was well worth the time and effort. If you have any questions about topics I may have missed I'd be pleased to try to answer them.

Regards,

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