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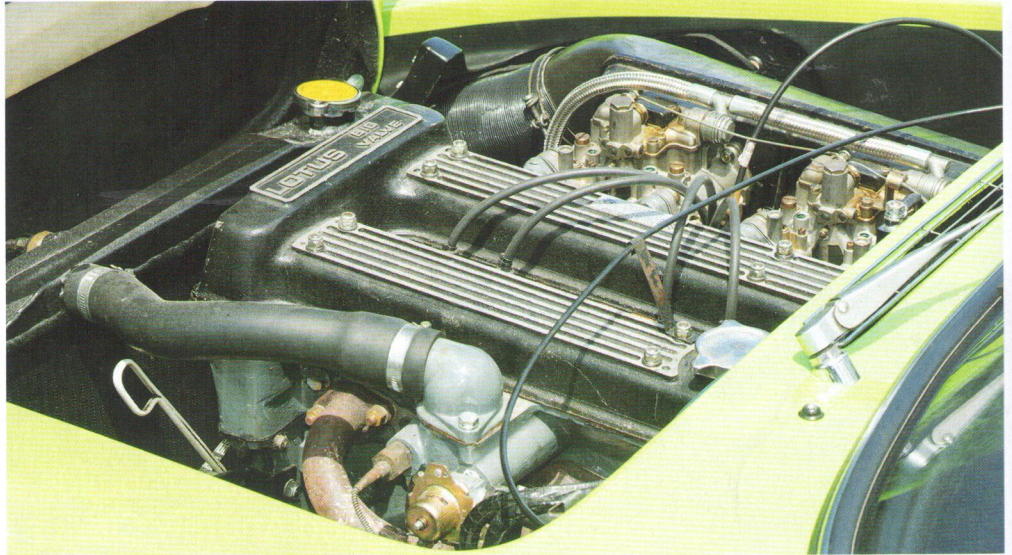
istachio Green sears in the sun, its acid intensity mellowed by creamy Cirrus White and a strip of gold. The Elan Sprint parks up on the Sussex hills and the view could come straight

from 1971. Whether it's the pristine paintwork, the dazzling wheel rims or the tightly trimmed interior, it's hard to believe half a century has passed since this Lotus first saw the road. Andrew Clark has been behind the wheel for four of those decades, and he still adores the car he bought back in 1981. "The Elan was sports car to have when I was growing up. It's always been the car I wanted to own."

The Sprint has never been subjected to the daily commute in all that time. Reserved for weekend use, every mile has been a pleasure and most were accrued en-route to race meetings and Club Lotus events. "I never needed to drive it every day so it's only ever been used for fun. I'm covered for 2000 miles a year but I'd struggle to even do that!" The odometer read 54,400 miles when Andrew bought the Elan. After four decades of careful custodianship, the car now shows a genuine 67,300 on the clock.

A quick glance won't reveal any deviations from the Elan Sprint norm – you'll need to dig deeper to find the roster of modifications that improve the car's endurance and usability. Two such changes appeared on the Lotus before Andrew ever set eyes on it. There's a voltmeter nestled in the otherwise-original dashboard, while the parcel shelf boasts discreet and removable tabs to improve access to the rear suspension. The rasping stainless steel exhaust is another time-served improvement, Andrew having replaced the original soon after he bought the Lotus.

More recent alterations centre around the electrical system. The entire car has been



The original Lotus Twin-Cam engine was retained during the car's post-accident rebuild.

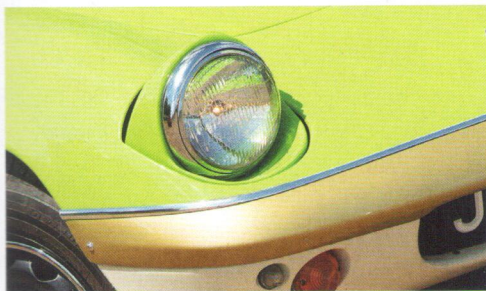
converted to negative earth, the dynamo has been swapped for an alternator, and the radiator cooling fan is now operated via a relay. "When the Sprints were built originally, the cars only had two fuses in them," Andrew explains. "The cooling fan worked from a thermostatic switch at the top of the radiator, and that switch had to take the whole current of the motor. They do fail after a period, so that's something I've had to replace." The radiator itself has also been replaced by a new item with a far larger matrix. There are no cooling concerns here.

Planned workshop visits have been otherwise few and far between. The Elan gave Andrew a decade of faithful service before its first engine rebuild – the Weber 40 carburettors received attention at the same time – and received a more thorough mechanical refresh in 2018. Carried out by Max Hurst of Guildford, Surrey, based specialist Max500, the work touched on the engine, gearbox, brakes, suspension and more. "I think it must be like original now, quite honestly.

There's nothing mechanically that's in anything other than full working order."

With the car renewed and running well, Andrew could get back to enjoying the legendary Elan driving experience. "It's just fun," he smiles. "The steering is very precise and very direct. You need only the smallest movements at the steering wheel and that's typified by the thin rim Lotus fitted at the factory. I'd call it a delicate device – you feel exactly what's happening as you're driving. The real pleasure is in leaving the motorway and getting out into the countryside with it. You really can drive the Sprint with your fingertips once you're on the move, and that's just a nice feeling." This wasn't happily ever after. Less than half a year later, the Elan was back in the Max500 workshop.

It all started on the northbound carriageway of the M23, just before the Gatwick Airport junction. The Twin-Cam coughed and stuttered, though the engine rallied a little



The car looks fresh and new throughout.



Dashboard survived the crash unscathed and was carried over to the new bodyshell.