

Mike Causer on Lotus nose badges

The script monogram in the centre is A C B C, which stands for Anthony Colin Bruce Chapman. Note that the vertical of the monogram does not line up with the vertical of the T in Lotus. All Lotus badges were like this until the 1984 design, and if mounted correctly the T is slightly out of vertical.



1953-1963 The original design, this example is from the very first batch made.

The earliest Lotus badges were painted onto the cars, starting with the Mark Two (the car called the Mark One was never called a Lotus at the time). When production of the Mark Six was established and development of the Mark Eight was underway Colin Chapman had a batch of "proper" badges made, and the Mark 3B ONK 408 was the first car to be fitted with one. The badge above is from that first batch made in late 1953 or early 1954. It was retrofitted to Mark Six, chassis number 11, which was built in July 1953.

The oldest badges were not vitreous enamelled (porcelain in the USA) as most badges are, but used a much softer material, more like paint. When an early badge is damaged the colour will peel off (as can be seen above), whereas enamel will crack and chip in a brittle way. A later variation, found on some Elites and Sevens has an enamelled finish.

Other distinguishing features from the 1960s production are that the letters are narrower and slightly shorter, the T is 6.5mm high with stroke width ~1.2mm, and the letters are raised above the colour. Also the side profile is flatter than later badges, but this needs a trained eye to see.

On the back of the badge the very earliest have 3.5mm diameter mounting pins, but later ones are 4.5mm diameter.



1963-1968 & 1970-1974 Classic green and yellow

This is the "classic" Lotus badge. Essentially the same as the original, it is slightly more domed (although this is hard to see), the letters are larger and flush with the surface of the coloured enamel. For comparison with the original, the letter T is 7.5mm high with a stroke width of ~1.7mm.

It was probably introduced at the start of Elan (Type 26) production, and was used until the first appearance of the black & silver badge. It then reappeared in middle of 1970 until once more replaced by the black & silver in 1974.

New badges can still be found under part number X026B0269Z



1968-1970 & 1974-1983 The Jim Clark memorial black and silver

This is the badge about which there is much confusion, but the real story turns out to be pretty simple. It was adopted in the middle of 1968 following the deaths of Jim Clark and Mike Spence, and was fitted to all cars until the middle of 1970 when Lotus reverted to the traditional green & yellow version. In 1974 it was adopted again, probably at the introduction of the Elite (Type 75), and used for most production until the black & gold badge arrived in 1983.

The lettering and use of enamel flush with the lettering are identical to the classic green & yellow.

As far as I know there are no contemporary factory records of the badges fitted, but there is photographic record in the form of the road-tests published by the magazines at the time.

By the period of interest Lotus had given up their old practice of re-using registration numbers on different cars, and thanks to the UK's date-related numbers it is easy to follow the individual cars supplied to the magazines and see that they were replaced frequently, none being used for more than a year. Every car that appears in more than one test always had the same colour badge, probably indicating that they represented the production standard at the time, and that Lotus did not bother to change the badge even if production had switched.

Cars supplied by the importers in the USA and Australia are much harder to follow, and may well have been modified by the importer, or even have been lying in stock for some time, so they have been ignored unless the test was performed in the UK.

Of 159 road tests from 1963 to 1983 the colour of the badge is discernible in 126, of which 59 are black and 67 yellow.

From 1962 to 1967 all the badges are yellow.

The first black badge appears in April 1968, on a car with non-production black paint, which also sported chrome bumpers -- the only ones ever fitted to an Elan. So the assumption is that the badge was specially made for this one-off car.

The next appearance of a black badge is on a Europa S2 in September 1968. The car appears to be a standard production one. The badges then continue to be black on UK cars, with just one exception, until April 1970.

Yellow reappears in the magazine tests in April 1971 and stays consistent until March 1974. This leaves a gap in the record, but a Europa with March 1970 build date was delivered new with a yellow badge to the owner who still has it in 2005, so the return to yellow is quite probably that early.

Then from May 1974 until January 1983 (the last test in this survey), black is always used.

This badge is still available new under part number C036B0269F



1983-1984 The Colin Chapman memorial black & gold

Following the death of Colin Chapman in December 1982, the badge was changed to this black and gold version. It lasted just over a year.

The badge above is from my 1983 Lotus Excel. The gold fades away after 3 or 4 years, but new badges are still available under part number A089U1610F