

# R53 went sprinting

By Mike Mark

Well, with my £5 of enhancements ready for action, I attended the last round of the DEWS Speed Series at the beginning of October. The event took place at the Clay Pigeon Raceway near Dorchester and was my supercharged S's first 'competitive' outing (other than the cross country drive home from work with the guy in that damn GTI Golf!).

The drive to the venue was a break from the norm as all the other rounds I have contended in my MK1 Cooper, the average commute being a 4,000 RPM plus two hour cacophony of straight cut gears! This time there was air-con (no having to put the heater on in traffic), electric windows and the soothing sounds of Black Sabbath emanating from the built in sound system. This modern competition car was looking quite attractive!

Scrutineering was a formality, with basically very little to check on a modern car in road going trim. The biggest question was over the timing strut, which apparently 'looked small' (heard that before somewhere!) I explain that it was exactly to the MSA's rule book dimensions and that was the end of that conversation. The car was passed fit to run. I have to say it looked a bit out of place lined up in the middle of a selection of classic Minis but this was going to be fun.

With the green lights of the start control glowing, I just about remembered to switch the traction control off before 'launch. Having experienced how invasive the traction control is on the 'home run', driving the car with this OFF was going to give the best output from the engine. The first run was a bit of a test, Clay Pigeon is a Go-Kart track and as a result the corners (and there are a lot of them) are quite tight. I was quite expecting to have a massive amount of understeer as I charged into the first series of bends, but was quite surprised how

well the BMW's bulk was persuaded to change direction, this was however accompanied by an interesting amount of tyre squeal. On the main straight the car's greater horsepower over my MK1 was noticeable and the ABS was very useful when the straight finished in yet another series of bends.

Each timed run is approximately 1¼ laps of the circuit, so enough time to get into the swing of throwing the car about. After the first test I was toward the lower end of our group on times, not that this was a problem as this is a fun outing. The next run I was going to be more confident in how the car was going to handle and how brave I could be on the brakes. There is a chicane toward the end of the first lap and this was the place I figured time could be made up with late breaking and using the torque of the supercharged engine. This was a great plan but the chicane is quite tight and I was used to threading the much smaller MK1 through this gap, so with the BMW having wider hips I lost my bottle and braked a bit harder and earlier - maybe a brave pill next time.

At the end of the day I had worked my way to mid field times and beaten my previous best time in my MK1 (but that was on a damp circuit). If I had a criticism of the car it would be that the leather seats and G force are not a great combination, maybe some Velcro or a large spike could help here! Other than that, for what was basically a very low cost day's motorsport, I had a great time and drove home with the satisfaction that I'd learnt a great deal more about how the car handles.....now where's that Golf!

**Mike Mark**



Mike Mark competing in his R53 for the first time



# Elvet Pierce Memorial Trophy

By Peter Horsburgh



The Elvet Pierce Memorial Trophy

Many of you may know Elvet as a sometime contributor to the Mini Cooper Register magazine and a great Mini enthusiast. In his memory, his family kindly donated a perpetual trophy to be awarded on The Vale of Clwyd Classic Rally for the highest placed BMC car and crew.

Run as the penultimate round of the HRCR Clubman's Championship on 1st September and organised by Guy Woodcock and his team from Clwyd Vale Motor Club, it attracted a capacity field of 70 cars. Richard Dix and I were entered in my well rallied Morris Cooper S 277 BRX.

The varied route in North Wales started from The Druid Inn in Llanferes and took in six regularity sections and eleven timed to the second tests. At the lunch halt at the Neuadd Owen village hall, we were a very respectable 4th overall behind two MkI Escorts and a Porsche.

The second half was very challenging and a couple of missed tricky slots on regularity sections dropped us to 9th overall at the finish, just pipping the Austin Mini 1275GT of James Griffiths and James Howell, by 46 seconds, to be the delighted recipients of the Elvet Pierce Memorial Trophy, from the other 20 or so Minis and assorted BMC variants.

Peter Horsburgh

