

**2006 MULTIWAGE GRANITE CITY RALLY - REDPOINT RALLYING  
(Martin Page and co-driver Alan Bennett plus the nutters that make up  
the service crew!)**

Well as you know we were out on our home rally in April. Our first shot at our local round of the Scottish Rally Championship.

The organisers arranged the event so that the two wheel drive cars ran over the stages first, followed an hour later by the turbo, four wheel drive cars. This was great news as it allowed us to run on fast stages that werent cut to bits by 50 odd Subarus etc. Magic!

The difference was superb and hopefully more organisers will follow this.

We rally the only BMW Mini Cooper in the uk and have been developing it on a rally by rally basis. The car is showing great promise and is just brilliant to drive.

Initially we started out with it on tarmac events but have lately been concentrating on the gravel. The car is not too far removed from boggo standard. We have re-mapped it thanks to our supporters at [www.essentialmini.co.uk](http://www.essentialmini.co.uk) and bolted on a comp. exhaust manifold/system, and improved the induction side of things with a modified throttle body and air filter.

So far, so good but our experiments in the suspension department has been a little frustrating...but further developments are in the offing here which should improve things greatly.

Anyway, back to our day out on The Granite...

Scrutineering took place on the Friday before the rally in the plush workshops at Volkswagen at Altens. Good to see some supporters there, cheers.

The Cooper sailed through all the checks and we were all set for the following days competition.

Our Cooper had featured in the Press and Journal Granite City Rally item where they strangely 'quoted ' us that we were going for a class win (?)...which was news to us but a good source of amusement none the less. Next time we are going to attempt to be 'quoted 'saying we are going for the overall win !!

At 8am we were waved off in grand style by a variety of local dignatries ( and some bewildered Jakey's who were no doubt confused by the spectacle and were reaching for more Special Brew and 'Buckie' ) from the Castlegate in Aberdeen city centre and headed for Special Stage 1 Whitehaugh.

The service crew meanwhile were heading for the Transport Museum at Alford to set up and another Cooper 'S' shadowed us as 'Management' car with tools, spares and a couple of spare wheels.

Whitehaugh was about 5 miles of good gravel and we were on it immediately. We still have concerns about the effectiveness of our forest suspension ( we have broken it on every forest rally so far !! ) but running first made the difference. The stage was a cracker, nice and flowing. By about half way we could see the dust of the car that had started a minute before us so we were obviously catching it.

As the stage started to plunge down hill we rounded a 90 left and found it on its side at the edge of the stage. The crew were extracting themselves, gave us a wave and we flew on to the end of the stage where we reported the car to the marshalls.

A quick phone call to our Management car to let them know that we were out of the stage without problem and AI navigated us along the Road Section to Special Stage 2.....the infamous Clashindarroch.

Clashindarroch was 8.5 miles of good forest track except its mid section which was extremely rough. We had covered this section before, last year when it was a 16 mile stage of the Speyside Stages and survived....many dont!

Again we were right on it, the car was pulling really well (Cheers again Simon - essentialmini.co.uk the mapping is just superb!) and handled fantastically. Most of the bends were nicely driftable and wherever AI's pace notes said we could 'cut' or 'keep in' we took literally and straight lined as much as we dared. It really is becoming a favorite stage for us, its just so fast in there.

We cleared the stage and got in touch with the Management crew who were due to carry out a running check of the car during the next road section. We met up with them at Rhynie in the village square for a re-fuel and visual check over. We found the rear offside tyre had punctured, presumably near the end of the stage as I hadnt noticed any ill effects. A minute later the checks were complete, AI and I were fed and watered and juice bottles in the car replenished. All very slick.

We headed off for Special Stage 3 Tornasheen, again being shadowed to near the stage start by the Management Crew. We would next see them at the main service.

Tornasheen started well. More fantastic gravel track in boiling sunshine and huge numbers of spectators. About 2.5 miles into the stage we were flat out as fast as the car would go and heading for a 90 left. The bend wasnt quite a 90 degree bend initially but tightend into it. We drifted nicely into it, just cutting it as the notes stated but suddenly the car got sucked deeper into the apex and I couldnt do anything about it!

We ran deeper into the bend under the trees when there was an almighty bang. We knew instantly we had collected a large rock which had punctured the front nearside tyre.

Al said we had about 3 miles of the stage to go so I elected to drive on the puncture as we would lose less time than stopping to change it. A front puncture is always worse than a rear one as you lose a lot of control. We could only do about 50mph and a lot less when it came to bends as the car was unwilling to turn in. As a result we clobbered a couple of log chicanes further along the stage.....at least we made them wider for the following cars!

The flying finish couldn't come soon enough as we weren't sure what other damage we may have sustained. Al reckons we lost a minute in the stage. It took us nearly 3 minutes to change the wheel at the end of the stage so carrying on over the short distance was the right thing to do.

The wheel had a huge chunk knocked out of it and we were running on the rim as the tyre had shredded completely.

Somewhat relieved that there was no other obvious damage we took to the road section to Main Service.

The Service Crew did a great job as usual. The car was up on the stands in no time, re-fuelled, re-tyred and we were fed and watered again.

The next stage at Blackhall Forest at Banchory was one Al and I were really looking forward to as it is our local stage near our homes so we were quite familiar with the forest. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing so we didn't want to over do it. The track can look a little different flat out in a rally car than mountain biking through it a 15mph!

As we entered the forest and drove to the stage there were a few other rally cars parked at the time control. At this time the Marshalls advised us of the accident in Special Stage 2 and that the rally had been cancelled.

All the competitors headed back to Rally Headquarters in Aberdeen and handed in our time cards.

ADMC finalised class positions and we were officially 4th in class. Al has calculated that if I hadn't collected that puncture in Tornasheen, we might have been much, much further up in our class.

All ' what might have been' but ultimately completely unimportant in the circumstances.

We are missing the next couple of rallies due to other commitments but are aiming to be out on The McRae Stages on 30 September. Hopefully with new and improved suspension.

Our team can only echo the sentiments of the organising club (Aberdeen and District Motor Club) and extend our own deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Graham Lewis who died during the rally and to Stuart, his driver. Also to the crew of the car involved in the accident.