

Neil Blackburn checks out a BMW that really stands out from the crowd in gravel rallies



BEAMER DREAMER

There are many people involved in the sport of rallying at so many different levels, and Sydneysider Mark Callinan is one of these.

Mark has seen many sides of the sport over the years, including co-driving at state level in the '80's, rallying his own Galant, and working and servicing on the famous Fiat 131 Abarth of Greg Carr.

With experiences such as these, and with a successful business, BEMW at Castle Hill in Sydney's north west, servicing European cars, and with the rallying bug never really quenched, Mark obtained a BMW 3 Series



about two years ago.

The BeeEm had been crashed by a teenager and as it was uninsured, changed hands very quickly. So the BMW rally car was born.

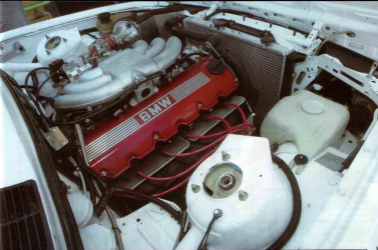
Mark's earlier career had seen him competing in a GA Galant, doing rallyprints at the dirt circuit at the now-defunct Amara Park near Sydney. Swapping sides, he then went on to some co-driving which included a roll in a rally on the Watagan Road.

Later he bought the ex-Caroline O'Shaughnessy Fiat 131 through a family contact. This car, a four door, was built to PRC (Production Rally Car) specifications, but Mark converted it to Group G and then back to PRC specs. Later he and his family ended up moving to Carberra and the car was sold off in bits. This came the typical rallying problem - he ran out of money. Fast-forward 18 years.

The 1990 BMW E30 3 Series that is the subject of our story was taken apart, slowly at first, however at the end of 2005 the project accelerated and the car was taken to have a cage fitted. It was then that the decision was made that the car would debut at the Rally of the Manning Valley in Taree, then just under six months away.

"I'm not kidding, I worked 17 hour days to get the car ready," explained Mark. "I kept on working on certain parts of the car, and I kept on finding other things to do, and then more things to do again. It was a big task."





● All the work in preparation has paid off. The car is superbly prepared, and makes spectators sit up and take notice - as it did at Baja (below).

Your writer has a 'thing' for these cars. In my younger days I worked briefly on the JPS Team BMW team in the early '80's. I remember Terry Longhurst's car and the 325i at Amareo, and the noise the engine made. Callinan's car with the 2.5 litre BMW M20 engine that contained tightened and shot-peened conrods and a BMW-spec, camshaft, produced that sweet sounding noise again that I remembered so well.

There was a lot of detail put into this car, and it shows when you take even a quick look over it. The interior of the car is purpose built for the job, containing things like Velo Apex seats, 6-point 3" safety harnesses, a Terra-phone ProIntercom, Terra-trip 303, an AIM MXL Pro electronic

data-logging dashboard, and a purpose built WRC-like upright hydraulic handbrake.

Under the dash the car has a Tilton pedal box - the last one of these I saw was on the WRC cars at Rally Australia last year. It's a great looking interior that must be a pleasure to work from.

Speaking of brakes, the car is stopped via that pedal box by some good size brakes - the front wheels wear 4-piston alloy calipers working on 300mm x 28mm slotted rotors, whilst the rear has 2-piston alloy calipers and 300mm x 22mm slotted rotors. Stopping power should not be a problem.

Suspension is taken care of by a Bilstein shock absorber set-up and King springs. The BMW's considerable power is trans-

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● You won't find too many better prepared cars than Mark Callinan's BMW.

mitted to the ground through a BMW M3 5 speed gearbox with a 1:1 5th gear, a lightened flywheel, 5-button heavy duty clutch and pressure plate and a 4.45.1 welded differential.

Attention to detail is obvious everywhere; in the boot, beside the fuel tank, there is a soft-type insert that has a shaped cut-out for a powered wheel nut wrench, cleverly placed for quick access.

Attention to detail continues. The driver sits behind a Stack dash with a Haltech program tailored to the dash. A Haltech dealer, Mark waited for a program to match his dash to arrive but when it finally arrived, the protocol wasn't working properly.

The engine would start and then die, and Mark spent hours trying to figure out why.

After a lot of mucking around, he had a brainstorm and checked to find something simple wrong, whereupon the engine ran. Mark didn't end up firing the engine up properly, though, until a week before the debut rally, and it was a mad rush to get the car registered and ready to go.

Mike said he did a bit of a bump test around the grounds of the workshop a couple of nights before the rally, just to see if anything would fall off. "It didn't so I thought we might have been ready," Mark recalls.

Rallyeup helped out with the registering of the car just prior to the trip to the Rally of the Manning Valley. After a late start leaving Sydney, driver, navigator and car ended up leaving at 4pm on the Friday night, arriving for scrutineering at Taree at 10.40pm, just 20 minutes before scrutiny

closed.

The big day came for Mark and his co-driver, Matt Wilson (who also sponsors the car through his business) and the proof of how well the car was designed and built was the fact that it ran just about faultlessly throughout its first event at Taree.

"Even I was surprised," Mark said. "I expected some rigging dramas, but apart from me being a little rusty driving-wise, it all went very well."

The car runs on Kumho tyres and the team had fitted Compomotive wheels shod with 285's for the first event. "I think we had too wide a tyre on the car, and too hard a compound," explained Mark, so a softer compound and a narrower tyre will be fitted for its next outing.

Mark has had a lot of assist-

once from many people with the build-up of such a special and unique car. The Other Dimension, Penrite, Auto Focus Marketing, Bond Roll Bars, Daverne Financial Assistance, and the crew, Cam, Darrel and Pete all helped along the way.

However, his biggest thanks are for his biggest fans, his family: "I would like to thank my wife Samantha and my daughters Caitlin and Maggie for their patience, support and for putting up without a husband and dad for three months while I finished the car," Mark adds.

"You'd have to go a long way to see a more detailed and professionally-built car. It's surely the only gravel-spec BMW in Australia and for that reason alone it stands out from the crowd."

Take a close look at it at a NSW event when you get the chance. You won't be disappointed.



● Looks good, sounds great. There's something about a BMW engine at full revs that gets the pulse racing.