

## Mark Hoppe

Where to start? My time in Woolbridge is short compared to many of my learned friends. I became a member in late 2012 with the intention of doing a few car trials, having sampled an outing on the Hardy with my great friend and motorsport mentor – Nick Cleal. However, my motorsport career started many years prior to this in 1982 at the age of 14, where I started competing in Autograss in a Mini 850. Autograss was something I lived and breathed from that moment and over the next 30 years I raced at hundreds of events in every class of car. I was involved in the organisation of events with the local clubs – Weymouth Motor Racing Club (Wessex MRC as it is now) and was also chairman of South Somerset Autograss Club as well as 8 years as Southern league chairman. I was involved nationally on the NASA (National Autograss Sports Association) Chairman's committee. I also spent 10+ years on the national commentary team – so its safe to say competing was just one part of what made auto grass a great sport to be in. However, in 2013 I started the season with a newly built car and realized that the whole thing had become a habit and not a hobby – upon realizing this I decided to sell everything – camper, racecar, trailer - the lot. I continued for 18 months as league chairman and even to this day still have a strong network of friends in grassing and I still attend the national championships. Once I had relieved the "burden" I bought a Peugeot 106 diesel to use as a trial car and my first event saw me turn up like the messiah – thinking I was going to walk on water – how hard could it be? It was only chugging up a hill! Well after coming 17th out of 19, I realised that there was a bit more to this game than it looked like – A common perception for many people that trialling is easy. 12 I disposed of the Peugeot – well it rattled itself to death on the last hill of the day and replaced it with a "saved from the scrapyard" 1100cc Peugeot 205. It was a wonderful car and I started to improve over the next few events and was gutted to drop a crazy 9 when I was on to win the clubman section of the Golden Springs in 2013. Having killed the 205 I bought a 1 litre Micra and used it on the road and drove to a few national events to compete in the clubman section whilst I observed the "national" experts. The results improved, but the 1 litre coupled with my bulk was not the answer. So, I bought a 1600 Saxo VTR and entered the national series – both MSA and BTRDA in 2014. I had a stunning season – with 6 overall wins and landed both MSA and BTRDA Gold star in my debut season. I loved the success and the lack of garage time needed. I repeated the MSA championship win in 2015 and just fell short in the Gold Star. By now my "natural organisation" desire saw me getting involved with the Woolbridge Car Trials and starting to push the entry levels up and get the competition growing. The assistance from Andy Webb and Graham Blake as well as the flexibility of John Kirby certainly made sure we could grow the trials potential. I also have ended up serving for 4 years on the Motorsport UK Specialist trials committee. I was also getting itchy fingers to build a RWD car, and it was by luck that I purchased Duncan Stephens "spare" chassis when he was moving house in 2015 and started the ground up build of the Dutton Melos. A rocky start meant I needed to push the boat out and buy a proper engine - which I used LCP in Cheltenham for (an ex grassing colleague). Since then, the Dutton has been my weapon of choice at National trials and in 2018 I managed the MSA and BTRDA double again. I then won the 2019 Motorsport UK championship for a 4th time. During the last 8 years I have missed only one WMC car trial and have been involved with setting out the courses, entry taking and generally pushing forward – especially with our September taster days where we have encouraged many people to try the sport, several of which have become successful triallers. Competition breeds competition and its not a surprise that we have very capable triallers in the club who have had success when they move into the national events – something else I am proud of..... do not get me wrong – I like to win, but if I see others gaining success that is nearly as pleasing! 13 I have also been

involved with autotests and this is harder work than the trials – we do not seem to have a thriving hard surface autotest following and I believe we probably need to focus on 2-3 per year grass autotests where the triallists can bring out their winter weapons for a cobweb clearing exercise. Away from motorsport I have been a manager in a large fabrication business for over 25 years and currently pursuing a change of career away from the corporate world. At 53 I have realised that time is important, and I need to get a better balance of work, family, and motorsport! My wonderful wife of 29 years (39 years together altogether) is extremely supportive and as my passenger is worth many points a season! My daughter has just finished at uni and is looking to spread her wings into somewhere less sleepy than Sherborne. Overall – I have a passion to compete and grow the disciplines that I enjoy – so for those of you who think trials are easy... come and have a go with our current crop of superstars! Hopefully, that gives you a flavour of me and what makes me tick