

MULLMURMURSMULLMURMURSMULLMURMURS - Chapter 2

Scrutineering is now finished for the 32nd Philips Tour of Mull Rally and all the top stars are safely through so no last minute surprises. As usual some poor sods were turned away to get things attended to but it was all done in good humour and mild swearwords. But remember, all you competitors, the Scroots are going to be out checking during the rally!

Chris Paton who has starred in more Mull events than anyone (31 out of 32 so far) is back for more with the wee Nova but it wouldn't tick over the other night. It just so happened he bumped into the Pro-Tec guys in the pub (as you do on Mull) who originally built his engine and Mark popped down the very next morning and within 5 minutes the wee Nova was ticking over like a sweetie.

Compare that to Mark Durham's own Vauxhall. The Pro-Tec boys have built their own Corsa Kit Car which has a 193 bhp engine and 6 spd dog box and this will be it's first run out this weekend, a real rapid wee machine.

John Cressey appeared with a few scars on the Astra. He had been entertaining guests at a corporate day when the wheel studs sheared and a wheel came off. The rally virgin alongside thought it was all part of the thrill ride! John didn't let on, his guest was really impressed.

Martin Healer was sweating a wee bit before the rally. The wheel bearings on the Escort failed earlier this week and he has had to fit his spares. That means he doesn't have any back-up and therefore daren't hit anything this weekend.

Dave Thwaites has been hard at work on his MkII since last year. He's chucked away the Bilsteins and fitted Pro-flex to the 220 bhp Vauxhall 16v engined machine which now has a full set of big Brembos all round. Apparently it stops so quick that he's had to install a palette knife which scrapes him off the windscreen and drops him back in the seat after emergency stops!

John Rintoul has fitted a new turbo since his last one blew up two weeks ago at the Milltown Stages. The unfortunate thing was that when it blew it damaged the engine so it was a major rebuild all round to get ready for this. As if that wasn't enough he's changed the gearbox from a 6 spd with o/drive to a 6 spd with direct top.

Newcomers Naomi Knight (Andy's missus) and Rebecca Paterson (Jimmy's daughter) are making their rallying debut this weekend in a wee Peugeot, but Andy is contemplating a return next year. As for this year, the twice Mull winner is chief tea-maker in the service crew for the girls.

An unusual sight on the roads this weekend will be Gavin Gray's Citroen (100), but he's not so daft. Apparently it's just a Peugeot 309 with a different body. That means parts are available and cheap and with its M1-16 engine, it's quick for half the price of the wee lion badge.

Rod Brereton is back with the 1800cc Clio. An under-rated wee motor this, and with its Clio Cup tarmac suspension it's a value for money offering that provides just as much fun as his previous 200 bhp Renault 5 Turbo.

The reason that Richard Egger's Nova (123) looks so wide is that it's got a 2 litre lump under the bonnet.

Alan McLaughlin (126) is hoping to get further in the Ford Puma this year than last. He got 6 miles before the battery Master switch broke!

It's 29 years since Alan Conley won this event in a Clan Crusader but Michael Curry (149) is hoping to stir the memory boxes. He last competed on Mull in an Imp 14 years ago and here he is with a Crusader this year. He bought the shell 6 months ago and fitted his Imp gearbox and bought a new engine for it.

By the way, Mark Wagstaff was spotted on the Island. Winner in 1992 he's back on his hols from Australia and his wife has never been in the UK before, let alone on Mull. Apparently she has never experienced wind before (the airy kind, not the Heinz beans kind) and that's something this part of the world has plenty of!

And NO, you're not seeing things. That really is a Mr Blobby paint job on Fred MacLean's Peugeot (132) pink with yellow spots. The only thing is, he couldn't get a race suit to match!

And finally, the Polis really are a nice bunch around here. They took pity on a certain individual who is a member of a service crew (who shall remain nameless to protect his embarrassment) and who appeared to be celebrating rather too early last night. In the early hours of this morning, the boys in blue encountered the aforesaid gentleman wandering the dark roads of Mull in his jeans and stocking soles, completely oblivious to his whereabouts and surroundings, and took him into protective custody (till he sobered up and could tell them who he was!). I don't know what he was on, but I wouldn't mind a pint of it!

And finally, finally, Eddie O'Donnell was just about last man through Scrutineering. The number 4 seed was on an all-nighter last night trying to get it ready. Some things never change, eh?

And remember, all you spectating folks. Take care out there to-night, pick your spots (no, not those ones, if they get infected you'll get acne), but pick your spectating spots and get there early before the Polis shut the road, and then stay there till they open it. Enjoy yourselves, there will be hot fun on the roads of Mull to-night.

That's yer lot meantime, more guff to come. Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Tobermory, Friday tea-time.