

MullMurmurs – Chapter 1

Well, hullawrerrchinasanhowzyertastebudstinglin? Welcome one and all to the 37th running of the annual Tour of Mull Rally and an especially warm welcome to that harbinger of all things scrumptiously tasty, St Tunnock's of Biscuitry, sponsors of 'the best rally in the world'.

Things got off to a quietly rowdy start in the Aros Hall last night where a Scotsman, an Englishman, a Welshman and an Irishman gathered together for the pre-rally forum chaired by someone from another nation entirely (but we haven't found out where), Mr John Fife. First time on the panel James MacGillivray represented the Scots and for someone who's shy proved remarkably adept at the spoken word. John Cope was there on behalf of the English and determined to go well this year, the most 'winningest' man in British rallying and having driven more types of rally car than anyone else, John Price is back for another crack at the one event which has frustrated his trophy cabinet and Denis Biggerstaff is back – just for the craic!

But even before that Rod Brereton was up to his usual tricks on the Wednesday night running a music quiz in the MishNish and raised £275 for the RNLi while another on 'good works' duty was Dougi Hall. He cycled the full length of the 22 miler yesterday setting a time of 1 hour 7 minutes 33 seconds and averaging 19.94 mph for the trip – then he cooled down by cycling over the lochs! And the reason, he was being sponsored to raise funds for the bear Cubs, the groups of rallying youngsters that Steve Davies is helping out – and Dougi is still open for donations, it's a good cause!

And just before the rally gets underway, make sure you get 'tooled up' for the weekend, the 2300 Club girls are selling Tunnock's Tour of Mull gear in the Aros Hall and the fully informative programmes are on sale there too and many shops around the towns and villages. This is essential reading because it contains stage maps and timetables, without which you will see nowt to-night!

But back to the rally, Scrutineering opened for business at Tobermory Distillery where first through was Tony Bardy who has hired a Steve Petch Hyundai WRC machine in place of his Nissan. "It's an early 50th birthday present to meself" said Tony – about one year early I thought.

John Swinscoe's Lancer EVO9 looked mean. He brought it in direct from Japan and started prepping it on the 11th of September. Mark Jasper sounds as though he's well prepared. He and Don Whyatt (2nd time at Mull) drive the stage once to make the Notes and then drove them once to check them! The Metro looks well after its 'bump' on Ulster: "I was leading at the time," said Mark, "and doing 100 and something, then we went off!"

When asked why he had such a huge airbox on top of the Metro V6, John Price said: "It needs a lot of air!" Still, it's cheaper than petrol I suppose. Next up was the MINI triplets of Daniel Harper, John Cressey and Ian Dawes. The cars have around 270 hp and 6 speed gearboxes built by Minisport. Daniel and John's cars are the same as last year but Ian and Gary Dawes have forfeited their Astra in favour of the MINI. According to Daniel it's a "2 Dawes model" (Think about it!).

Ian Colman appeared in his facelifted Nissan. He put it into Tony Bardy's place for a checkup and they moved the intercooler from the top of the engine to low down at the front. More efficient, but more exposed!

Dave Thwaites has got a new 2.4 Duratec in the MkII in place of the 2 litre Vauxhall. It's got more power and more torque and a big Atlas, with big diff and big shafts ... Chris Tooze is hoping for a better run out on Mull than he had in Ulster. The Corsa shed a wheel 2 miles into the 1st stage ... Eddie O'Donnell came through Scrutineering with clean hands! The car has actually been ready since June when he went to do the Donegal, only he didn't. The cylinder head went porous and he had to withdraw his entry so all he had to do was get the engine rebuilt for Mull ... Duggie Ingram's Mini looks a bit of a handful with its Jack Knight 16 valve head and throttle bodies ... and John Rintoul has new glasses, now he'll actually see what he's been missing over here all these years! ... Dave Taylor is a lucky starter. He got his car pinched out of the garage on Tuesday after thieves played bumper cars with 8 other showroom vehicles to get it out. But it ran out of fuel after 4 miles and the thieves couldn't get fuel into the WRC spec filler. A lady jogger spotted it behind a hedge and phoned Easson's garage so they got it back ... not so lucky is Billy Bird, the Lancer put a rod through the block last night ... Ian Grubb had a fright last night too when the Lancer's brake pedal went to the floor but an overnight master cylinder change had him back in action this morning.

We didn't see Neil MacKinnon this morning but we saw his car – he was still in bed, but sone Paul was there with Emma McKinstry's Lancer. The car is up for sale, but the MacKinnons did a deal with Kenny for two cars on Mull this year. And local hero Calum Duffy was there too. He's got a new engine in the car. He did Crail late last year and did the Sperrins Rally in Ireland a few months back where he finished 16th overall and 2nd in class so he should be match fit for this weekend.

It was also good to see Dutchman Lex Koevoet back again. He marshalled for the first time on Mull last year and was so taken he's back for more. He will be marshalling at Ardtun with the BMRMC whose stage starter is none other than Vanessa Bott who is the Chief Start Marshal at Oulton Park. Apparently Oulton Park does a bit in motor sport too!

And finally, Mull does strange things to folk when they first visit and then keep coming back, but few stranger than this. Granite City Clerk of the Course, Gerry Potter and Entries Secretary Rae Osborne got married in Tobermory registry office yesterday morning at 11.00 am witnessed by Doug Weir and Stevie Brown and photographed for posterity by Iain Robertson. Gerry said they did it quietly to save a lot of fuss (I reckon he was saving money!) but if you see a car out there to-night on marshalling duty with steamed up windows, just be careful, it might be the newlyweds! Congratulations from all of us to all of youse.

And finally, finally, the Polis have one of them new fangled see-far-away radar guns that can spot a speeding motorist at a mile! So be careful and be sensible. And if you hear a siren and see flashing lights just ahead of the rally to-night that could be Bulletin Bill with the MullMurmurs, so look out and be ready!

Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Tobermory, Noon, Friday