

Tunnock's Tour of Mull

"the best rally in the world"

MullMurmurs – Chapter 1

Well, hullawrerrchinasanhowzyerschockieshooglintheday? If ye huvny goat guid suspension, go home now! Otherwise let me bid you a warm and tastiferous welcome to the 38th running of the annual Tour of Mull Rally sponsored by the best thing to hit the tastebuds since Adam reached for that apple! - St Tunnock's of Biscuity, sponsors of 'the best rally in the world.'

As usual, the tee-shirts were flying in the Aros Hall last night when that awfy nice big chap, John Fife hosted the annual Tunnock's Rally Forum with special guests Neil MacKinnon, Paul Kirtley, Alick Kerr, Chris Paton and Dave Cabena. A fun filled frolicsome time was had by all with Quiz prizes kindly donated by Dunlop, Kumho, Nissan and Volkswagen.

Earlier on this week, Dougi Hall was up to his usual tricks. Last year he cycled the full length of the 22 miler in 1 hour 7 minutes 33 seconds and averaged 19.94 mph. This year it was wetter and slipperier and he 'only' managed 1hr 8m 22s for the trip, so he's set himself a target for next year – under an hour. Gaun yersel Dougi! And it's all in aid of raising funds for the Bear Cubs, Steve Davies' rallying apprentices. So if you see Dougi, give generously. And Rod Brereton continued his RNLI fund raising activities with support from Tony Tyres and Kumho raising £300 at his Music Quiz in the Mishnish on Tuesday.

And no, you're not seeing things. Buzz Lightyear is not on the island! It's only Rally Director Neil Molyneux zipping around on a Scooter with L Plates. At least the nickname Buzz Lightyear is better than the other one we came up with, Mr Blobby's mate, Mr Wobbly - give him a wide berth!

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. Rally programmes are also on sale there and at various shops and garages around the island so look out for them, they are essential reading with full rally timetable and Road Closure details. Also tune in to Oban FM over the weekend on 103.3 to enjoy (?) the dulcet tones of Campbell Cameron with all the latest rally gossip.

But back to the rally, Scrutineering opened for business at Tobermory Distillery where first through was Neil MacKinnon's (1) Mull machine, and lucky to be here at all. Two weeks ago the Kenny McKinstry car he was planning to use was crashed on an Irish event (not by Neill!) prompting the guys to have to get another Subaru ready for this weekend. They have spent the last week converting a Left Hand Drive car to RHD, but since no-one had a conversion kit in stock they had to make everything from scratch. A seriously big job. Then bringing the car up yesterday morning the tow truck blew its engine to bits and brought downtown Belfast rush hour traffic to a halt while the McKinstry lads emptied the truck and transferred everything to a spare and they arrived here on the last boat last night.

And whilst on the subject, here's the 'Tweak of the Week'. Spot the top-hinged front number plate. When the car is in full flight it blows back allowing more air through the radiator. Nice one bhoys.

James MacGillivray (6) has fitted last year's 2.3 litre MkII with Proflex and used it on the Jim Clark., he says it has transformed the car, so he's ready for tonight. Causing a stir last year was young Paul MacKinnon (9) up to 6th before the engine let go, but he's back with a GrpN Subaru. He reckons it needs the full AP brake kit, but has only got the GrpN Brembos at present – but then boys like him don't use brakes

Billy Bird (10) reckons "the calendar would be good, anything else is a bonus" referring to the annual Tunnock's Tour of Mull Calendar which features the top 12 finishers on each of the monthly pages. Calum Duffy's car was next through and the MkII should be in an art gallery not out on a rally. The 2.4 John Reid engine is producing in the region of 300 bhp while the car itself was built by Den Sport in Ireland. The result is every bit as mouth watering as a caramel wafer. The car also features suspension built in Sweden by Sellholm which is cheaper than Reiger but just as good according to Den Sport, worth a chat anyone?

Paul Kirtley (5) appeared in the WRC Impreza which he first used in 2002, but which has recently been rallying in Holland (and winning) with Dirk Boers. MSP has sold Dirk a new S7 so the car is back here and since Paul's car from last year is now up for sale, brother John Kirtley, who runs MSP, won't let him use it! George MacDonald's (26) wee Corsa looked a treat after it's rebuild from the Speyside. Engine, gearbox and transmission have all been re built ready for this weekend. Top ten for 'Chicken' George?

Tristan Pye (19) has already clinched the GrpN BTRDA title this year so it's a change of shock absorbers and brakes for Mull, John Marshall (29) blew a turbo on the first stage of this event last year so guess what's brand new under the bonnet this time – and check out his tribute to Colin McRae on the back window. Dougi Hall (2) is well prepared – he bought a standard engine off E-Bay to replace the one which failed last year. Chris Tooze (34) has done 2 events in his new Lancer and had trouble on

both. He hit a sheep on Epynt on the first one (and still finished 3rd) and somebody ran into the back of him on the second. Better luck this time, eh.

Stuart McQueen has upgraded his EVO7 to EVO9, but what do you made of Denis Biggerstaff (8)? Denis Smallerstaff more like. He's taking this seriously, looking fitter and meaner than ever despite the fish supper I saw him sneakily tucking into last night. And it's a new car, but he's having trouble with the paddle-shift, so fingers crossed for a trouble free run.

Barry Renwick (30) has spectated here before, but he's a Mull Virgin "the roads look totally different from this angle". Steve Davies (45) made it to Scrutineering, which is a tribute ton his preparation skills, only kidding, but hoping for better luck than last year when "the gearbox sh*t itself on the second last stage". Another Mull virgin is young Alick Kerr (75) the John Easson Scholarship winner. You won't mistake his Fiesta, it's got gold door numbers. After two seasons in a Peugeot 205 this is his 3rd outing in the Fiesta, but first time in the dark and first time on tar with it.

Robert Davies (49) is in for a culture shock, he's not out in his Lancer, but a Ford Fiesta "I'll either do very badly or chuck it off" he said wistfully. Lyndon Barton (18) has a brand new engine in the Subaru which has still to be run in. He installed a new engine last Wednesday, which promptly failed and it was a rush to get another for this weekend. Tony Bardy's (7) Hyundai Accent WRC is a similar spec to last year's car but it's brand new although the boys had a wee misfire this morning.

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 for the Flying Ford Focus and be ready at the road side to grab a Bulletin!

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