

**MullMurmurs – Chapter 2**

Let's start with a BIG news story. It's not raining. Well, for the moment, anyway. This morning's cheerless drizzle has given way to dry skies, let's hope they stay that way for the weekend. I'm not thinking of the competitors here, I'm thinking of the Marshals, those dozens of lads and lassies from all over the UK who come each year to the Tunnock's Tour of Mull and who help to make this the best damn rally in the world. Thanks to all of you.

The 39th Tunnock's Tour will shortly get underway and the Scroots have been all day shoogling wheels and wagging wires (see, I do technical stuff as well) ahead of tonight's speedfest. By the way, Happy Birthday to 2300 Club President Joan Molyneux. Don't tell anyone it was me, and keep it a secret, but she was 80 just a couple of weeks back. It must be the porridge.

Tristan Pye's Subaru looks the business. He was 5th last year and Paul MacKinnon is running in a Pye Motorsport sister car, so no pressure there then. John Marshall is back on Mull having packed away the racing Legend for the weekend to return to his first love, rallying. He's got the TegSport ex Manx winning Mark Higgins Subaru, so no pressure there either, but John had a lovely tale to tell. He was at Monza the other week for World Touring Cars and had dinner with twice British Touring Car Champion and Sky TV pundit John Cleland who asked him if he was racing this weekend. John Marshall said, no, he was going to do the Tunnock's Tour of Mull. Well, to say Mr Cleland's gob was smacked was an understatement. "Is that so?" he enquired, "Jaggy Bunnet used to co-drive for me when I was a rally driver." Well, there you go, famous across the globe, that's me. Imagine going all the way to Monza to find that out.

Billy Bird has got another Astra, but a FWD one this time. He bought it earlier this year and after it's first event, put a new engine in it. He had to! Tugs Sherrington is a turncoat. He sold his Escort and built a Lancer. The chassis plate declares 'Mull Edition Special'. Cameron MacLean's Escort is still in the process of being re-shelled so he's borrowed a Lancer for the weekend. 1st time in 4WD for him. Chris Tooze has refettled the Lancer and sincerely hopes to avoid last year's culvert.

And here's a surprise, Eddie O'Donnell wasn't last man through Scrutineering, the car appeared at 11.25 this morning and sailed through without a query! See, miracles do happen on Mull. He was out on the McRae the other week where ECU failure sidelined him, lucky it happened there and not here though. Grum Willcock had trouble sourcing a new back axle for his Opel Manta, but eventually got one, in America!

And what about Dave Thwaites latest work of automotive art. A MkII with a 2.4 Duratec and 6 spd seq hydraulic paddle shift and suspended on full Reiger suspension with a WRC Escort rear end. It's the usual shade of duck egg blue, but it looks minted out of its mind. Curly Haigh is back with the MkI but it's got Proflex suspension now. Only trouble is he doesn't know how to set it up. Some things don't change. John Swinscoe had a panic this morning. Rain got into his electrics and set off the fire extinguishers. Fortunately, Alan Brown of Questmead just happened to have an exactly similar system in stock – but only because it was a cancelled order. How lucky was that?

Denis Biggerstaff was spotted casting his eyes skyward. The last 4 times he's done Mull, they were dry, but he's not worried about the wet, as long as he's on the right tyres. That'll be a big concern for all tonight.

Some things never change. Sid 'The Parrot' Fleming ran out of fuel on the way to Scrutineering and the boys had to get behind him and push the car in, including co-driver Fergus Loudon who just happens to be one of the 'High Heid Yins' at Tunnocks. Hardly the way to impress your sponsor, but then Sid is just like the Queen, she never carries cash either even though her handbag is bigger than Sid's.

The Irish are great fun thought aren't they? Fiona Boa is co-driving for Damian Hagan but the Irishman is calling the local lass 'Ony'. I can honestly say there is no truth in the rumour that this is because Damian can only cope with words of one syllable or less. His crew told me that, so it must be true.

And what about the perennial pairing of Chris Paton and Dave Cabena? This will be Chris' 38th Tour while Dave has done them all. As for the Nova, well not quite. Chris started with a Mini way back in 19 Oatcake. He nearly didn't make it this year. He pranged it last year and had to rebuild the suspension so did the engine as well and then took it to Ingliston in July and guess what, he had suspension and engine problems. So he finished the job this week.



Jim Brindle is back for more in his Mini with its 1960 number plate although that is just about the only original feature left on the car. He's threatening to build a 'new' 1969 Mini Clubman for next year. Rob Eastwood has been footering about with his Mini too. Out has gone the 970 Cooper S engine to be replaced with a 1275 unit from Minisport. It was just finished a week ago and he hasn't driven it in anger yet. John Bennie is back too, he's just finished rebuilding his Corsa which he started 3 years ago! Richard Egger has completely rebuilt the Corsa. He bashed the sump on last year's Mewla so the engine had to come out, then he thought he'd do the suspension and the gearbox, then he thought he'd strip it and paint it. Still it looks the business again now. Louise Thomas is hoping for a better Mull this year. Last year, the alternator fan burst the oil cooler pipe - so she chucked out the oil cooler! John Morrison was late through Scrutineering, but has Louise Sutherland along on co-driving duties as Ali is in New Zealand on business. She's just as hard on him as Ali was, but has a nicer voice when she's telling him off! Martin Page is back with the MINI but has replaced the 13 quid sensor which let him down last year. Damien Sherry is doing his first Mull as a driver. After years of coming over to watch he's brought his 1600cc Corolla. The Irishman said: "The roads are completely and utterly different to ours - there's no room for sleeping on the job here!"

And the Bear Cubs are back. The group of 12 to 18 year olds have entered their Corsa again with another one being readied in the wings. 17 year old Zak Hancock did his first rally on the Pendragon, so this is his second event. Fortunately for him he has the vastly more experienced Alasdair MacCrone as co-driver. This will be the 16 year old's third rally. Oh, what I would give to be this age again with the keys to a rally car in my pocket. Gaun yersel boys, and it's a great tribute to mentor Steve Davies who keeps this enthusiastic bunch of youngsters going. Just as long as he doesn't give them rally driving lessons though, eh Steve?

And here's a lovely thought to warm up a cold heart on a windswept hillside tonight. Scrutineer and long time Mull stalwart Jack Neal, who sadly passed away just the other week, is doing his first ever Mull tonight. He will be strapped down in the back of Tim Foster's Course Car tonight. Nice one boys. Give them a cheer as they go by.

By the way, look out for 'Bulletin Bill' in the Blue Subaru with flashing lights tonight running ahead of the rally distributing MullMurmurs which will attempt to keep you up to date with all the news and gossip from the 39th Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally. Take care out there, be considerate and stay safe.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet - Friday, 4.00 pm, Tobermory.

P.S. Did you know that Ted Heath was born and raised in Tobermory? Who says MullMurmurs aren't educational as well as informative?