

Wellhullawrerrchinasandhowzyertarmactastebudsanticipatinthisteacakealicious 40th Tour of Mull Rally? Welcome one and all to the 2009 international world centre of rallying, Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. Every year is special over here, but this year is more special than ever, it's the 40th Tour of Mull. Who would ever have thought it way back in 1969, eh? 40 years of rallying on God's gift to tarmac sniffers everywhere. And the icing on the cake, or chocolate on the biscuit so to speak, is that internationally renowned snack maker to the gentry and royalty (as well as the likes of us), Saint Tunnock's of Uddingston is supporting the rally again this year. An especially warm and tasty welcome to the carameliciously delicious baker and purveyor of the world's finest treats.

As usual, the fun and frolics kicked off in the Aros Hall last night where that helluva nice big chap John Fife hosted the annual rally forum. On the panel last night were the MacKinnon twins, the Paton/Cabena twins, John Cope, John MacCrone and Steve Davies. The Hall was packed (standing room only!) and the banter was guid, even the jokes were passable. Our grateful thanks once again to the supplier of the 'flying tee-shirts' and to Peugeot who donated six Scalextric models of Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle's Peugeot 2007 as prizes for the quiz. And our congratulations to Kris and Paul on winning the International Rally Challenge this year. Marvellous, absobluidylutely marvellous.

Apparently someone said to Kris at the Colin McRae Rally last week in Perth that it was a pity he didn't clinch this world title on next month's Rally of Scotland but as wise old sage, Ian Grindrod, said last night: "It's better to take the fight to the continentals and stuff them on their home ground. That way they will take more notice!" I couldn't have put it better and more politely meself.

As for the credit crunch, forget it. Get yourself along to the Aros Hall before it shuts late this afternoon to get your commemorative programmes and buy some rally gear. 2300 Club have done a sterling job once again on the production of this 40th Prog and colourful apparel for the wearing of!

As usual, the Prog has a full entry list, maps of the stages and a timetable to ensure you get to chosen vantage points before the Roads are Closed. Remember, get there early, park up safely and don't move till safe to do so. Drive carefully when moving around and park sensibly when going spectating. Badly parked cars will mean cancelled stages!

And so to the rally. Friday dawned cloudy and cold, bitterly cold, which is not what the Scrutineers were wanting because they were all wearing kilts for a bet. Their wee nuts were frozen – wheelnuts I'm talking about, what do you think I meant?

First car into Scrutineering at Tobermory Distillery this morning was Willie Bonniwell's Albar Subaru. The boys were telling me he was out last night setting up the lights, and each time he was telling them "higher, higher" so if you see a car tonight with spotlights looking for Lancaster bombers in the dark night sky over Mull, that'll be Willie. Neil MacKinnon's Subaru is the same as last year, only blue. It's Kenny McKinstry's own car, so it's the same spec as last year but has a different dashboard display so Neil is having to relearn all the instructions.

According Daniel Harper, Chris is "shaking like a sh*tt*ng dog" ahead of tonight. Last time out on the Jim Clark the MINI disappeared through a hedge. I don't reckon he was nervous, just shivering standing in the draughty distillery yard. John Cope's car was looking well. He broke a driveshaft on the Lindisfarne last month but admitted it was his own fault, giving it a bootful of welly when it was on full lock after a hairpin. Silly boy! James MacGillivray's Ralloy MkII was looking minted as usual. He managed to have a shakedown on the Pendragon last month and finished 8th despite claiming to be taking it easy to ensure that car was in one piece for his home event.

Dougi Hall looked as fit as a butcher's dog at Scroot Palace. He had been cycling the long stage again to raise money for the Bear Cubs. His target was under an hour this year, and he was on target when he turned into the Calgary stretch and struck a headwind. How bad was it? He achieved a top speed of 47 mph last year, this year it



was only 37 mph- but he still took a minute off his time, doing 1 Hr 4m 27 secs. Maybe next year, eh? He's fit for the rally too. He was leading the Pendragon (and beating a WRC car) last month till he got a puncture.

You won't miss John Swiscoe's Lancer. It's got shiny chrome panels along its flanks and bootlid. It's got more bling than a footballer's xmas tree, but Paula says its to check her lippy and her hair before she puts her crash hat on and steps inn the car. Mind you, the car needed a few cosmetics of its own. They re-modelled it on the Jim Clark! Doug Weir was looking remarkably cheerful after rebuilding the engine. He gave co-driver Duncan Brown a shot at the Rockingham Stages and the engine blew after 7 miles. Even so, Duncan was so energised by the experience, he's bought his own rally car now!

Calum Duffy went back to school the other day. He took the Escort up to the primary at Salen and the kids had a ball. They were into everything. It's a good job Calum checked the brake bias knob afterwards, or he might have gone into the clock on Tobermory main street tonight with nothing but rear brakes! Big concern is the weather. If it's wet he reckons he'll lose 5 seconds per stage on both the 'city centre specials' tonight just getting wheelspin up Back Brae – guess where I'll be watching then?

And what of twice winner Andy Knight? In a car that weighs less than 800 kgs and two skinny blokes in it! He reckons the 1400cc Corsa is quicker than the 1600 car he last used in the 90s – and look what he managed with that. In a somewhat different FWD car is John Cressey, he's trying out different back brakes to those in the Harper MINI. Iain 'Ogg' MacKenzie has his eyes on the class and has 'tickled' the wee Peugeot since its last outing at Crail. He says he's got a new top gear for Mull, and his Dad's eyes rolled skywards! 10th overall last year Wayne Sisson is back and hoping to improve – "We've been working on the Notes, especially over the crests!" Stand well back tonight folks. Guy Woodcock was last here in '97 with an Astra, and has brought the original ex-Gwyndaf Evans Ford works Escort Maxi this time, a mean looking machine if ever I saw one. Tony Bardy could spring a surprise this weekend. The 4WD Nissan Sunny scored a win on the North West Stages in February, so he's still a bit rusty, but the potential is there.

And what about James Hoseason's Darrian. Looking at it, you'd never think it was a 10 year old car with a whole dose of events under it's belt. It's a tribute to Metro running Jon Ingram who looks after the car. It's seriously quick too, it's got a 2.5 Millington under the plastic but James says he's only going for a finish on his first visit here. Sensible bloke, eh? But in a Darrian? Nutcase if you ask me. Jimmy Christie was last here in 95 and finished 13th getting the top newcomer award but on his second visit retired on the first stage. That kind of sums up Mull, don't it? The Lancer is still on forest springs but he's put bigger brakes on it. Tristan Pye says his new hatchback Impreza is totally different from his previous model but this is only its first run out on tar. John Rintoul is giving his new EVO9 its first run. Testing it the other night, he said: "It's so smooth and quiet its like driving a taxi." Brother Jim retorted: "He's full of sh*t* isn't he?" Also in a brand new car is Tim 'Timo' Stell and Stevie Brown is using the Fiesta ST which is still for sale. So no heroics tonight, this is a demonstration run only. Yeah, that will be right. He'll be out to beat Dad's times in car 17.

Alan Gardiner has had a hectic time these past few days. He wiped the lights out and the front corner on a fence straining post but the Escort is looking fit an well again today. He'll be back out to set up the lights later – only more carefully this time.

And a special warm (cold?) welcome to the Hinley family. Margaret and Mike contested this rally in a Hillman Imp in 1980, but what they didn't know at the time was Mags was preggers. And they're back this year for the first time since then with Rachael who's now a wee bit older, but does that make her the youngest ever competitor on the Tour? The whole family is marshalling down at Scridain, nice one folks. And welcome to Daniel Croy a visitor from the Czech Republic who runs the Nostalgia Rally Championship in his homeland – Mull's fame has reached some far flung places, eh?

Rod Brereton was up to his old tricks in the Mishnish on Wednesday night. His music quiz raised over 200 quid for the RNLI. Fixed? I should think not, but when asked if he would take 50 quid to swing the results – guess who won? Oh, and by the way, Happy Birthday Alan Cameron. He's running car 75 but he's 60 today, or should be car 60 and he's 75? Only kidding.

That's yer lot for now,
Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Friday, Noon, Tobermory.