

MullMurmurs – Chapter 11 - The Final Instalment

Final Results after SS19 (of 19)

- 1 Neil MacKinnon/Mike Stayte (Subaru Impreza WRC) 2 Hr 21 Mins 53 Secs
- 2 Calum Duffy/Iain Duffy (Ford Escort Mk2) 2h 24m 23s
- 3 John Cope/Tony Cope (Subaru Impreza WRC) 2h 27m 13s
- 4 Paul Kirtley/David Jones (Subaru Impreza WRC) 2h 28m 37s
- 5 Denis Biggerstaff/Graham Thomson (Subaru Impreza) 2h 29m 40s
- 6 Tony Bardy/Reg Smith (Hyundai Accent WRC) 2h 30m 19s
- 7 John Price/Caroline Price (MG Metro 6R4) 2h 31m 14s
- 8 John Swinscoe/Bill Robertson (Mitsubishi Lancer EVO9) 2h 33m 10s
- 9 Cameron MacLean/Alastair Fraser (Ford Escort Mk2) 2hr 34m 34s
- 10 Tristan Pye/Andrew Roughead (Subaru Impreza) 2h 35m 24s

- 12 Mike Storrar/Weazel Currie (Ford Anglia) 2hr 38m 05s – 1st 1600cc
- 28 Chris Woodcock/Heid Woodcock (Proton Satria) 2h 45m 40s – 1st 1400cc

There's an old saying, 'Beware the quiet man'. I never really knew what it meant – I do now. And anyone who witnessed the 37th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull Rally will too.

Neil MacKinnon and Mike Stayte never get excited and don't have much to say. Never in the limelight and never controversial, their motto would appear to be 'Actions speak louder than words'. And so it proved. They had their problems over the weekend, but the McKinsty lads were on the case. Never a word of complaint or criticism from the 'MullMeisters', it was simply taken on board with quiet acceptance.

Mind you I could be wrong. He could be quite different around the house for all I know, kicking the dog and leaving his clothes all over the floor, but there was nothing untidy about his drive into the record books. His 11th Tour victory.

"I enjoyed that, and I enjoyed the car," said Neil, "There was never really a problem with the gearboxes, we could work round it. In fact the third one wasn't a 'new' box, and we knew it wasn't as good as the one we used on Friday night and the other on Saturday afternoon, but as long as I lifted off before changing up, it was fine. Having confidence in the car meant I could lift the pace whenever I needed, which was quite often, with the likes of Callum (Duffy) and John (Cope) behind me, but the suspension was good and so were the Michelin tyres – and so were the McKinsty lads. Aye, this was good."

In the face of such a force, Calum and Iain Duffy were always going to be looking at the tail end of a Subaru, but that didn't stop them trying. It's one of the great 'sanity tests' of life, seeing Calum in a MkII, your eyes see one thing but your brain refuses to absorb it. His speed and commitment are a revelation to behold. "It was certainly the fastest rally I've ever done," he said at the finish.

By darkness on Saturday the Copes were virtually resigned to their fate, third again. "We were pleased with our pace on Friday night," said John, "but the puncture left us always coming from behind – and you don't give them two a chance like that! But what was really good was just how few retirements there were, it was a good fight."

Paul Kirtley was beaming at the finish despite a rock-clattering, track-splashing impact on the long penultimate test and did just enough to keep ahead of Denis Biggerstaff who had his own last minute dramas. A power failure towards the end of the penultimate stage and a puncture before the start of the last one saw him drop down the running order, but he finished. And finally getting to grips with the Hyundai was Tony Bardy, just doing enough over the closing stages to displace John Price for sixth. But was JP annoyed or upset? "It was another tough rally – but I absolutely enjoyed it." And so too, did we who only watched.

But those were the lucky ones. Last year's winner James MacGillivray crashed out of contention on Saturday night, Dougi Hall suffered engine failure and so too did the O'Donnell twins. So gutted were they, neither has yet had the energy or the desire to lift the bonnet to see what gave up. Willie Bonniwell broke a driveshaft and Daniel Harper broke his car. If he hadn't lost a wheel on Friday night who knows where the MINI might have finished!

More over.....

But this rally is not just about the top seeds, everyone who finished are heroes including the John Easson Scholarship winner, Ryan Borthwick: "I didn't really enjoy it on Friday night, it was the first time I had rallied in the dark – but by the end it was good!" And the last I saw of Ryan he was badgering his Dad: "We need something quicker for next year Dad." And what of the Bear Cubs, Heather MacCrone and Sarah Jayne Daly. They finished one place behind Ryan, in 55th place overall, a simply stunning and richly deserved result and one of which every one of the youngsters and teenagers involved in the project should be proud. And for once, Steve Davies has come up with a good idea and got a result out of it – unlike his own exploits! And a special word for 17 year old Drew Sturrock, son of Bulletin Bill, who was co-driving for Jonathan Mounsey. It was only his fourth rally and 1st Mull. He finished, and finished 34th – something his Dad never did on the island!

In the classes, Mike Storrar scored an exceptional 12th place overall in the 1600cc winning Anglia, but is increasingly worried about sourcing parts for his car, apparently the doors are now made of 'unobtainium'. Jim McKenna in the Toyota Starlet was 2nd in class while Donald Brown got third after a fire threatened to engulf the Sunbeam. Chris Woodcock heaved a sigh of relief at the finish not just for winning the 1400 class, but because the Proton can now be returned to its owner in one piece, so the threat of banishment has been lifted. Only 17 seconds behind him at the finish was Alistair Willis in the Nova while Alan McLaughlin was third in the Puma.

Yes, there were incidents but fortunately all are walking wounded, if not physically then certainly in the pocket, and only one casualty was detained overnight Friday, and our best wishes to them all. Lyndon Barton suffered transmission failure, Doug Weir crashed, Mark Jasper disappeared and Mark Durham left his Lancer in an awkward place in Mishnish last night. It's nose was on the tarmac but the tail was on top of the Armco at Calgary.

Paul MacKinnon suffered engine failure (when knocking on the door of the top six!), John Cressey holed a piston, Iain Grubb broke a driveshaft, John Marshall blew a turbo and John Paterson converted a once pristine MkII into a badly collated box of constituent parts.

For the third year in a row, the backdrop to the rally looked like a Tunnock's Caramel Wafer wrapper, red skies and golden rays of sunshine, while the islanders hospitality was as warm and squidgy as a tea cake – so here's a plea to St Tunnock's of Biscuitry – don't ever make a water biscuit!

And here's a thought. In 1993, Neil MacKinnon ran with the number 4 on the door after four years without a result. This year, he had number 4 on the door, after four years without a result. He won then, and won again for the next four years! Ominous or what?

As ever, our thanks go to an increasingly long list of rather special people, to all at Tunnock's, and to all competitors, service crews, marshals and officials, and also to those nice folk at Volkswagen, Bulletin Bill and all those who gave prizes at the Rally forum, Subaru, Ford, Kumho, Dunlop and Mintex. We love you all.

And finally, I couldn't resist this one. Apparently a certain journalist had borrowed a brand spanking new Volkswagen Transporter California camper van from VW's Press office to cover the Tunnock's Tour, although the 'real' object of the exercise was to appraise the vehicle for an article in 'Professional Van & Light Truck' magazine. Late on Friday evening, our hero was parked outside the Salen Hotel, admittedly on a wee bit of a slope, whereupon he stepped out of the vehicle. The electrically powered side door slid quietly shut as the van rocked on its suspension – with the keys sitting on the table inside, and so were his phones! The Polis were unable to offer any help due to the deadlock sophistication of the vehicle, the local garage was busy and every AA and RAC patrol person on the island was out servicing for someone on the rally. So what did our hero do? He smashed a window. As he later explained, he hadn't locked himself out of the van, the van had locked the keys in. First on the scene was Gerry from the Salen Hotel with dustpan and brush in hand – so that our hero could sweep up all the broken glass in his Car Park – Thanks Gerry.

And I couldn't resist this one either. Local man Bill Langford was unable to start the rally when his engine failed, but when he was asked how he was getting on with the Pace Notes, replied: "You'd be as well reading 'Tales of the Unexpected' to me!"

And finally, finally, what a grand night we had on Friday. Warm and gloriously bright. But I know where that came from, somebody upstairs had turned on the fire, put up his feet and switched on the light - all the better to see what we were up to down here. Thanks Brian.

That's yer lot for 2006,
Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Strongarbh, Tobermory, 12 Noon, Sunday