

MullMurmurs – Chapter 1

Wellhullawrerrchinasandhowzyernervesajinglin? Welcome one and all to the carameliciously unique 39th Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally here in the world capital of international rallying, Tobermory. Forget Monaco and Lake Geneva, think Mull and Calgary Bay, besides our midgies will eat theirs for breakfast!

The rally got underway on Wednesday night with Rod Brereton's quiz involving 25 teams at the Mishnish in aid of the Pendleside Hospice on behalf of the late, and well loved, Jack Neal. The auction raised 150 quid for the BTCC weekend prize, a Kumho jacket went for 60 quid and a Renaultsport jacket fetched even more money. In total Rod raised nearly £700. No bad, eh? By the way, Rod would like the winning Team Avenger to make contact with him, he wants the trophy left on the gantry at the Mishnish, that's if Team Avenger hasn't pawned it already.

Last night it was that helluva nice big chap John Fife's turn with the annual Forum in the Aros Hall, solely in the aid of fun and frivolity. Our grateful thanks to Calum Duffy, John Cressey, Ian Grindrod, John Swinscoe, Paul MacKinnon and Louise Sutherland for taking the time out of their pre-rally preps to come and provide meaningful insight/inane drivel (cross out the one which doesn't apply) to the packed house which attended. Naturally there were a few bruises along the way – from the flying tee-shirts. If you don't understand, you weren't there!

There was also a presentation last night to the now retired Sergeant Ian Erskine who has shown great patience, and dare I say it, enthusiasm, for the rally over the years, since he became the chief Polis here in 1986. Sergeant Angie MacDonald is the new chief Polis on the island so take care out there tonight and tomorrow, she's got plenty of support. There's more polis caurs on the island than in an episode of The Bill. The Police are great here every year, but only if you behave yourself. So when out and about exercise care on the narrow roads and park sensibly when going spectating. Badly parked cars will mean cancelled stages!

And if you don't mind, here's another wee intimation. There will be a wee gathering at Brian's bench beside the cairn above Dervaig on Sunday morning at 11.00 am, for the scattering of Jack Neal's ashes. All welcome.

Now, if you've happened to notice the sartorially attired rally officials, you too can avail yourself of some fashionable excesses at the Aros Hall where team support gear and rally programmes will be on sale. This is essential reading as it contains maps and a timetable. Remember, if you want get into the stages you have to be there and parked up safely before the Road Closure Time and stay there till Road Opening Time.

And so to the rally. Friday dawned wet. After four dry Mulls, the clouds looked ominous this morning, but Mull regulars are used to it, whatever happens. First car into Scrutineering at Tobermory Distillery this morning was Neil MacKinnon's McKinstry Subaru. It is the same car as last year but the Team reckons they have sorted out the ECU problem which was causing the overheating problems last year, so the Ol' Man of Mull should start in fine fettle tonight.

John Cope was next through after getting his engine back and fitted on Tuesday of this week. The turbo had blown on the Pendragon, but remember he was leading the CSS Stages on the Isle of Man earlier this year when he put it off 2.5 miles from the Finish. So he should be on the case tonight. Just how fit is he? He's lost a stone and a half, two stones if he leaves his wallet at home, so he's now a lean, mean driving machine!

James MacGillivray was in a rush to get through Scrutineering, he was going straight back to the farm to round up the cows which are due at Oban market this afternoon. Fortunately for him, his Dad is going to take them over, but if you've ever seen his Dad drive the cattle float, maybe James should stand down from rally driving duties! Even so, James is hardly match-fit, his bad back is back and he's on pain killers.



Calum Duffy's Exocet MkII was next through the arch. He went out for a wee shot this morning. "The back was all over the place in the wet," said Calum, "the front was fine but I'm going to need to get softer tyres if it stays wet."

Willie Bonniwell's Subaru was looking better than it did after the McRae. Fred and the boys had done a sterling job repairing the bent bids and straightening the shiny bits. Oddly enough, all the damage was on the driver's side, according to the team: "He ain't that bright!"

Young Paul MacKinnon's N10 was looking well with its jet black highlights on the bright yellow car. John Pye said he painted it 'jet black' for the 'jet' who will drive it tonight. So no pressure then, eh? But remember the youngster was up to 2nd place overall last year before trouble struck.

And here's a sight for sore eyes, Wayne Sisson is back. Ten years ago he competed in an Astra but the lure of Mull was too much so he's back in a Lancer.

There are four German sausage tins in the rally again, three built by Daniel Harper and one customer car. The 'works' cars have benefited from more development since last year and the supercharged 1600cc BMW engines are now developing 265 bhp with 245 lbs/ft torque. They've also got a new gearbox Daniel Harper is driving one, the effervescent John Cressey another and Ian Dawes is in the third. As an aside, John Cresset reckons it never rains on Mull. No. What happens is, it rains 2 miles out to sea and then gets blown horizontally on to the island. I know what he means! There was another surprise. Cressey was using a credit card to squeeze the bubbles out from under his stickers. I didn't know he had one, or maybe it was someone else's.

Doug Weir's MkII was looking well, and four years after building the Browns of Tobermory machine they finally got to the bottom of a recurrent electrical problem. It was a broken wire. But could they find it? They made a new loom for it and tested it at an autocross before bringing it over for this year's event.

Dougi Hall was at it again. Cycling to raise money for charity. Yesterday morning he was out pedalling furiously the 22 miles from Gruline, round Calgary to Dervaig and did it in 1 hr 5 mins 36 secs – 2 mins quicker than last year. His top speed was 47.6 mph on the downhill hairpins and he averaged 20.2 mph. Maybe he should give up the Lancer and do the Tunnock's Tour on his bike!

First timer Wesley Patterson is here. "It's all Calum Duffy's fault," said the Irishman who finished top 2WD and 5th o/a on the Wexford, "he keeps going on about Mull and talked me into it – it's a lot tighter than I thought! They're narrow too with no hedges and no ditches. I'll need to keep it in the middle of the road."

Martin Healer is back for more. He tried ski-ing but got run over by a hoodie on a snowboard and carted off to hospital where they put a metal plate in his broken leg. Now he can't walk past a scrap yard without getting dragged in when they switch on the big magnet. So rallying is safer than ski-ing, that's official.

And fresh back from clog country and cheesy Holland, Paul Kirtley was 8th in the flat country before coming back to the hilly and rocky country. The 99 spec WRC Subaru looks the same as last year but it's a brand 'new' car built for Mull but remember he had a bit of a 'woopsey' on that sudden rain shower last year.

So just how serious is the Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally? Just ask the Rintoul brothers. They're still speaking, but only just. They were out doing their own Notes on the Hill Road the other night and then went back to check them. But every one was wrong, so they had to re-do them. Then they went back a third time, but there was a difference. Jim started on the 1st page this time, not the 2nd page as he did before. Driver John may be small, but he's fiery when fully lit! I'd love to have heard them inside the car after that one.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Friday, Noon, Tobermory.

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?

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 3 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 22m 35s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 23m 02s
- 3 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 24m 01s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 24m 02s
- 5 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 24m 16s
- 6 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 24. 26s
- 7 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 24m 37s
- 8 E O'Donnell/S Proud (Ford Escort MkII) 24m 44s
- 9 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 24m 55s
- 10 Tugs Sherrington/S Bould (Mitsubishi Lancer) 25m 00s

The 39th Tunnock's Tour of Mull is underway – with a vengeance. Top seed Neil MacKinnonn is out. The Subaru's oil temperature soared on the first stage of the night and Neil pulled over till it cooled and then tried to carry on but was eventually forced to stop in the third stage and parked up. So it looks as though he's out.

However, there is another MacKinnon setting the pace. Young Paul looks as though he's had two fastest times out of 3 stages so far. But as for the rest, it's business as usual. Callum Duffy had a big moment in Gribun, but he's having trouble keeping tyres on the Exocet, it just wants to keep lighting them up! John Cope has had a "dreadful start to the rally – I don't know whether it's me or the car!" Paul Kirtley had a massive slide on the third stage to steady him up. He took it cautious on the first stage of the night – especially at the bit where he went off last year!

James MacGillivray is finding the rear end of the Escort too soft but hardened it up for the third test and that was better. Daniel Harper needs some fine tuning, the MINI rear wheels are grounding out on the arches. Tony Bardy has been in 2WD mode since the first stage, it's either a driveshaft or the centre diff but the Nissan is not a 4WD car at the moment. Wesley Patterson is finding the Scottish tarmac a bit of a handful: "that's unreal out there!" Tristan Pye was off on the new tar in the first stage, but lost only about 15 seconds although co-driver Kirsty Riddick was more excited about seeing an otter crossing the road in front of them. She was really chuffed about that, that's her first wild otter sighting. Eddie O'Donnell is OK although John Swinscoe lost a turbo hose and lost power but is still going and Willie Bonniwell is behaving himself, although he still managed to have "a bit of a moment" on the new tar on the Hill Road. Denis Biggerstaff and Dougi Hall both have slow times through the first stage but are still going.

So what's it like out there? It's dry, that's the main thing, but the new tar laid down over recent weeks is proving to be very slippery. However, there is still standing water in places and its damp under the trees.

Please Note: In this and subsequent Bulletins, the times and positions shown are provisional pending confirmation from the organisers. These are field results gathered on the move.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Friday, 10.30 pm, Loch Scridain.



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull*"the best rally in the world"***MullMurmurs – Chapter 4**

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 3 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 22m 35s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 23m 02s
- 3 D Hall/S Clark (Mitsubishi Lancer) 23m 15s
- 4 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 24m 01s
- 5 K Hall/R Millener (Ford Fiesta) 23m 56s
- 6 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 24m 02s
- 7 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 24m 16s
- 8 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 24. 26s
- 9 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 24m 37s
- 10 E O'Donnell/S Proud (Ford Escort MkII) 24m 44s

The 39th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull is serving up a feast of fearsome and fastidious delights, but not everyone is enjoying them. John Marshall had a puncture on the first stage of the night so that set him back, plus the Subaru has all Mark Higgins' settings, and John is no Mark Higgins, apparently! Tommi Graham had a turbo pipe come off and the Lancer barely made it through the 2nd and 3rd tests overboosting all the way. Martin Healer had no intercom on the first one and only half an intercom on the 2nd. From Dervaig onwards Ian Colman had no brakes. A pipe had come off but it was fixed at service. Gribun, with no brakes? No thanks. Billy Bird reckons his new Astra is "the most horrendous thing I've ever driven". John Morrison caught cars on the first two otherwise OK. Chris Tooze punctured on the first one and had to stop, then the jack kept sinking in the mud. After replacing the wheel he jumped in the car and drove off then pulled over when he saw headlights in the mirror – but it wasn't a following car, he was still wearing his head torch. Doh! Giles Brooksbank had an alternator problem at the end of SS1 and did the next two on sidelights. When Chris Woodcock's Lancer gets hot it starts misfiring badly. He put new plugs in at Craignure, so fingers crossed. Full marks to Jim McKenna for observation "it's dark so it is, it's hard to beat the daylight – and Dervaig bridge needs to be widened!" Alan Gardiner lost 40 seconds on the startline of the first stage, when the Marshals had to push Dave Thwaites stricken car off the stage! Poor Dave, he didn't even get it mucky. Gerry Cassidy is suffering fuel starvation in the G3. Paul Miller was still buzzing, he got it into 5th gear in Loch Scridain and he was also in a ditch on the Hill Road but got away with it - this time. Stevie Brown had the Fiesta cut out on him over a yump and lost time when it wouldn't re-start and then had a brake problem over the next two. Ian Woodward knocked his back box off on Scridain but fitted a spare at Craignure before the bizzies noticed!

It looks as though John Cressey is out, he was spotted parked up and Mike Storrar has put the Anglia off. He went straight on instead of going round a corner!

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Friday, Gone midnight, Salen Hotel.



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull

"the best rally in the world"

MullMurmurs – Chapter 5

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 6 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 49m 48s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 50m 09s
- 3 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 52m 36s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 52m 58s
- 5 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 53m 04s
- 6 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 53m 14s
- 7 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 54m 00s
- 8 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 54m 30s
- 9 P Kirtley/D Jones (Subaru Impreza) 54m 32s
- 10 E O'Donnell/S Proud (Ford Escort MkII) 24m 44s

Some crews will go to bed happy and some disconsolate at the end of this first Leg of the 39th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull, but they'll all go to bed well and truly kn*ck*r*d – and there's still two Legs to go.

One man (or should that be 'boy'?) who'll go to bed happy is Paul MacKinnon. He leads Callum Duiffy by 21 seconds after the opening night tests. It hasn't been plain sailing for either of them. Paul lost the power steering over the last two and he had to wrestle the Subaru round the bends while Callum found the drier conditions suited his tyres better but he's got a trace of a misfire appearing at higher revs now.

And then it rained. A quick shower transformed the roads yet again. Paul Kirtley found the Subaru a real handful on slicks and Daniel Harper had a hard landing in Calgary which damaged a front corner suspension. James MacGillivray overshot the big hairpin at Dervaig and later clipped a rock but he thinks he got away with it and is ready for a "big push tomorrow". Tony Barty replaced the broken front driveshaft so the Nissan is now driving through 4 wheels again. Tristan Pye and Kirsty Riddick are continuing their 'Nature Watch' on this Tour, this time they saw a deer. It was stood right in middle of t'road transfixed, so they had to slow up till it bounded off. Dave Miller rounded off his first night's work with "I'm still here, that's good enough for me." Doug Weir got a puncture in Calgary but it was near the finish so he didn't need to stop and Denis Biggerstaff heaved a big sigh of relief at the finish. He had a big 6th gear tank slapper with full lock both ways a few times before he got it sorted. His earlier time loss on the 1st stage was due to two punctures. Denis doesn't do things by half, eh? Billy Bird just looked relieved. The Astra's not handling any better "I'm just a glutton for punishment," he said. John Marshall had to stop and change a puncture in Gribun so that cost him over 3 minutes. Tommy Graham was quite expressive "I've never seen owt like it out there, I can't get to grips at all." Ian Chadwick had a puncture in the wee Peugeot, and it's a new car but it's getting better now. Neil Morgan went swimming at Dervaig when he went off, he's got brake problems, but still going. And Paul Daniel was full of praise for young Kris Hall "he caught me in there like I was standing still, full credit to the lad, you've got to take your hat off to him."

It looks as though Dougi Hall is out. He was spotted parked up facing the wrong way.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Saturday, 2.00 am, Salen Hotel.

P.S. When Gerry Ralston, 'mine host' at the Salen Hotel brought in a tray of sandwiches for the already weary officials, he warmed the heart and the stomach of an Old Jaggy too. Never did a tomato and gammon sannie taste so good!



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull

"the best rally in the world"

MullMurmurs – Chapter 6

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 6 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 49m 48s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 50m 09s
- 3 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 52m 36s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 52m 58s
- 5 K Hall/R Millener (Ford Fiesta) 53m 01s
- 6 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 53m 04s
- 7 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 53m 14s
- 8 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 54m 00s
- 9 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 54m 30s
- 10 P Kirtley/D Jones (Subaru Impreza) 54m 32s
- 11 E O'Donnell/S Proud (Ford Escort MkII) 54m 38s
- 12 T Sherrington/S Bould (Mitsubishi Lancer) 54m 56s

The young guns are taking charge. At the end of the first Leg of the 39th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull Rally, the boys are taking over the old school. Star pupil is 21 year old Paul MacKinnon out there in front, but only 15 seconds clear of Callum Duffy. The other star in the making is Kris Hall lying fifth in a Fiesta. When co-driver Richard Millener was asked what it was like sitting beside the 19 year old, he said: "I'm just hanging on!"

As for their Dads, they are both out. Neil MacKinnon saw engine oil temperatures soaring and each time he pulled over to let it cool, it started boiling again when underway. No choice. Stop. As for Dougi Hall. His Lancer is parked in a ditch. We don't know why, either puncture or shiny tar. And that's the big story on this weeknd's Tunnoch's Tour, grip, or lack of it. It was wet in the run up to the event and although there was little rain overnight, what there was left the roads in treacherous conditions. This is a place fit only for the brave and the foolhardy.

Paul hasn't been without his problems though. Overnight the power steering pump was being replaced while Calum went back to base to check out a misfire. Daniel Harper is mighty pleased with third in the MINI but there is still some fine tuning to be done although team mate John Cressey is out with a broken gearbox. Young Kris Hall is an amazing fifth ahead of a disconsolate John Cope. After 6 stages he still doesn't know whether it's him or the car that is off the pace. Willie Bonniwell is as happy as a schoolkid in a sweet shop and Tristan Pyre would probably go quicker if he would stop wildlife watching (see previous Murmurs). Dave Miller is content to be in the top ten while Paul Kirtley is just working his confidence back up after a massive slide on Gribun where there was no room for a small slide, let alone a massive one!

John MacCrone is leading the 1600 class in his Peugeot from Iain 'Ogg' MacKenzie in the 106 and Irishman Jim McKenna in the Toyota. Matthew Tarbutt tops the 1400 class in his Nova from Mark Constantine in the Corsa and Donald Brown in the Suzuki engined Nova. As for the girls, it looks as though Donna Ingram is leading from Nicola Harper, but as for Louise Thomas, she seems to have disappeared in the dark!

And now for daylight. Whereas carrots are supposed to be good for night vision, here's my tip for daylight – a Tunnoch's Caramel Wafer. Well, it keeps me going. As for the boys, they'd better watch out. The old men will be able to see better in daylight!

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Saturday, 10.30 am, Tobermory.



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull*"the best rally in the world"***MullMurmurs – Chapter 7**

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 9 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 1h 11m 33s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 1h 11m 57s
- 3 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 1h 15m 28s
- 4 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 1h 15m 40s
- 5 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 1h 15m 49s
- 6 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 1h 15m 50s
- 7 K Hall/R Millener (Ford Fiesta) 1h 16m 16s
- 8 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 1h 17m 02s
- 9 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 1h 17m 55s

Who'd have thought it? Sunshine at Dervaig. It's as pretty as a picture here on the 39th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull Rally with the sun sparkling on the shimmering surface of the River Bellart as it flows under the dainty Dervaig bridge. It wasn't so pretty last night when Darren Meadows rolled his Escort into it! Fortunately, he and Jonny Bould were OK, but going no further.

Paul MacKinnon started the afternoon Leg the way he finished off Friday night, in record breaking form, taking 2 seconds out of the Calgary West record on his first run through. The 2nd run was aborted and has caused a delay due to another competitor going off and the car having to be removed by the Rescue crews. Paul looked remarkably calm and composed. "I'm just taking it steady, and happy just to take a couple of seconds out of Calum when I can."

As for Calum, he's slipping back. "I can't keep tyres on this thing. I'm running the hardest I can get and it's still all over the place. You can't slide it or drift it, it just wants to keep going." But if you think he's given up, think again. "I'll get that back tonight - when it's cooler!" James MacGillivray says "We're holding our own" but he was promising a big push tonight. Daniel Harper finished the last stage with a bad misfire "It crawled out on one cylinder. I switched it off and started it up and it was fine - it must be Cressey's wiring!" Kris Hall is going as hard as the little Group N Fiesta will let him but is losing out to the big boys in daylight this afternoon "I'm happy with my times, but I can't go any harder." John Cope was looking slightly happier "I've softened it up more than I have before but it's still a bit too skippity. It's better, but not right. I've caught Hall, now I'm after Bonniwell." As for Willie Bonniwell "The tyres are working better today, it's all about confidence now. It's either that or Kevin – he's got a bigger stick today!"

For all you spectators out there, it sounds as though November the 5th is coming early to Mull this year.

And what about Pye and Riddick? This time it was a pheasant!

Paul Kirtley has retired. The exhaust manifold has blown in Calgary and the excessive underbonnet heat would damage the engine, so he's called it quits, gone back to service and hopes to get it fixed to go for a run out tonight. It also looks as though Ian Colman has retired, the Nissan is off in Calgary and caused a delay in the stage.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Saturday, 2.30 pm, Dervaig

P.S. Any of you service crews lost a battery impact gun? It's been found. Call Gary on 07796 861440 to reclaim it.



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull*"the best rally in the world"***MullMurmurs – Chapter 8**

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 12 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 1h 27m 24s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 1h 27m 49s
- 3 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 1h 32m 01s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 1h 32m 10s
- 5 J Cope/R Fagg (Subaru Impreza) 1h 32m 19s
- 6 D Harper/C Campbell (BMW MINI) 1h 32m 41s
- 7 K Hall/R Millener (Ford Fiesta) 1h 33m 22s
- 8 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 1h 33m 32s
- 9 T Bardy/R Smith (Nissan Sunny GTI-R) 1h 34m 03s
- 10 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 1h 34m 59s

As ever, the 39th Tunnoch's Tour of Mull Rally will be decided on the final Leg tonight. Those who lost out in the dark last night made up for it in the daylight this afternoon, but their time will come later if they don't rise to the challenge.

And looking as though he did this all the time, 'MacKinnon The Younger' is doing the business at the head of the field. But there can be no rest for the rally leader, there is a clear and present danger in his rear view mirror. If Calum's Escort can stop cooking its rear tyres, then we'll be in for a fight tonight. For his part, James MacGillivray was looking as cool as ever earlier this afternoon although Willie Bonniwell took time out of him over the final two tests, but James was still holding off a determined John Cope. These three are waging a private battle of their own, but that damned MINI hasn't given up on a podium placing yet either. Daniel Harper lost out to them earlier but he has all his sparks back now!

Doug Weir is out, the Escort broke its propshaft in Calgary, but not before he took a second out of his son Stevie Brown in the previous stage. Stevie says "He won't let me forget that now and can always say he was quicker before he went out!" Grum Willcock says "I always seem to go backwards in daylight, when the big boys start getting quicker, but I'll get them all back tonight." John Morrison stalled it on the start line of Calgary "Oh, b*gg*r" he said, or words to that effect. John Marshall is going better, no punctures this afternoon and Cameron McLean left his exhaust in Calgary, and left rubber on a Dervaig hairpin when he overshot. After running a Nova for years, Angus Mathieson is finding the switch to an Impreza a bit of a culture shock but revelling in the grip and the power. Jim McKenna says he's taking it easy, he's had two re-shell jobs recently and he's running out of Starlet shells in Ireland. A bolt came out of Paul Daniel's steering rack on Mishnish. "Good job I didn't know at the time or I would have crawled through there" he said. Grant Fleming is looking quite pleased with himself after his Scrutineering day embarrassment "I haven't been as high as this since '75" said the 23rd o/a runner. But then Fleming is under serious pressure. His eventual overall position will determine just how generous his sponsor is to him for the rest of the year, and since that sponsor is Tunnoch's Bakery, he could starve before the year is out if he doesn't do well! Points make prizes as they say, or in this case, points make teacakes. Allan Mackay is getting serious, he's changed the Inters for slicks – and he's just heard it's raining down the south end of the island. John Woodward had cause to be thankful for spectators – when they pushed him out of the shrubbery after a straight-on in Mishnish and Matthew Tarbutt is struggling a bit, the 1400 class front runner is having problems with his carburettors.

And so to the final five tests. Man and machine versus time and distance, but there's a little more to it than that. The magical extra ingredient – Mull itself. The island roads always have a twist in their tale and this year is no exception. 13 miles up the Hill Road and down Glen Bellart. There'll be demons in dark places tonight – remember last year?

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Saturday, 5.30 pm, Tobermory



Tunnock's Tour of Mull

"the best rally in the world"

MullMurmurs – Chapter 9

(Provisional) Leaderboard after 14 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 1h 54m 09s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 1h 54m 49s
- 3 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 2h 00m 17s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 2h 00m 50s

As the 39th Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally enters the closing stages all eyes are on the battle at the front. Both Paul MacKinnon and Calum Duffy broke the record on the first stage of the night, the 22 mile Tuath/Calgary blast up the west coast. Paul was 20 secs under his ol'man's record and Calum was 12 under. By the finish Psaul had no brakes and Calum was struggling for grip even in the near freezing temperatures and his hot rubber.

But it looks as though John Cope's challenge has come to grief at Torloisk. The Subaru slid off on loose gravel across the road. So how slippery is it? James MacGillivray reckons "Mishnish was about the slippiest stage he had ever driven." Willie Bonniwell had a fright at the Salen start when the car wouldn't start and he had 3 minutes to change the plugs. Worse was Daniel Harper, the gear linkage broke on the start of the long one and he lost 2 mins stage fixing it. Tristan Pye smashed his bottoms lights when the Subaru landed nose first after a vicious jump and Kris Hall lost 45 seconds with a front puncture.

Denis Biggerstaff was climbing back up the leaderboard after his double puncture on the first stage, but Ireland's finest is struggling again. The Subaru is fast running out of brake pads due to a problem with the calipers binding on. Eddie O'Donnell has been slipping back this afternoon. He lost power at one stage when the starter motor battery strap snapped and then later started losing gears in his gearbox. As ever, the enterprising Eddie was off home to borrow bits from a relative's gearbox to repair his own to make sure he re-starts tonight. Young John MacCrone nearly threw away his 2nd in 1600 class this afternoon when he slid off on Mishnish, but he survived. Paul Miller was in trouble too, he had lost third gear and just as important, he had lost reverse gear! The box was getting noisier by the mile, but he is determined to carry on as far as it will take him. And 'Fuey the Fireman' is still going despite having to replace the gearbox and the throttle linkage in the Escort he borrowed from Iain Gardiner. Fuey is better known as Ian Noble, the Automotive Technician (you can't call him a mechanic these days) who works in that beacon of industrial activity, MacKay's Garage in Tobermory.

Jaggy met Freddy. No it's not the name of a new horror flick. Freddy Ferodo is the team mascot of Chris Shield running at car 140. It's a wee dug wearing clothes and has three 'minders', Emma, Ann-Marie and Jess who take this wee dug everywhere and wave it at the rally cars and take photos of it in different situations. Mad? Yes, but good fun, and Jaggy asked Freddy for his 'pawtograph' – think about it. Oh, please yourself!

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Saturday, 11.00 pm, Tobermory



Tunnoch's Tour of Mull**MullMurmurs – Chapter 10***"the best rally in the world"*

Results after 17 (of 17 Stages)

- 1 P MacKinnon/D Barritt (Subaru Impreza) 2h 17m 17s
- 2 C Duffy/I Duffy (Ford Escort MkII) 2h 17m 26s
- 3 W Bonniwell/K Rae (Subaru Impreza) 2h 24m 18s
- 4 J MacGillivray/I Frazer (Ford Escort MkII) 2h 25m 18s
- 5 T Pye/K Riddick (Subaru Impreza) 2h 26m 24s
- 6 K Hall/R Millener (Ford Fiesta) 2h 26m 45s
- 7 T Bardy/R Smith (Nissan Sunny GTI-R) 2h 26m 53s
- 8 D Miller/A Bailey (Subaru Impreza) 2h 30m 37s
- 9 T Sherrington/S Bould (Mitsubishi Lancer) 2h 32m 00s
- 10 W Sisson/D Stone (Mitsubishi Lancer) 2h 32m 29s

Did you notice? There were no shooting stars over Mull last night. Nope, they were all at ground level. That was one of the most compelling duels we have seen on this island in many a year. If folk ever ask you what makes the Tunnoch's Tour of Mull 'the best rally in the world', just tell them about last night.

Going into the final Leg of 5 stages, 'MacKinnon The Younger' and Daniel Barritt had 25 seconds in hand over Calum and Iain Duffy. There were 56 miles of stages in that final group. For Calum, that meant less than half a second a mile to make up. No problem, eh? Let battle commence. And what a fight that turned out to be.

MacKinnon's yellow Subaru was like a comet, blazing a path up Loch Tuath and round Calgary Bay. He stopped the clocks 22 seconds sooner than his Dad did 2 years ago. A new record. Then came Calum, the comet scorching its own line over the tarmac. He broke the record too, but by 'only' 14 seconds.

Mishnish Lochs did neither of them any favours. According to James MacGillivray, "that was just about the slippiest stage he had ever driven". No records, but MacKinnon took another 7 seconds out of a disconsolate Duffy. "My tyres are like jelly" said Calum, "I was hoping for more grip when it was colder."

The gap was now 40 seconds with 3 stages to go. Now, sensible folks like you and me might have left it at that, but note the use of the word 'sensible' here. Calum took 5 back from Paul on Loch Scridain. Paul equalled the record on Gribun and took 3 back from Calum. There were now 38 seconds between them and 14 miles of tarmac, which was originally laid down by a drunk, dribbling asphalt out of the back end of a tipper, while driving over what became the Hill Road and down Glen Bellart. That isn't a road, it's wishful thinking.

Surely not? Well those two went at it like a pair of ferocious Scottish midgies wanting a big bite out of the same fat bloke. And then it happened. A patch of mud on the road, locked up brakes, and off. Disaster. It was all over. Maybe. Paul locked the diffs and managed to reverse out, but Calum's lights were only too visible and catching. "That was some trip down the last 10 miles of the Glen, I'll tell you," said Paul, "the bumper was hanging off it, I don't know what else might have been wrong, but I just had to go for it." And go he did.

At the finish, Calum said, "He drove well, you can't take that away from him." So how hard was Calum trying? He pointed to his rear tyres. The whole tread moulding was starting to separate from the tyre casing. You could put your fingers in the gaps.

By comparison, the pace of Willie Bonniwell, James MacGillivray and Tristan Pye was almost sedate in 3rd, 4th and 5th, but for 'drive of the rally', what about young Kris Hall in 6th place? I almost felt sorry for that poor wee Ford Fiesta. Tony Bardy, David Miller, Tugs Sherrington and Wayne Sisson rounded off the top ten but what of the others?



John Cope was in the hunt for top honours till that last mad dash across the island last night, and he too fell victim to a patch of gravel, but unlike MacKinnon, there was no way out. Daniel Harper too was in the hunt for honours, but clipped a rock in Gribun and almost tore the wheel off. Eddie O'Donnell finished the rally with bits of his brother-in-law's gearbox inside his own, but that prompts the question, does his brother in law know? He does now! Dougi Hall parked the Lancer in a ditch and Paul Kirtley blew an exhaust manifold. Denis Biggerstaff had punctures and serious brake problems and John Swinscoe had to stop in stage and change a puncture too.

John Cressey broke a gearbox, although he tried to blame his navigator Stan Quirk, "He stutters a lot for a co-driver!"

In the classes, Iain 'Ogg' MacKenzie's 11th place overall was stunning too for a wee Peugeot 106, but who knows where he might have finished if not for his co-driving Dad "He would have gone quicker – if I had let him!" Second in class B was the equally impressive John MacCrone in 13th place overall and if that is not testament to the value of the Bear Cubs and Steve Davies then I don't know what is. Gaun yersel boys. In the 1400 class, Alan Mclaughlin in the Ford Puma took the honours from Donald Brown in the Suzuki Swift engined Sunbeam.

And so as the 39th Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally draws to a formal close we must once again thank all of the guid fowks of Mull for their patience and hospitality during this annual invasion of nutters, speed freaks and rally fanatics. Our marshals too are wonderful people. Without them there wouldn't be a rally. The Coouncil too, as ever, have been supportive and helpful and thanks too, to John K Philips for the loan of their truck to bring the rally to Mull. As ever, the Polis were efficient and very busy, perhaps too busy at times. And our grateful thanks to, to Tunnock's for their own tastebud tickling, carameliciously scrumptious contributions to the Scottish diet. It's what makes our weather bearable!

And you know what? One of the best bits of the rally? At the rally finish in the early hours of Sunday morning, we all got a Tunnock's Scotch Pie. By Goad it wiz fierce. A hot best-mutton pie is just the thing to set the seal on a perfect event, just don't tell the wife I had a pie. She'll kill me.

Oh, and by the way, don't be fooled for a minute thinking that was a full moon last night. Nope, somebody was up there with a big torch taking an interest in everything we were up to down here. Thanks Brian, from all of us.

Yer Auld Pal, Jaggy Bunnet – Sunday, 12 Noon, Tobermory