

MULLMURMURSMULLMURMURSMULLMURMURS - Chapter 10

Provisional Leaderboard after 18 (of 18) Special Stages:

1	Neil MacKinnon/Mike Stayte (Subaru Impreza)	2Hr 20m 54s
2	John Cope/Tony Cope (Ford Escort Cos)	2.29.59
3	John Cressey/Ian Grindrod (Vauxhall Astra)	2.31.07
4	Robert Davies/Neil Fraser (Mitsubishi Lancer)	2.31.34
5	John Swinscoe/Paula Swinscoe (Ford Escort)	2.32.37
6	Tony Bardy/Reg Smith (Nissan Sunny)	2.33.42
7	Doug Weir/Duncan Brown (Vauxhall Nova)	2.34.25
8	Roger Binyon/Nick Bray (Mitsubishi Lancer)	2.35.00
9	Bob Cowe/John Baird (Mitsubishi Lancer)	2.35.45
10	Stuart McQueen/Alistair Green (Mitsubishi Lancer)	2.36.34

Just how tough was the 32nd Philips Tour of Mull Rally? 12 of the top 20 seeds either didn't make it, or struck serious trouble. Multiply that through an entry of 160 cars and you get some idea of the terrible attraction that this unique event exerts.

Not so the number two seeds Neil MacKinnon and Mike Stayte. In a remarkable display of absolute control and commitment, MacKinnon scored a record 10th victory on the island in the Kenny McKinstry prepared Impreza. Well, apart from one indiscretion, "I had a big 360 plus at Dervaig on the first night. It was so tight I had to drive back up the road and handbrake it - but don't tell the organisers - after that, it just clicked. The GrpA car was easier to drive than last year's GrpN-and-a-bit machine. All I had to do was keep an eye on Duffy."

In second place were John and Tony Cope first time out in their new GrpA Escort. "What an animal," said John (about the car, not his brother), "it's just so quick I couldn't take my hand off the gearstick. I had to drive one-handed just changing up and down all the time with the other."

"I've finished in every position in the top ten on this event except 1st and 7th," said 3rd placed John Cressey and Ian Grindrod. Even more remarkable than their finishing record is the fact that it was achieved without the use of many of the colourful profanities which have punctuated previous attempts at winning this event. "I was 2nd in '86 but I've never been 3rd before. 17th at the end of the first night and 3rd now, and all thanks to the service crew." A sentiment echoed by every other competitor in this event. And whilst on the subject, what about the marshals? Thanks to each and everyone of you. And to the good folks of Mull for putting up with us. Mind you it was all getting a bit fraught for a wee while with Foot & Mouth threatening the event in particular and the sport in general.

But it wasn't all good news. Number 1 seed Calum Duffy delivered his usual dose of fireworks but they fizzled out in Gribun courtesy of a broken oil-cooler and Dougi Hall saw delight turn to despair, oddly enough, also in Gribun, going the other way. Then the new-Dad, James MacGillivray, struck trouble when the engine developed a death rattle. And what about young Steven Clark? Up to 6th and going well, then bang - driveshaft broke. That was just bloody cruel.

Many other top seeds didn't get that far. The O'Donnell twins blew a head gasket on Friday

night and Willie Bonniwell in the 'Blue Bullet' fired himself off the road on Mishnish Lochs. Daniel Harper dropped 11 minutes with an off and then got stuck with 'notional times' in accident-affected stages. Otherwise his 25th o/a placing could have been a hell of a lot higher in the single figures. It's a damn shame that so much effort generated so little reward.

Mark Jasper lost a wheel in the Metro, Rob Barry cowped it and Mark Hudson wrecked it. Others who disappeared like ghosts in the dark included Lyndon Barton, Steve Davies, Martin Healer and George Grieve.

Doug Weir won 1600 class with a sensational run into 7th overall with Anguis Mathieson 2nd in class (13th (o/a) and Mark Durham 3rd (15th). Chris Tooze clinched the 1300 class (21st) ahead of James Wright (30th) and Terry Rooke (33rd). John Cressey was also top in the 2 litre class and also top 2 Wheel Drive runner while Eddie O'Donnell, Willie Bonniwell and Steven Clark were the undoubted stars of the Trophy Rally.

But Mull is not just about results, it's about taking part. Like Donald Brown (79) and his 16 year old rally-daft daughter, Lynsey, co-driving on her first event. Like Stuart Atkinson (99) who will always be able to find his service crew in the busiest of service halts courtesy of Emmannuelle the illuminated, inflatable sheep (honest, it's true). Like Tony Bardy's co-driver Reg whose wife gave him a lucky black cat to make sure he got round in one piece and with the instruction to keep it close at all times - so he sat on it for the duration (good job it wasn't a real one). And like Dave Calvert, competing on his 27th Mull, but breaking a half shaft and retiring - his first non-finish in all those attempts!

And finally, my own personal thanks to 'Bulletin Bill' and Hyundai for the loan of the 'Big Red Bulletin Bus' (Hyundai Trajet) and all those competitors and service crews who have so generously contributed to 'MullMurmurs' over the years. Without you, there would have been no bulletins, all I did was record the facts. And just as the pen is mightier than the sword, so the airwaves will become mightier than the newsheets. Thanks for everything. Our thanks also to Philips - the vital spark!

And finally, finally. As an example of tenacity and an inspiration to us all, our thanks must also go to the 'silent spectator' without whom we would have nothing to report. Next time you pass the Cairn at Dervaig just doff the cap or tug the forelock in acknowledgement. You know something? He really WAS there over the past couple of nights, I could smell the pipe baccy. Thanks Brian.

That's yer lot for now,
Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Sunart View, Tob, 2.00pm Sunday.