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Philips Tour of Mull
THE BEST RALLY IN THE WORLD
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MullMurmurs – Chapter 1

Wellhullawrerrchinasanhowzitgaunanat, on behalf of Philips and 2300 Car Club may I bid you 'ceud mille failte' (that's Gaelic for a hundred thousand welcomes) to the rally of a hundred thousand puddles, better known as the Philips Tour of Mull Rally and even better known as 'the best rally in the world' - and that includes events on the moon because they've got no atmosphere!

Now a couple of messages to the punters. Get yourself a programme. This enlightening piece of colourful paraphernalia is essential for good spectating. It's got maps of where to go, lists of who to see, and times when to be there. On sale at the Aros Hall in Tobermory. 2300 Car Club will also be selling other goodies, but there has been a problem with the embroidered high fashion items, a serious problem, but the girls are taking orders just now and should be available for collection from the Aros Hall on Sunday – failing that, they will be posted out.

Now on to more serious matters. Martin Healer and mechanic Kevin Hughes were involved in a road accident last night. They were parked at the side of the road with Kevin under the bonnet when their stationery car was struck from behind by another vehicle. Martin is in hospital locally but being transferred to Oban while Kevin was airlifted to the Southern General in Glasgow last night. Reports are OK at present so keep your fingers crossed. A bit of better news though, Results Team guru Mark Goossens is back on the island albeit with the aid of walking sticks following last year's fall (while sober!) in which he badly broke both legs. Good to see you back and vertical, Mark!

The 34th Philips Tour of Mull Rally actually got underway last night in the Aros Hall when that helluva nice big chap John Fife hosted the traditional Philips Forum. Guests included last year's winner Daniel Harper and John Cope with John Cressey. The fun and frolics kicked off with the 'flying tee shirt' and 'key-ring scatter' competitions (if you weren't there ask someone who was!) and that went down a treat and then we had an hour of wholesome (and profane and unwholesome) chatter and slugging from the foursome. It was a cracking night by all accounts. And the film was good too – AMTV's production of 'Colin McRae – The Early Years' and there were some gravity defying sequences in that. Friday dawned clear and dry, then grey and wet, then clear and dry, then grey and wet (as ever) as Tobermory Distillery opened its doors for Scrutineering. First there as usual was Chief Scroot Roger Whittaker. Funny thing though, the last time I saw Roger this side of the border was at last month's Park Systems Rally which has its Scrutineering session in Bladnoch Distillery. Spot the common denominator here! Roger, Scrutineering, Distillery. Is there something we should know, does Roger have a problem, who's he kidding when he says the 'AA' badge on his jacket means Automobile Association?

One of the first into Scrutineering was Billy Bird. He reckons this is the last outing for the big Sierra, as he has bought an ex recce car Mitsubishi Lancer. When asked why his exhaust pipe exits underneath the side door of the car he replied: "I couldn't afford the extra bit that sticks out the back."

John Cressey appeared with the Astra (and not Manta as it said in the programme! – oops) with its new engine. According to Cressey it's quick: "Daniel Harper built it and when trying it out back to back with his Lancer, the Astra was quicker in a straight line. Daniel says he's going to re-map it if I start beating him!"

John Swinscoe has deserted the MkII brigade and appeared with his latest acquisition, an awfy smart Mitsubishi Lancer: "I had to sell the Escort. We make Kevlar components for cars and customers were asking what we could do for Lancers." So, a word to the wise dear reader, have look inside Swinny's machine, it's minted. He's also got a new co-driver, wife Paula is expecting their third child – where does he find the time when he's building rally cars?

Calum Duffy's Escort looks the business. Built by Adrian Hargreaves the car's got a John Reid engine and 5 spd Quaife. It's may be not as quick as the EVO he drove three years back but with Duffy at the wheel who knows what can happen.

Neil MacKinnon is back in an Impreza WRC, but not the same car as last year: "It's the same spec," said Neil, "but it's only done 120 miles since a full rebuild." When asked if he had tried the car, he said: "I've spent an hour in it, so I know where the switches are – well, most of them!" Now I'm not supposed to know this, and you didn't hear it from me, but Paul (son of) MacKinnon has been getting some stick from Dad. He was out driving Mike Stayte (Neil's co-driver) round the route checking the notes, driving Mike's car. Guess who burst the sump and had to be towed back?

After nearly 12 months of waiting, Mark Jasper's Metro 6R4 has a brand new engine. This will be its first outing since last year and has also had the gearbox and transmission rebuilt. Robin Hamilton's got a new co-driver this year, Vanessa Rawson standing in for Ian Robson. This will be Vanessa's first Tour and she's desperate to get on with it: "I've been out checking the Notes with Ian Rutherford as Robin has been working on Anda Campbell's Sunbeam all week, but Robin's here for a finish this year – after all he's got precious cargo – me!" referring to the fact that Vanessa is Robin's girlfriend.

And what about this for cheapskate rallying. Jon Fuller and Debby Walter got married recently but they haven't changed the name stickers on the Astra's side windows. As far as the rally goes, they are still single!

Steven Clark is a non-starter. The hot shot 1600 front runner had a major engine failure in the borrowed John Marshall owned Peugeot 206, but he lent his own 'challenge spec' 206 to John Marshall who is chuffed to bits with his decision to opt for a slower machine on his first visit to Mull – at least he'll start!

Well, that's yer lot for now – look out for more MullMurmurs around the route during the rally and check out progress and results on www.2300carclub.org and tune in to Oban FM on 103.3.

Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Tobermory, 1.00 pm