

MullMurmurs – Chapter 2

Scrutineering is almost over and the Scroots will have a hard task deciding who should be awarded the prize for best prepared car - there are some right tasty looking machines out there.

Tristan Pye's Subaru (32) was looking good and some folks reckon Tristan could be in for a result here, he won GrpN on the Jim Clark and finished in the top six overall. Alan Gardiner (46) appeared with his new Escort, only it wasn't: "I've still not finished my own new car so I bought this just to do Mull, and it'll be for sale afterwards." John Marshall (56) came through Scrutineering with the Subaru: "Last year I started at 106 in a 206," said the former Peugeot driver, "and finished 51st, so this will be a bit different." And speaking of nicely prepared cars, Mike Storrar (50) came through with the Toyota 1600 engined Anglia although that last time it saw a tin of polish was when Queen Victoria was on the throne. Lewis Gallagher (28) has a new engine in the Peugeot: "The old one dropped a valve and made mince out of it. The trouble was I was due to go offshore on the Sunday and this happened on the Friday, but between Adrian Hargreaves and Ronald Dunsmore, I'm here this weekend." Did you see the tyres on Paul Darlington's 1969 Saab (107)? They looked like old style Avons but Paul says they are 'soft compound racers', and they'd need to be, that wee Saab has around 140 bhp! Alan Cameron (55) is doing his second Mull Subaru-mounted although he has lots of MkII experience but he didn't have such a good run on the Jim Clark. The car jammed in gear on the startline of a stage and blocked the road till they got a trolley jack to move it out of the way.

But for all 'oddball' machines it's hard to beat Mark Booth's (54) Mini and John Cockburn's Range Rover (99). From the outside the Mini looks quite Mini-ish, but the nose is actually 90mm longer than a standard Mini, for under the bonnet is a 180 bhp Honda V Tec 1600 cc lump mated up to a 5 spd Quaife box and it runs on 15 inch wheels. The car was built by co-driver Geoff Watson who builds and sells these conversions for road use. These guys actually marshalled here for four years before building a car to actually do the rally, so this is their first event in it! But if you think that's special wait till you see John Cockburn's weapon. Remember he appeared with the TomCat last year, a sort of open-air, cutdown version of a Land Rover Defender that had a fight with a demented tin can opener – and lost. Well, our dear old MSA governing body didn't like this machine and told him to build a 'proper' rally car to do 'proper' rallies – and this is the result, the outcome of a tortured mind, addled with too much drink. It's sort of built on a Discovery II Chassis with a Range Rover body grafted on to TomCat suspension, but tucked away at the back of the front bulkhead, almost between the two front seats, is the engine.

And what an engine. It's big enough for the CalMac Ferry. In fact, stick this in the 'Isle of Mull' and we could all water-ski over to the island! It's a 5 litre V8 with 364 bhp and what a glorious noise – albeit subdued due to the constraints of the person who introduced noise limits for rally cars (if I ever meet him I'll tattoo his back-side with my toe-tectors!)

..... more overleaf/

And speaking of unusual machines, howzabout an unusual pairing. Chris Paton (81) is contesting his 34th Philips Tour of Mull and co-driver Dave Cabena is celebrating his 35th. Chris started in a Mini and now has a Nova but has slipped back down the rankings somewhat due to three non finishes on the past 3 events, but his record is 21 finishes from 34 starts. That's pretty damn good considering just how tough this event can be. But his record isn't quite so good as Gareth Frank (135) whose Nova has finished all 55 rallies it has started, that must surely be a world record? This is the Nova's 6th Mull but Gareth put a Suzuki Swift TC in it 5 months back so it's a wee bit quicker now.

Speaking of record breakers, howzabout another one. Jim Brindle (71) is one of a three car Mini team with Duggie Ingram (85) and Donna Ingram (123) but his 6 man RACE service squad is looking after 9 cars on this one rally! I wonder what happens when they all come in to service at the same time? The words 'chickens' and 'headless' come to mind, but like all service crews I'm sure they will cope.

David Johnson (82) has repaired the front of the VW Golf after rattling its nose off a couple of fences on the Jim Clark Rally and he's hoping for a dry event so that he can use some of that 220 bhp. Full-time co-driver John Bennie (101) is looking forward to to-night as for the first time in his 'driving career' he has another 'professional co-driver' alongside in Stan Quirk. So there are two co-drivers in the wee Peugeot and one driver. That should make differences of opinion worth eavesdropping on!

Andrew McGowan (78) has done a couple of single venue tarmac events in his Subaru Legacy, but this is his first 'proper' one and Grum Willcock (95) has brought his Opel Manta over to Mull after previously competing in Barbados, so not much difference there, it's an island too! Carol MacCrone (147) is back for her third Mull in the Mini while Alasdair Ingram (93) has fitted bigger brakes to his Nova than last year – why? And what a cheapskate parent Murdo Morrison must be. His son Stuart is driving age and his Dad sold Stuart's Sunbeam to buy a new dog box for the Escort – and then lets Stuart drive the Escort into Scrutineering. Some reward for his sacrifice, eh? And isn't it great to see Iain 'Fuey' Noble out in Alan Clark's Avenger. Over the years Fuey has worked his socks off in MacKay's garage to keep folk in the rally and here he is doing his first rally since 91 in his Mini. So give him a special cheer to-night.

Well, that's yer lot for now – look out for more MullMurmurs around the route during the rally or read them on the web. Keep up to date with: www.2300club.org and tune in to Oban FM on 103.3.

And just one final word, if you're out and about to-night and over the rally weekend, drive carefully and sensibly, and when parking your car, don't obstruct any others. Drive safe and stay safe!

Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet, Tobermory, 4.30 pm