

MullMurmurs – Chapter 5

Provisional Leaderboard after SS7 (of 19)

1. James MacGillivray/Ian Fraser (Subaru Impreza) – 49 Mins 22 Seconds
2. Eddie O'Donnell Jnr/Eddie O'Donnell Snr. (Ford Escort MkII) – 51m 18s
3. Denis Biggerstaff/Graham Thomson (Subaru Impreza WRC) – 51m 39s
4. Tony Bardy/Reg Smith (Nissan Sunny Gti-R) – 51m 51s
5. John Cope/Tony Cope (Subaru Impreza WRC) – 51m 58s
6. Mark Durham/Andy Mort (Mitsubishi Lancer EVO5) – 52m 01s
7. John Swinscoe/Paula Swinscoe (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9) – 52m 03s
8. Doug Weir/Duncan Brown (Ford Escort MkII) – 52m 16s
9. Pat Johnson/Graham Harper (Subaru Impreza) – 52m 40s
10. Dave Hopwood/aul Grattidge (Ford Escort RS) – 52m 54s

((Please note, this leaderboard is VERY provisional, and covers only those timecards received at the time of printing – it could well change.))

What a night! Forget unpredictable weather, what an unpredictable rally. John Marshall summed it up best when he booked into the Final Control at Dervaig in the early hours: "Are there any previous winners of this rally left in it?" So here's one prediction, there will be a new winner for the 36th Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally on Sunday.

So where do I start? James MacGillivray is the new rally leader following Dave Miller's off in Gribun and the O'Donnell twins are up to second place with Denis Biggerstaff wearing a smile wider than the Irish Sea ... MacGillivray survived a 5th gear scare when a deer jumped out in front of him, O'Donnell is happy, but not tempting fate and Biggerstaff has raised the ride height of the Subaru and it's handling much better now!

Tony Bardy is getting back up to speed having bled the brakes at service ... Willie Bonniwell has put the Escort off in Calgary – and it won't be coming back out without some outside assistance ... Dougi Hall has also gone off in Calgary which is a great pity, you should have seen the times he was setting after his earlier 4 minute loss ... Ashley Field has also departed the fray. As high as fifth overall at one point, the Darrian has gone off in the new stage at Ardtun ... John Swinscoe is bothered by a misfire in the EVO9 ... John Cressey says the MINI is a different car now, he's got the rear suspension sorted a bit better but can't do much about the brakes: "I'll just have to live with them as they are – and not use them!" ... Billy Bird has dropped way down the order to 24th place after stopping to change a punctured tyre in Gribun and then in his haste to jump out the car tore out the intercom ... Martin Healer appeared with a noisy Escort: "That'll be the anti-lag, it's been stuck on for the past three stages and the engine temperature would melt a volcano, and now the centre diff is playing up" ... Doug Weir is dropping back down the order after a superb start to his rally. The Escort has developed a misfire and won't pull over 5000 revs ... Pat Johnson lost the use of his intercom for three stages and Graham Harper was having to shout at him – nothing new there then! ... Keith Hall has sorted out his earlier brake problems by fitting new pads at service and then noticed that the front wheel studs were loose! Once tightened up, order restored ... John Marshall was full of disbelief when he stopped at Dervaig: "I just can't believe what I saw out there to-night – is there a previous winner left in this rally?" ... George MacDonald's not so cheery. He has broken three wheels and suffered one puncture and now the Subaru is running too hot. He got it remapped just before the rally and reckons it's not quite right ... Lyndon Barton got caught up in the aftermath of Ashley Field's accident and dropped some time ... Tim Stell admitted he was hopeless in the first two but is going much better now ... Young Iain Ogg MacKenzie stopped in the first stage with suspected head gasket failure ... Mike Storrar is pleased with his Toyota engined Anglia. After fitting new pistons to the 'elderly' beast he reckons its got better mid range punch ... Alan Gardiner's brand new MkII is going well: "I was slower than before in the first five stages but I was quicker than the old car in that last stage, so I'm getting there", but he's had to disconnect the power steering because there was just no feel to the system, he'll have arms like Arnold Sshotzenriddler, or is it Schitzenstirrer, by the time he's finished ... Cameron MacLean had a misfire over the first two stages then broke a brake pipe in the next but clamped up the broken end with a set of vice grips and carried on (the exuberance and confidence of youth!?) at unabated speed ... Ian

Chadwick is bubbling with enthusiasm over the rally so far despite doing the 2nd stage on 3 cylinders when a spark plug broke but he's just loving it out there ... Rick Fry's co-driver Stephen Thompson lost his place on the Notes then in the last stage the map light failed and he had to dig out the torch then find his place again, but Rick was bubbling too: "I've never been as fast down that last stage in my life before. I was suffering sphincter creep by the end, it was going faster than a dump valve in a turbo" – Thanks for that Rick, I think you could have spared the tender nature of my readers ... Curly Haigh in the Mk1 was going well: "My hair was on fire in there". Mind you it wouldn't have been a big blaze were it to be true, but I think I know what he meant ... Andy Tearle had a big spin in Gribun in the wee Peugeot but wishes he was back in his Chevette. But I've got a thought for Andy, just how big a spin would it have been in the Chevette? ... Chris Woodcock ran out of brakes over Mishnish and then had to stop in the next stage when the bonnet started flapping as the bonnet pins were not properly secured ... Alan Cameron has lost count of the number of times he's been off already – on 7 stages! ... Alex Taylor is fast running out of tyres. He had 3 punctures on Ardtun and then had to fit his spare (which was flat from his latest puncture) to reach the Control at Dervaig ... Grant Fleming and Fergus Loudon are still going with Fergus handing out Tunnock's Caramel Woofers to all and sundry ... and the veterans are still going strong. Chris Paton is on his 35th Tour of Mull and co-driver Dave Cabena is on his 36th – and he doesn't look a day over 40, a few years over forty more like ... and an apology is due to a new member of the Bulletin Team. In addition to the Bulletin Boys, Bill'n'Bob we have to add Drew the Disherouterer who is helping to distribute MullMurmurs around the route.

In the classes, Ian Chadwick leads the 1600s in the Peugeot 106 by 9 seconds from Ian Grubb, these two going at it like rats fighting over a lump of cheese ... Duggie Ingram is leading the 1400cc class in his 'real' Mini by almost a minute from Alan McLaughlin in the Puma ... and Doug Weir is leading the 2 litre class from Dave Hopwood.

Phew! And that's only for starters. It can't get any more exciting tomorrow (Saturday), or can it? Here's a taster – having caught up with Calum Duffy at Dervaig after his bitterly disappointing start to the rally I thought he would have been ready for attacking his wrists with the breadknife, but no, what was concerning him most? "It was bad enough breaking down and stopping so early in the rally but it was worse – it wasn't a good bit to spectate!" There speaks the words of a true enthusiast, but he's coming out on the Trophy Rally tomorrow, and he's not so much caring about stage times as having a bit of fun, now that sounds like a threat!

I'm so excited I won't be able to sleep. Also excited are the two visitors from 'Motorsport News', Jonathan and Matt (who are camping out at Angus Williams' place because there was no room at the Inn or the hotel or the B&B or anywhere cos the island is full) who are up here visiting their first ever Tunnock's Tour. So be nice to them when you see them and ask for lots of good coverage.

That's yer lot for now, Yer auld pal, Jaggy Bunnet,
Dervaig, 3.00 am, Friday night/Saturday morning.