



DOING BATTLE ON TRAIL 666

The mountains are hungry for a broken truck per day, but Jim Leach fights back and is determined that there will be a re-match

A CROSS between Moab, Utah and the Mississippi bayou. Everything an off-road enthusiast could ever want all in one place. Slick rock combined with deep mud on the same trails. Season to taste with rocky technical sections and simmer, while winching for hours on end. What could be better than this?

This epic began on Thursday afternoon in Parry Sound, Ontario where the small group of adventurers made their way north east to the trail head in Ardbeg and then onto the south trail. The trail was technical and rocky at first, like the classic New England trails I cut my teeth on, but as we made our way further in, we discovered some nice slick rock, as good as any you'd find in Moab, Utah.

As the trail got deeper still, we found several steep, rocky sections with the classic 'baby-head' rocks which make driving a Land-Rover like ice-skating on ball bearings. Finally, to round out the first day's 'warm-up' we traversed a mud hole which nearly washed over the bonnet of the trucks (which is no small feat when you consider the height these machines ride at). We made good progress on this trail as

*Above: Jim's 110 battles through the water.
Below: Pat makes a splash.*



our way back to the trail head to set up camp for the evening, rather than camp out on the trail.

Day two started with the first repair of the day. Patrick Findlay had some trouble with his spring mounts (which were completed especially for this trip) coming un-bolted, and the springs were detaching from the upper mounts on several occasions during the first day's outing. A bit of wrenching and some Lock-Tite had it all sorted out for the day ahead.

The first major obstacle of day two was a rather sinister water crossing. Although there was a go-around, Patrick and I decided to cross it after a thorough inspection by our intrepid guide, Ted Matthews and his now legendary hip-waders and cane. Later, on our way to lunch, we ran into a bit of an... inconvenience.

Ted and Patrick had already chosen a spot for lunch; a lovely little ring of sand on the bank of an unassuming stream. The approach bridge was no problem for Ted's Range Rover and Pat's Disco; however when the fully-laden Defender 110 made the trip, it never even got onto the bridge fully before things went really badly

Apparently, the previous month of solid rain had done a number on the bridge abutment and the rear wheel was completely swallowed by the resultant hole just before the bridge deck, leaving the 110 hanging rather precariously on the edge of the bridge. The rotten timbers used to construct the roadway under two of the wheels were not giving us a warm and fuzzy feeling either as we surveyed the damage. The winch was used for the first of many times that day to free the heavy 110 and we did our best to mark the damage to prevent someone else falling into the hole and suffering the same fate as I did.

setting the tone

After a quick bite of lunch, it seemed like the 110 was immediately (once again) strung up with the winch. A particularly nasty hill climb was next on the menu it seemed. While Ted and Patrick had little difficulty navigating the hill, thanks to their lockers, the stock 110 drive train (and the added weight certainly didn't help the situation) just wasn't up to the task. Several riggings were required to finally get the 110 to the top of this long, rocky hill but after all the efforts: the truck