



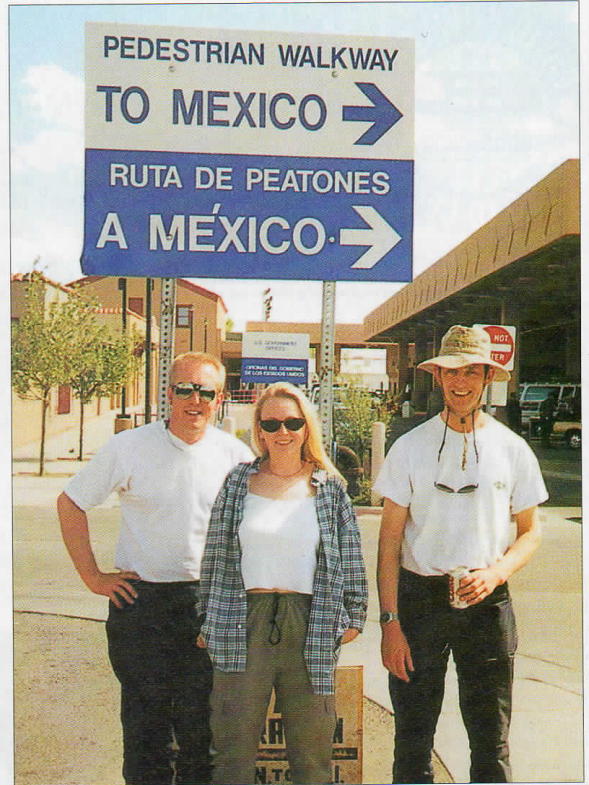
Simon Burn stops in Monument Valley, Arizona, to admire the view



Mud bath for Hans Strebel's Disco



Off-road in Tonto National Forest



Above, Graham Baker (left) with Dave and Natasha Jenden at the Mexican border, Douglas, Arizona

Days Seven and Eight took the trip through Mexican Hat in Utah to Holbrook, Arizona. A local Navajo Indian medicine man in his seventies appeared in his old Series II short wheelbase. It turned out he was the only person for many miles who owned a Land Rover and he took great interest in seeing other vehicles like his own.

The highlight was the trek through Canyon de Chelly. Local Navajo guides had been booked in advance to help the vehicles pick their way through their sacred canyons. Due to heavy rainfall, the water level was three feet deep or more in places and no one had ventured forth for the past few days. The vehicles lined up at the river edge inside the canyon before they surged into the huge expanse of water.

Initially, the water was relatively shallow, but as the convoy continued upriver, the bed began to become uneven. Disaster struck for Alan Palmer in his modified Series IIA pick-up when it dropped into a deep channel and stalled. The current washed the soft sand out from beneath the vehicle, it tipped over to 45 degrees and began to wash downstream. Soon, only the cab remained above water. Alan evacuated the vehicle, a tow strap was quickly secured and the vehicle recovered, together with gallons of water! Many other vehicles struggled in the water as they lost power.

The presence of so much white water brought about the decision to evacuate the area, but not before

disaster had struck another team. Ed and Marissa Bartlett's 1997 Defender 90 Station Wagon dropped into another hole and failed to get out. Once stopped, the vehicle quickly sank into the sand, making it impossible to get out. Brits Dave and Graham came to the rescue in the 101, but as soon as towing commenced against the current, the 90's engine died. No amount of coaxing would get it going again and a tow truck was requested from Phoenix, Arizona - 370 miles away. At 7am the next morning Land Rover Phoenix started work on the 90 and, by 2.30pm, they were on their way back to the expedition.

On Day Nine, one of the groups negotiated a tricky 30-foot drop at an angle of 70 degrees. It required a turn halfway down on a base of loose soil and rocks. Going over the top, they could see nothing but sky, and some quick manoeuvring was required to

prevent falling into a ravine.

By the end of the trek on Day 10, the convoy had travelled about half the distance of this year's Camel Trophy event in South America in 10 days - albeit at a slightly more leisurely pace. They had driven over amazing terrain and through challenging obstacles, but apart from minor off-road damage, the vehicles had been solid, comfortable and totally reliable. The groups had relied heavily on their own expertise, ingenuity and on-board supplies of parts.

Simon Burn was full of admiration in particular for the Series owners, who often drove a 20-hour day and then worked into the early hours to have their vehicles ready for the next day. Age was largely irrelevant, with a 1957 Series I performing off-road just as well as a one-month-old Discovery. As a recovery vehicle, the FC 101 excelled. **LRO**



Left, it's all over and oldest vehicle on the trek - a 1957 Series I - poses alongside a 1998 Discovery on the Mexican border