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Stefan Thiele looks at a Discovery with a glorious past

Above: Happy family: Sebastian's hobby has the support of wife and children

ome people refer to the Camel Trophy as the Olympics of four-wheel driving, and the 1996 event will be remembered as the toughest of them all. Kalimantan -Indonesian Borneo and the



third largest island in the world - was the setting for the 17th Camel Trophy and the last of the traditional "jungle" events, before the Trophy ceased to exist altogether in the year 2000.

Isolated, wild, hostile and

unforgiving, Kalimantan is the land of mud and the ultimate nightmare for any traveller. Dense tropical rainforests, a network of fast flowing rivers and the hot and sticky climate make this possibly one of the most unpleasant places in the world.

In 1896 Dutch explorer Anton Nieuwenhuis was the first to cross the island from west to east. It took him 14 months. The 20 international teams of the Camel Trophy took just 22 days to complete a recordbreaking east to west crossing in their Discoverys, covering a distance of 1850 kilometres.

Team Germany, Eberhard Stettner and Christine Höfer, had fought a superhuman battle against the raging elements and had lived through a hell of continuous technical maladies. After suffering from a broken front axle, a bent driveline, total loss of steering, a frontal crash with the Team Japan Discovery and last not least a rollover. their totally battered Discovery limped across the finish-line 24 hours behind schedule.

Overall winners in this gruesome event were Team Greece; Russia took best of the Special Tasks and the Team Spirit Award went to South Africa. The Germans finished in 17th place in true Camel Trophy style: "Winning is part, taking part is all".

For the poor Discovery however, it was complete disaster. The legendary conquest had not left a single piece of sheetmetal unscathed and the right front wing had been ripped off altogether. All the window-glass on the righthand side was broken and the chassis was bent like the rollercoaster at Billing Aquadrome.



was shipped back to England, and from there it went immediately to Worldwide Brands. Inc in Cologne, the German branch of the company that markets adventure gear under the Camel trademark. WBI had hoped to display the Discovery

at glamorous sales events, but a feasibility study gave it the thumbs down and "CT 30" was left to rot in a rather unglamorous parking lot.

Things were looking grim, when Eberhard got wind of this sad situation in late summer of 1997 and in a quick move bought the rusting remains of Lilly – as CT30 was known in her battling days. A motor mechanic by training, he enlisted the help of his fatherin-law, and they set about rebuilding the Discovery.

After the 1996 event, Eberhard had found a job as a Camel Trophy trainer, and set about the restoration with plenty of motivation. Among other things, he replaced every body panel and both doors on the damaged right-hand side. Lilly began to rise like a Phoenix from the ashes, but only halfway through the process things came to a standstill. Personal goals shifted and Eberhard reluctantly put Lilly up for sale in the summer of 2002 without ever getting a chance to drive her on the road.

Sebastian Fasold of Gersfeld saw the

magazine ad and wasted no time. Working for Land Rover Germany as "Flying Doctor", sorting out vehicle problems that the dealerships cannot handle, he had won the coveted award for best mechanic with Land Rover in 1999. He immediately recognised that this was a tremendous opportunity: here was a chance to buy a true gem, a genuine Camel Trophy Discovery that needed the help of an expert, a person who had a thorough understanding of this vehicle down to the last

bolt and nut. On June 22, a deal was struck and after meticulous preparation, the car went off to the paint shop to receive a fresh coat of Camel Trophy Sandglow, paint code number 361. Sebastian's good connections to Special Vehicles at Solihull, who had transformed the

standard

Eberhard Stettner

production Discoverys into Camel Trophy vehicles, proved of great help. This is how he managed to get hold of some special adaptors for the Safety Devices roll-cage and a host of other small parts. However, his aim was to

keep Lilly as original as possible, exchanging parts only when they were

beyond repair or simply missing. So the roof-rack, chassis and a myriad of mechanical items were restored with painstaking

care for originality. The warped dashboard common on Discoverys of that age - had to be replaced, and then the new one had to be cut

Left: The rollover in Kalimantan

Above: Inside immediately afterwards (Photos: Thomas Grimm)



VIN plate confirms authenticity: SALLIGMF8TA-

503613

78





was in Kalimantan

Above: 300 Tdi has hardly been

New panels (Photos: Sebastian

80

and modified to accept the roll cage tubing which runs through some of the ventilation openings. All carpeting and upholstery was saved and thoroughly cleaned. "The dirt was unbelievable" remembers Sebastian, and traces of reddish Above right: mud remain visible, adding **Full Trophy kit** nicely to the authentic atmosphere inside the cabin.

Clean but not over-restored, Lilly's cabin still radiates the true spirit of adventure and proudly Below right: bears the scars of battle. One such is the piece of moulded foam missing from the passenger's headrest. During the rollover, explains Sebastian.





a journalist sitting in the back was thrown head-first against the front seat, and his teeth took a good bite out of the cushion. Luckily, no one was hurt in the incident.

Early in October 2002 it was time to fire up the 300 Tdi engine that Sebastian had cleaned but otherwise left

Six and a half years after Lilly had finished her ordeal, she jumped into life on the first turn of the key, running smoothly on genuine brownish-looking Kalimantan diesel. Though the tank was contaminated with water and silt, the engine did

have a problem with that

not miss a single beat - a clear indication for Sebastian that the Tdi will run on even the worst of fuel. "Try this with a Td5!" he

In March 2003, with only 7000 kilometres on the original engine, Lilly passed her German TÜV roadworthiness test with flying colours.

There was now light at the end of the tunnel, but a great deal of fine-tuning remains to be done. Some of the original decals are still missing, and they are increasingly hard to find in times when collectors eagerly snatch up everything associated with the Camel Trophy movement.

However, luck helped Sebastian to locate the original remote control for the frontmounted Husky Superwinch. After some research, it was found in the long-forgotten corner of a garage, identifiable by the word "Germany" on the handle which distinguished it from other competitors' units. The owner handed it over free of charge – a noble gesture in times where even the smallest Camel Trophy sticker fetches an ungodly amount of money on Internet auctions.

Having already spent in excess of 500 hours on Lilly, Sebastian is already planning his next challenge. "This one will be easy", he says, pointing at the earthly remains of a muchneglected Series III. Why this one? His answer is simple and straightforward: "Like with all Land Rovers, I simply have to sort its problems out". Fortunately, his wife Gaby and five children do not seem to attitude. Lucky Sebastian!



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