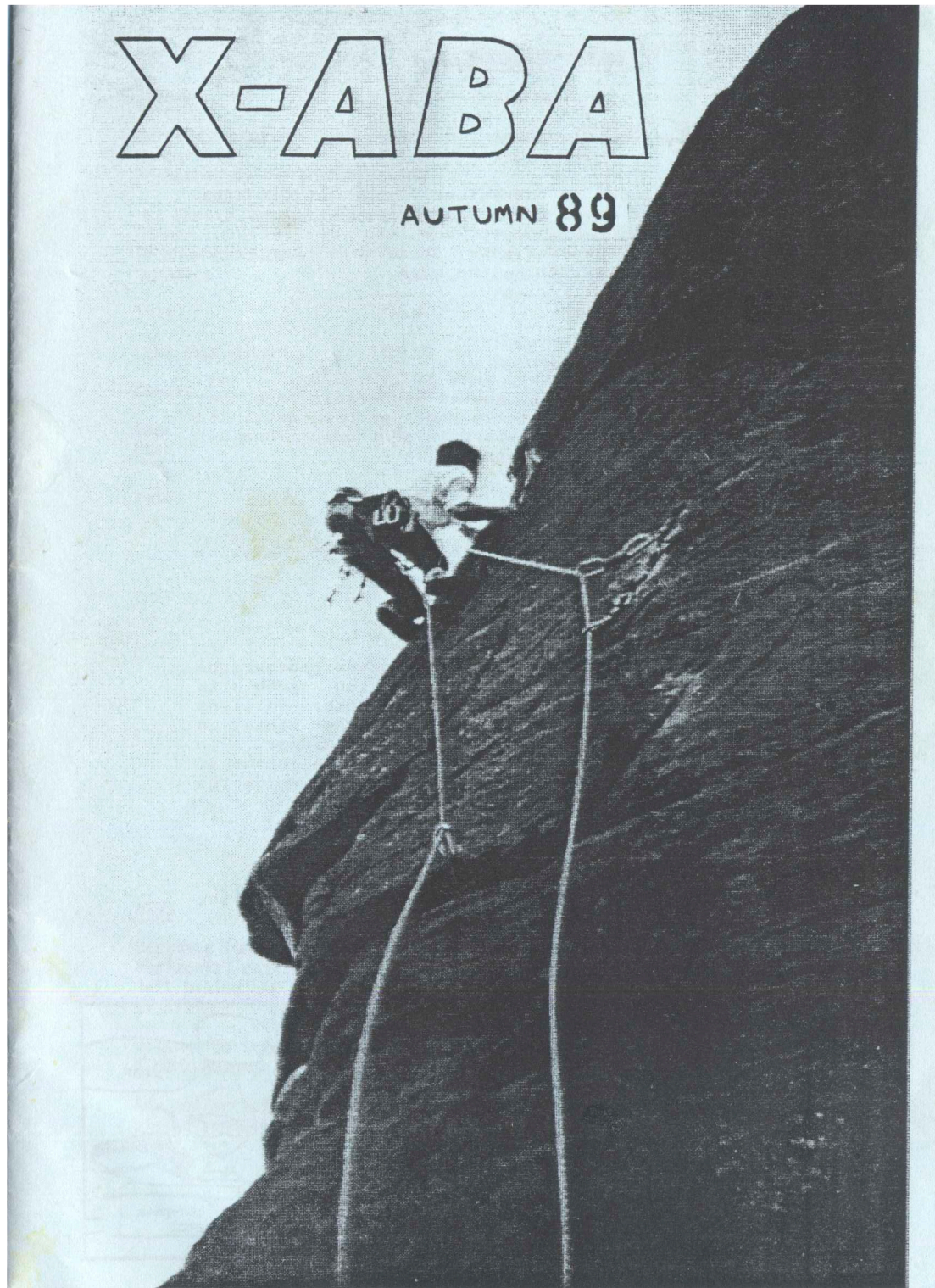


X-ABA

AUTUMN 89





X-ABA NEWSLETTER , AUTUMN 1989

Hello and welcome to the autumn issue of the X-ABA Newsletter. It was saved from being a very slim one by a last minute production by Ant to whom I am very grateful. There are only a few general news items this time as for once things seem well with the Club. These are as follows;

MONEY.

Send Bill your membership fees of £10.00 by 1st Nov. This will entitle you to 12 months membership from that date, but you will not receive your new card until the Spring 1990 edition of the 'letter is sent out. Your old membership card is valid unto that time.

ADDRESSES and PERSONAL DETAILS.

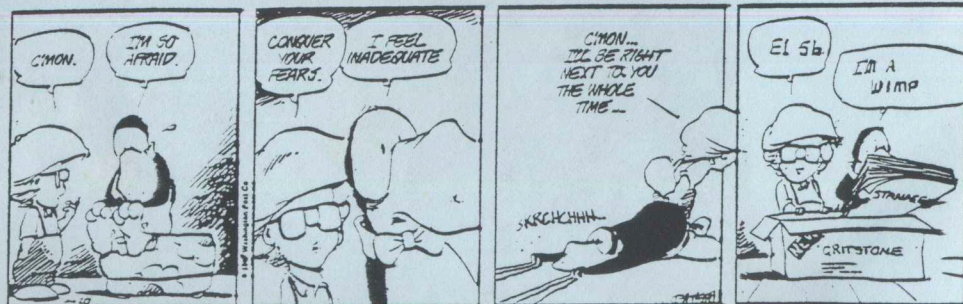
Please send all relevant information to Caroline and NOT TO BILL.

PHOTOGRAPHS.

I have finally found a way to reproduce photographs in what I think is a reasonable way. If you agree with me why not send me some of your snaps for future editions of the 'letter. Correct identification of the route on the front cover may result in a prize at the Dinner. In the event of a tie a correct description of the colour of each rope and the size of the runners will decide the winner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Thank you to Denise for the cartoon of the falling climbers.



X-ABA ACCOUNTS 1988/89

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Carried forward	348.57	Rent	200.00
Membership	775.00	Insurances	110.00
*enhanced by one member paying until 2006		Gas	146.94
Hut Fees	114.50	Dinner	375.75
Dinner	375.75	Postage/Newsletter	82.04
Premium Bond win	100.00	Gwlam	10.88
Donation	5.00	Repairs	144.16
		*new gas light, new chimney	
Total	1718.82		
Less Expenditure	1125.92	Sundries	6.15
		Donation to OVMRO	50.00
Credit	592.90	Total	1125.92
Bank	554.91		
Cash	37.99		
Total	592.90		

Walking to help tour

TWO Neath Valley school teachers are planning a 120-mile Easter stroll to launch an appeal for funds to send more than 20 young rugby players to Australia.

The two teachers are David Richardson and Brian Morgan and for most of their route they will be avoiding main roads and using country tracks.

Said Mr. Richardson: "The school is looking for as much sponsorship as possible and we thought we would start the ball rolling with this sponsored walk."

"Brian has planned the route and we hope to cover around 20 miles each day while another of our colleagues stays ahead of us in the school minibus booking overnight stops."

The teachers from Llangatwg Comprehensive School at Cadoxton plan to set off from Capel Cerrig in North Wales on March 17 and return to the school within six days.

The school are preparing for a rugby tour of Perth in Australia in July and August 1990 and the walk is the first of a number of fund-raising events which are being planned.

NEWS

Bertimus (OMAN) + kiddywink recently visited the hut. Usual story of horizontal rain + mist on Glydders. Drowned sorrows etc. Also kiddywink left behind her earrings (in the hut?) anyone finding them please return to Bill.

Welcome to several new members:- Tavi Murray, Ingrid Matthews, Dean Fenton & Mark Moynagh.

Any new/articles of interest for 25th anniversary newsletter 'souvenir issue' please send to Neil Plant (please note temporary address)

LIFE
IN
THE
FIFTH
LANE

Toronto is hardly the spot I would have chosen to spend two years in Canada, but work is work and when someone offers you a stint in Canada with all expenses paid it would be stupid to refuse! For a mountaineer North America certainly has better than Ontario's offerings, so, removing the chalk-smudged blinkers for a while I decided to take in some of the alternatives during my stay.

Not knowing any like minded souls on arrival in Canada my first moves were to join the York University Outing Club and the local section of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) in order to find expedition partners. At the ACC I met Ian from Bollington (only a stones throw from my house in Padfield if you have a strong arm), small world 'int it! I teamed up with various members of these clubs for occassional forays into the hills, onto the crags and into the lakes.

My first North American 'wilderness experience' was a two week trip to Florida over the Christmas/New Year holiday period. Infact, many Canadians migrate south for the winter, as evidenced by the trail of Molson and Labatts beer bottles lining the highways to Florida. They, however, the Canadians that is and not the bottles, tend to laze about on the beaches developing sarcomatous skins, whilst we four intrepid explorers paddled off into the wide green yonder of the Everglades National Park. At the first mention of this area most people utter the word "Alligators"! Yes, we saw lots but they were into the water and out of sight as soon as they saw us, I guess it was something to do with the fact that we hadn't washed for a week that brought about their hasty retreat. During our week long canoe trip we saw lots of Mangroves (about 80 miles worth) and much wildlife, including just about every shade of Heron as well as Great Egrets, White Ibis, Ospreys, Pelicans, etc..

No sooner back into the Canadian winter, from the deep south with temperatures in the mid-twenties, than I donned my newly aquired cross-country skis and promptly set off into the Ontarian forests only to rapidly discover that falling over was infinitely easier that skiing. It is remarkably difficult to snow plough with two metre long bits of fibreglass strapped to one's feet. For a province that is apparently flat the Ontarian ski trails are remarkably mountainous. However, an Easter weekend trip to the Laurentians (north of Montreal) provided real mountain skiing and the certain knowledge that I should not be representing the U.K. in the biathlon at the next winter Olympics.

Other winter forays included a couple of weekends in the Adirondacks (of Lake Placid Winter Olympic fame) where there are a number of classic ice routes. Yes, I must confess that I couldn't keep away from the ice this year. It sounds as though Scotland was not the place to be this winter! Routes 'bagged' were a steep three pitch grade IV (Multiplication

Gully), a classic grade III on excellent waterfall ice (Roaring Brook Falls) and the 1,000ft North Face of Mount Gothics, grade III. The latter sounds very impressive but is in reality a 1,000ft ice and snow covered slab at an angle of about 40°. A complete lack of belays meant that it was safer to solo, and so we had a very pleasant romp up easy, but smooth and thinly iced slabs and grooves. The consequences of a fall being entirely too obvious ... we decided against a bum-slide descent! On top of Gothics it was cold but in true mountaineering tradition Ian, Jamie and I ate our frozen butties and admired the view in temperatures approaching -20°C. When we descended there was a wind blowing and with the windchill effect it felt considerably colder. I think that day must rate as one of the coldest that I have ever experienced in the mountains.

The last snows of winter having finally melted away and the lakes at last thawed some time in May it was time to turn the attention to local pursuits, such as canoeing and rock climbing. The first canoeing trip of the season was to the Algonquin Provincial Park, some 2-3 hours drive north of Toronto. Four of us set out and four of us returned, but only just! The party consisted of Diethard, Richard, myself and a young guy from Singapore, called Calvin, who had completed his national service in the army there. He told us with great relish about how he had been trained to eat snakes to survive and how he had learned to map read in the dense jungle. During the course of our trip he got lost on one of the wide, well trodden portages, he didn't know his left from his right, on two occasions he very nearly capsized the canoe (luckily not the one I was in) and he was a pyromaniac! Apart from that he was good company and we had great time. There were pairs of Loons on every lake, we had a moose walk right through the campsite and we heard Wolves howling ... what more could one ask for?

And so to rock! There are in fact many crags around here including Buffalo Crag, Rattlesnake Point and Kelso Crag to name but the few that I have sampled. All are limestone and are part of the Niagara Escarpment and outliers of this formation. My first attempts at Rattlesnake Point were dismal failures (that wimpish streak again!), and so after abortive attempts to find something local resembling gritstone or granite I returned with a vengeance to tick off a few classics at Buffalo Crag, nothing harder than 5.7 but it was good to be back on rock in body and spirit.

The local crags are very similar to Symond's Yat in appearance and have good routes ranging from 5.0 to 5.11 and from a few to fifty metres in length. Other not so local crag offerings include a 600ft high gneissic/granitic outcropping of the Canadian Shield rocks at Mazinaw Lake, luckily half of this is under water! This does make getting to the routes a little difficult, hence, the Toronto section of the ACC owns a boat and uses this to ferry people to the climbs and to the nearby hut. I have only sampled the easy routes here, but I am assured that there are excellent climbs at all grades. One major advantage of lake-cliff climbing is that whilst waiting to be ferried to the next objective there is ample opportunity for swimming in the beautiful lake and route spotting ... what could be better on a hot and sticky summer day?

This summer I spent two weeks in the Rockies and on the West Coast with a friend from Vancouver. Andy and I met up near Banff and then headed north via the Icefields Parkway

to Mount Robson Provincial Park. Our plan was to meet up with some of Andy's friends who were a couple of days ahead of us and hopefully camped on the Snow Dome at 10,000ft on Mount Robson (12,970ft). We were to join them for an ascent of the North Face. The walk into Mount Robson and the Robson Glacier via Kinney Lake, The Valley of a Thousand Waterfalls and Berg Lake is spectacular. From the car park the summit of Robson looms 10,000ft above, the proportions seem almost Himalayan. Even after the six hour walk up to Berg Lake the summit is still 7,500ft higher. Berg Lake is a beautiful spot, or it would have been had it not started raining as soon as we got there. From the campsite the view across the iceberg infested lake takes in the Diamond Face and the North Face. Unfortunately two days of rain (snow on the mountain) and thunderstorms put paid to our plans and so we beat a retreat, disappointed but still keen for other adventures. It was some consolation to know that Robson had only been climbed by three parties up until that point in the season, some seasons it gets no ascents. One of the 'successful' parties this year helicoptered in to the Helmet at 10,000ft and climbed the remaining 3000ft of the North Face from there!

Heading south on the Parkway we made Mount Athabasca (11,420ft) our next objective. We chose the best looking route on the mountain, the North Face via the Hourglass (IV). There are harder, unclimbed routes to be had on the mountain but they tend to be in a state of spontaneous regeneration! The Rockies are, in general, not renowned for their solid rock. In order to save a two hour slog in the morning we decided to bivouac at the top of the moraine and found an excellent spot with superb views. Despite the very comfortable bivouac site neither of us got much sleep, so at two a.m. we started brewing and making ready. Leaving the bivouac gear behind to lighten the loads we set off about half an hour later. Peering over the top of the moraine and looking northward we were rewarded with an stupendous display of the Northern Lights. This was the first time I had ever seen these curtains and beams of green light flickering across the night sky, it was a sight that I shall remember for a long time. Looking at the display from time to time helped to take our minds off the slog up the glacier and into the snow bowl at the base of the North Face. That slog took longer than we had expected, a trend that was to become all too common during the rest of the climb.

On reaching the snow bowl we could see that the bergschrund directly below the line of our route was a 100ft wall of ice and that to the right the slope had recently been scoured by a major serac fall leaving a very impressive ice boulder field at the base of the face. To gain the route involved climbing a short steep section of rotten ice on the back wall of the 'schrund. This interesting little problem was soon overcome but not without reaching 'pump factor 8'. Once on the icefield we took a diagonal line and soon realised that the face, at 50 - 55°, was steeper than we had expected and, because of a recent warm spell, it was not névé but hard waterice, at least the belays were good.

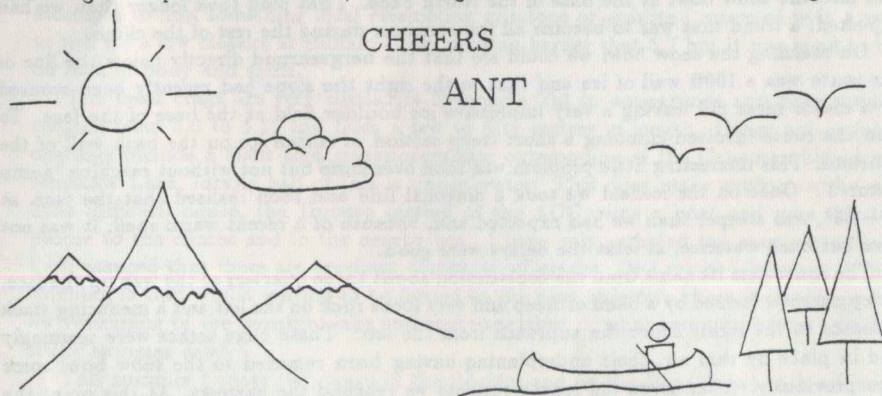
The route gets its name from the constriction about three quarters of the way up the face, an icy narrows formed by a band of steep and very loose rock on the left and a menacing stack of seracs to the right; hence the approach from the left! These huge seracs were seemingly held in place by thin air, their underpinning having been removed to the snow bowl some days previously. After seven full length runouts we reached the narrows. At this point the ice was something like 60°, above it was getting on for 80° and it was Andy's pitch. Hanging

SPOTLIGHT ON ROCK

from two ice screws I watched as Andy slowly worked his way up the steep ice, the pitch was only some 40ft but it must have felt a lot further on the sharp end. As I watched Andy doing his hardest ice climb to date I was all too aware of the delicately poised mass of ice only ten feet from my belay. It was then that I wished I'd belayed lower down and further away from those imposing blocks. However, I needn't have worried because at that point Andy (a little pumped by then) decided that the ice directly above was too steep and lunged across onto the nearest serac, moved 20ft across it and belayed to it! Oh well, in for a penny in for a pound, so up I went, all the while wondering about those seracs It was steep ice, probably as steep as some Scottish grade Vs, but I soon reached Andy and led through as quickly as possible onto the safety of the upper slopes. Three pitches of old icy snow on top of hard ice and we'd made it; seven hours after crossing the 'schrund we were on top in the sunshine, tired but happy. We lazed in the sun and admired the view of the Columbia Icefields and the hoards of tourists below, they'd probably been watching our slow progress and wondered ... so had we!

Wading through the knee deep, wet afternoon snow on the descent it was hard to concentrate, but the words of a song kept coming to mind on the steeper sections "Slip, sliding away ...". Back at the Park Centre we registered our return and made an entry in the logbook. As far as we could see we were only the second party to have done the route up until then in the season. Most people had reached the summit by either the traditional North Face route, a gully through the rock band to the left of the Hourglass, or via the Silverhorn, a beautiful curving snow arête way to the right.

After that we were thwarted by (a) the weather and (b) a severe attack of wimpishness. We did drive along a 45km dirt road to have a look at the Bugaboos ... but that wimpish streak got in the way of any attempt on those magnificently steep granite spires, and so we headed west to Vancouver in search of civilisation, rock climbing on sun the kissed granite slabs at Squamish and Granville Island beer! We bagged a few 5.7s and 5.8s at Squamish, including the superb Diedre at 5.7, and then got down to some serious socialising!

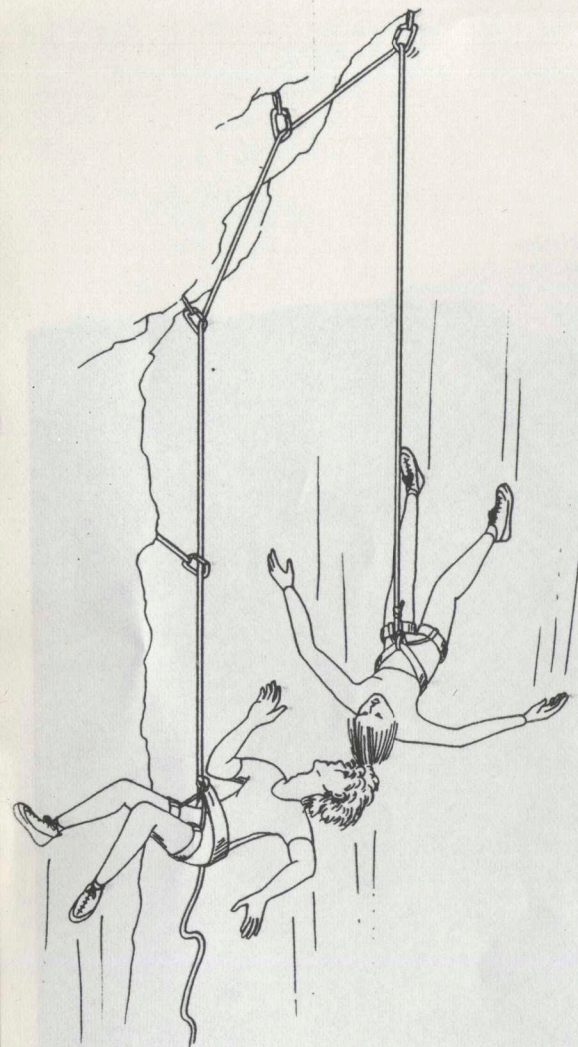


To quote Stumpy on the closing paragraph from this section in the last 'letter', "....Spring should have sprung soon and once again the sun will bathe the crags of these isles". How true he turned out to be - what a summer. So what was it then that made his second statement about how much news we should receive be so wrong? Is it that we are all so modest that we don't want to say how well we are all going or perhaps we've all spent our time sunbathing on the beach. Not even a 25 ascent of Oberon from anyone, 'though I can understand a certain reluctance to confess to that!

However, despite all your best efforts to keep things quiet just one or two people have made themselves a bit conspicuous. It seems we have a new rock athlete rising in our midst, 'though the man seems undecided as to whether or not he enjoys hospitals better than the crags as he has a pretty high attendance record at the first! The culprit young Hooker, (or should I say the Hookers as they are an even team), seemed not to be content with simply severing his flesh on an abortive attempt at Pincushion needing multiple stitches at Portmadog Hospital, and went on to crunch bone on the one and only time I've climbed with him at Chee Dale. My impersonation of Carl Lewis in the 100m sprint was only partially successful as Nigel parted from the rock an unpleasant distance above his only runner. The said runner removed itself from its precarious lodgement anyway when the rope came tight and deposited both of us in a sprawled heap down the bank amongst the nettles. Since I had only fallen off the ground I was not the least concerned and Nigel, who was unable to walk, seemed delighted at the prospect of a few weeks in the Hallamshire at Sheffield. When he is not hospitalised he's been around on Cenotaph Corner, Sirplum, Dream and was also reported to have been seen on Regent Street and soloing E.2.'s at the Roches.

Club Superstar Mark took a laid back approach to his climbing this year after an early warm up on a few E.4.'s and E.5.'s (one of them solo on the second attempt - a top rope rescued our intrepid hero above the 6b crux). Up at the Bowderstone one day he set off up a fairly straight-forward E.4. called Wheels of Fire but unfortunately when he tucked up for the layback the hold snapped off. The acceleration outward from the rock was probably equivalent to the Apollo rocket launch and was certainly enough to lift out his three runners before he completed his graceful 50' arc to the ground. Sadly there was nothing graceful about his landing, the helicopter to hospital and the subsequent 4 months in the Spinal Injuries Unit at the Promenade Hospital in Southport. (ward G). He is still there to date and the thoughts of many of us are with him, and also with Phil Tarplee who suffered a terrible tragedy on Cloggy in June this year.





The only other people I've any real information on are Al and Rich - yes Mr. Lewis. Who's he? (Or should it be what is he!). Al as ever is a bit vague about his routes if you ask him but one thing is for certain - they all involve thuggery to a ridiculous degree as it is the only stuff he can do. After all for anyone as strong as him to fall off Bitterfingers by being pumped obviously can't climb by ability! Sorry Al !!!

Seriously though the pair of them have been getting their heads together on this route and finally got it right. Rumour has it that it wasn't just the knowledge of their success that swelled their heads that day, but a collision of the fast rising Lewis with the fast falling Boyd who, on seeing the poor state of his gear tried to slow his fall. One thing I should mention is his second ascent of an E.6.,6c (flashed), but that is a story best left for him to tell when he finds a pen strong enough not to crumble to fragments in his grasp.

As for myself the start of the year went very well and culminated in ascents of The Axe and Great Wall on Cloggy. After that things fizzled out and interest in climbing went all downhill but since it's raining these days it matters little.

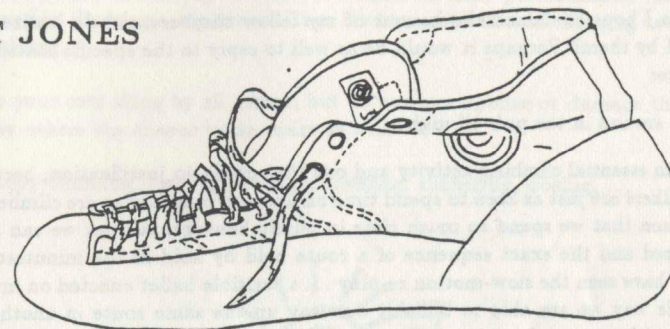
All the other news from the year will be in the next issue provided I get to hear about it.

cheers, Neil

ANOTHER BOOT ... A DIFFERENT VIEW

by

ANT JONES



This is to be a long overdue contribution, on my part, to this most august of climbing journals. Can it be that I have for so long failed to put fingers to keyboard and spout forth pearls of wisdom? No, I flatter myself, the truth is plain ... I have only just learned to spell and do non-joined up typing.

Some time ago, only a matter of weeks before the newsletter deadline, Neil wrote me a begging letter (the cheque is in the post Neil!) and asked if I would be prepared to write something of a reply to an article in the spring issue of this most esteemed of publications ... I suppose one could call it an editorial of sorts, a balanced and completely unbiased subjective view? Let me first quote from the article in question, which refers to the activities and attitudes of climbers, in order to set the scene for what follows.

"... (they) sit around the pub all night, talking about the merits of using chalk, or even that they go out when it's raining? ..."

"... Climbers are active go-getting, highly motivated rock athletes, who strive to reach the limits of their performance. They live for the adrenalin fix and accept the danger. ..."

Before I throw myself into the fray and self-sacrificingly defend the chalk-smearing, spandex clad heroes of the vertical world of rock, let me declare a vested interest. Several months ago a certain member of X-Aba not entirely unconnected with the article in question (who shall remain nameless), came to visit me in Toronto and as a parting gesture left behind a bottle of Scotland's best which was later consumed in the company of one J.M. Bibby Esq. (thanks Mark ... Oops!). Hence, my defence may be somewhat mellowed by the copious quantities of Laphroaig that has been consumed, much to detriment of Neil's original intention in getting me to write this. I must also confess to being rather more of an armchair climber these days, having hardly climbed more than a handful of routes during my time in Canada and then

never anything harder than 5.8 (see article elsewhere in this issue for more details of these exploits).

How can I hope to defend the honour of my fellow climbers and do justice to the deeds perpetrated by them? Perhaps it would be as well to reply to the specific 'criticisms' levelled at us. Hence:

...sit around in the pub all night

This is an essential climbing activity and one that needs no justification, because as far as I can see walkers are just as keen to spend time on licensed premises as are climbers. However, the real reason that we spend so much time in public houses is so that we can ascertain the 'gear' required and the exact sequence of a route hold by hold in the minutest detail. You must surely have seen the slow-motion re-play ... a veritable ballet enacted on invisible holds. Thus, in this way we are able to bullshit our way up the same route in another pub some weeks later without ever having set foot at the base of the crag. What could possibly be safer? (Stumpy with a spark plugless chainsaw? ed.)

...talking about the merits of using chalk

No climber talks about chalk anymore. A chalk-bag is now an essential part of any self-respecting rock athletes equipment and is to be found dangling alongside the nuts on the rack. In any event, just think how much harder the routes would be if the holds were not highlighted in clearly visible white chalk blotches. Why do you think that environmentally friendly coloured chalk never caught on?

...go out when its raining

Never! There is, in this day and age, absolutely no need to climb in the rain, the proliferation of excellent indoor drinking halls has completely curtailed this most unpleasant activity.

...go-getting, highly motivated rock athletes, who strive to reach the limits of their performance

To be honest the only motivated reaching that I have seen any rock athlete do is lunging for the bar in order to get last orders in.

...live for the adrenalin fix and accept the danger

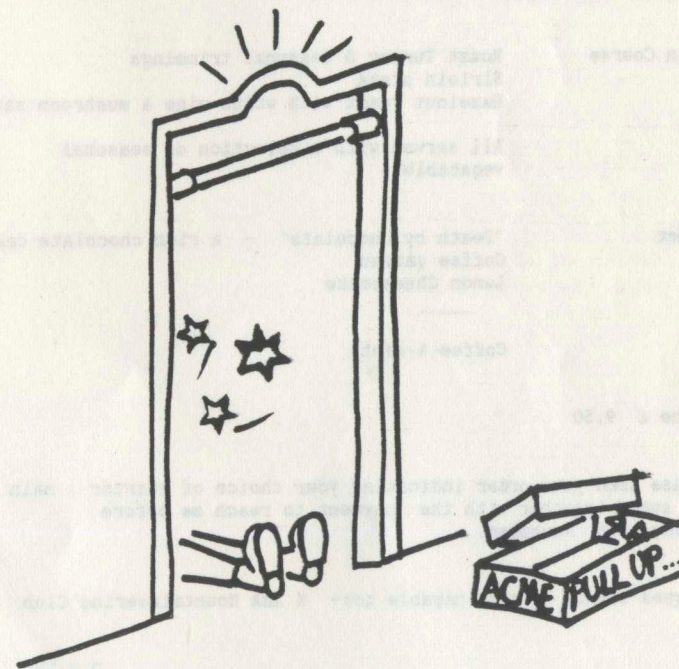
The only kind of fix that many rock tigers get is the kind that illicit undue attention from the boys in blue, and as for accepting danger, well I'm afraid to admit it but most of us are complete and utter wimps when it comes down to it!

When all is said and done, let us not forget that every sport/pastime has its extremist adherents and I venture to suggest that 'walking' is no different in this respect. What is

fell-running if not 'walking' taken to the extreme? Afterall, does it not also require highly motivated athletes striving to reach the limits of their performance? Rock athleticism, as displayed in climbing competitions, is as far from recreational climbing as fell-running is from hill-walking.

Do your own thing by all means, but do not monopolise or damage the environment and so deny others the chance to do theirs as well.

Happy climbing, running, walking, crawling, slithering, dozing, ...



Cheers!

X-ABA DINNER

Saturday 25 November 1989

Cobdens Hotel

7-30 for 8 p.m.

MENU

Starter	Parma Ham & Melon Prawn cocktail Mulligatawny soup
Main Course	Roast Turkey & seasonal trimmings Sirloin steak Hazelnut roast with white wine & mushroom sauce All served with a selection of seasonal vegetables
Sweet	"Death by chocolate" - a rich chocolate cake Coffee gateau Lemon Cheesecake Coffee & mints

Price £ 9.50

Please send your order indicating your choice of starter ; main course and sweet together with the payment to reach me before Friday 17th November.

Cheques should be made payable to:- X ABA Mountaineering Club

D.W.Lee
1, Brookdale
BELMONT
BOLTON
BL7 6BR
0204 81336

Anyone wanting Bed and Breakfast at Cobdens should make their own arrangements mentioning that you are with the X-Aba party to qualify for reduced terms: which are £ 15.00 per person per night.

Cobdens phone No 06904 243

Duffy

