



# Chair's Annual Report

London & South East Area AGM

20th October 2021

This time last year, we were here at the Alpine Club holding our first in person meeting since the outbreak of COVID-19. Twelve months on and this is now our third meeting here and I wish to thank everyone at the Alpine Club, particularly Sherry Macliver and Paige Newman for their warm hospitality. I am delighted that all three meetings have been run in a hybrid format enabling greater access for members to attend. In addition, this year we have also held two online meetings which took place in partnership with our colleagues in the Midlands area.

Given that clubs are such an intrinsic part of the BMC, and indeed it is because of clubs that the BMC exists, it is very fitting that we are in the headquarters of one of the founding clubs. In the London & South East Area we have 80 (28% of all clubs) affiliated clubs and I would like to acknowledge the work carried out by all the volunteer club officers who dedicated hundreds of hours of their time, without whom, clubs would simply not exist. In January, Will Green was co-opted as your Area Clubs Co-Ordinator and if you have been at the previous area meetings this year you will have heard about all the fantastic work Will has done to engage with clubs and find out how the BMC can better support them and their members.

We are very fortunate to have in this area two BMC owned crags, Harrison's Rocks and Stone Farm Rocks. Management and conservation of these crags is carried out by a very dedicated team of volunteers who sit on the Harrison's Rocks Management Group chaired by Adrian Paisey. I wish to thank Adrian as well as Daimon Beail, Mark Brewster, Sarah Cullen, Emma Harrington, Bob Moulton, Michael Phelan and Tim Skinner for all the work they do, much of which goes unseen but without it the future of these very popular crags would be in jeopardy. Following the removal of swaging in September 2021 members of HRMG along with Rob Dyer and Dan Middleton from the BMC office have spent much of the year testing and replacing bolts, work which is still on going.

I also wish to thank Graham Adcock and the Sandstone Volunteers Group for the crucial work they do to protect access to all the other Southern Sandstone crags. Following the introduction of climbing restrictions at Eridge in 2020, thanks to the hard work of this group, in August some climbing restrictions were lifted and a new climbing access agreement between The Sussex Wildlife Trust and the BMC was put in place. I also wish to thank everyone who attended workdays at Harrison's and Stone Farm earlier this year.

In April, Bob Moulton stepped down from HRMG. Bob, who will be familiar to many of you, chaired HRMG from 1997 to 2005, has been a member of the BMC Land and Property Trust since its formation in 2005, sits on the Land Management Group and has written and edited many guidebooks to name a few of his many contributions. His work has truly been transformative for the southeast sandstone outcrops and people who climb them as well as the wider climbing community. In 2021 Bob received the George Band Award. Bob continues to be an active member of the Sandstone community and I wish to thank him, on behalf of the BMC's London & South East Area for the years of service he has given and the countless hours of time he has dedicated to the area.

In Autumn last year, following a break due to COVID, the Youth Climbing Series took place which culminated in November with the national finals. I am delighted to say that in the team results, the London & SE South region came top. Congratulations to all the competitors who took part. A massive thank you to Tanya Sage and the other Area Youth Climbing Series Co-ordinators, without whom the competition would not be able



to take place. Thanks, must also go to all the volunteers including parents, that support the competition days by registering competitors, belaying, and judging.

In May, the area hosted the Junior British Bouldering Championships which took place at Mile End Wall.

I would like to thank Fabrizio Scaglione for the work he does as your hillwalking rep. Fabrizio sits on the hillwalking specialist committee and supports their work in ensuring hillwalking is represented across all parts of the organisation. Last year Fabrizio was interviewed by Niall Grimes for an episode of the *Wild Horizons* podcast series talking about the South Downs Way, do give it a listen if you haven't already.

At present, we have 25,536 members affiliated to the area of which 18,581 are individual members and 6,955 are club members. The total BMC membership currently stands at 82,568. On Facebook we currently have 1,435 followers, putting us in 7<sup>th</sup> place out of the other BMC area pages.

As you will gather, running an area takes a team and I am incredibly grateful to Robert Dufton for everything he has done both as area secretary and as one of your Members' Council reps. It is with great sadness that at this AGM Robert is stepping down as a rep on Members' Council. Robert has given four years of service to council, being a strong advocate for you, the members of the area. In addition, Robert has sat on the Nominations Committee providing his invaluable expertise as the board recruited new members. I am pleased to say that Robert is continuing as area secretary and will continue to sit on the Equity Steering Group, leading the LGBTQ+ sub-group.

Although I have singled out some volunteers, there are hundreds that support the organisation and they all should be recognised for their dedication and support to make the BMC what it is ensuring representing the members is at the heart of it.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the hard work and dedication of the BMC staff and to thank them for everything they have done and continue to do. I would like to thank Tony Ryan in particular for all his work supporting areas.

Finally, I can't end without saying thank you to you, for being members and supporting the BMC. The BMC is only as strong as its members and by supporting the BMC you are ensuring it has a loud voice when it comes to representing your interests whether you are a hill walker, climber (indoor or outdoor!) or mountaineer.

**Chris Stone**

*September 2022*