

BMC Sandstone Open Meeting - 18th May 2014

Present: Tim Skinner, Sarah Cullen, Mick Canning, Malcolm McPherson, Chris Gibson, Graham Adcock, Edwin Jenkins, Martin Walker, Scott Titt, Nigel Gower, Richard Hopkins, Lenny Black, Bob Moulton (Chair)

1 Welcome and Apologies

- a. BM welcomed all to the meeting. He explained that in the interests of finding the best way to publicize future meetings he had added a column to the attendance register to ask how people had heard of the meeting.
- b. Apologies: Chris Tullis, Robin Mazinke, Sarah Goodman, Mike Vetterlein, Emma Harrington, Daimon Beil, Richard Fox, Tim Daniells, Mike Brain, Gwain Theobald, Steve Jackson, Karen Vaughan.

2 Minutes of the 6.10.13 Meeting

Approved for accuracy as far as anyone could remember.

3 Harrison's Rocks

TS reported:

a. Toilet Block and Campsite prior to November

TS reported: The toilets and the campsite were now open, New signs had been put up in the car park, and donations had increased and campsite fees were being collected.

b. Fencing

A contractor was putting up a new fence along most of the western and southern boundaries starting on 27th May.

c. Woodland Plan

TS was arranging for the trees in the next area to be felled in the autumn, after which SVG would be having a work day(s) to do the clearing up. MMcP raised the need to clear the bracken which was growing up and also as to the growth coming from the sycamore stumps and the seedlings that were coming up at an alarming rate. There was also discussion about the need to poison the stumps and to add a dye so that the stumps that had been treated could be identified.

d. Car Park Contract

Chris Tullis was stopping his contract at the end of June. He was going to be away for two months and had been unable to find cover. The question of finding someone to undertake the work would be discussed at the HRMG meeting on the following day.

e. Approach Road

TS was continuing to chase up the Forestry Commission (FC) about the deteriorating state of the road surface and on the need for the FC to repair it.

f. **Cement Work**

SC reported that GT was keen to do this.

g. **The Car Park, Toilet Block and Campsite after November.**

SC reported: the Community Interest Company (CIC) group had submitted an Expression of Interest to the Forestry Commission, as also had the Parish Council. The CIC group had met with the FC to discuss the proposal, and were waiting to hear further from the FC. The FC had expressed their disappointment at the lack of involvement from the BMC. Sport England have said that the group could apply for capital grants.

4 **Stone Farm**

- a. TS reported on the revetment work that had been done by a small group of volunteers (not a full SVG day).
- b. MMcP asked whether we should be doing any coppicing work at Stone Farm. It was agreed that this would be a good idea, not so much to dry out the Rocks as at Harrison's but just as good woodland management practice.

5 **High Rocks**

Nothing to report other than on the successful SVG day.

6 **Bowles**

- a. SC reported on the 50th anniversary celebrations on 7th June, when the Rocks would be very busy.
- b. It was confirmed that Loz Reading does treat the rock - with wood hardener.

7 **Bulls Hollow**

- a. GA reported on a good work day, which had been made easier by the fact that The Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators had already cleared most of the vegetation that had grown up.
- b. A bolt inspection was due this year. GA undertook to arrange for this to be carried during the CC evening meet. **Action GA**

8 **Eridge Green Rocks**

BM reported that he and SJ had held a site meeting with the Sussex Wildlife Trust warden:

- a. The Trust were happy with the way that climbers were behaving at the Rocks and with the number of climbers at the Rocks.
- b. The poor condition of the rock at the top of the buttresses above the car park seemed to have got worse, but there was little that could be done about this other than encourage climbers to use large pieces of carpet.
- c. BM had raised the subject of placing bolts, which had been discussed at the open meeting in May 2013. The warden had advised that a request could be made to consider this to the trustees, but she would be against the idea and she

thought that the trustees would reject the request. The meeting agreed that the matter should not be pursued any further.

9 **Treating worn holds on Sandstone**

BM reported that following discussions at previous meetings there had been email exchanges on the way forward, and he proposed that the work should be done in two different ways:

- a. We recognize that individuals are going to do their own thing, but this will usually be on small areas that they are interested in and it won't usually be for a whole outcrop or even a part of an outcrop. Robin Mazinke, who has been using PVA mixed approx. 50:50 with water for 10 years, has written guidance notes that could be used to ensure best practice.
- b. We need to pay one or more people to continue the systematic approach that Mike Vetterlein used to do using resin (furniture polish). That is: surveying each outcrop and then working along the outcrop to repair all the holds that need to be treated. We have had a number of attempts to do this, which have failed for various reasons. Mick Canning (who did the recent cement work at Harrison's), has undertaken to do ground level work but unfortunately because of his back he couldn't do it off the ground.

CG argued that it was important to get research done and to identify the best treatment for the rock in the long term, and that we should stop people doing their own work. Although the point about the need for research was accepted, it was generally agreed that it was important to restart the systematic work as soon as possible without delay. MW and NG volunteered to help with the work. ST undertook to find out what work was being done on German/Czech sandstone.

Action HRMG, ST

(After the meeting, Mike Vetterlein reported that Mike Eden, a qualified geologist had in fact, researched the different methods, including that used for conservation on Canterbury Cathedral and had concluded that the methods using furniture polish were the best available).

10 **The SVG Website** (www.Sandstonevolunteers.org.uk)

Nothing to report. Arising from the relatively low attendance at the meeting (not helped by the good weather), there was some discussion about the best way to publicize the meeting). It was suggested that SVG may pay to have a premier post on UKC, on which the premium threads occupy the first four posts on the forums latest page on a rotating basis, but a number of those present said that they never looked at those!

11 **The Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust** (www.sdst.org.uk)

GA and SC reported on the book mark that was planned and on the idea of having a charter mark to give to commercial companies who use Sandstone. BM to ask the CC if they would insert it in all copies of the reprinted CC guide. **Action BM**

12 **Any Other Business**

- a. ST reported that the BMC had been contacted by the 'University of East Sussex' (*sic*, probably Sussex or Brighton?), who were laminating copies of the Code of Practice.
- b. There was a request for information as to whether Rockfax were producing a Sandstone guidebook. This was understood to be the case, and it was to be a selected climbs guidebook.

13 **Date of the Next Meeting**
Sunday 12th October in the same venue.