

BMC Sandstone Open Meeting - 17th May 2015

Present: Tim Skinner, Sarah Cullen, Malcolm McPherson, Chris Gibson, Edwin Jenkins, Emma Harrington, Daimon Beail, Steve Jackson, Phil Loasby, Adrian Robins, Frank Shannon, Tim Daniells, Rob Bogue, Mark Hazell, Mick Canning, Mike Bennett, Elizabeth Holley and Bob Moulton (Chair)

1. Welcome and Apologies

BM welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from: Steve Reeves, Graham Adcock, Oliver Hill, Tim Bush, Ian Bell, Chris Tullis and Mike Vetterlein.

2. Minutes of the 5.10.14 Meeting

Approved for accuracy as far as anyone could remember.

3. Harrison's Rocks

a. BM reported that SC had taken over from TS as Chair of HRMG.

b. Access to the top of Isolated Buttress

- i) TS reported that following advice from Ian Nettleton, an engineer/geologist on the BMC's Land Management Group, HRMG's and the LMG's preferred option was to put a bridge across to Isolated Buttress and that no structure should be put in place that put extra weight on the large jammed boulder. However, HRMG was aware that there were a number of local climbers who thought this was the wrong option. Before opening the matter to general discussion BM and TS read out comments from a number of those who had sent their apologies: TB and IB were in favour of a bridge; GA, CT and OH were against, with OH making the proviso that if suitable arrangements were not put in place to ensure that climbers could get off the buttress he would accept a bridge.
- ii) There was a wide-ranging discussion, and the general opinion was against a bridge. Concerns were expressed by a number of people as to the danger of the soloing to and from the top, although only graded 2b it would be a nasty fall. MMcP described the method he had developed for getting onto the buttress: the first person leads with protection from the old rope that is currently hanging down from the bolt above *Boysen's Arête* and then sets up a rope from the bolt above *Crowborough Corner* to the mainland to safeguard the other members of the party. Although this method did mean that there would be increased foot traffic over the large boulder, this would not be as great as putting a structure on it. It was pointed out that the rope used to protect the first person was of unknown provenance, and that as such it should be removed by HRMG because of the liability issues. It was also stated that it would not be safe to put in a bolt as that would have to be in vertical rock. It was suggested that HRMG should be responsible for putting up and inspecting/maintaining a new piece of rope, which could be protected by a sheath. The option of allowing a one-off exception to the no-abseiling rule by allowing abseiling down to the large boulder, was

strongly opposed by some because of the danger of this encouraging abseiling elsewhere.

- iii) Given that HRMG's main reason (shared by TB and IB) for preferring a bridge was because of concerns about people lowering off, HRMG members agreed not to proceed with plans to build a bridge during the summer and to review the situation at the next open meeting. All climbers were asked to challenge anyone that they see lowering-off/abseiling and to report any such instances to a member of HRMG.

c. Cement Work

No progress had been made on doing further cement work, but there had been an incident, witnessed by CG, when some cement had fallen from the top of *Spider Wall* and had hit a boy on the leg. As a result of this the BMC had asked that local climbers carry out a survey of all the existing cement at Harrison's. TS and BM will be doing an initial visual survey, which should establish how many cemented-in grooves there are, and then how much work will be required to carry out a full survey, for which volunteers would be sought. FS, who had put some of the cement in, recommended hitting the cement with a hammer to identify and break off loose cement, and BM replied that this would be part of the full survey. The BMC were also contacting University departments with a view to setting up a project to examine the best practice

d. Anchors (Bolts)

TS reported on the anchors that he and DB had put in and on the problems with the old approx 35 year old anchors, two of which had pulled out and others which were in the wrong place. Some of the new anchors could be twisted very slightly although they were considered to be safe. The problems with both these and the mess left by the old anchors that had pulled out would be included in the project described in c) above. It was suggested that the anchors used at Bowles might be better than those used at Harrison's and also may cost more. TS undertook to discuss this with Bowles. **Action TS**

e. Resin Work

This had restarted and was being coordinated by SJ, who had been fully briefed by MV. SJ had done some work at Harrison's (e.g. Bow Window), and he will be contacting the other people who had volunteered to do this work, which also needed to be done at Stone Farm. **Action SJ**

f. Woodland Management

The next area to be cut in the autumn was the area between North Boulder and Eyelet. The need to control the Himalayan Balsam was discussed: HRMG would be arranging for the main area where this was growing to be trimmed, and any plants that are missed to be pulled out by hand when the ground is wet. **Action SC.**

g. Car Park

SC reported on the new arrangements. Pay-and-Display machines are to be installed in the near future, and until then both parking and camping will be free. The access road is being resurfaced during the next week.

h. Signs

- i. BM reported on the consideration being given by HRMG on updating the signs at the entrances to the Rocks with an emphasis on getting people to read them. To be discussed further with SJ. **Action HRMG**

- j. CG suggested the small signs should be put up at, say, the three most popular areas with just the two or three most important messages on them. Views were expressed for and against using pedestal stands for such notices as at Bowles. **Action HRMG**

4. High Rocks

GA, AP, OH and BM had met with the owner. The new arrangements for access are as follows:

- i) No climbing will be allowed within a designated area (centred on the *Nemesis* area) while wedding parties are using the Rocks.
- ii) Season tickets are being replaced by membership, which will cost £50 p.a. Members still have to sign in.
- iii) Non-members now have to sign in 24 hrs in advance and will be charged £10 for a day's climbing.
- iv) Anyone signing in with a member will be charged £7.50 per day
- v) Both those signing in with a member and non-members will be charged £5 for climbing after 5:30 pm. Non-members still have to book.

Details will be put on the usual websites and will be emailed out to GA's distribution list. **Action BM et al**

5. Bowles

Nothing to report.

6. Bulls Hollow

Nothing to report although it may be decided to have an SVG workday at the next meeting.

7. Eridge Green Rocks

The question of putting anchors in was raised. BM replied that this had been discussed at the 18.5.14 meeting and the decision had been made then not to pursue the matter with the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

8. Stone Farm

BM reported on the tree work that had been co-ordinated by MMcP. All but a handful of the works planned had been completed. It was agreed that it was not a

priority for this work to be done in the coming winter, but maybe the following year. BM thanked MMcP for his work.

9. **The SVG Website** (<http://www.sandstonevolunteers.org.uk/>)
SJ had nothing further to report.

10. **The Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust** (<http://www.sdst.org.uk/>)
TS and SC reported:

- a. A barbeque is to be held at The Hunstman to raise money for the Trust.
- b. The Trust had set itself a deadline for implementing its Charter Mark ? by October 2015.
- c. The Trust is planning is to implement gift aid

11. Any Other Business

- a. DB showed the meeting an Eco-Ball, which he had discovered. It could be used instead of chalk for bouldering (but not as yet for longer climbs because of the size of the ball) but it left no marks on the rock. DB would be following this up with the BMC.
- b. EH outlined her plans (as BMC Regional Development Officer - London and South East England), which included: putting together a strategic plan for the region, reinvigorating the L&SE Area Committee, holding a Southern Sandstone Climbing Festival and local area meetings for clubs north and south of the Thames. She was asking for views on these ideas and seeking volunteers to help.

12. Date of the Next Meeting

Sunday 18th October 2015 in the same venue. Start time to be advised.

Bob Moulton 27/5/15