

BMC Sandstone Open Meeting – Sunday 18th October – 6.30pm at Bowles

Present: Rob Dyer, Tim Skinner, Karen Vaughan, Mick Canning, Toby Hamer, Torie Morley, Rob Naylor, Oliver Hill, Lisa Payne, Rik Payne, Martin Walker, Mark Brewster, Steve Jackson, Daimon Beail, Emma Harrington, Adrian Paisey, Paul Robertson, Malcolm McPherson, Chris Gibson, Robin Mazinke, Sarah Goodman, Sarah Cullen (Chair)

1. Welcolme and Apologies

SC welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Bob Moulton, Graham Adcock and Frank Shannon.

2. Minutes of 17.10.14 Meeting

Approved for accuracy as far as anyone could remember.

3. Harrison's Rocks

a) Access to the Isolated Buttress

SC updated the meeting on the current situation of access to the Isolated Buttress. Climbers have put up their own rope for access and although people were lowering off and abseiling initially, there have not been any issues since signs have been put up asking people not to. SC said that the HRMG's preferred choice for the block would be to continue to keep the access arrangements as they are, preferably with a regularly inspected official rope in place, and to continue to monitor this accordingly. RD reported that he had visited Harrison's that afternoon and decided that the rope access was something that the BMC are unable to accept from a liability point of view. He said that if climbers want to access the block at their own risk, that's no problem but they should remove any ropes they use to do so. RD said that the BMC will support what local people want. It was agreed that signage would be required to state that the BMC are not providing access and that any roped used to access the block would have to come down at the end of the day. MM suggested putting in a via ferrata cable (cost £110). RD said that there could be problems with people not having proper lanyards and also damage to the rock. A show of hands clearly demonstrated that those in favour of allowing climbers to access the block with their own methods at their own risk was agreed by 100% of the attendees.

b) Cement Work

SC reported on an MSc project that Ian Nettleton has organised for us with a professor at Portsmouth University, looking at cement bonding; and told the meeting about Tim and Bob's recent survey. TS said that a lot of the cement is behind the bolts and they removed all the loose bits and recorded everything. RD and Dan Middleton are writing a method statement for future surveying. Frank Shannon has done a couple of urgent repairs but other

cement work is on hold until the cement university project is complete. A lot of the gaps we won't need to worry about replacing as it is re-weathering and a lot of it is behind the bolts. Some areas may need to be replaced if there are big rope grooves.

Resin Work

Steve Jackson and Martin Walker have carried out resin work and they reported that this is now mostly all done; they were thanked for their work and thanks were passed on from Bob Moulton. They reported that they had not done Isolated Buttress yet and a couple of other routes and that this will probably now wait until next year when the weather is better. They will also start looking at climbs that need further treatment.

Bolts

SC reported that several sets of new bolts have gone in and the front bolts on most of them have become loose. Data from MSc students will help to resolve issues with this.

c) Woodland Management plan year 4

- i) Compartment D is due to be cut this year – not a great deal to be done in that area. MM asked for a tree to be cut down near elementary which is in the 10 metre corridor. CG said that we should use volunteers who are currently keen and TS pointed out that other crags need work done if there's not too much to do at Harrison's.
- ii) MM reported that Jonathan, Forest Agent was at the rocks recently and they discussed the Himalayan balsam problem; he suggested that Phil should continue to strim this each year. He talked about the Rural Payment Agency for grants and noted that we need to re-register to be eligible for grant funding; he said that we need to re-do the registration and that this needs to be done by Bob Moulton as he signed it originally. He suggested that we could plant some shrub trees, TS said that the rhododendrons could be sorted out and also we may get some help with the Himalayan Balsam. Phil did a great job strimming but SC asked the group to pull it out if they see it as lots has popped up since. **Action BM**
- ii) SC reported that the steps in the two gullies need replacing and also by the Root Routes and that Graham Adcock has Croydon Mountaineering Club coming to help with this in November. **Action GA**

d) Car Park Toilet Block and Campsite

SC reported that the Forestry Commission are doing a great job. The BMC have offered to pay for a permanent BBQ area that the Forestry Commission have proposed to put in near the fire area at the bottom of the car park.

4. High Rocks

RM reported that climbers can get new season membership tickets now - £50 for the year, £10 for the day, £6 after 5 o'clock - £6 for the general public. OH reported that when he went, he saw only 12 members in the book and that very few members are using it at all. Bouldering is only allowed a couple of days a week. RM reported that hardly anyone was climbing there and that the routes are getting quite dirty. DB reported that the situation is very delicate at High Rocks and that boulderers should be politely reminded of the times at which they can climb there, else there is fear climbing will be banned altogether. RD said that Cappalazzi had told him that he doesn't mind climbers as long as they are not being any trouble or being problematic for him. It was generally thought that if we keep a low profile and obey the rules that climbing will be o.k. at High Rocks.

5. Bowles

There was nothing to report on Bowles Rocks.

6. Bulls Hollow

RM reported that it could do with some cutting soon. MC reported that needles(drugs) have become a bit of a problem at Bulls Hollow. **Action GA**

7. Eridge

There was nothing reported on Eridge Rocks.

8. Stone Farm

There were reports of graffiti at Stone Farm at the far end of the rocks - pink spray paint on the rocks and trees. TS said that it does tend to fade quite quickly, so hopefully won't be too much of a problem; he said it's better to leave it alone than to try to remove it as this can cause more damage.

9. Other Craggs

a) High Rocks Continuation

SC read out an extract from an email from Bob Moulton which said:- "One minor point that might be worth raising that occurred to me during the 8 outcrop walk is that High Continuation is now so overgrown that it might be worth getting Rob Dyer to see if he can negotiate an access agreement with the Woodland Trust along with a commitment for it to do some woodland management (we

could provide some volunteer labour), As it stands there's a complete ban on climbing there which they never enforce, so things couldn't get much worse, and it would be interesting to see what the meeting thinks."

The group said that it's not climbed much, due to its state, but that there are some good routes if it was cleared. RD said that he'd get in touch with Bob regarding this. **Action RD**

10. SVG website

Steve Jackson said that there is nothing new to report on the SVG website at present.

11. SDST

SC said that the Charter Mark is now due to be launched in January and RD said that the BMC will happily endorse this when the time comes.

12. AOB – Group use

i) CG said that concentrated use on climbs causes erosion. Use carpet mats, wipe shoes properly and static rope should be the only rope used on sandstone. Instructors should care enough to use the right sort of rope and rope protectors. MM asked RD if there are problems at other crags and he said that there were. MM asked how the BMC deal with this. RD said that you can't police it all the time but there is a movement called the Group Use Working Group – the BMC are getting close to publishing guidance Group Use Advice for Climbers, Walkers and Walking Challenge Events. CG said that he would like to see the BMC influencing syllabuses for SPA and Southern Sandstone Award. RP said that SPA is a national qualification so could be tricky. MC pointed out that Sandstone Supervisors award insist on use of static ropes. RD said he would look into what he can do and speak to Andy Newton. CG would like to see a ban on dynamic rope on Sandstone. **Action RD**

ii) **BMC London and South East Chair**

Rik Payne – chair of BMC London and South East said that the next meeting is on 26th November in London. John Griffiths – alpinist/photographer will be talking. He is trying to increase numbers at these meetings. He said that Liz Holley was no longer Regional Development Officer (RDO) for the area and that these posts will be now based in Manchester. It was said that the largest proportion of BMC members live in this area (34%) and that it is disappointing that we don't have an RDO. RP said he will go back to the BMC and say that we need more representation in this area. This will be talked about at the meeting on the 26th. MM requested that they have meetings, perhaps every other, down here. Rick said that it had been tried in the past and hadn't worked. MM

disagreed that this was the case. MM thanked him for coming.

Action RP

iii) **Code of Conduct**

SC reported that the code of conduct will be reprinted with minimal changes in the near future. In particular the HRMG had agreed that drawing attention to the grade differentiation between indoor and outdoor sandstone climbing was more important than the current request to not 'work' routes.

RP suggested keeping Mountain Training informed of Code of Conduct to go out to instructors.

iii) **Signs** – TS said that we will have a new one by the beech tree at the South End of the rocks and that we need to change the contact details to the BMC.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on 15th May 2016 at the same venue. Start time to be advised.