

BMC Southern Sandstone Open Meeting - 21st May 2017

Present: Sarah Cullen, Adrian Paisey (co-Chair), Emma Harrington, Daimon Beail, Frank Shannon, Carolina SR, Karen Vaughan, Tim Skinner, Neil Atkinson, Mark Brewster, Graham Chapman, Oliver Hill, Steve Jackson, Malcolm McPherson, Rob Naylor, Daniel Davies, Matthew Warner, Andy Cantrell, Rab Evans, Baptiste W, and Bob Moulton (co-Chair)

1. Welcome and Apologies

BM welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from: Mike Vetterlein, Graham Adcock, Mick Canning and Mike Parks .

BM explained that the meeting would take on a new format. It would only last for one hour: it would start with a 10 minute overview from HRMG/SVG and then be followed by 50 minutes of general discussion with no agenda, which would be chaired by Adrian Paisey. He would not be asking for agreement to the minutes of the last meeting or matters arising, as nothing had come up under these items as far as he could remember! Minutes would be taken of this meeting and would be emailed round by GA and be available online from the usual websites.

2. HRMG/SVG Overview BM reported on;

2.1 Harrison's

- a. The Woodland Plan.** The next stage, to be worked on this autumn would be the area, below Unclimbed Wall. A tree had fallen over at the top of the Rocks above *St Gothard's*; HRMG had decided to leave it as it is for the time being.
- b. The Isolated Buttress.** In January HRMG decided to extend the trial period for a further summer under different conditions, i.e. not having a fixed rope in place and to monitor erosion and practices used. A decision on what to do next, which may or may not be to build a bridge, would be made in the autumn. Extensive resin work had been done on the *Boulder Bridge Route* traverse.
- c. Anchor Placements at Harrison's.** HRMG members were looking into and experimenting with the best ways of placing new bolts following the report from Portsmouth University, including obtaining the bonding agent recommended in the report, and ways of removing old bolts. To this end some HRMG members had attended a BMC bolts workshop. It was also intended to exchange views with Bowles.
- d. Resin work.** In addition to the work described above, Steve Jackson had worked on the *Giant's Ear* area, North Boulder and together with SC had identified a number of climbs to be treated. AP had undertaken to do a trial, using PVA, resin/shellac, wood hardener and the bonding agent recommended by Portsmouth University on the slab below the Isolated Buttress to monitor how they compare in an area of heavy use.
- e. Cement work.** No work had been done recently, and nothing is known of as needing urgent repair. When work is done the bonding agent mentioned above as

recommended by the Portsmouth University student will be used on a trial basis, after which cement will be used more sparingly than in the past.

- f. Community Café.** This was being run by the local Parish Council on 24th June in the Harrison's car park with proceeds being shared between the Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust and the Julie Tullis Memorial Fund.

- 2.2 Stone Farm.** The problem with BBQs and fires had been considered by HRMG, and it had been decided against having a permanent BBQ site and not to put up new signs. HRMG had also decided to move the sign at the main entrance to the Rocks so that it is more clearly visible to all visitors. New signs will be put up both here and at the southern boundary of the BMC land, probably in conjunction with a redesign of the signs for all BMC-owned land.

- 2.2 Bowles.** The area at the very far right (north) of the crag had been excavated and soil had been cleared away. Bolts were to be placed and work was almost finished.

- 2.3 High Rocks.** There was enough support among local climbers for a work day to cut back the rhodies above and to some extent below the rocks. Once agreed with the owner volunteers would be sought from SVG but it was appreciated that some would be deterred on principle given the current admission charges for climbing, though it was hoped that the owner would allow people in for free to do this work.

- 2.4 Eridge Green.** There had been some criticism of the tree work and vegetation clearance that had been done in late 2016/early 2017, but the Sussex Wildlife Trust had confirmed that this was done by them and had made the point that this did not mean that there would be any improvements for the permitted climbing areas. The Rocks were increasingly popular for bouldering, and all were reminded of the need to keep the use of chalk to a minimum to avoid problems with the Eridge Agreement with the Sussex Wildlife Trust

- 2.4 Bolt Tests.** Tests were (over)due this summer at Bulls Hollow and on Hut Boulder at High Rocks.

- 2.5 Happy Valley.** Along with other trees, the leaning tree that provided a belay for the routes on Cheesewring Rock had been cut down, and this raises the question of whether to put in bolts at the top or not.

- 2.6 Evolution Indoor Climbing Centre.** The centre had closed in January. Chris Tullis was currently in the States for six months. A debt of gratitude was owed by all to the Tullis family for the work they had done on Sandstone, particularly Harrison's, since the mid-1950s.

- 2.7 The Sandstone Code of Practice.** The revised Bouldering Sense (previously the Ten Commandments), had now been incorporated into the Sandstone Code of Practice (to which there have been minor amendments) redesigned by the BMC's design team. Stocks were being distributed to local climbing walls and shops were available at the meeting.

3 General Discussion

- 3.1** MMcP reminded HRMG that the Harrison's Woodland Plan included a planting programme of appropriate trees in the areas that have been cleared and that we were eligible to apply for grants for this work and for clearance of bracken. SC replied that HRMG had been discussing this at their recent meeting when it had been decided to do just that subject to seeking advice from Kate Harris of the Forestry Commission as to the best species to plant.

MMcP also asked if the heavy vegetation (brambles etc) could be strimmed at the foot of some of the climbs. SC agreed that HRMG would look into this. MMcP suggested that this should be paid for out of the BMC's Land and Property Trust's accounts, and he noted that the money in this account had recently increased from approx £50K to £200K. As one of the trustees, BM explained that he thought that this was due to the BMC transferring a bequest into the Trust with the intention of giving the Trust the ability to buy crags should the need arise within the last-resort constraints of the existing BMC policy. **Action on both points SC**

- 3.2** SJ asked whether he should apply resin to the deep rope groove in the *Tame Variant* area at Harrison's, which he had discussed with SC, or whether it should be cemented in. It was agreed that this should be treated as a priority for cementing in once the new bonding agent had been obtained and FS volunteered to do the work. **Action SC**

- 3.3** MMcP asked what was being done about removing redundant bolts. AP explained how he and MB had cored out the bolt above *Bow Window* at Harrison's and then filled it. Feedback on what they had done would be welcomed before they continued to use this technique. **Action All**

- 3.4** GC asked whether there was any chance of getting High Rocks to start issuing season tickets again. Those who had met with the owner said that once the owner had made up his mind it was very difficult to get him to change it; his main business was the weddings though he had often said he doesn't want to stop climbing. BM saw the idea of a workday there and the need to do the bolt testing might give us the chance to discuss this issue, particularly given that in the past he had mentioned the idea of having a club. **Action BM**

- 3.5** KV referred to two recent incidents of aggressive behaviour against climbers, and asked what should be done on such occasions. The first had happened that day at Bowles when a rope was deliberately dropped on a climber soloing a climb that the aggressor thought he had already 'booked' by having his rope down it. The second occurred recently at Harrison's but full details are not known. Any aggressive incidents involving climbers or anyone else at the rocks should be reported to the respective owners but are really a police matter, which should be reported by the person concerned. AP concluded that no action need be taken via the Open Meeting.

- 3.6** FS asked about monitoring of what was happening on the Isolated Buttress at Harrison's. Both he, DB and AP reported on what they had witnessed/heard of, which covered both good and bad behaviour but none of this was documented. HRMG were asking that all such 'monitoring' from now on be documented and submitted to HMRG via SC. **Action All**
- 3.7** FS said that the use of the slab below the Isolated Boulder for the tests being organised by AP would be compromised by the fact that there were already coated with resin in places. Other locations for the test such as the small slab at the foot of the way down from *Zig Zag* and the slab right of North Boulder were suggested. **Action AP**
- 3.8** DB raised the question of the need to put in bolts on the Cheesewring Rock at Happy Valley now that the leaning tree had been cut down. Views both for and against were put at the meeting. BM reported that at the recent HRMG meeting Rob Dyer had made it clear that although the BMC's insurance covered the bolts at Bulls Hollow and High Rocks, this would not be the case for any further bolts on crags that were not BMC owned/managed. In the light of this information it was agreed that subject to his discussing the matter with GA as to the best way to do it, DB should sound out the Tunbridge Wells Common Conservators (the owners) as to how they felt about putting bolts in and the insurance implications. **Action DB**
- 4** **Next Meeting** Sunday 4th October at Bowles

RDM and AP - 31/5/17