

Sandstone Open Meeting Monday 18th October 2021, 6.30 to 8:00

Overview Report

Introduction The format for these meetings is that we aim to limit the meeting to about one hour and we have no agenda. This report is an overview from HRMG/SVG to tell people what has happened since the last meeting. This update, which be read out in summary will followed by about an hour of general discussion when any matter can be raised including any questions raised by the update. Minutes are being taken of this meeting and will be available from the usual websites but they won't be on the agenda for the next meeting.

This meeting is again being held online, primarily because of the higher attendance that we had online. For the record the attendance figures at recent face-to-face meetings varied between 25 in October 2016 and 9 in October 2019; for virtual meetings it was 12 in September 2020 and 16 in May 2021.

In 2022 we hope to be having the Sandstone Festival organised by Chris Stone, chair of the BMC London and South East Area Meeting, that was planned for 2020 but had to be postponed, which will include an open meeting. Any thoughts on whether or not we should have a meeting in May and if so what form it should take will be welcome during the general discussion.

General

The historic system used for years was shown to be inadequate following a review and testing. It was discovered that we could not guarantee all the swaged links were as good as we wanted them to be. Added to that was the recommendation that both bolts be equalised to enhance the system currently in place. As such there was no choice but to remove the swaging used to connect the bolt pairs of bolts at Harrison's, Stone Farm and Bull's Hollow to improve safety for all users Please see the BMC article here: [Changes to Southern Sandstone bolted anchors \(thebmc.co.uk\)](https://thebmc.co.uk/changes-to-southern-sandstone-bolted-anchors/) .

Further to the May Open Meeting most restrictions have now been lifted but some issues remain to be fully resolved. However, parking problems at some of the outcrops have continued and all such advice should continue to be observed. The BMC's Regional Access Database (the RAD) and the Southern Sandstone Climbs website will be updated regularly and it is important that all climbers are aware of and following the advice.

The Sandstone Code of Practice (COP)

At the 11/5/21 meeting the change to the 'climbing on wet rock' clause in the COP proposed by HRMG was rejected and instead the meeting agreed that a working group be set up to consider the matter. The working group, consisting of Graham Adcock, Adrian Paisey, Mark Brewster, James Bouchard, Gerry Gilmartin and Paul Norris have considered other options and, for the moment, recommends that the text reverts to the existing (2017) clause, pending a full review of the COP. If this meeting is in agreement with this approach, the review will begin forthwith. There has also been some concern expressed that the BMC does not currently have funds allocated for this but, subject to agreement, costs could be covered locally through the Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust.

Harrison's Rocks - HRMG's next meeting is on 25th October

Tree Felling of the next phase of the Woodland Management Plan, below *The Niblick* will take place over the winter and a work weekend will follow and notified to all in advance.

HRMG will be considering a number of other site jobs that need to be done at its next meeting, including in the *St Gothard's* area, some of these jobs may or may not be left until the work weekend following the tree felling.

Resin/Shellac work: Graham Adcock has been out several times this year. Deep rope grooves have been noted and treated above *Deadwood Crack*, *Slim Finger Crack* and also above/left of *Birch Crack*, where there are recent bolts. The foot traverse on *Boulder Bridge Route* treat, which appears to be standing up well. There is still much to do

Anchors: Daimon Beail and Emma Harrington have installed new pairs of bolts above *Rotten Stump Wall*, *Giants' Ear* and *Small Wall*, and have added new bolts to the existing pairs above *Ejector*, *Belt and Braces* and *Unclimbed Wall*.

Stone Farm

Daimon and Emma have installed 5 pairs of bolts in the area where the tree stumps were taken down above the *Stone Farm Crack* area, and also a new pair of bolts above *Moss Wall-Left Block* at the far end of the Rocks. A repair that needs to be made to the revetments below the yew tree is to be done in the Autumn by a small working party, possibly involving the EGCC.

Bowles

Bowles opened back to normal in August. Loz Reading reports, "We are aware that many key areas are losing ground height due to erosion, not helped by the fact the site is on a hill. We have just bought materials for stopping and repairing ground erosion under some key areas, the work will be carried out this winter. Loz will at the meeting to expand on this and answer any questions.

Eridge Green

Further to a meeting with the Reserves Manager for the Rocks in May and a Sussex Wildlife Trust Ecologist colleague at Harrison's on 4th May for Graham to demonstrate what was involved in the application of resin and show them it had been applied. Then we have now heard from the Reserves Manager that the SWT have decided that they are not against our treatment on the rocks, as long as it is in a very targeted and controlled way. The SWT are now consulting with Natural England (as the site is an SSSI) to ensure they agree with SWT's assessment and to get all the relevant consents. The SWT want to review their agreement with the BMC and to assess all the climbing walls in relation to our biological survey data to ensure it is still a good fit for their reserve and is not causing any damage to sensitive flora. This might result in expanding the no climb zones. A review of the climbing restrictions is seen as inevitable as the agreement has been in place for 20 years and we will also be raising the possibility of removing the restrictions in certain areas. Meanwhile the BMC's agreed voluntary suspension of climbing at the Rocks will remain in place but we hope that the overall suspension on climbing can be lifted next Spring.

High Rocks

Some Rhododendron work is needed.

Other Outcrops

TWCC. They have asked for a small clearance of bramble etc. at Happy Valley, on the section immediately left of the Cheesewring.

The Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust

A meeting of the committee is imminent.

Bob Moulton - 12/10/21