

Minutes of Sandstone Volunteers Group meeting

The Junction January 16th, 2006 at 7.30pm

Present 12 in all: Martin Brice (secretary), Bob Moulton (chair), Rob Naylor, Nick Alcock, Martin Kocsis, Jon Bibby, Rebekah Bibby, Ute Wegerhoff, Tim Skinner, Robin Mazinke, Steve Jackson, Graham Adcock

1. Welcome and apologies

apologies from Oliver Hill, Martin Hill (Chelmsford MC), Anna Gregory (BMC L&SE meeting), Geoff Pearson, Sarah Cullen, Mike Vetterlein, Rob Foster. Bob welcomed everyone to the freezing environment of the Junction's back room. Martin Kocsis, recently returned from ice climbing in northern Italy, felt at home.

2. Minutes of the Sandstone Volunteers Meeting on 3.10.05, agreed.

3. Harrison's Rocks

a) Ownership progress Bob said it was progressing slowly.

b) HRMG

Tim said a work day was planned, Bob suggested a date be fixed - to be progressed with Graham (who hadn't arrived yet).

c) Work Day

as above

d) Bolt testing

Tim has a new method of testing bolts involving two people hanging/bouncing on a bolt with a third person inspecting it for movement. This is an improvement on the previous method of "inspection-only". Bob said this method puts significantly more force on the rope than would be in a fall. A carpet is needed to protect the rock for this in future. Nick asked about the reason for the failure of the hut boulder bolts, and was told a report had been asked for by the BMC into the resin used to put in the bolts. Tim said this has happened in the past in other venues. Rob Naylor said the resin had not bonded to the rock, he had seen this when he took the bolts to Chris. Martin K said the BMC had set up a technical committee to look into the issue of bolts. Bob asked for Tim to be informed of any communications. Rob N volunteered to be the single heavy person needed to test any bolts. Bob said the Stone Farm test was an advance on previous practice and very practical.

4. High Rocks

a) Further work/maintenance. Oliver had sent an email with his apologies, Bob read it to the meeting. There was a discussion on how to deal with the rhododendrons. Rebekah suggested removing the rhododendrons was more sustainable in the long term, rather than cutting them back. Graham then arrived and said a management plan was being drawn up, to give us an idea of how frequently, and how much, work was needed. He said the position at the moment was that a few small areas needed a few hours of work from a few people. The rhododendrons on the ground were a separate matter from those on the top of the rocks. Bob said Sussex Wildlife Trust would be the people to talk to. Rebekah said she had contacts at English Nature who were experts on rhododendron control. Graham said a two-year gap in volunteer work was a good idea and he was looking forward to a good year's climbing in 2006

b) Bolts on Hut Boulder Bob said Rob F and Chris should report - as above.
c) Other the original plan had been to place some bolts on Isolated Boulder Rob F was generally agreed to be the guru in helping out with this sort of thing bolts and please could he come along to the next SVG meeting. Rob N said there had been groups of abseilers and Graham said he had bravely intervened and prevented such activities, and so did Nick. Tim had also seen it happening.

5. Bowles

Robin had little to report, but had seen signs warning of rock repair works. He planned to ask about a new belay at the top of Banana.

6. Bulls Hollow

6. Bulls Hollow

Graham said Bulls Hollow was "loovly". The Conservators had removed some scrub.

7. Eridge Green Rocks

Tim had nothing to report. He had had troubles in making contact with the owners, the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Rebekah said an oak sleeper could be used for the signage we had suggested. Bob offered to make contact with SWF, which he needed to do anyhow for the guidebook, but a volunteer to take over from Tim now that he was HRMG Chair was to be sought.

8. Stone Farm

a) Open Access Land (also Harrison's) Bob said it was BMC policy to declare all BMC crags as Open Access Land (under CRoW) in perpetuity.

Bill Renshaw, chair of BMC A&C cttee and Graham Lynch of the BMC had been down to look round. Bob said we had a responsibility to replace the bottom fence and this was in hand. When the BMC took on Harrisons, the same would apply.

b) Work Day(s) Bob had been to the Land Registry to find out the owner of the land below the field, and was on the case to get the fence sorted. We might need access to his field to get the fence fixed. Volunteer labour would be needed to clear the extensive undergrowth round the fence. Neil Atkinson has now marked out the west boundary.

c) Other: John Galloway memorial. Bob said it has been suggested that we do some sort of memorial to John, and one idea was to dedicate one or more of the trees that are to be planted below the rocks to John, who had taken the lead and done the lion's share of the work in the BMC acquiring the rocks. The meeting agreed that this would be appropriate. Bob to speak to Graham West, who was organizing the tree-planting, and to check on the Julie Tullis memorial at the Harrison's campsite.

9. Other crags nothing was raised.

10. SVG website - please see www.sandstonevolunteers.nildram.co.uk. Steve Jackson had updated and improved it. As things happen, he would continue to update it. Rob Foster's article about High Rocks bolts work is on there. He planned to put photographs on there and he would put Terry Tullis's early ones up for interest. Bob wanted a link from the BMC to us.

11. Any Other Business

Signage: Steve produced many examples and they were shown to the meeting. Two for High Rocks were shown to the meeting, one for the gatehouse and one for hut boulder. Rebekah advised against fixing the latter to the oak tree and recommended the railway sleeper technique. Signs for Harrison's, Bulls Hollow and Stone Farm were also shown. The graffiti signs were shown, to go up at Stone Farm and Harrison's. A separate graffiti sign is planned for High Rocks. The meeting approved the general design of the signs, which echoed the Code of Practice. Bob thanked Steve for his work on this.

12 Next Meeting

Martin K talked of a Sandstone Open Day, involving the BMC. Steve J suggested some sort of celebration to mark the ownership of Harrison's by the BMC. Graham suggested food and beer as well as meeting the BMC, Rebekah said we should focus on what we wanted from such a day. She could do the press work and suggested asking the High Weald Unit, SWT and English Nature etc to put up their boards/stalls with or without an individual presence, making leaflets available etc.. Martin K said we could use the opportunity to blow our own trumpet and explain to other climbers the work of the SVG. Task force: Martin K, Martin B and Rebekah (Sarah Cullen?). To fix date of Sandstone Open all on the same day. (Saturday May 20?) Tim asked for a barrel of Shepherd Neame beer to be laid on. Bob suggested Harveys.

Meeting closed at 9.21pm