

Minutes of Sandstone Volunteers Group meeting

The Junction October 3 2005 at 7.30pm

Present: Rob Houston, Louise McMenamin, Ute Wegerhoff, Rob Foster, Tim Skinner, Robin Mazinke, Steve Durkin, Geoff Pearson, Sarah Cullen, Martin Kocsis (BMC Volunteers Officer), Neil Atkinson, Graham Adcock, Steve Jackson, Brian Mead, Rebecca & John Bibby, Bob Moulton, chair, Martin Brice, secretary. 18 in all. Also Barney Lewis at the end of the meeting.

Apologies from Oliver Hill, Chris Tullis, Mike Veterlein, Anna Gregory, Julian King, Graham West (former Access & Conservation rep).

1. **Welcome** Bob welcomed Martin Kocsis to the meeting.
2. **Chair and Secretary of the Group** The meeting agreed Bob should be formalised as the chair, Martin as secretary. Martin B appointed Access & Conservation rep.
3. Martin K introduced himself as BMC Volunteers Officer and explained his role as supporting Areas and volunteers. Talked about recognition of volunteers, said their profile needs to be raised. Would complement Guy Keating as the BMC's Access & Conservation rep. Martin said he is in a three-year post, funded by Sport England.
4. **Minutes of the Sandstone Open Meeting on 15.5.05.** Geoff talked of the Sandstone Code of Practice, the postcards will go in forthcoming guidebook
5. **Harrison's Rocks** Tim Skinner is the chair, Bob will stay on the group.
 - a) Ownership progress – Bob said progress was being made, albeit slowly as these things tend to be. Sports Council Trust will transfer Rocks to a Trust, so BMC is setting up Land Trust for ownership of crags, including Stone Farm and Harrisons. Transfer of freehold seems to be moving OK, should be sorted within a month or so. No news of car park transfer as yet, between SE and FC. SE still funding car park upkeep, with payments via the BMC to Soft Rock, which means toilets can stay open. Campsite management should go from Sandstone CC to BMC. BMC has taken on the job of insurance of campsite. Bob suggested any additional administration responsibilities should be taken on down here rather than at the Manchester office. Julie Tullis Memorial Fund will be run by the BMC's International Committee (whose chair Lindsay Griffin had phoned Bob), to fund expeditions by women.
 - b) Tim talked of using volunteers for some clearance work at Harrison's - notification via the usual channels.
 - c) HRMG meetings to be in the evening to accommodate those who found it hard to get time off from full-time employment.
 - d) Other matters. Night time noise at the campsite was an issue, mostly this was from climbers who were using the campsite rather than from non-climbing, late-night intrusive visitors. Chris T and Frank were working on this. A suggestion was made to put a sign up at toilets reminding campers of the need for respect for others using the site. Ute asked about graffiti, Tim said there had been no new (see below re signage). Croydon MC doing their annual day of toil this month.
5. **High Rocks**
 - a) Further work/maintenance. Bob said Treeworks still to finish of their work to for BMC, partly because it was still doing some work for the owner. The boundary fence may be moved eastwards near to the steps. Bob said Oliver, he and Graham need to agree a programme of future clearance requiring one or two volunteers days. A more permanent solution may be needed in some areas to keep growth back. Robin said that grass was growing back under *Infidel*, this should be encouraged It was agreed that the rhodies at base of crag needed to be kept in check This would probably by the using a weed killer next summer but concerns were expressed about killing off the rhodies at the top of the crag - advice to be taken from High Weald ANOB, English Nature, Sussex Wildlife Trust *et al* .
 - b) Bolts. Rob Foster said he & Chris had put in 12 bolts on Hut Boulder but some had come loose. Two on the mainland had come out and Chris had now fixed all of them. Brian Mead said they looked solid and useable (Tim said he had seen Brian placing an unreasonable amount of strain on the bolts

yesterday, but they had held his great weight on numerous occasions, so they should now be safe). Meeting discussed whether some of the High Rocks bolts should be backed up by wires to other nearby bolts and but it was agreed not to do this but to recommend that climbers should back up their belays (inc. in the guidebook, on the sign - see below) .

6. **Bowles**

Robin reported that the wire sling on *Skiffle* had been taken out as requested, but that nothing had yet been done about putting some bolts immediately above *Fragile Wall*. Some rope grooves were worsening.

7. **Bulls Hollow**

Graham Adcock said conservators had no plans to alter or dig out the uneven ground that youngsters use to ride their bikes on. English Nature had visited a year ago and were very pleased with the work we had done. Plan for Commons around Tunbridge Wells omitted Bulls Hollow. Graham said drainage remained a problem but the situation would be kept under review, and a bit of trimming was needed. Signage needed doing and was underway.

8. **Eridge Green Rocks.**

Tim said the bouldering sign had been acquired but the good summer meant he had been busy climbing. He would be talking to Sussex Wildlife Trust to arrange for the sign to be put up, about the proposed joint leaflet, and about putting up a sign beneath *Sandstorm*.

9. **Stone Farm.**

Bob said Graham West was going to complete the work that he had planned to plant trees below the slope, and that some earth was needed to encourage stabilisation above the Rocks. A bolt above *Inside or Out* had been suggested, because groups were using it a lot. Neil was going to mark out the west boundary. Bob said a decision needed to be made on the fence below the rocks needed attention, and Tony Boud from East Grinstead MC had done some research into the matter but had now moved to Germany. Louise said she would contact Tony, who was currently on honeymoon, to ask for details of the contacts that he had made, and would also have a word with the new chairman of EGMC to see if any further help could be offered.

10. **Signage**

Bob said we are working on two types of signage:

- a) Graffiti example was on display, other options were available, designed by Steve Jackson. HRMG budget would pay. High Rocks owner to be asked for a contribution to those designed for those rocks.
- b) Signs for the entrance to various rocks were also planned, and the High Rocks example, also from the fertile imagination of Steve Jackson, was on display. The Bowles sign was to be left as is. Steve to be asked for yet more work, this time some signs that would be 90cm by 60cm for Stone Farm, Bulls Hollow and Harrisons. The strength of the background of the High Rocks example was discussed by several people at some length, and Steve explained that he could do anything we asked. Bob said Evolution had asked for paper versions to put up at the wall, and he would send Steve an email thereon. Bob said that we should leave the final decisions to the designer: one man's Picasso is another man's Andy Warhol, we were told.

11. **SVG website.**

Steve Jackson explained that he had spent an idle moment or two putting together a website detailing the proud and multifarious SVG achievements and he wanted a report from people about each crag. Bob had done a first draft and would send it Steve and to the usual suspects involved in the various works, who might want to change it before a tight deadline, after which Steve would use what he'd got. Steve said there was no cost for the website as yet. Graham said he could transfer the Bulls Hollow and High sites to add gravitas to Steve's SVG site if he wanted.

12. **Any Other Business**

Robin said the new guide was coming along nicely, and people were quite free to make comments, which he might ignore if he wanted. Nobody can agree a grade for *Birchen Corner* at Harrison's, a vote was taken 5c or 5b, the result being inconclusive and therefore for Robin to interpret or ignore as he saw fit. Bob asked if what people preferred for the covers of the new guide, plastic or card – Ute said her card version had languished at the bottom of her rucksack for eight years so it must be pretty

tough. Another vote was taken – the result was a dead heat - seven for card and seven for plastic. Graham suggested silk or steel might be alternatives. Bob said cost might be the decider.

13 **Date of next meeting** Monday 7.30pm, January 16th 2006 (HRMG is January 23, 2005)

Bob thanked everyone for the work that they had done and all for attending. Meeting closed at 9.27pm.