

SOUTHERN SANDSTONE OPEN MEETING 2005

Minutes of the Southern Sandstone Meeting held on Sunday 15th May 2005 at the Junction Inn, Groombridge at 19:30 hrs.

Present: Chair - Bob Moulton (CC, Chairman for HRMG), Tim Skinner (CC, MMC), Chris Boylan (CC, TWMC), Adrian Paisy, Robin Mazinke (CC), Anna Gregory (L&SE BMC), Daphne Pritchard (CC, London MC), Steve Jackson (TWMC), Geoff Pearson (BMC, HRMG), Sally Westaway, Alex Speirs, Ned Westaway, Chris Tullis (SCC, CC, HRMG), Mary Anne Mellor, Steve Reeves (MMC), Graham Adcock (CC), Oliver Hill (CC, TWMC), Ute Wegerhoff (TWMC), Barney Lewis (SCC), Steve Durkin (CC, TWMC), Rob Foster (TWMC, CC), Phil Loasby (CC), Graham West (BMC), Raz Parmar (CC, MMC), Tim Daneills (CC), Sarah Cullen (CC, HRMG, SCC).

1 Welcome and Apologies

Bob Moulton welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Minutes of the Annual Open Meeting on 16.04.01

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as accurate.

3 Minutes of the Sandstone Volunteers Group Meeting on 17.1.05

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as accurate.

4 Harrison's Rocks

4.1 Matters arising from the meeting re ownership on 17.1.05

Bob explained that Sport England (SE) have agreed to pass the freehold ownership of Harrison's Rocks to the British Mountaineering Council (BMC). Because the Rocks are currently owned by the Sport Council Trust (SCT) they can only be transferred to charities. Although the BMC is not a charity, Dave Turnbull has agreed to set up a trust specifically for ownership of Harrison's. Sport England has agreed to pay half the cost of setting up this trust.

The Forestry Commission (FC) has agreed to take over the car park lease and are keen to enter a partnership with the BMC; we are waiting to hear their proposals.

The FC does not wish to take on responsibility for the campsite and have asked the BMC to take on the outstanding lease (9 years).

Bob said that we needed to come to an agreement with the FC to ensure that campers have access to the toilets and washing-up facilities and that we were consulted if there were any plans to lock the car park at night (this was in fact something that HRMG had discussed as a result of recent security problems).

SE will give the BMC a dowry of £5,000.00 per annum for the length of the lease (9 years remaining), and Bob noted that we need to think about what will happen financially after the 9 years, and that we should maintain a good relationship with the FC.

4.2 Other matters

Chris Tullis reported that the main problem at the present time at Harrison's Rocks is graffiti. This has occurred in numerous places along the rocks; some carving, but mostly spray paint. He said that the police had been informed but unfortunately there is not a lot they can do.

Signs have been put up to show the damage caused.

Bob said that not much resin work was carried out last year mostly due to bad weather, and that he hoped that more will be done this summer, however Mike Vetterlein was not present to confirm.

Bob reported that John Galloway has done some more work documenting the artificial Boulders in Birchden Wood Project, for consultation in the near future. There may be a meeting in reaction to this, and we will wait to hear from John, although he was unable to attend this meeting.

4.3 Nominations for membership of HRMG (currently Tim Skinner and Sarah Cullen).

Bob explained that he will be retiring as Chair and that Tim Skinner will be taking over this role. There was then, a need to nominate another member to the Harrison's Rocks Management Group (HRMG). Frank Shannon is currently a member of the HRMG, having been co-opted by Bob Moulton, and it was agreed that he should be nominated by the Southern Sandstone Meeting. Sarah Cullen was nominated by the meeting to continue as an HRMG member.

5 High Rocks

5.1 The Restoration Project

Oliver Hill reported that the restoration work would be finished within 10 days. 44 season tickets have been issued to voluntary helpers. The rocks are nice and dry and it is looking good. Bob Moulton thanked Oliver and Graham Adcock for their work on the High Rocks Restoration Project.

5.2 Further work/ maintenance

Bob Moulton pointed out that we needed to keep an eye on the scrub, as the rhododendrons are already growing back, and it would be necessary to give some thought about using a weed killer to keep this growth at bay. It might be that some sort of grant could be obtained, from various organisations to obtain pesticides etc. Tim Skinner suggested contacting Sussex Wildlife. **(Action: Tim Skinner)**

Bob Moulton asked Oliver if he is happy to continue this work, and he said that he was. Bob suggested that perhaps we could have a working volunteers' day in the autumn. Tim Skinner said that some routes will probably need a good clean, and that the cutting back has made a big difference to the condition of The Rocks.

It was agreed to keep the position under review this year with the probability of a volunteer day or two being required in the autumn, and then to decide what to do next spring as regards spraying etc **(Action Oliver Hill/Graham Adcock)**

Adrian asked if we need to fix the hole in the fence. Bob Moulton explained that a tree had fallen down on the fence, and that the contractors would fix this; it may be that they are waiting for the tree work to be finished first. The hole in the fence was the responsibility of the owner.

Bob said that a final report on the project would be produced to show what work had been done.

5.3 **Bolts**

Rob Foster from the Tunbridge Wells Mountaineering Club reported that they are making progress. The owner of High Rocks has agreed to the bolts on Hut Boulder and Rob said that he is hoping that Chris Tullis is still available to help. (**Action: Rob Foster**)

Chris Boylan pointed out that bolts were required not only on Hut Boulder, but also on the mainland - Rob confirmed that this was being done

6 **Bowles**

Robin Mazinke reported that he has carried out some rhododendron and holly clearance work from the bottom of the crag to Abracadabra. There is also a problem with rope grooves by Fragile Wall, and he thought that maybe the Bowles people could put a bolt in here to prevent any further damage. He has asked the owners. (**Action: Robin Mazinke**)

7 **Bulls Hollow**

Graham Adcock reported that Bulls Hollow is dry, and that the work carried out there is now really paying off. Some oaks in the Full Moon area may need to be looked at and the scrub needs to be kept down at the bottom, but the bramble so far has not come back. Drainage has not been attempted yet, it might be best to wait until the winter to see what is required. Bob said that this can be discussed at the next Sandstone Volunteers meeting.

Tim Daniels said that the police have been to Bulls Hollow looking for evidence of drug usage. Tim said that we should all make ourselves aware that there could be needles etc. lying around at Bulls Hollow. Chris Boylan also stated that needles and syringes had been found at Bulls Hollow and that this had been reported to the police.

8 **Eridge Green Rocks**

Tim Skinner reported that the Sussex Wildlife Trust are happy to sort out a sign to go under Sandstorm area at Eridge Green Rocks, and to get together to produce a joint leaflet. The purpose of this is to educate people on two issues, firstly to remind climbers not to use chalk on Sandstorm etc, and secondly to produce a leaflet which basically outlines the Sandstone Code of Conduct. They estimate the cost of the sign is £800.00, and that the leaflet would probably be about £1,000; they said that they would pay half the money. A much simpler sign could be constructed at less cost, perhaps something A4 and robust. Tim Skinner will be contacting an officer within the Sussex Wildlife Trust regarding this. (**Action: Tim Skinner**)

9 **Stone Farm**

Graham West has done some chainsaw work at the far end of The Rocks, and was planning to do some planting of new trees to help stabilise the slope below the main crag.

Graham West thanked Robin Mazinke who helped with tree work at short notice.

Bob Moulton noted that there has been a refrigerator dumped on the north side of the path above Inaccessible Boulder; although probably not on our land we should probably have to arrange to have it removed. **(Action: HRMG)**

Bob said that the planting at the top of The Rocks above Thin etc has not taken and the material used is now bare; may do some more seeding. **(Action: HRMG)** The area above Remote and Control is much nicer.

Adrian reported that somebody has lit a fire to the right of Undercut Wall. This has caused quite a large lump of sandstone to crack and fall away.

Bob Moulton said that the East Grinstead Climbing Club have undertaken the fixing of the falling-down Victorian fence, by the main boulder at Stone Farm. They have identified the owner of the field below the fence, and are making progress with this issue. Bob Moulton will email Tony at the East Grinstead Club to see if there is any further movement. **(Action: Bob Moulton)**

10 Other Crag

Graham West and Bob Moulton commented on further graffiti at Under Rockes. The owners of this crag are unknown.

11 Sandstone Code of Practice

Geoff Pearson said that the Sandstone Code of Practice is finally complete! 6,000 leaflets have been printed and 10,000 postcards. Now all we need to do is distribute them. Chris Tullis and Frank Shannon have been given 2,000 postcards to hand out, the remaining 8,000 remain with Geoff to be inserted into the new CC guide when printed. Of the 6,000 brochures, 2,000 have gone to Guy at the BMC to distribute to clubs and climbing walls. Chris and Frank have 1,000. Bowles has 250 and 250 are going to High Rocks.

Chris Tullis said that he would be putting a leaflet dispenser onto the notice board and the same at the Climbing Wall. **Action Chris Tullis**

Geoff Pearson said that he would arrange for Chris Tullis to be sent a .pdf of the Sandstone Code of Practice so that he can incorporate this onto his website. **Action Geoff Pearson**

12 High Weald ANOB - Forest Ridge Landscape Project (FRLP)

12.1 The Project

Bob explained what the FRLP Scheme intends and, for accuracy, I quote the introduction to their Project Summary paper.

“The High Weald AONB Unit has secured a planning grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to develop a large project proposal that could secure a further £2 million from the Fund. The proposal will aim to enhance the special habitats of the High Weald’s Forest Ridge and improve the public’s understanding of its unique heritage.

The High Weald AONB Unit is now looking for other organisations to work with to deliver landscape scale change across the Forest Ridge.”

12.2 Possible projects

Bob said that there is potentially quite a lot we could apply for, although we should bear in mind that it might not necessarily apply to the projects we are doing now. The money would not be available until 2007.

Various ideas were discussed: Graham West suggested the idea of reinstating the area at below Harrison's as wooded lowland heath, as post-war pictures have indicated. This would require more research, but could be an interesting project to put forward. **(Action: Graham West)**

It could be possible that the FRLP could make a small contribution to the Eridge information leaflet, but we hoped to do this before 2007.

Bob suggested that perhaps we could gain some funding for an anti-graffiti campaign. It was felt that this could be needed at High Rocks, Stone Farm and Harrison's. Perhaps some discreet signs could be put up. We need to come up with some ideas; perhaps we could ask English Heritage and other relevant bodies, perhaps English Nature and The National Trust were suggested, to see if they have any ideas of anti-graffiti tactics at SSSI sites. Graham West pointed out that criminal damage to a SSSI site could incur a fine of up to £20,000. Perhaps this could be publicised on a notice?

Bob said that he would approach the owner of High Rocks regarding the refurbishment of the gatehouse. It was thought that this could be a good place to put posters and signs. **(Action: Bob Moulton)**

Tim Daniels suggested that Bob could also ask the owner if we could do something about removing the tarmac below to Tilly Lamp Crack, as it is unsightly. Bob said it would be worth asking. **(Action: Bob Moulton)**

12.3 Interpretation

Sally Westaway explained that in exchange for any grants given, the FRLP would support putting up a signs and leaflets etc. Bob expressed concern at having too many signs but said that it would be an opportunity to explain the geological aspects of the ridge and to provide some interesting facts about it.

Sally explained that the FRLP do not pay all the project money, but would expect us to pay 25 % of it in cash or voluntary labour. She said that any ideas should be 'flagged up' and passed to Bob quickly.

Sally said that the FRLP are also keen on the Artificial Boulder Project (proposed by John Galloway) in Birchden Wood.

13 Any Other Business

13.1 Bouldering Signs

Bouldering signs have been made and paid for by the HRMG budget. There are a few spares and Bob suggested that these could be used at Stone Farm, possibly Eridge, Bowles and High Rocks. The Stone Farm, Harrison's and Eridge signs need to be erected on freestanding posts. Chris Tullis agreed to sort them out and put them up. It was decided that a sign would not be erected at Bulls Hollow as it is thought likely it would be vandalised. Bob said that perhaps the High Rocks one should be put on hold until the gatehouse is sorted out.

13.2 New Guidebook

Robin explained that Mike is still requiring more photographs for the new guidebook. Paul Highams is putting together a first ascents list. Oliver said that the High Rocks chimney grades should be looked at. Bob said that the new guidebook would probably be published in the New Year; the CC's stock of the old one is now sold out.

NOTE Proposed date for the next Sandstone Volunteers Group is Monday 3rd October, 7:30 pm.

Sarah Cullen - 14/06/2005