

Woodland Plan for Harrison's

You would not have to be too observant to notice that quite a lot of trees have been cut down at Harrison's.

Well this is not wanton vandalism, it is the result of years of planning, expert advice and liaison with various authorities including Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

What is happening and why is it being done? Good woodland husbandry involves having a management plan so that the woodland thrives and produces the best landscape and ecological environment.

The Management Plan has been produced for the Harrison's Rocks Management Group, a body set up by the British Mountaineering Council to look after the rocks. The Plan is a weighty tome, sets out what needs to be achieved and the actions that need to be put in to practice.

Much of the work in producing the plan has been carried out by Malcolm Macpherson (also known as the Wizard, see photo, where the wizardry appearance is rather obvious) to whom we owe huge thanks.

Hopefully we will look back and be grateful for the work carried out. It is a 13 year plan, so do not worry, all the trees will not be gone next time you walk along the path and look up at the rocks!

The main problem we want to deal with is the preponderance of self seeded poor quality trees that are suffocating the high quality trees and not least, shading the rocks. Certain climbing areas have been virtually lost to overshadowing trees making a number of routes unclimbable as they just do not dry out sufficiently. The worst example of this is the stretch of rock from The Nuts to Forester's Wall, hence this is the area that has been cleared first.

You should be able to look forward to the delights of some of these steep and interesting routes in the not too distant future with any luck.



Malcolm Macpherson

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second Sandstone Bulletin. Hopefully last year you will have seen the first Bulletin, very popular it was too.

2012 saw the worst climbing conditions and weather for decades, and not surprisingly most outcrops were fairly quiet as less of us ventured on to the rock. Those that did visited less often in the almost certain knowledge the rock would still be damp because of the never ending, or so it seemed, summer rain. Fewer climbers getting out combined with hopefully the strong messages of the first Bulletin, meant no real problems occurred. That was a welcome relief from the exasperation of some of the destructive and stupid things that happened in 2011. Amongst them a hold being chipped on Hate at Bowles, and slackliners pulling out a belay bolt on West Wall at Harrison's.

This year is going to be great, with the driest summer on record – how brilliant would that be. Let us look forward to that and being able to enjoy the rocks at their best with, hopefully, total good belay practise and less of that old evil known for some reason as 'dogging'.

NO GROOVING ON WAILING WALL

A photo on the front page of the first Bulletin showed a recently cut deep and vicious rope groove at the top of Wailing Wall caused by unacceptable belaying by inconsiderate climbers. Well that rope groove has now gone, or at least been repaired as best it can. Repairing rope grooves is a skilled technique,



Mick Canning

luckily there are one or two climbers who are able to perform this art.

One such climber is Mick Canning who happily experiments with the mixes and techniques required to achieve the desired result. All this takes time, patience and some dexterity as it usually has to be done hanging from a rope with bucket and various tools hanging from a harness.

It is all done voluntarily, so let us thank Mick for sparing his valuable time to create the right sand and resin ingredients, hang from a rope for hours and trowel away until the form of the rock is restored.

A sandstone apprenticeship



*Annapurna South Face
First climbed in 1970 by a British Team including
Don Whillans, Dougal Haston (summit team) and
Martin Boysen led by Chris Bonnington*

A world famous climber of the 60's and 70's somehow tempted on to sandstone called them 'piddling little rocks'.

That climber was Don Whillans and in a way he was probably right, what is more who would disagree with the 'Villain'?

Piddling they may be, but they have been the early playground and inspiration for some of the best and most accomplished climbers on the globe.

Notables, in reverse chronological order, are Neil Gresham, Mick Fowler, Martin Boysen and Chris Bonington. Fowler and Boysen in particular were passionate about Sandstone.

Martin became universally recognised in the late 1960s as probably the best and most naturally gifted technical rock climber at the time.

Mick still is one of the most highly regarded exponents of serious exploratory technical high altitude mountaineering.

Piddling they maybe, but they can be the catalyst to the path of big time climbing. Do not underrate the intricacies that a sandstone technique can teach you about upward progress.

BARBIE BONKERS

With 2013 going to be the driest Summer on record, there will be nothing better than a beer and a BBQ on a scorching hot day, but are the rocks the right place for it?

Well no, not least because of the fire hazard.

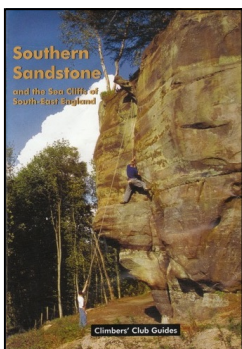
How many outcrops could you get a fire appliance to in an emergency, in any case, what do you do with the BBQ afterwards? You would not throw it in the undergrowth would you? No you wouldn't, but believe it or not some people do just that, because it is alright as somebody else will clear it up.

Climbers are more responsible than that, are they not and they will take everything home with them, but how about not bringing BBQs in the first place?

An accidental fire at any of the outcrops could be catastrophic with the undergrowth and trees going up in flames in no time.

Everybody would have to stand and watch it happen because the emergency services would not be able to get anywhere near the place. Worth thinking about.

GUIDEBOOK UPDATE



Always up to speed with their guides, the Climbers' Club is about to reprint the Southern Sandstone Guide as existing stocks have nearly sold out.

It is not a new edition, but an improved version, being packaged in the same format as the CC's Pembroke Guides with card covers and French flaps.

Various information is being updated and the revised format has provided space to promote both the Sandstone Volunteers' Group and the Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust. The Sandstone Code bullet points have been expanded to include reference to cleaning your footwear and not hanging on ropes or working moves.

WHO OWNS WHAT?

You may not realise it, but all of the sandstone outcrops are on private land.

Here is a run down of who actually has control over climbing at the main outcrops.

Bowles

The Bowles Rocks Trust Limited.

Climbing permitted at a charge.

Bull's Hollow

The Manor of Rusthall and the Tunbridge Wells

Commons Conservators.

Free public access and climbing allowed at no charge subject to bylaws.

Eridge Green

The Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Climbing permitted at no charge by contractual arrangement with the British Mountaineering Council.

Harrison's

The BMC Land and Property Trust.

Designated as Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

Naturally no charge.

High Rocks

Operated by High Grades Limited.

Climbing permitted between 10.00am and 7.00pm

May to August and 10.00am to 4.00pm September to April at a charge (season tickets available).

Stone Farm

The BMC.

Designated as Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

Naturally no charge.

LITTER

We are not used to it, but it is appearing, particularly at Harrison's.

Please do not drop litter, and if you are feeling really environmentally conscious, feel free to pick up other people's litter if you have a small bag handy.

The magic of Harrison's

Extracts from an article by Steve Dean called *A Winter's Day at Harrison's* published in last year's Climbers Club Journal...

'Harrison's is where it all started...'

'I was captivated by climbing and all that went with it...'

'the passion for climbing just grew from there...'

'I was aware of that distinctive sandstone smell and could hardly believe it was 20 years since I'd been to this place...'

'what had caught my eye in comparison with those visits many years before was the degree of tree removal and thinning out that had been carried out giving the place a welcome, much more open feel...'

'the afternoon was getting on and the sun, though still quite bright, was low in the sky and bathing the rocks in a pleasant winter light...'

'I sensed that the place would soon be covered in bluebells, always one of the great delights...'

'I started thinking about the history of the place, a crag that means so much to so many...'

'the rocks are now owned by the BMC Land and Property Trust. Long may they provide pleasure for future generations, in this delightful rural setting...'

'sterling work has been done over the years by a great many people and a huge debt is owed to Terry Tullis in particular...'

'today's visit to Harrison's had been a delight and a fond reminder of so much...'

'Good natured banter and laughter; they are perhaps the things I remember best about those days down on sandstone 40 years ago...'

'I was very tired when I got home, but it had been a precious day remembering long forgotten joys of a crag that has a place in the hearts of all London Climbers...'

'That little crag put so many of us on the road to countless delights and exciting times, long may this continue, for climbers still to come.'



Watercolour by Jim Curran

Steve moved to Derbyshire a long time ago, but still holds his early memories of Harrison's dear. It is certain that many hundreds of climbers who over the years have experienced the magic of Harrison's will be holding similar thoughts to those of Steve.

His words capture so much of what is truly special about the place, and climbers who started at Harrison's, not just those from London, have embarked on the road to a life of climbing, travelling and adventure around the world because of all that which can be enjoyed at Harrison's in those young formative years.

SANDSTONE VOLUNTEERS' GROUP - SVG

If you appreciate sandstone climbing as much as many of us do, why not get involved with the Sandstone Volunteers' Group? SVG is an informal group of regular climbers who want to put a something back into their sport.

Regular work days are organised, often in the winter months, when volunteers meet for a day and apply their manual skills and energy to the task in hand. Most of the changes you see at the rocks will be the result of SVG work.

They work in partnership with the outcrops' owners whether that is the BMC for Harrison's and Stone Farm, or for example The Commons Conservators for Bull's Hollow and agrees and carries out various programmes of work to maintain, conserve or improve the rock environment. The group originated with the work carried out at Bull's Hollow over the winter of 2003-4 where a lack of tree management had resulted in the crag becoming overgrown and shaded from the sun and air. Climbers took

the initiative to do something about it, forging a mutually beneficial relationship with the Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators. The most ambitious project to date has been the substantial clearance of undergrowth and trees at High Rocks in early 2005, this time in conjunction with its owner Mr Cappellazzi.

Everybody seems to agree that the result of the work at both outcrops was a step change, improving the setting of the rocks, leading to much dryer climbing conditions and allowing many classic lines that had been out of condition for years to be experienced once again.

At Stone Farm, the SVG have built revetments to reduce ground erosion and planted trees to stabilise the lower slopes at this popular crag.

The big project at the moment is the Harrison's Woodland Management Plan which is also being carried out by the SVG. Many volunteers were active from November through to February carrying out the first phase. The results are clear to see.

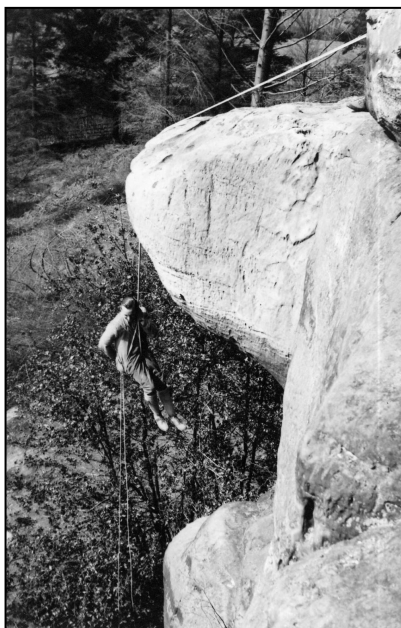
Ted Zenthon

A name few will be familiar with, but most will have at some time used his work.

Edward 'Ted' Zenthon was born in 1920 and grew up in a mews beside Hyde Park a world away from climbing. However, he and his compatriots (including my father on occasion), climbed on the sandstone outcrops before WW2 heading down on the train and bivvying overnight at the crags. Ted was a prolific diarist that he beautifully illustrated with his own drawings of equipment and plans of routes and climbs.

On Sunday 28th August 1938 at an informal meet of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland at Harrison's, Ted and party had been climbing Dark Chimney when they heard shouts for help from the direction of the Slab. They found, to their horror, a girl hanging from the overhang with a rope round her neck. Whilst frantic efforts were made to release her, Ted ran to the top of the crag but found the rope looped round a tree. A knife was thrown up and the rope cut. The girl had been unconscious for one and a half minutes by now. They ran for a doctor and upon their return, found the unfortunate girl recovering, none the worse for her ordeal although she had a terrific weal around her neck.

With the outbreak of World War II he was trained as



Ted Zenthon, Harrison's circa 1940

a spotter and land surveyor for the Royal Artillery. His main task was to calculate and plot the position of enemy guns in relation to the Allied guns.

In 1950, a three year spell in Uganda working for the British Colonial Service saw him involved in new climbs in the Ruwenzori Mountains and on Mount Kenya and Mount Speke. He also climbed extensively in Scotland, where he made several first ascents.

Ted's first contribution to guidebooks was contained in the 1947 *Sandstone Climbs in S.E. England* by Edward C. Pyatt, published by the JMCS, of which both he and Edward Pyatt were members.

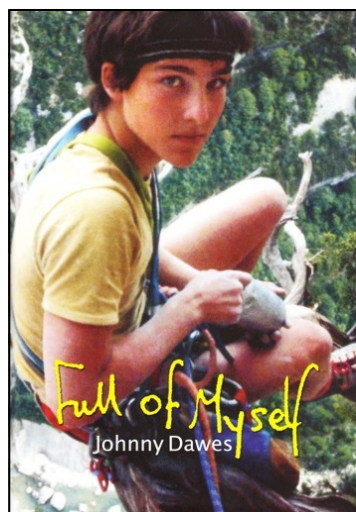
Ted's illustrations included detailed surveys of Bull's Hollow, Eridge Green Rocks, Harrison's Rocks, High Rocks including Continuation Wall and the Annexe and Stone Farm Rocks.

His surveys remain the basis for the crag diagrams that appear in all sandstone guides too date. Perhaps Ted's greatest contribution to sandstone climbing is his girdle traverse of Harrison's Rocks, climbed in June of 1941. Ted's original 400m route has been extended over the years but was a significant achievement.

Ted Zenthon died on 28 September 2012. He was 92.

There is some historical information from the JMCS at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/chris.bashforth/History.htm> by Graham Adcock

Johnny and his autobiography



Johnny Dawes is an occasional and enthusiastic visitor to sandstone, particularly High Rocks and Eridge Green where he has produced some esoteric gems of new lines.

As you may know he is quite a good climber with some of country's scariest leads to his credit with a video or two of his more alternative escapades for the record.

Johnny is a delightful and interesting character, so you will not be surprised to hear that his self-published autobiography appears to be an honest and mildly unconventional piece of work which gives a good insight to his life and times as one of the most talented masters of rock to grace the crags.

It is rather compulsive reading and certainly not establishment.

If you have not already read it, do get hold of a copy.

www.johnnydawes.com

DONATE TO THE STEVE DURKIN SANDSTONE TRUST

Want to know more?

Then when you log on to the internet tonight, why not go on to the Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust website www.sdst.org.uk?

It tells you all about what it is and what it does, if you like what you see why not make a donation?



And finally

Would you like to sponsor the cost of publishing a Sandstone Bulletin?

Doing so would be a way of contributing financially to the Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust as it will save the Trust some money.

If you like the idea, please contact Tim Daniells via the SDST website www.sdst.org.uk.