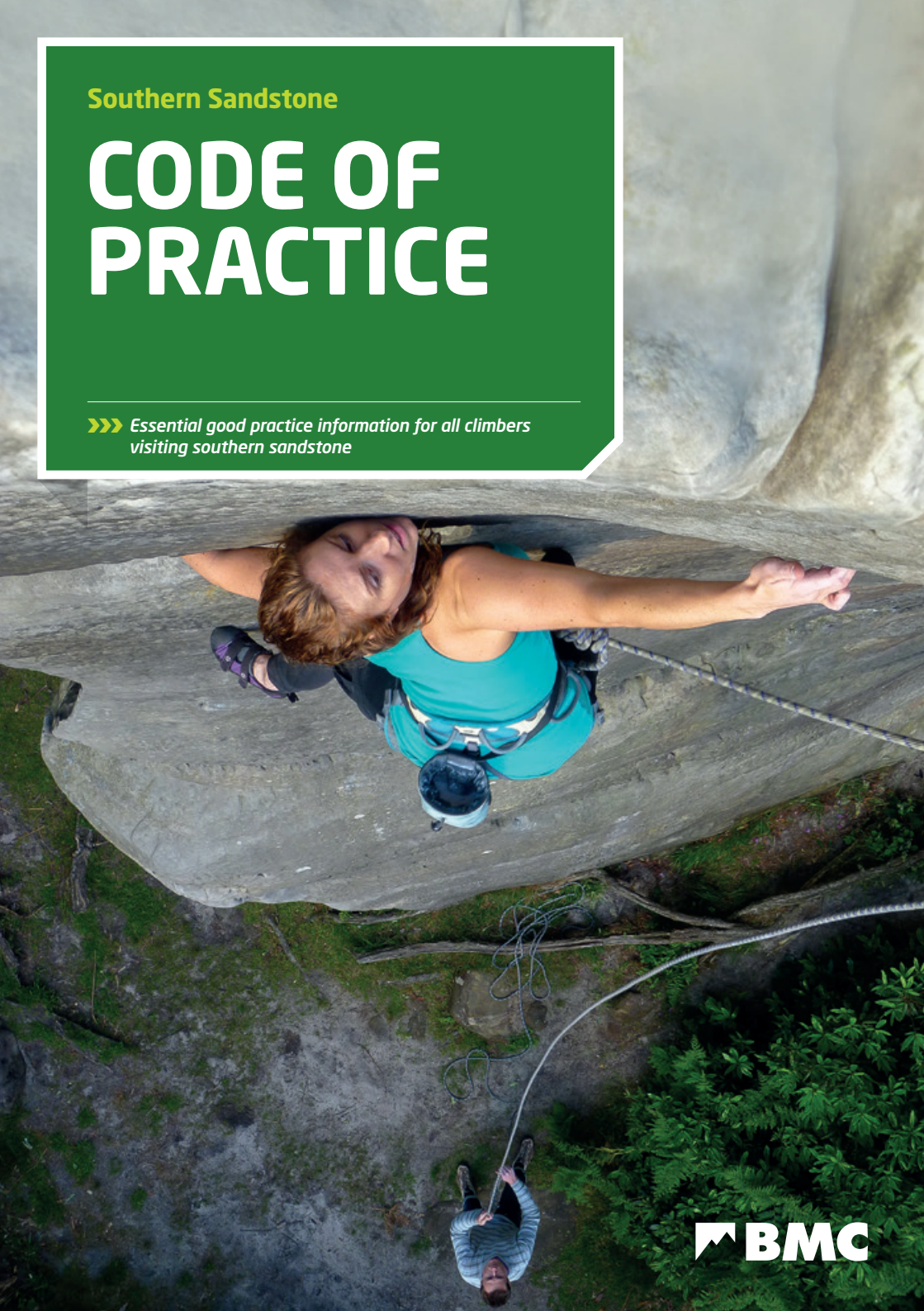


Southern Sandstone

# CODE OF PRACTICE

»»» *Essential good practice information for all climbers  
visiting southern sandstone*





Once the outer crust is broken, the rock underneath is incredibly soft




Incorrect rigging with moving ropes contacting the rock quickly wears rope grooves

The sandstone outcrops of the Central Weald on the borders of Kent and East Sussex were deposited during the Cretaceous period about 130 million years ago.

- Some of these crags have unique environmental features. Bull's Hollow, Eridge Green, High Rocks and Stone Farm are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Climbing is monitored by Natural England which has powers to protect these sites and to ban climbing in the event of damage to the rock or its environment.
- As the only climbable rock close to London, these crags are probably the most heavily used in the country.
- The sandstone is softer than virtually any other climbable rock, and consists

of a thin weathered crust over lightly compacted sand. Once the crust has been worn away, rapid erosion occurs.

- Climbs are done using a top rope, or solo. Careful positioning of climbing ropes and belay are necessary as any weighted rope moving over the rock will cause a sawing effect and permanent damage.
- Ensure you are familiar with the grading system used in your guidebook. Be aware that UK Technical grades are totally different to Sport grades commonly used indoors .
- To help preserve the fragile sandstone environment so we can all continue to enjoy the climbing in this area, please follow this code and encourage others to do so.



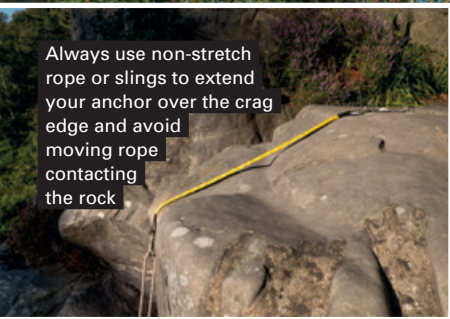
Extending your anchor point over the crag edge with non-stretch material reduces wear on your gear and helps to protect the fragile rock.

## ► THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS ARE:

- Use a non-stretch belay rope and sling
- Make sure the karabiner hangs over the edge of the crag
- Make sure moving ropes do not come into contact with the rock
- Clean your shoes before starting each climb
- Walk off when you have finished a climb, do not lower off or abseil
- Keep chalk use to a minimum.



A typical double bolt anchor, found at the top of many sandstone routes



Always use non-stretch rope or slings to extend your anchor over the crag edge and avoid moving rope contacting the rock



Leading on trad gear is not allowed on Southern Sandstone due to the softness of the rock

# PROTECTING THE ROCK



## FOOTWEAR

**01** Wear light soft-soled footwear. If you do not have specialist rock shoes, lightweight gym shoes are best. Clean your shoes before starting each climb.

## CLIMBING STYLE

**02** Top-roping and soloing are the only acceptable methods. A non-stretch belay should be used. Do not use pitons, bolts, nuts, camming devices or any sort of leader protection.

**03** Choose a climb of the right standard. Please do not spend a long time 'working' a climb that is too hard.

**04** The preferred ethic is not to use chalk. Please keep the use of chalk to a minimum. Do not use resin powder.

**05** Avoid cleaning holds if possible, but if cleaning is essential, do it gently with a very soft brush.

**06** Sandstone is softer when wet and climbers must exercise caution by avoiding sharp or fragile holds and ensuring good footwork. If it is wet, why not embrace the opportunity to explore the wonderful cracks and chimneys on offer.

**07** Never climb with axes and crampons, even on the rare occasions when ice forms on the rock.

## SETTING UP A BELAY

**08** At Bowles, Harrison's, Stone Farm and Bulls Hollow, belay anchors have been installed at the top of most climbs. Do not thread the climbing rope through these, but set up a non-stretch belay. Use a static belay rope of 11mm diameter. Five metres is a convenient length, and it is also useful to have a longer belay rope of 12 metres when there is no anchor and you are using a tree some distance back from the top of the crag. Putting a permanent sleeve around the knot just above the karabiner helps to protect both the knot and the rock.

Alternatively, tape slings can be used. Note: The bolts are only to be used for top-roping.

**09** When setting up a belay, adjust the height of the karabiner to hang far enough over the edge of the crag so that the climbing rope will not touch the rock.

**10** Moving or stretching ropes should never come into contact with the rock. The sawing action destroys the weathered crust and cuts deep grooves in the top of the crag.

**11** On an isolated buttress, the first member of a party will usually have to solo to the top. Do not throw a rope over the buttress from the ground.

## DESCENDING

**12** Walk off after completing a climb, do not lower off or abseil.

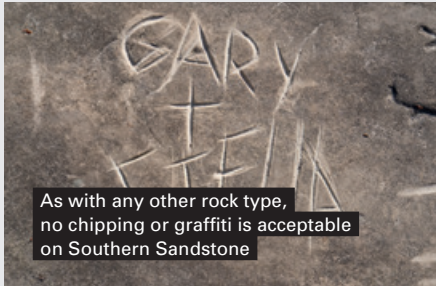
**13** On isolated buttresses all members of a party except the last should down-climb on a slack rope, and the last member should solo down.

## ABSEILING

**14** Please do not abseil at any Southern Sandstone crag. The top of the crag and the fragile holds on the face will be damaged. Abseiling is not permitted by the owners of the major outcrops.

## MALICIOUS DAMAGE

**15** Unfortunately this still happens from time to time, for example graffiti, chipping new holds or enlarging existing holds. If you see anyone doing this, please stop them.



## ➤ PRESERVING THE CRAG ENVIRONMENT

### GROUND EROSION

**16** Use established descent paths. Step on rock rather than earth, and avoid treading on vegetation if possible.

### TREES AND VEGETATION

**17** If there is no belay anchor, it is usually necessary to belay to a tree. Tie the belay rope round the tree as low as possible to minimise leverage. Please do not cut down or prune trees.

**18** Do not use herbicides for clearing vegetation from the rock. Regrowth will occur and it will be the commonest species that re-colonise, the rare species being eliminated.

## CAMPING

**19** Do not camp, bivouac, light fires, barbecues or stoves near the crags. There is a campsite next to the car-park at Harrison's Rocks. There is a fire area and in-situ BBQ at the car park.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR LEADERS OF ORGANISED GROUPS

**20** Please avoid the most popular climbs at weekends, particularly Sundays. Limit the time your group occupies a climb or a section of the crag. Remove ropes when you have stopped using a climb.

**21** Choose climbs to suit the ability of the group. If members are having trouble on a climb their feet will slip repeatedly causing rock erosion, additionally a weighted rope is likely to cause damage to the rock. Try something easier.

## FOR DETAILS OF SPECIFIC OUTCROPS

**22** For details of specific arrangements at the different outcrops please see the following websites:

**BMC Regional Access Database:**

[www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD)

**Sandstone Volunteer Group:**

[www.sandstonevolunteers.org.uk/](http://www.sandstonevolunteers.org.uk/)

**Southern Sandstone Climbs:**

[www.southernsandstoneclimbs.co.uk/](http://www.southernsandstoneclimbs.co.uk/)

**Nuts4Climbing:**

[www.rockclimbingstore.co.uk/southern-sandstone-news](http://www.rockclimbingstore.co.uk/southern-sandstone-news)

# SANDSTONE BOULDERING SENSE



Clean boots reduce rock damage



Please take all litter home - not just your own



Don't use toothbrushes or boulder brushes. Repetitive brushing will damage the rock



Bouldering mats reduce ground erosion



No chipping



Don't place tick marks



Use as little chalk as possible



Don't remove turf and vegetation from the rock

# WHAT IS THE BMC?

The BMC stands up for climbers and walkers in England and Wales. Join over 82,000 members today to get gear discounts, Summit magazine, personal liability and accident insurance and the warm glow that comes from helping us keep crags open.

**Join today and support our vital work.**

**JOIN NOW:** go to [www.thebmc.co.uk/join](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/join) or phone **0161 445 6111**

The BMC's Access team are available to discuss access issues on sandstone (or elsewhere in England & Wales) by contacting [access@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:access@thebmc.co.uk) or **0161 438 3309**.

## FURTHER READING & INFORMATION:



**READ: Rock Climbing:  
Essential Skills & Techniques**

The definitive and comprehensive 'how to rock climb' textbook.

[www.thebmc.co.uk/shop](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/shop)



**SEARCH:**

**Mountain Training find a leader**

Explore and learn under the guidance of a qualified leader.

[www.mountain-training.org/find/find-a-leader](http://www.mountain-training.org/find/find-a-leader)



**READ:  
The Countryside Code**

Respect. Protect. Enjoy.

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/countrysidecode](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/countrysidecode)



**READ: The Green Guide for  
Groups of Climbers**

Minimal impact advice for climbing groups of all sizes

[www.thebmc.co.uk/green-guide-groups](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/green-guide-groups)



**WATCH:  
Southern Sandstone Skills films**

Short films about good practice techniques for climbing on Southern Sandstone.

[www.thebmc.co.uk/southern-sandstone-skills](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/southern-sandstone-skills)



**READ: New Rock Climbers**

Your free guide to heading outside for the first time - or refresher for the more experienced.

[www.thebmc.co.uk/new-rock-climbers](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/new-rock-climbers)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



**ROCKFAX**  
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