

Advice for Drive Organisers

Location

Decide on a couple of suitable dates, and discuss them with the Secretary in plenty of time in case there is a clash with other events. Decide on a starting time. Will you offer food or drink afterwards? This is up to you. It's not compulsory! The Secretary will put the date into the Newsletter. Give a contact phone number and a brief set of directions to the location for the newsletter, and write yourself a detailed set to read out over the phone in case of further enquiries.

You need plenty of level, dry space to park horseboxes, unload the horses and carriages, and put-to. Make sure the gates are wide enough to get the horseboxes in.

Decide on a route, and a format. Drives can be led, as a convoy. They can also be driven solo or in small groups. You can send them over a flagged route, or (as with Treasure or Scavenger Hunts, Poker rallies etc) give them a set of instructions and/or a map. If it's the first time you've run a drive, you can ask the Committee to send someone to check out your route and planned activities.

Choose a drive leader (if you are not leading the drive yourself, or if it's not an individual effort like a Treasure Hunt). See Leading a Drive.

Choosing a route

5 miles is the least distance that people will expect on a drive. Anything up to about 12 miles is acceptable for a single drive. Obviously you must tell people when they enquire, how long the drive is, and whether there will be a stop for a picnic (or whatever) partway round.

Allow roughly one hour for every 5 miles, to accommodate halts for traffic, gates and walking spells, when estimating how long you will be out. If the scenery is very important to enjoyment of the drive, allow longer!

It helps if there is a shorter option for those with small, young or very unfit ponies and you should either give them a map with the alternatives marked or have a spare drive leader for that option.

If the local roads are very steep or the terrain is rough, consider choosing the solo/small group option.

On return

If you are planning to put up "fun" obstacles remember they may be attempted by inexperienced drivers and novice horses, so try to make them easy to knock down, rather than solid. There must be no more than 6 compulsory gates per obstacle, and all compulsory gates must be a minimum of 2 metres wide.

Don't build them on banks, next to barbed wire fences, over tree roots or rabbit holes, or in water (except for straight crossings with a sound bottom).

They don't have to be timed.

Leading a Drive: the Drive Leader's responsibilities

Drive leaders must be members of the Club and have taken a safety test before the day of the drive.

Drive participants must be members of the Club and have taken a safety test before the day of the drive.

If you have guests who wish to join in a drive, please explain our safety rules and ask them to show proof of their third party insurance (BDS or BHDTA membership is sufficient). The Club's BHDTA insurance only covers paid up members of the Club - so be careful.

Your drive leader must:

Know the organisers' agreed route and stick to it unless in emergency.

Be a responsible person who will look after the drivers and horses following.

Have an active passenger or groom in the carriage, and carry a mobile phone with all necessary numbers keyed in beforehand.

Ensure that the lead horse is happy driving with other turnouts and will lead willingly.

Match the drive's pace to the distance of the drive, the terrain, the fitness of the horses/ponies and the experience of the drivers following.

Ask the groom to look behind frequently and listen for requests from the drivers behind.

Give frequent walking breaks if horses are becoming badly blown, particularly in hot weather.

Know the short ways home in case of a turnout having difficulties for any reason.

Be aware of and warn followers about difficult conditions underfoot: stretches of slippery tarmac, or rough going.

Always signal clearly what you are going to do, particularly slowing pace. The vertical whip position to warn following turnouts of a drop from fast trot to walk, or walk to halt, is much more visible than any hand signal to people driving behind you.

After descending a slope remember that all turnouts behind must be clear of the slope before anyone increases pace.

On narrow roads where it is unsafe for traffic to pass, hold the crown of the road until you reach a stretch of road where there is room and visibility for it to pass safely, then move over.

When leading a drive through gates, remember that all turnouts behind must have cleared and closed the gate before you move off. The groom or passenger should be asked to look back and confirm that this is the case.

If you really can't avoid travelling on a busy road, split big drives into groups of two or three. Let car traffic behind you "leap-frog" the drive safely by driving into the gaps. This splitting-up of the drive can also be helpful if coming out of gateways or road ends onto busy roads, but it must be discussed beforehand (eg at a briefing) so that the job/s of leading the smaller group/s can be delegated.