

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION

## THE BRAE

CARRIAGE DRIVING  
HELPERS' BASIC TRAINING NOTES



**Designed by Katie Horne**

**Group Organiser: Alison Macintosh  
July 2011**

## **RDA CARRIAGE DRIVING**

### **ROLE OF HELPERS**

Helpers are required to help with the following elements:

- Bringing carriage in from container.
- Harnessing up.
- Head holding.
- Putting to.
- Loading disabled driver in wheelchair/helping ambulant person (i.e. not in wheelchair) into carriage.
- Balancing carriage.
- Clamping wheelchair onto carriage.
- Accompanying carriage (preferably on bicycle) – different role depending whether in front of, beside or behind carriage.
- Taking out.
- Unharnessing.
- Cleaning carriage.
- Cleaning harness.
- Putting carriage back into container.

## **THE BRAE** **Riding for the Disabled**

**1 Linlathen Grove  
Dundee  
DD5 3GL**

**Tel: 07885851881  
[www.brae.org.uk](http://www.brae.org.uk)**

## ACCIDENT PROCEDURE

All turnouts must carry a spares kit and a First Aid kit. All turnouts will have at least one person present with a First Aid Certificate, but all helpers should be encouraged to have one. All helpers should be familiar with the harness.

### IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT:

- ASSESS THE SITUATION
- WHERE POSSIBLE MAKE THE ACCIDENT SITE SAFE
- GIVE EMERGENCY FIRST AID
- GET HELP

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In an emergency, the objectives are to stop the carriage, hold the pony, and , if thought necessary, dismount the driver quickly, calmly and safely. The RDA Whip is in charge of the operation. Be aware of traffic if on the road. The RDA Whip may judge that the first and safest action is to separate the pony from the carriage. Once the pony has been led away from the carriage, one helper (or two, if there are three helpers in all) can easily hold the shafts of the carriage in balance with the RDA Whip and disabled driver still sitting on board, until further assistance arrives. The helpers will follow this five-point procedure:

- Undo the quick release clips connecting traces to carriage, and slip traces through trace carriers.
- Undo the parrot clip on the back strap.
- RDA Whip (and driver if applicable), throw away reins.
- Allow the pony's tail to slide through crupper while he is led away.
- Keep hold of the shafts while the drivers are still on board.

**Be quick. Remain calm. Phone for assistance at the first possible opportunity.**

High visibility safety tabards should be worn by all cyclists and drivers. Helpers should constantly be aware of safety issues, and avoid going too near the wheels of the carriage. Hats should be worn by carriage drivers which conform to current standards:

**PAS 015 1998 or ASTM F1163.**

## APPROPRIATE DRESS & FOOTWEAR FOR RDA

- Wear appropriate comfortable outdoor clothing.
- Wear strong shoes or boots, to protect feet.
- Jackets must be fastened, since flapping jackets might scare the horse.

## APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR WHEN WORKING WITH HORSES

Horses can easily be upset or frightened by sudden movement or loud noises therefore:

- Always remain calm and quiet.
- Never shout near a horse.
- Do not run, always walk.
- Do not walk directly behind a horse. They have a blind spot immediately behind and may not see you. This could result in a kick.
- Do not make any sudden movements with your hand, especially towards the horse's head.

## WORKING IN THE STABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Watch the pony's body language e.g. ears back, swishing tail, restless behaviour. An unhappy pony may kick, bite, stand on your foot or strike out with a front leg.
- Return all tools and equipment to their appointed place e.g. grooming equipment, lead ropes, head collars, buckets, hoses, pooper scoops. Untidiness can cause accidents
- Always secure doors and gates in the stable.

## LEADING

- Clip lead rope onto head collar .
- Wear gloves.
- Lead horse from the near side.
- Do not wrap lead rope round hand.

## GROOMING

### Always tie up using a quick release knot.

- Pick out feet into a bucket.
- Use rubber currycomb/dandy brush on body to remove loose hair and mud.
- Use body brush to remove dust from body and to groom face, mane and tail. Clean brush with metal currycomb.
- Use yard brush to sweep up loose hair and mud. Put in bin or muck barrow.
- Have a bucket of water ready to sponge pony down after work if necessary.

NB. Straight away, report any worries about the pony to the Group Organiser: Alison Macintosh.

## HARNESSING UP

- Put harness on harness rack.
- Put on driving head collar.
- Start by putting on breast collar (upside down and turn in direction of mane).
- Fit pad. Do up girth loosely to prevent pad from slipping.
- Do up belly band loosely.
- Fit breeching. Attach back strap to pad via parrot clip. Do up crupper, making sure no hairs are caught.
- Fit traces onto breast collar and feed traces under belly band, through trace carriers and up to back strap to secure.
- Fit RDA Whip's reins through both sets of terrets with enough slack to reach bit and then buckle to terret on breast collar. Secure excess onto back strap.
- If disabled driver is using reins, fit them through both sets of terrets with enough slack to reach bit and then buckle to terret on pad. Secure excess onto back strap behind the RDA Whip's reins.
- Just before putting to, put on bridle over head collar and attach RDA Whip's reins to bit. Disabled driver's reins go on the head collar. RDA Whip will check harness for correct fitting before putting to.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE DRIVE-OUT

The RDA Whip is in charge of the carriage and the team of helpers, and will:

- Check all round the whole turnout.
- Be seated, pick up the reins and whip and take up a light contact with the reins until the driver gets in and takes up his/her reins.
- Signal to the helper at the pony's head to release the pony's head when he/she is happy that everything is in order.
- Drive at a sensible speed, avoiding sharp turns.
- Be alert to any difficulty encountered by the driver.
- Remain seated in control of the carriage until the driver gets out.

## THE HELPERS

- For each carriage there will be an RDA Whip and two or three able-bodied helpers on bicycles. Ambulant drivers will be accompanied by a minimum of two able-bodied helpers while wheel-chair bound drivers will be accompanied by a minimum of three able-bodied helpers. The helpers can be described as pony helpers and driver's helpers, according to the role they play.
- The pony helper has a lead rope which is attached to the pony's head collar when stationary and unclipped and carried when on the move. The driver's helpers help load and unload the wheelchair, or help an ambulant driver mount and dismount. All the helpers accompany the carriage on bicycles to be alert to potential traffic difficulties, and to attend to the driver in the event of any emergency.
- As well as driving in our two arenas, we will be driving on a track round the centre, which has already been risk assessed. There is a likelihood of meeting farm traffic (cars, combine harvesters, tractors etc.) and also traffic coming to the Brae or the Nursing Home. The cyclists must make sure that approaching motorists see the turnout early. Cyclists should remain alert to traffic conditions and think about potential risks. This may at times mean the front cyclist going forward some way, or the rear cyclist hanging back, in order to be visible to oncoming traffic round a corner for example.
- Cyclists accompanying the turnout should not make signals to drivers of other vehicles to overtake. They should signal left and right and slow down if necessary if asked to by the RDA Whip.
- The pony helper will cycle ahead of the carriage, carrying the rope, ready to stop and attend to the pony if required by the RDA Whip.
- One or two helpers will cycle behind the carriage (track too narrow to cycle alongside), being aware of the need to be visible to traffic approaching from the rear but also keeping an eye on the well-being of the driver and being alert to any request from the RDA Whip.

## LOADING AND UNLOADING MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING

### **Semi-ambulant (i.e. not in a wheelchair)**

- RDA Whip to be seated with reins and whip in total control of the pony.
- One helper is at the pony's head, lead rope on.
- Another helper assists the semi-ambulant driver to mount or dismount the vehicle with the aid of steps as necessary.
- Quickly remove the steps if used.

### **Loading Wheelchairs**

- Electric wheelchairs must never be used in the carriages.
- The RDA Whip will check all round the whole turnout, then get into the carriage, sit down, pick up the reins, and be in control of the carriage; the pony helper is at the pony's head with the rope attached to the head collar; the driver's helpers assist the driver.

### **Driver's helpers will:**

- Lower the jockey wheel, lower the back of the carriage and pull out the ramps.
- Assist the driver's own carer to push the wheelchair up the ramps and pull into position in the carriage; apply brakes.
- Raise the ramps, back and jockey wheel.
- Check balance and adjust wheelchair position if necessary.
- Secure wheelchair to the carriage using the clamps.

### **The RDA Whip will then:**

- Make sure the driver is comfortable and hand him/her the driver's reins.
- In the absence of a driver's own carer, one other helper should be available to handle wheelchair.

## UNLOADING WHEELCHAIRS

The RDA whip remains seated and in control of the horse; a helper is at the pony's head with the rope attached to the head collar.

The driver's helpers:

- Undo the clamps.
- Lower the jockey wheel, back and ramps.
- Let the wheelchair brake off and unload it carefully until well clear of the back of the carriage, with the help of the driver's carer, if available.
- Raise the ramps, back and jockey wheel.

## HEAD HOLDING

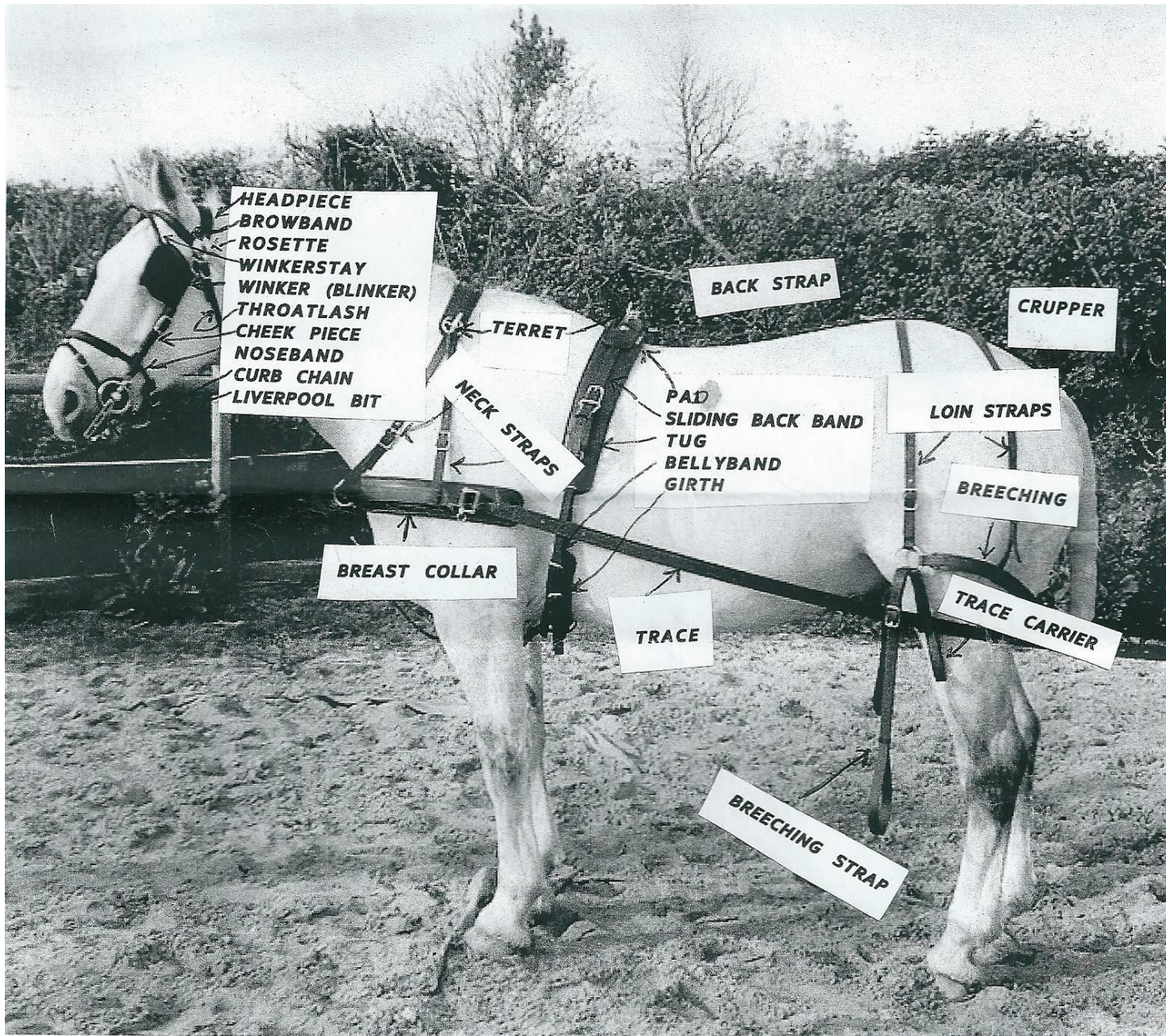
- Always wear gloves to prevent rope burns should the horse pull his lead rope.
- Always allow enough length of rope so that the horse can move his head freely.
- Never wind the lead rope round your hand.
- Never hold the reins. This means that the driver has no control over the horse.
- If necessary, hold the horse by the cheek pieces on his bridle.
- Clip lead rope to head collar.
- Take the horse round to the front of the carriage in line with the shafts and stay in front of and holding horse by the head collar rope whilst putting to and loading up.
- Take lead rope off and stand aside when told to do so by RDA Whip or driver.
- Go out with the drive and keep an eye on the turnout at all times, being ready to go to assistance if necessary.
- Stay at the pony's head until everyone is out of the vehicle and the pony is fastened up.

## PUTTING TO

The horse should never be backed into or walked away from the shafts (except in an emergency take-out, when the latter would happen). Put to in the following order:

- Bring the carriage up to the horse and warn the horse that it is coming by gently placing a hand on his quarters. **Slot the shafts through the tugs**, with a helper at each side.
- Attach the traces to the swingletree.**
- Fasten the breeching straps** through the breeching dee on the shaft. If the breeching is properly adjusted, there should be a hand's breadth between the horse's quarters and the seat of the breeching.
- Tighten the girth** - not quite as tight as the girth on a riding saddle.
- Last adjustment is to the belly-band**, once you have balanced the carriage. Normally about a fist between the girth and belly-band. If the vehicle is correctly balanced, there should be a minimal weight of approximately two pounds in the hand of the helper when the shafts are lifted slightly.

**Reverse the process for taking out and unharnessing.**



HEADPIECE  
BROWBAND  
ROSETTE  
WINKERSTAY  
WINKER (BLINKER)  
THROATLASH  
CHEEK PIECE  
NOSEBAND  
CURB CHAIN  
LIVERPOOL BIT

TERRET  
NECK STRAPS

BACK STRAP

CRUPPER

PAD  
SLIDING BACK BAND  
TUG  
BELLYBAND  
GIRTH

LOIN STRAPS

BREECING

BREAST COLLAR

TRACE

TRACE CARRIER

BREECING STRAP