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Dear Member

Welcome to Caithness Riders Access Group (CRAG). Caithness is a beautiful County with many horse riders and horsey activities available.

We have put together a welcome pack for you in order that you can find your hooves in Caithness.

You will find all the details you need to settle into horsey life in Caithness.

Attached are: Constitution, Available rides, Useful horsey numbers and websites, and a hacking survey which we would be grateful if you would fill in and return to CRAG.

If there is any more information you require, or if you just want to get in touch with some likeminded horsey folk, please log onto [www.crag-online.co.uk](http://www.crag-online.co.uk)

Hope to see you out and about in the near future.

Cath Whittles  
Chairperson  
Caithness Riders Access Group

# Caithness Riders Access Group

## CONSTITUTION

1. The Caithness Riders Access Group committee shall undertake all powers of management. The committee shall consist of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer (the 'office bearers'). At least four committee members including at least two office bearers shall constitute a quorum.
2. The office bearers shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting and shall hold office for two years but they are eligible for re-election. Representatives of other organisations that share similar aims to Caithness Riders Access Group and other interested individuals may be invited to attend meetings.
3. The committee shall have the power to ask for the help of any member with particular expertise, as and when needed.
4. The date of the Annual General Meeting will be announced publicly two weeks in advance of the event. The notification shall include an outline of the agenda. Items for the agenda must be sent to the secretary no later than three weeks before the AGM takes place. The AGM will be held in August. A quorum for an AGM shall be 12 people.
5. The decision of the committee shall be the sole authority for the interpretation of Caithness Riders Access Group's aims and objectives. The committee's decisions shall be final and binding.
6. If upon winding up or dissolution of Caithness Riders Access Group there remains, after the discharge of debts and liabilities, any property, effects or funds whatsoever, the same shall be given or transferred to some other Scottish Organisation(s) sharing similar aims and objectives. The committee shall decide upon suitable organisations.
7. The secretary will keep minutes of all committee meetings and AGM meetings.
8. A Special General Meeting may be called by the committee or by four other members by written request, lodged with the secretary and specifying the business to be discussed. The secretary will give

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ten days notice of the date of the meeting and shall specify in writing the business to be discussed.

9. Members of Caithness riders Access Group Committee or persons acting on their behalf shall not be held responsible for any accident or injury to any person or property, however caused.
10. The constitution may only be altered at the AGM and any amendment must be carried by a majority of at least three quarters of those present who are eligible to vote.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To lobby for the provision of routes throughout Caithness for off-road riding, including old tracks and rights of way that may have fallen into disuse.
2. To actively work at keeping existing routes open and to improve and extend them whenever possible.
3. To seek funding from appropriate official organisations and/or commercial sector companies to further the aims of Caithness Riders Access Group.
4. To aim to ensure that all surfaces are suitable for the horse and rider.
5. To work in conjunction with cycling and walking groups, when appropriate.

# Caithness Riders Access Group

ROUTES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

Correct as of April 2008

## **LOCH MORE CIRCUIT- WITH SPUR TO FORSINAIN**

**IN SUTHERLAND:** *See* map pack. (CRAG got this route opened with funding assistance from Highland Access Project (to make the cattle grid bridge passable, installation of a horse access gate and way marking). RSPB at Forsinard have asked to be informed if riders intend to go on the Forsinain route. An unmanned railway crossing at Altnabreac must be negotiated and it is advisable to check train times. Railtrack are currently monitoring the use of some unmanned crossings with a view to closing them to horse riders. This includes the Altnabreac crossing. David Barclay, Highland Council and Access Forum are involved with this. *Note: The 5 mile section of route from Loch More to Dalnawillan lodge is very stony and unkind to horse's feet. There is also severe water erosion of track in places along track beyond Dalnawillan approaching Loch Dhu and low-lying sections subject to water-logging. Should CRAG address these issues?*

**DALNAWILLAN-GLUTT-BRAEMORE:** By arrangement with Dunbeath and Langwell (Berriedale) estates due to estate activities. There are locked barriers/gates along this route to prevent unauthorized vehicular access.

## **DUNBEATH RIDE- ESTATE TRACK TO ACHNACLYTH.**

Parking usually at factory by arrangement with Dunbeath estate (or possibly at sheep station at start of track). It is also possible to park down at the harbour beside public toilets and ride up beneath the fly-over, and on track behind hotel but makes this a longer ride. There are locked barriers along this route to prevent unauthorized vehicular access so presently ridden by prior arrangement, subject to estate activities.

**BROUBSTER FOREST-** *See map pack.* (There was intensive lobbying by CRAG to gain horse access in this forest, eventually made possible by the installation of a new side gate beside the locked forest gates). There is limited parking in the gateway. Other parking ½ mile up road is available by

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arrangement at the entrance to a privately owned quarry. The forest is privately owned by a number of different people and roe deer shooting is carried out throughout the year, except on Sundays. A notice is posted on the gate when shooting is in progress.

**RUMSTER FOREST TRACKS-** as described in map pack. (CRAG was the main lobby group behind the new tracks in the forest, funded by the Highland Access Project and for the installation of horse access gates). There is a new extension (2007) at the end of the track on the Golticlay side of Rumster (the one that goes from the public car park on the Rumster road) and this runs for 1km and is surfaced with flat stones. The first part of this track mainly has a smooth sandy surface.

**LOCH STEMSTER TO MUNSARY COTTAGE-** *See map pack.* Parking either at public lay-by or in Rumster forest. (The lay-by was made large enough to take a horse box following lobbying by CRAG). Courtesy 'phone call to keeper requested due to estate/fishing activities. See map pack.

**CAMSTER-CLYTH CYCLE TRACK-** *See map pack.* (Horse access gate put in because of CRAG).

**CAMSTER-ACHAIRN AND NEW EXTENSION TRACK TO THRUMSTER ROADS SYSTEM VIA TANNACH HILL.** *See map pack. Note: new extension and parts of main track stony and unfriendly to horse's feet. CRAG has raised this in the past with the Forestry Commission and asked for improvements to be made, when possible.*

**BRAEHOUR FOREST, WESTERDALE. FORESTRY COMMISSION.** *See map pack.* Reasonable amount of parking available in forest gateway; access via a side gate. Some stretches slightly stony.

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**WESTERDALE QUARRY RIDE CROSSING THURSO RIVER. ESTATE LAND SUBJECT TO STALKING ACTIVITIES.**

**LYBSTER RIDES-** *See map packs.* Private parking by arrangement. Not suitable for winter riding.

(Highland Council paid for a replacement gate to be installed at the top of the right of way above Reisgill burn, following representation by CRAG).

**KEISS ROUTE** Highland Council funded some work several years ago on a route near Auckengill, Keiss but it is believed this is now disused although parts may still be able to be ridden.

**RIDE AT REAY** This is a circular ride covering approx 5 miles with the option of riding on the beach at the end of the ride.

It is mainly on tracks with a small part going through the village where traffic is not too fast.

**Parking and start** Go through Reay and turn down the road signposted to Reay Beach, Go to end of that road and you will see a large car park where you can park up to 8 trailers/lorries depending on other vehicles that are there.

Leave this spot following the road you have just driven down to the end and take the first right which is still a track towards the big house, At the top of the hill turn left At the next T junction, turn left towards the village. Go over the bridge over the burn and turn right immediately after it and then take the next left (following the houses on your left) At the next left bend in the road turn right down a track (there is a gate a short way down please close it behind you if it is closed when you reach it)

Keep following this track and after a while you will reach a concrete bridge and an arched bridge beside it, use either.

Just after the bridge there is a track to your left take this up towards a house and some outbuildings.

Take the next left track alongside a wall and an arena, keep straight and this takes you back to the main road through the village

At the T junction turn left and follow this back to the beach road on your right.

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Access down to the beach is beside the public toilets which you go past on your way back to the car park.

## **BEACHES:**

**DUNNET, parking at Pavilion with option of new multi-use path to Dunnet Forest and horse track.**

*See map pack.* (CRAG lobbied for the horse track in the forest and was the significant pressure group for the multi-use footpath to connect the beach with the forest).

**REISS- needs a map pack!**

**DORRERY-RSPB** land, important breeding area for rare birds. RSPB Forsinard has requested to be informed if riders intend to use this track. Restricted, private parking area- 'phone calls required to park. It is believed that no one requests to ride this track due to importance of area for conservation.

## **ROUTES UNDER INVESTIGATION**

**SHURRERY Estate track-**In progress; neighbouring land to Dorrery with comparable conservation issues. There are concerns over the fragility of track which is subject to erosion and extra damage that horses might cause. CRAG arranged a ride there in 2006 (during unusually dry summer) just prior to remedial work being carried out. Have had no contact with estate since then. If riders wish to go again, it will probably need to be by arrangement, restricted to certain times of year due to shooting and stalking.

**KEISS BEACH-** Access was blocked to horses due to tidal activity-boulders and rocks. Investigate current position.

**DUNNET HEAD-** boggy stretch identified and other paths on 'The Head' could be ridden but work needed.

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**CASTLETOWN-BATTERY ROAD-EAST MURKLE FARM-MURKLE BEACH.** A possible route was identified in a previous study (not carried out by CRAG).

**BILBSTER-TARROUL.** A possible route has been identified but would require some work to be done.

**BROUBSTER FOREST-**A link to tracks on the Reay side (Limekilns Forest belonging to Sandside estate and area higher up to Shurrery). Track creation would be required. Would be great if it could happen!

**RUMSTER-**Link to Paddock parking area; in Forestry Commission plan for future development, along with other possible routes.

**RUMSTER-GOLTICLAY SIDE.** Link between two tracks on this side of forest. In Forestry commission plans for future development. CRAG has intimated support for this and other developments in Rumster.

**RUMSTER-OSCLAY.** Link from Osclay access track to Golticlay track. In management plan for future forestry developments in next few years.

**ACHOW-** actively under investigation with Forestry Commission and farmer to gain a new access from the Achow road ( see Lybster map pack 1) into Rumster forest.

**CAMSTER-CLYTH-**Link from off-shoot path to main track to create a circuit at Clyth end of forest. CRAG to try and take forward? Plans submitted for windfarm (2007) may make this not worthwhile. Await outcome of planning application?

**HALSARY- Forestry Commission** track available and car park now created but awaiting fencing being put in. Delays due to health and safety issues regarding a power line.

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**REAY-** forest tracks belonging to Sandside and Shurrery.

**BERRIEDALE.** Langwell estate hill tracks and track at Braemore. No one has yet gained access for riding. Approach new factor, Anson Macauslan, to discuss?

## **CRAG Hacking Survey**

1 How often have you ridden over the summer months?

- Never
- Once a month
- Once a fortnight
- Weekly
- 2- 3 times per week
- 4+ time per week

2 How often do you hack out on your horse?

- Never
- Once a month
- Once a fortnight
- Weekly
- 2- 3 times per week
- 4+ time per week

3 Please list any off-road routes you already use

4 Would you like to hack out more than you do now?

5 What are the barriers to you hacking out?

- No horse
- No transport
- Horse not suitable
- Not confident enough
- Other – please explain

6 What would help you to hack out more?

7 Is there anything CRAG can do to help?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our survey

## Some Useful Numbers

### Feed Merchants

CLB	Thurso	01847 894567
W & A Geddes	Thurso	01847 891651
W & A Geddes	Wick	01955 602207
Pets at Home	Wick	01955 603586

### Farriers

Margaret	Lairg	
Nick Crosby	Lairg	01549 402936

### Livery Yards

Jean Gunn	Wick	01955 603270
Alex Henderson	Halkirk	01847 831
Marion Bain	Halkirk	01847 831324

### Tack Shops

Bits n Bobs - Full Range		
CLB - Clothing and Accessories	Wick	01955 603270
Geddes - Clothing and Accessories	Thurso	01847 894567
Geddes - Clothing and Accessories	Thurso	01847 891651
	Wick	01955 602207

### Vets

DS McGregor & Partners		
DS McGregor & Partners	Thurso	01847 892387
	Wick	01955 602088

### Riding Instructors

Jean Gunn (own horse only)		
Alex Henderson (own horse only)	Wick	01955 603270
Marion Bain (own horse or hers)	Halkirk	01847 831
	Halkirk	01847 831324

### Other useful numbers

Pony Club

Riding Club

01955 602527

Elaine Grey – Secretary  
[caithness@pcuk.org](mailto:caithness@pcuk.org)

Indoor School

01847 831763

Catriona Kennedy - Secretary

Indoor School for Bookings

Halkirk 01847 831452

Clipping - Lorna Calder

Halkirk 01847 831656

Dentist - David Brown

07795 508954

Equine Chiropracter - Kay MacCarroll

Visits you 01955 611449

Sandy Barton co-ordinator  
[bartonsandy@hotmail.com](mailto:bartonsandy@hotmail.com)

Horse Sitter - Lois McCulloch

Visits you 01847 851650  
07717280490

Debs Wilson - co-ordinator  
[Debsw123@hotmail.com](mailto:Debsw123@hotmail.com)  
[holidayhorsesitter@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:holidayhorsesitter@hotmail.co.uk)

Some Useful Web Addresses:

The Pony Club: [www.pcuk.org](http://www.pcuk.org)  
Caithness Pony Club: [www.piczo.com/caithnessponyclub](http://www.piczo.com/caithnessponyclub)  
Caithness Riding Club: [www.caithnessridingclub.co.uk](http://www.caithnessridingclub.co.uk)  
Community Web Site: [www.caithness.org](http://www.caithness.org)