



RIDING A HORSE ON CLEEVE COMMON



Cleeve Common is a wonderful place to ride. It offers wide open grassland, good going all year round, numerous and varied tracks and, of course, magnificent views. You should however be aware that the Common is, first and foremost, a conservation area and its fragile habitats are protected by law as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Common is privately owned land that is managed and regulated by a Registered Charity, the Board of Conservators, which was established by Act of Parliament in 1890.

What right of access is there for horse riders on Cleeve Common?

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) gives the 'right to roam' anywhere on the Common, but only on foot. Any horse and rider may use the bridleways and restricted byways (but these are very limited - see Ordnance Survey maps). Elsewhere, there is **no statutory access** for horse riders on the Common. However provision was made under the 1890 Bylaws of the Common to license horse riding and this has been in force ever since.

To ride off the Rights of Way on the Common you must have a hacking licence. The Board of Conservators is obliged to uphold the Bylaws in order to protect the Common for future generations.

Why do horse riders have to pay for a licence?

The purpose of licensing is to balance the various recreational uses of the Common with agriculture and conservation. We continue to charge a small annual fee for licences to horse riders for the following reasons:

- Local horse riders use the Common much more frequently on average than most other visitors such as mountain bikers, cover a much greater area and cause more damage to the grassland.
- We provide seven day a week Ranger cover. On a per person basis, horse riders are around a hundred times more likely to need Ranger assistance than walkers. The Board of Conservators incurs the cost of these call-outs.
- There is direct expenditure in repairing tracks eroded by horses and in providing and maintaining bridle gates (as opposed to cheaper and more robust stiles, for instance).
- Overall, it is a small contribution towards effective grassland management. Without this, the Common would not have the open grassy spaces that make it so good for riding. Over time, it would degrade to rough grass tussocks, gorse and hawthorn.
- We are following usual practice in levying a charge for access to ride on private land. Our fee is considerably less than for many other areas.

How does the Board of Conservators regulate other activities on the Common?

There is no provision in the Bylaws of the Common to enforce the licensing of other activities such as mountain biking or kite boarding. Instead, we engage with interest groups in a cooperative manner, producing a 'Code' for each of the main activities that take place on the Common. Within the Code we specify how other users should behave around horses. We receive funding from some groups who recognise the Conservators' valuable work from which they benefit.

What else do I need to know?

You ride on the Common entirely at your own risk. The Board does not accept liability for any damage or injury caused to any person, animal or property, including the rider and her/his horse or pony, whether the activity is authorised by licence or not. We recommend that you have your own public liability insurance.

Annual licences run from 1 March to 28 February; a half year licence (September to February) is also available at reduced cost. A rider may use her/his licence tag on any horse, but the tag is not transferable to another person. You should also be aware that there are random checks to ensure that all riders are licensed.

Licences are intended for local riders. Therefore **we do not offer parking** for horse lorries or trailers. You must not unload or load a horse on the Common.

Horse Riders' Code

In applying for a licence, you are signing up to abide by the Cleeve Common Horse Riders' Code:

- **Display your hacking licence tag** whenever you ride on the Common, either on the nearside of the bridle or nearside D-ring on the saddle.
- **Avoid 'no-go zones':**
 - the Golf Course greens, tees and fairways.
 - the Hill Fort above Nutterswood; this is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which we are legally bound to protect.
 - ecologically fragile area (marked on a map supplied with the licence) where many of our rarest plants and animals live on the thin soils. Please ride slowly, in single file on the centre of firm, established tracks only.
 - the winter cattle enclosures, except where main tracks pass through large field gates. Note that some enclosures will have pedestrian gates but these are narrow and not suitable for horse access.
- **Minimize the impact:** in wet conditions avoid fast work and keep to the middle of established tracks to reduce damage or erosion. Do not make new tracks. Do not ride through rough grassland.
- **Take care near livestock:** grazing sheep and cattle are essential to maintain the natural limestone grassland. Ride past slowly to avoid disturbance. **Always close the gates** behind you to avoid livestock escaping.
- **Respect other users of the Common:** Ride with courtesy and consideration for other visitors. Please politely alert kite flyers as you approach, to allow them time to rest their kites.
- **Follow the rules:** riders must obey any signs or requests from Rangers.
- **Emergencies:** Call **999** or **112** first, then the Ranger if you need on-site assistance: **07756 828 458**

Please keep us informed if you see something untoward while out riding. If urgent (e.g. illegal motorbikes), call the Ranger number. For less urgent feedback, email, text or phone us:

✉ info@cleevecommon.org.uk

☎ 07471 687877