



Duty Pilot Briefing Notes

These notes are not a comprehensive guide to flying procedures, but merely a guide to the responsibilities of the Duty Pilot. They should be read in conjunction with *Site Rules and Procedures*.

All solo pilots with more than 10 hours in the last year should have sufficient knowledge of the procedures to carry out the role of Duty Pilot.

The Duty Pilot is the person responsible, with the support and assistance of the Duty Instructor, for the smooth running of the launch point. He is not required to do all the work, but needs to make sure there are sufficient competent 'volunteers' to keep the launch point operating safely and efficiently.

With the co-operation of other members, there should be an opportunity for Duty Pilots to fly on their duty days.

Responsibilities

Arrive preferably by 8.30 am and make yourself known to the Duty Instructor, who will guide you as to the initial tasks – typically these include leading and organising:

- Ensuring that the caravan contains the flying list, log sheets, ballast weights, seat backs, weak links etc.;
- Disconnecting the caravan from the battery charger and taking it to the launch point;
- Unpacking the required club gliders from the hangar;
- Cleaning the gliders and canopies as necessary;
- Ensuring that the full complement of batteries and parachutes is put in the gliders;
- Organise carrying out the Daily Inspections;
- Organise moving the gliders to the launch point.
- Mentor newer members in learning launch point roles and safe ground handling techniques

Flying list

- Monitor the list and *try* to prevent queue jumping!
- The flying list is also useful for identifying new members and visitors, and you should help them get the best from their time at the club. Make sure that newcomers are given a safety briefing, and monitor what they are doing.
- You should recruit competent people from the list waiting to fly to help with tasks at the launch point.

Log keeping

Accurate log keeping is essential. It is a safety requirement, for monitoring the ‘landed’ or ‘flying’ status of each glider. It is also a legal requirement.

- Make sure that the log is competently manned at all times, briefing each new log keeper on the duties if needed.
- Pilots’ names, membership numbers and glider numbers must be entered in the log *before* launching takes place.
- Record the launch time from the clock in the caravan and keep a good lookout around the field to record landing times.
- Log sheets should record out-landings, if the information is available.
- If a glider is not logged down at the end of flying, the Duty Instructor *must* be informed. Pilots have a responsibility to ensure they are logged down!

Launch lines

We use a two-drum winch, so gliders should normally be organised into a queue of two lines, one either side of the cones between which the cable retrieve vehicle drives.

Pilots approaching the front of the queue should be encouraged to complete cable release checks and positive control checks before reaching the front of the launch line, so that they are ready to launch as soon as the cables arrive.

Normally, use the downwind cable first to reduce the risk of tangles – unless the winch driver confirms that the upwind cable can be used.

If a pilot is not ready for the cable, give it to the next pilot who is ready, if this

is practicable. Leave the first pilot to complete checks, etc. *Do not try to hurry up any launch – safety comes first!*

Do not let anyone handle the second cable until the first is fully drawn in, and the amber light on the winch has stopped flashing.

As soon as the two launches are complete, move up the next two gliders and ensure that the pilots are ready to launch. Good organisation at the launch point is a habit that should be practised even when things are quiet.

Signalling and wing runner

This role should only be entrusted to someone who fully understands the launch procedures.

The Duty Instructor is responsible for ensuring that all wingtip runners have received a brief on safe launching procedures and the importance of running with the wing, whilst maintaining wings level.

If the wingtip runner has difficulty maintaining the wings level during Take Up Slack, the launch should be stopped and the Duty Instructor informed as to the reason.

- The wingtip runner and signaller *must* have a clear view of each other, failing which a third person *must* relay the signals.
- Visual signals must be used.
- When briefing someone on signalling, ensure that he fully understands both (1) the Stop signal, and (2) that *anyone* may stop a launch if they perceive a safety hazard.
- *The wing runner must not call 'Cable Live' (it has been misunderstood as 'All Out').*

Weak links and cable handling

There should be at least two weak links of each colour at the launch point (or attached to the cables), on the rack of the caravan. If any are missing or broken, ask the winch driver to send a replacement.

The correct weak link should be waiting with each glider before the cables arrive. There is a table at the back of the red ring binder describing the colour of weak link required for various glider types.

Make sure that when weak links are swapped, they are returned to the rack on the caravan and not left lying on the airfield.

Be vigilant in preventing anyone from handling the second cable while the first one is still live.

Cable retrieve

Anyone who can drive can learn to retrieve cables, although they will require a demonstration of the process before going solo.

Ideally, the retrieve vehicle will be on its way back to the winch before the first cable is used, but make sure it stays clear of the launching glider in case there is a launch failure.

Return trips to the winch should use the ash track or farm road where practicable. Brief the drivers to bring the cables in a straight line from the winch to the cones adjacent to the caravan.

Glider retrieve

This is a very important part of the launch point organisation. Landed gliders causing an obstruction will halt launches, and landed club gliders left out on the airfield cost the club money and deny members the opportunity to fly.

Retrieve of club 2-seaters or aircraft obstructing the launches takes priority.

Make sure the retrieve drivers know where to look for approaching aircraft, and behave predictably. They should go around the edges of the field and then straight to the glider, returning straight to the launch point.

Never drive across the path of a landing aircraft – if in doubt, stop!

When towing a glider, stop and put the glider wing down on seeing an aircraft approaching. It is easier for the pilot to avoid a stationary target.

Clearing up

During the summer months, flying may go on late into the evening, and the Duty Pilot is not expected to remain until the end of the day. However, if still on duty at the end of flying, ensure that the following actions are taken:

- The Duty Instructor *must* be informed if any pilot is unaccounted for
- Tyres cleared away to the edge of the field
- Club gliders returned to the hangar;
- Parachutes and other ancillaries such as batteries, ballast weights and seat backs provided for use in club gliders are *safety-related* items and must be carefully looked after and returned to safe storage at the end of the day.
- Parachutes must be treated with great care at all times – never lay them on the ground or let them get wet. They must be bagged and returned to the store in the hangar at the end of flying. Your life may depend on this procedure. If you have any doubts about a parachute, take it out of service until it can be checked.
- Batteries must be returned to the store in the hangar at the end of flying, and connected to the battery chargers.
- Seat backs and ballast weights must be returned to the caravan.
- Caravan returned to the old hangar, master switch turned off, and connected to the battery charger.
- Log sheets returned to the clubhouse.

Like everyone else at the club, the Duty Pilots are here to enjoy themselves. Don't treat the job as a chore. Take pride in running a friendly, efficient launch point and make sure that you get some flying of your own.

NEIL MCAULAY, 2005

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