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A. Duty Pilot Notes

A.1 Introduction

Please note that this page is due for revision.

These notes are not a comprehensive guide to flying procedures, but merely a guide to the responsibilities of the Duty Pilots. They should be read in conjunction with this Airfield Operations Manual.

The Duty Pilot team, under their Lead Duty Pilot, are the people responsible, with the support and assistance of the Lead and Duty Instructors, for the smooth running of the launch point. They are not required to do all the work, but need to make sure there are sufficient competent 'volunteers' to keep the launch point operating safely and efficiently. All solo pilots should have sufficient knowledge of the procedures to carry out the role of Duty Pilot.

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

A.2 Responsibilities

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

- 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 and sign their ground handling cards as appropriate (i.e. once they are trained and competent on an item).

A.3 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.

A.4 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 logs for winching and aerotowing are 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: **no details = no launch!**
- 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 Lead Instructor **must** be informed. Pilots have a responsibility to ensure they are logged down!

A.5 Winch 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.
- When busy the winch driver should not be driving the cable retrieve vehicle.
- 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.

A.6 Signalling and Wing Runner

- These roles should only be entrusted to someone who fully understands the launch procedures and has read the BGA [Safe Winch Launching](#) and [Safe Aerotowing](#) guides.
- Their ground handling card should be annotated when they have received this training.
- The Lead 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 must be stopped.

- The wingtip runner and signaller **must** have a clear view of each other, failing which a third person **must** relay the signals.
- Visual signals and radio calls should be used for both winch launching and aerotowing.
- The radio operator, launch point controller and the tug pilot/winch driver need clear coordination to ensure unambiguous signals are transmitted. If there is insufficient ground crew, and the tug pilot/winch driver and PIC are in agreement, radio calls alone may be used.
- For aerotow launching in particular, it is important that a Stop signal can always be given to the tug by radio, when it is necessary to abort take-off. Experience has shown that hand signals will not always be seen by the tug pilot.
- When briefing someone on signalling, ensure that they fully understand that anyone may stop a launch if they perceive a safety hazard.
- Ensure that the wing runner makes the appropriate calls loudly enough. The only calls are:
 - **Take Up Slack**
 - **All Out**
 - **Stop**
- The number of words are also an auditory clue.

A.7 Centralised launch point

- Ideally, the launch point caravan should be positioned so that, if both winch and aerotowing is in progress, the log keeper in the caravan can clearly see the wing runner at both launch points, e.g. by placing the winch line to one side of the caravan and the aerotow line at a safe distance on the other side.
- The log keeper should maintain both winch and aerotow logs and should relay the wing runner's signals to the winch or the tug, as appropriate.

A.7.1 Winch launching

- When the cable has been attached (about the time the ground crew member is getting up from attaching it), radio the winch, e.g. "Winch, base, K21 on North cable" (or whatever is appropriate).
- When the wing runner signals Take Up Slack, radio the winch "Winch, take up slack" and then

press and hold the button for the take up slack light.

- When the wing runner signals All Out, radio the winch “Winch, all out” and then press and hold the all out light button.
- If anyone calls STOP, press and hold the stop light button and call “Winch stop” on the radio.

A.7.2 Aerotow launching

- When the wing runner signals Take Up Slack, radio the tug “Tug, take up slack” (or use the tug’s callsign, e.g. “G-GC, take up slack”).
- When the wing runner signals All Out, radio the tug “Tug, all out, all out” (the repetition is helpful as it’s noisy in the tug as full power is applied).
- If anyone calls Stop, radio the tug “Tug, stop, stop, stop”. (The glider pilot should immediately release on hearing this call.)
- Nobody should be launched if their details are not already on the log. It may be expedient to pass details by radio if the aerotow launch point is at a distance from the caravan.

A.8 Separated launch points

- Sometimes the centralised launch point will not be feasible, for example if aerotowing is on the North strip and winch close to the South side of the airfield. In this case the aerotow log should still be kept in the caravan with a single log keeper maintaining both logs. Pilot details for aerotow will have to be passed by radio.
- The signalling to the tug must be done by radio, by someone with a clear view and this will usually mean using a hand-held radio. A radio is kept in the clubhouse for this purpose and should be collected by the crew running the aerotow launch point.
- One person should give the signals to the tug by radio while another acts as wing runner. If there is insufficient ground crew the pilot may give the radio signals to the tug but this should not be the norm because of the danger of a Stop signal being given after the glider has started moving, which the pilot may not hear.

A.9 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 on the side 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. If uncertain which colour to use, ask the PIC of the glider.
- Make sure that when weak links are swapped, they are returned to the rack on the caravan or around one of the cones and not left lying randomly on the airfield.
- Be vigilant in preventing anyone from standing close to or handling the second cable while the first one is live.

A.10 Cable retrieve

- Anyone who can drive can learn to retrieve cables, although they will require a demonstration of the process before going solo and having their ground handling card signed off.
- 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.
- Try not to use the winch driver as the cable retrieve driver.

A.11 Glider retrieval on the airfield

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

A.12 Clearing up

At the end of flying, the following actions must be taken:

- The Lead Instructor **must** be informed if any pilot is unaccounted for.
- Tyres cleared away to the edge of the field
- Club gliders cleaned and 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.

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