

In Conclusion

There's a great deal to learn before you can be a solo glider pilot, and a lot of that isn't directly related to flying. However, you'll quickly pick up most things that you need to know, simply by talking to people on flying days.

There are lots of things to be done to keep the Club running, on flying days and away from the airfield. Nobody is expected to do things that they're no good at, nor jobs that they dislike, although of course the unpopular jobs still have to be done by somebody.

We encourage everyone to join in and help, simply because the Club works that way. Without the help of the members, we would rapidly grind to a halt.

We hope that this booklet has given you an introduction to Stratford on Avon Gliding Club, the things that you will need to do and the things that you might choose to do while you are learning to fly, and the goals you can set for yourself once you are a solo pilot.

Welcome to the Club, and enjoy your flying.

Welcome to Stratford on Avon Gliding Club

It is not unusual for newcomers to the sport to have some difficulty in unravelling the mysteries of a Gliding Club. However, as in many other situations, it is all relatively simple when you know how.

This booklet is written principally for new members who have just taken up gliding, and for those who may be considering the idea. It is an attempt to explain the workings of Stratford on Avon Gliding Club.

It isn't intended to tell you everything that you need to know as a pilot or as member of the Club. Rather, it's intended to give you an introduction to all aspects of the way the Club operates.

Gliding can sometimes be hard work, a little frustrating and rather slow at first. However, It is a sport that offers a lifetime of pleasures and can provide excitement, beauty, new challenges and new friends.

Your first solo soaring flight will make all the hard work seem well worthwhile.

Happy flying.

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There are many organisational jobs that have to be done regularly. For administrative purposes, these are divided up into areas of responsibility, and separate groups of people are responsible for these areas. The groups are chaired by committee members, but the group members need not be, and usually are not, on the committee.

The groups are, currently:

- *Field Operations.*

This group is concerned with the day-to-day flying operation, in particular with the efficiency and safety of all flying-related ground activities and equipment. It is chaired by a senior instructor who is usually also the Club's Vice-Chair, and includes both the Winch Master and the Safety Officer.

- *Flying Committee.*

This group is chaired by the CFI, and consists of all the Club instructors. It is responsible for the training syllabus and all other matters of flying policy, and for implementing the rules and recommendations of the BGA.

- *Aircraft.*

This group's responsibilities include the upkeep and maintenance of Club gliders as well as associated equipment such as radios, parachutes and barographs. The Technical Officer leads this group.

- *Engineering.*

This group is responsible for the provision and maintenance of winches, vehicles and other mechanical equipment.

- *Site.*

This group maintains and provides buildings, signs and so on, and looks after the field and roadways as necessary.

- *Marketing.*

This group promotes the Club and its activities, organises courses and trial lesson evenings, produces Club literature, and so on.

- *Finance.*

The Treasurer chairs this group, which is responsible for the Club's financial matters, and which always includes the Club Chairman and Secretary amongst its members. All the Club's income, from flying fees and so on, are handled by the Bursar.

If you have any relevant skills, or if you can assist in any of the areas mentioned, please contact the appropriate group, who will be most pleased to hear from you. A list of the current committee members and their groups is posted in the Clubhouse.

Of course, the committee members are Club members too, who enjoy flying just as much as anyone else, so you'll find that many of them are on the airfield on most flying days. They'll be happy to help you, so don't hesitate to talk to them.

About The Club

The Club was formed at Long Marston in April 1974, and moved to its present location at Snitterfield Airfield in September 1987.

It is affiliated to the BGA, the British Gliding Association, which is the governing body of the sport in the UK. The BGA is a member of the Royal Aero Club, and has powers delegated to it by the CAA, the Civil Aviation Authority that permit it to set safety standards and operating procedures for the gliding movement in this country. It is unique in this respect, in that no other organisation in aviation has this privilege.

The Club is owned solely by its members, and is a Company Limited By Guarantee. It is managed by a committee which is elected by the membership from among themselves. As in most clubs, the officers are Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary, with the Chair elected by the committee each year. All committee members are Directors of the Company, and as such are responsible for its well-being.

The CFI, the Chief Flying Instructor, is responsible for all flying matters, and appoints and approves all other instructors. The CFI is appointed by the Chair, on the advice of the committee and senior instructors, and this appointment must be approved by the BGA. The CFI is responsible both to the committee and to the BGA.

The Club has no permanent employees, so the many tasks necessary to ensure its smooth operation have to be carried out by the members on a voluntary basis. It is essential, therefore, that all members do their share towards its day-to-day and long-term running.

The Club issues a newsletter, *The Wire*, four times a year. In it, the committee and the CFI publish a mixture of Club and gliding news, information about committee decisions, and occasionally rulings that must be strictly followed.

There are also two Club meetings a year. The Annual General Meeting is held in October, and is a review of the season as well as being a formal meeting. The Club trophies are awarded at the AGM. There is also a Spring Meeting in April, the start of the Club year, which looks forward to the coming season. These meetings offer an opportunity for broad discussion among the members of the Club, and all major decisions are put to these meetings before they are implemented by the committee.

The committee consists entirely of Club members, and is responsible for the Club as a business. The committee is elected by the Club members at the AGM. Committee members must stand down after three years, and can stand for re-election. The Chair is elected by the committee from among its members, annually after each AGM.

Minutes of all committee meetings, which are monthly, are posted in the Clubhouse.

Safety

An airfield is a hazardous place for the unwary, and many of the Club rules and procedures are there purely to make it safe for the aircraft, the operation, and - most of all - the people.

At first, it may seem that we have lots of rules that don't make much sense to you. Eventually, however, they will become second nature rather than rules. In the meantime, take it on trust that many people, in the Club and in the British Gliding Association, have put their experience into making these rules. The Club's Safety Officer is the person who is responsible for monitoring and improving the safety of the airfield operation.

Of course, nobody expects you to learn all the rules by heart before you take your first step onto the airfield. Rather, you'll learn what to do and what not to do as part of your general introduction to the way we work. For this reason, it's very important that you should be shown how to do each job by an experienced Club member.

Most safety considerations are common sense, such as being behind the launch point when an aircraft is about to launch, so it's important to keep your brain switched on at all times. However, some things need to be learnt, such as the need to look *up* as well as *around*.

Safety is everyone's responsibility, including yours. If you see something that you think is unsafe, or you think that somebody else has overlooked something important, you should say so.

Until you're sure of yourself, the best thing to do is point it out to a Club member, who will either take action, or explain why it's not a problem. However, if you're sure that something is wrong, and there is no time or opportunity to check, you're entitled to act, for example by stopping a launch.

Even if the problem turns out to be unimportant, it's always better to be safe than sorry, and nobody will blame you for your action.

In fact, we aren't interested in *blame* in a gliding club. If something goes wrong, we're more interested in finding out why, and preventing it from happening again, than in identifying a culprit. Everybody can make a mistake, even the most experienced pilots, and we prefer to learn from those mistakes.

A Day at the Airfield

The first thing to do when you arrive at the airfield is to put your name on the flying list, which is a queue for the use of the Club aircraft. The flying list is kept on the Club computer, which is central to the day's operation, and it will make things a lot easier if you know your membership number.

At the start of each flying day, all the aircraft, mechanical equipment, and launch cables are subjected to a Daily Inspection, or DI as it is called. This needs plenty of pairs of hands, and takes at least an hour. At the end of the day, all the kit needs to be cleaned and put away, which also takes plenty of pairs of hands. You should plan to be at the airfield to be able to help with one or both of these.

Once everything has been inspected, the Duty Instructor holds the Daily Briefing, and you should always try to be present at that. The Duty Instructor is in charge of the airfield on the day, and is responsible for everything that happens there.

Let the Duty Instructor know if there is anything particular that you want to do that day. If you don't recognise many faces there, explain that you're a new member, and perhaps also that you'd like to find out about the jobs that need to be done at the launch point.

When it is your turn to fly, you will normally have two consecutive flights with an instructor, unless the first happens to be a prolonged soaring flight, in which case you will only have the one.

Once you have flown, you can add your name to the flying list again and, if there is sufficient time, have a further flight or flights once everybody else has flown. It all depends how busy we are.

While you are waiting to fly, there are many jobs that you can help out with, such as pushing aircraft, holding wings, and driving tractors. It takes half a dozen or so people to launch a glider, so we all need each other's help to fly, and everybody has to do their share of these things.

At the end of the day, fill in your log book with the details of your day's flights. Your instructor may wish to add some notes. Your log book is your flying record, and must be kept up to date.

You must pay your flying fees on the day you fly, by cheque or in a cash envelope. You should write your membership number on the back of your cheque or envelope, and post it in the Flying Fees box, next to the members' pigeonholes. You can pay other fees at the same time, provided that you make it clear what you are paying for.

Your flights are recorded on the Club computer, including the flight time and the fee. These details are usually printed out at the end of the day, and you can query your account or your flying logs at any time the computer is not in use. Your membership details are there, too, and you should check that they are correct, and change them whenever it is appropriate to do so.

Members of the Public

Members of the public often visit us, either in an organised group on a Trial Lesson Evening, or during any flying day.

These people are our main source of new members, and their first impression of the Club is very important. We always try to greet people as they arrive, and not leave them standing around looking lost.

This is usually their first flight, and they're keen and excited, which is as it should be. However, they have no idea what they should and should not do, and what is and is not safe, so they need to be guided.

On busy days, there are pilots on duty for greeting and flying with visitors, but they may already be in the air or elsewhere. If you see visitors arrive looking lost, and nobody else seems to have noticed, a polite enquiry is always appropriate.

Try to find the pilot on duty, or an experienced Club member, who will be able to answer all their questions. If you have to leave them alone, leave them in or near the Clubhouse, for safety's sake, but try not to leave them alone for long.

It is very important that you don't make any promises, such as the waiting time or the length of a flight, because we may not be able to honour your promises. Of course, you should always be friendly and helpful in all your dealings with visitors.

Young People

The Club operates a Child Protection Policy and it is important that you follow this policy and its guidelines in all your dealings with young visitors and young members.

The Child Protection Policy together with guidelines for members is posted in the Clubhouse.

The Silver certificate is confirmation that you are an accomplished cross-country pilot, and it is recognised internationally.

Further qualifications, the Gold and the Diamonds, need good conditions and a good aircraft, so not everyone gets that far.

Once you've reached Silver standard, there are many choices open to you, and you can set your own goals. Some people fly cross-country whenever possible, on flights of 100km, 300km, or even 500km, lasting many hours; others are content to fly locally; some fly with visitors, introducing them to the sport; and some train to become instructors.

Instructors and Instruction

Instruction is provided for student pilots, at no charge, by our BGA-rated instructors. Most of the Club's instructors actually learnt to fly at the Club.

The standard of flying and training required to become and remain an instructor is, rightly, very high. If you want to become an instructor, you must have a Silver 'C' and at least 50 hours solo to qualify you to attend a P1 course run by the CFI and his deputies. A P1 rating allows you to fly with other Club members, provided you pay for the flights yourself at normal Club rates.

Following this are the BGA ratings: Basic Instructor, which lets you fly with members of the public, and Assistant Category and Full Category Instructor, which let you teach people to fly. All of these require BGA examinations and the approval of the CFI.

Learning to Fly

You'll learn to fly in the front seat of one of the Club's two-seat training gliders.

Your log book and Pre-Solo Training Record sheet are a record of your training, and you should always present them to your instructor before you fly. That's the only way that they know how you are progressing.

When you have mastered the training syllabus, one of the Club's senior instructors will send you off on your first solo flight.

There is no hard and fast rule about how many launches it will take you to reach solo standard. It all depends on your ability and the frequency of your flights. Your age makes a difference too, because younger people generally learn much faster than their elders. As a guideline, if you fly regularly one day a week, it will take between six and twelve months.

Going solo is only the first step, and the instructors will give you further training for some time afterwards. This means that, before you launch for a solo flight, you will be asked to have a check flight or a briefing with one of the Duty Instructors. This will establish whether or not you can safely handle the weather conditions on that day. If the conditions are particularly difficult, or if you are not quite up to your usual flying standard - we all have good and bad days - you may only be allowed to fly dual with an instructor on that day.

The Training Syllabus

When you're learning to fly, the instructors will tailor their teaching to suit your progress. There are advantages to flying with just a few different instructors, since they will quickly get to know how you fly.

The instructors follow a training syllabus, and you will be given a copy of this, the *Stratford on Avon Gliding Club Flight Training Plan*, when you join the Club. You should track your progress through this syllabus, because it will help your instructors to understand exactly how you are progressing with your training.

Other Things to Read

If you want to read more about the sport, there are several good books available. One of the best for new pilots is *Beginning Gliding*, by Derek Piggott, a very well-known glider pilot who has written many books covering all aspects of the sport.

The British Gliding Association publish their rules in *Laws and Rules for Glider Pilots*. This is aimed at pilots who are at or about solo standard, so a lot of it won't make much sense to you yet.

Health and Fitness

When you joined the Club, you signed a declaration that you're medically fit to fly, but there's more to it than that. Every time you fly, you must be sure that there is nothing that will cloud your judgement or otherwise affect your ability to fly safely.

Your general state of health is one thing that has an effect. If you are under the weather or have a bad cold, or are stressed, or had a late night the night before, you may not be able to fly as well as you should.

Medication is another thing that can adversely affect your judgement, often without you realising it.

Alcohol always affects your ability to fly safely, so the acceptable upper limit is exactly zero.

Even if you start the day fit and healthy, the weather can have its effect. Sun, heat, and cold can all cause problems in their own ways, so whatever the weather, you should wear appropriate clothing.

Sunburn and dehydration are common problems on an exposed airfield, and also when you are flying, so it's essential to protect yourself with sunblock and a hat, and to drink enough to keep your body hydrated. Remember that a breeze might keep you cool but it won't protect you from these problems.

It's your own responsibility to monitor your state of health, of course, because you're the only person who really knows. If you're in any doubt at all, discuss it with the instructors.

BGA Medical Requirements

In March 2003, the British Gliding Association introduced a system of medical declarations whereby all glider pilots must have a declaration countersigned by their G.P. **before** they are allowed to fly solo. This must be renewed when the pilot reaches certain specified ages.

The declaration states that the pilot meets the required health standards, which are based on the D.V.L.A. standards for either private or professional drivers.

Before you can fly solo you must have a declaration signed by you G.P., and you must provide the Chief Flying Instructor (C.F.I.) with a copy for the Club records.

You should have received the appropriate paperwork in your welcome pack - we strongly recommend that you complete and return the declaration as soon as possible – you will not be allowed to fly solo until you do so.

Once you are Solo

Going solo is only the beginning of your flying career. Once your daily checks are complete, the next major step will be to qualify for a Bronze 'C' badge. The Bronze 'C' is the preparation to fly cross-country, and this is the stage where you can call yourself a fully-qualified glider pilot. It will probably take another twelve months to reach this stage.

To gain the Bronze certificate, you must pass the following flying and written tests (all done within the Club): two 30-minute soaring flights, solo; a written paper on airmanship, air law, meteorology, navigation and the principles of flight; a flying test to check your airmanship; a flying test to check your ability to land in an unknown field; and the Cross-Country Endorsement, a navigation, field selection, and field landing check, flown in a motor glider.

We usually run a series of lectures in the winter to help you prepare for the tests.

Once you have your Bronze certificate and the endorsement, you can fly cross-country, which is one of the great pleasures of gliding.

Once a year, you'll be asked to submit a summary of your year's flying and any qualifications that you've gained. This gives the CFI an overview of the Club as a whole and the members individually.

Once you have been solo for a while, and probably after you've gained your Bronze, you may decide to buy your own glider. Many pilots do this by joining, or forming, a syndicate with several others of similar standard. Most syndicates have three or four members. This makes it cheaper to buy a glider, gives you more freedom to fly, and can considerably enhance the pleasure that you get from gliding.

Glider types vary considerably, though, in both performance and flying characteristics. Make sure the aircraft you intend to buy is one that you can safely handle, and confirm this with the CFI.

You should take advice on this from experienced pilots and your instructors. If you buy a glider that is beyond your capabilities, you will not be able to fly it until you have gained the necessary experience. Although it is normally only a formality, you must also get permission from the Club committee before you can keep a glider and trailer on site.

After Bronze comes the Silver 'C', which is confirmation that you are a cross-country pilot. The Silver 'C' is within reach of all pilots, and most pilots progress to this stage. This will probably take another twelve months after your Bronze, although some pilots have done it within a couple of weeks.

To gain your Silver 'C' certificate, you must perform the following flying tasks, which must be backed up by a barograph or a data logger and checked by an Official Observer, and which are ratified by the BGA: a height gain of 1000 metres; a duration flight of five hours; and a straight-out cross-country flight of 50 kilometres.

- On the Bus.

The bus is our control tower, and the Launch Controller is responsible for radio communication with the winch, relaying the launch signals using automatic signal lamps, and logging all launches and landings on the Club computer database. Radio is never used to control the launch, because of the risk of interference and misunderstandings.

Logging is a responsible job, and you need to be familiar with the Club aircraft and at least some of the members' names before you start. You'll need a couple of training sessions too, because the flight database is our financial and aviation record, and therefore needs to be accurate. You'll also need to be familiar with radio procedures.

- Marshalling.

On busy days, the launch point marshal is responsible for organising the launch point so that everything runs smoothly. This involves ensuring that people on the flying list fly when it is their turn to, that people doing particular jobs do not do more than their fair share, and that aircraft do not sit idly by when there are members waiting to fly.

- The Retrieve Vehicle.

The Land Rover brings a pair of cables from the winch to the launch point. It's important to drive at a constant speed in a straight line, which is harder than it sounds on a rough open field. The Land Rover also carries the cable repair tools and other equipment, and has a ground radio, so you may also be asked to use your mobility to help out at various points on the airfield.

Driving the cable retrieve vehicle isn't difficult, but you must be properly trained to do it. You are in charge of moving cables, and mistakes can cause delays for the launch point, problems for the winch, or even danger to people and aircraft.

- The Winch.

The winch drivers are all volunteer Club members, but we won't start teaching you this until after you have become a solo pilot. If you drive the retrieve vehicle, you'll have plenty of time to talk to the winch driver, who will explain how it all works.

During a launch, make sure that you are safely in a cab, because the cables are very dangerous. An extra pair of hands at that end of the field is always welcome, but ask the winch driver to tell you what you should do.

How the Airfield Works

There are many things to learn about the way the airfield works, and it is best to learn these from the instructors and other members at the launch point.

This booklet is not intended to provide detailed instruction about all the various procedures used on the field. Everything is formally documented in the Club Procedures manual, and a copy of this is kept in the Clubhouse, but these are for reference rather than being training guides..

While you are waiting to fly, and afterwards, you can help at the launch point and on the airfield. There are many tasks necessary to keep the aircraft launching and the people flying.

These include: Pushing gliders into position at the launch point; Holding a wing when a glider is being launched or moved; Attaching the launch cable to the glider; Signalling to the bus; Logging the flights and signalling to the winch; Marshalling the launch point; Driving the tractors used for retrieving the gliders that have landed; Driving the Land Rovers that retrieve the cables; Driving the winch.

Although everybody is expected to play their part in these activities, some tasks require a little more experience and instruction before you can do them. A few others, such as signalling to the bus and driving the winch, are restricted to solo pilots. Remember, safety always comes first, so always ask and learn before doing anything for the first time.

It will also be necessary, in the interest of safety, to learn about field discipline, such as how to move around the airfield, where to look for aircraft in circuit, how to handle and park gliders, and so on.

The more experienced Club members will be happy to explain the things that you need to know. If possible, find somebody who's prepared to spend some time showing you the ropes. Don't forget, though, that they want to fly too, and may have other responsibilities, so they can't give you their undivided attention, and they may not be there next time you come to fly.

Things it Helps to Know

Here are a few basics that will cut down the number of times you hear "*Don't do that!*".

- **Safety.**

There are many cases where something is safe in some circumstances and not in others. An example is walking in front of the aircraft at the head of the launch line, which is a problem if it's about to be launched, but safe if it's not. It's always safe to walk behind that aircraft, though, and that's the habit you should get into. Once you have acquired these safe habits, you can use your judgement in particular situations.

Make a habit of watching for aircraft in circuit, especially if you're on the landing area or the perimeter track, on a tractor or with an aircraft. Don't forget that aircraft can land anywhere.

Keep clear of moving cables, and also the unused cable during a launch. It might move too. Cables are sharp and very abrasive, so wear gloves to protect your hands.

Aircraft are often moved around, so be careful to stand well clear of the wings, and always keep an ear open for cries of "*Mind your head!*".

- **Handling an Aircraft.**

Aircraft can easily be moved around by hand. One person holds a wingtip and steers the aircraft, while one or more other people push or pull the fuselage. It's hard work for just one person, though, so don't just stand and watch.

It's safe to push or pull anywhere on the top of the fuselage or the edge of the cockpit, or on the leading edge of the wing if the aircraft is going backwards. Never push or pull on the canopy or on the tailplane. Older aircraft have vulnerable areas, such as the trailing edge of the wing.

Gliders are by their nature comparatively light, and are susceptible to strong winds or gusts, so it's important to park them safely. One wing should be pointed into the wind, and held down by tyres, and the aircraft may need to be prevented from turning by using more tyres at the nose or tail. Never leave an aircraft unattended if it's not safely parked. Never leave the canopy open if you're not right next to it.

- **Driving a Tractor.**

When you go to retrieve a glider, always drive behind aircraft at the launch point. If there are any aircraft in circuit, wait at the launch point until they have landed.

Once you get close to the glider, slow down, and don't drive directly towards it in case your feet slip off the pedals. Turn the tractor round and stop near the

nose of the aircraft while the pilot attaches the rope. Don't move until the pilot is ready. While you are waiting, have a good look round for aircraft that will be landing soon.

When you tow the aircraft back, drive at a comfortable walking speed, keeping one eye on the pilot, one eye on the circuit, and one eye on where you're going. If you see an aircraft in circuit, point it out to the pilot, who may ask you to stop and wait.

When you get back to the launch point, slow down so that the pilot can control the aircraft more easily. Never tow a glider directly towards another one, and never use the tractor to manoeuvre a glider near to others.

Many single-seat aircraft need a tail dolly when they're moved on the ground, so you'll have to take that with you from the launch point.

- **Launching an Aircraft.**

The launch is controlled from the launch point by a signaller, who uses a bat to signal to the controller on the bus. The controller relays the signal to the winch.

The signaller is responsible for ensuring that the launch is safe. In particular, this involves monitoring the aircraft being launched, and looking out for aircraft which are in circuit and about to land, and which is therefore out of sight for the pilots in the cockpit.

The signaller is assisted by a wing runner, who holds the aircraft level until the winch is up to power and the wings are working enough for the pilot to have control.

Whoever attaches the cable to the aircraft normally signals for the launch. However, the signaller must be a solo pilot, so if you attach the cable, but are not qualified to control the launch, you must explicitly hand over responsibility to someone who is.

- **Signals.**

There are three basic signals used all over the airfield: *Take Up Slack*, an arm waved low with the forearm downwards; *All Out*, an arm waved above the head; and *Stop*, one or both arms raised, and accompanied by a shout. These signals are used wherever they are appropriate, such as at a distance or where it may be difficult to hear speech. The launch signaller uses these signals, with the assistance of a signal bat for clarity.

Sometimes we use lights instead of waving our arms. In this case: *Take Up Slack* is a slow flash, one second on and three seconds off; *All Out* is a quick flash, one second on and one second off; and *Stop* is the light solidly on.