



Your Day at a Gliding Club



These pages give you a small idea of what to expect when you go for a days gliding to a local club near to you.

Gliding is man's nearest equivalent to flight - just like the birds, and as a sport has been practised since the early days of man's attempt to fly.

The pictures are from different clubs with different gliders, but when you go, it will be in a two seater (either side by side, or one seat behind the other). Whatever the type of glider, the instructors will make sure that you have a fantastic experience!



Glider Trailer

A Glider Trailer



Side view of Trailer



Rear view of Glider Trailer

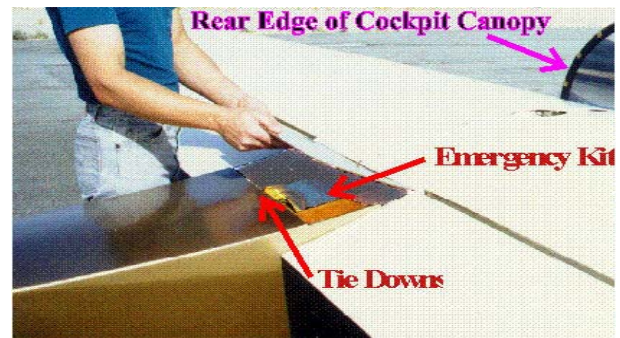


Getting the Glider Out

On your arrival at the gliding site, you may be asked to assist with getting the gliders out of the hangar, or even out of a glider trailer!

Once assembled, the gliding instructors/pilots, will check each glider very carefully over, making sure that it is safe and has all the right equipment necessary for the day's flights.

Once the gliders are out, a flight line will be established, with pilot's and passengers going on a list for the order of launching and flying. If you have not already received one, a detailed Safety Briefing will then be given, covering such things as the dangers of stepping on or over glider cables, wandering about on the launch site and emergency signals, and where to hold a glider and what NOT to touch!



Usually those pilots that are attempting cross-country flights will go first, and local flights following on.

A Retrieval Crew in Action!

It may be some time before it's your turn, but at most clubs, the members will get you involved with helping retrieving and launching other gliders, so that you start learning some of the skills required.





A Gliding Flight Line.



Gliders are launched either by a winch, or via an aerotow. With a winch, a long cable is attached to the front of the glider and then pulled up just like a kite.

<<< This is a picture of a winch launch.



An aerotow is when a powered aircraft pulls the glider up to a reasonable height and then the glider releases itself.

<<< This is a picture of an aerotow.

When a glider is not being used, it is "parked" with one wing resting on the ground, and if the wind is a bit gusty, sometimes some old tyres or even a person is placed on the wing tip so that there is no danger of it being flipped over by the wind!



You may even have to assist with a glider launch, by holding on to a wingtip, and keeping the wings steady, while the "TAKE UP SLACK" signal is given for the launch by the launch marshaller - then - all of a sudden you will hear the command "ALL OUT" and with a sudden jerk, and a couple of steps the glider is away - climbing into the blue sky!

At last - it's your turn - and you meet your instructor - who will often ask you your name and weight (that's so the total weight of the glider can be worked out to keep the gliders balance close to the centre). Having established that and started to get to know your instructor, they will check that you have had a safety briefing and will answer any questions that you may have - so ask if you want to know!

It's not usual to have any parachutes on whilst in a glider, unless you are going some distance or great heights or over the sea, but once you are in the glider, you will be strapped in for safety.



After checking that you are securely in, your instructor will go through the pre-flight checks, before closing the canopy.

Then when your instructor is ready, the wings are raised level, and the winch cable or tow line is attached to the nose of your glider.



The "TAKE UP SLACK" signal is then given, and if you watch carefully you'll see the cable tighten and tension.



Finally, after the "ALL OUT" signal is given, you're away - climbing steeply into the air with the wind rushing past noisily - don't worry it's normal.



At the top of the climb the pilot releases the cable or tow rope by pulling a clearly marked handle or ball pull (so don't touch it!).



To make the most of your flight, do look around outside - see if you can spot some recognisable features - don't cars and people look small!

The instructor will explain how the glider operates and point out any interesting features on the ground or in the air - and may even allow you to handle the joystick for a short period.

All too soon your flight will start to come to an end - the instructor will make his pre-landing checks, line up the glider for the approach and with a rush the ground is coming up fast - the instructor uses the airbrakes and with a small bump the glider is safely on the ground - what a fantastic flight you've had!



You'll enjoy your day out at the Gliding Club - so why not organise for your Patrol / Troop or Explorer Unit to go - it's not too expensive (about £12 for a day ticket - giving you 1 or 2 flights) and fly like a bird!