



Wycombe Air Park, Marlow, Bucks SL7 3DP
t 01494 442501
e info@bookergliding.co.uk
w www.bookergliding.co.uk

DRIVING ON THE AIRFIELD

OVERVIEW

The general principle is that airfields are for aeroplanes not for cars, so cars play a very subservient role. In particular:

- Lookout is paramount
- Cars **always** give way to aircraft, so if you see one with its propellor or rotor turning stop and wait until it is gone, or shut down, or you are certain that its pilot has seen you and has waved you on.
- The airfield speed limit is 10 mph – if you are in a buggy with no speedo that is twice walking pace.
- When you are airside in a vehicle and in motion you must have your hazard lights on.
- Drive only on the routes designated for vehicle use. Approach the gaps between the hangars with caution – there are blind corners for both cars and aeroplanes, so stop, look and listen before proceeding.

DRIVING THE BUGGIES

At the start of every day, before starting the buggy, check the oil and fuel levels and if either is insufficient, fill them

- running out of fuel in the middle of the airfield is at best a nuisance and might easily create a dangerous situation if the buggy is blocking the landing area
- take care to not overfill the engine oil – it is easily done because the capacity is small, and adding too much harms the engine. Top up with small amounts at a time, checking before adding more.

Never start a buggy if it is pointing at a glider – the buggies are apt to leap forward when they start, especially on cold days when they need lots of choke to get started, so if the buggy is pointing at glider or some other obstacle, put it into neutral and push into a safer place before starting it.

On a similar theme, do not try starting the buggies in reverse gear to avoid an obstacle ahead – it may not be in reverse as you expected it to be!

Never reverse up to a glider when hooking on – if you are using the tow-out gear pass the glider at an oblique angle and stop, then pull the glider up to the buggy and hook on.

When towing a glider across the apron to the launch point make sure that you have enough wingtip clearance from cars and parked aeroplanes – if in any doubt stop, get out and check before proceeding, ideally you should have a wingman at the tips to check that all is well.

Always give way to aircraft. Stop until they have taxied away, or that you are absolutely sure that the pilot is letting you go – that means eye contact and hand signals so that there is no doubt as to what has been agreed.

Watch out for aeroplanes returning to the apron along taxiway Alpha – they are not limited to 10mph so will be upon you far faster than you can tow a glider across the taxiway. Stop and let them pass

Avoid helicopters with turning rotors – the downwash will flip a glider in no time at all. And keep a very good lookout when crossing the helicopter taxiway between the apron and the gliding area – helicopters appear very quickly, so if you see one heading your way then stop and wait until it is gone.

When retrieving a glider from the land out area

Before setting off LOOK for other landing gliders or tugs. Cars have significant blind spots, as do the buggies with roofs, so make your lookout before you get in, or drive a circle in the circuit direction so you can have a good look at downwind, base and finals before setting off across the airfield. And once you are on the way, keep the lookout going.

Try to arrange your route to the glider so that you minimise the time you are blocking the landing area - this is best done by crossing the area as much as possible along the landing direction, and ideally aligned with the glider you are collecting, so that you are blocking the landing area as little as can be. In other words, do not set off directly to the glider - cross the landing area perpendicular to the landing gliders and tugs, then carry on in the landing direction.

When towing the glider back to the launch point or trailer park same principle applies – minimise the time you may be obstructing landing aeroplanes.

The exception to this is when the glider is blocking the landing area and hindering others landing or the tug taking off – in these cases move the glider asap to a safe place – that may be away from the landing area towards the buffer zone, until it is clear and safe to continue on to the launch point or trailer park.

As before, LOOK for landing gliders or tugs before setting off. Check also if the tug is waiting to go – if the prop is turning it a good sign to be gone asap. And once you are on the way, keep the lookout going – it will take less time for a glider to get from downwind to touchdown than it will to tow a glider back from halfway down the field so keep looking!

If you do think that there will be a conflict with a landing glider or tug, stop immediately – let aeroplane pilot decide what is best, they have a better view and if they know that you are stationary, they will have less to worry about. If you are with a wingman they should put the wing down so the landing pilot knows that they have been seen. If you have time and it is safe, position the buggy close to, or in line with the landing direction to minimise the amount of the landing area you are taking up.

Plan ahead – before you set off back to the launch point or trailer park, look at where you want to end up – do not wait until you are nearly there before working out a rushed plan. It helps if, before you set off, you ask the glider pilot where they want to go – avoids a clumsy mid-retrieval discussion.

When you are towing with a buggy make sure that you travel back at a walking pace so that the wingman can keep up without running. And keep looking back to check that your wingman is ok.

If possible, plan your turns so that the wingman is in the centre of a turn, not on the outside – so they do not have to run.

Try and avoid tight turns, or pivoting the glider on its wheel - especially when the ground is soft, so as to avoid making holes in the grass.

At the end of the day, return the buggy in the hangar, but do not park it pointing at an aircraft for somebody to sort out the next morning.

DRIVING THE BUS

Do not drive the bus until you have had instruction from a suitably competent person.

The bus is a long and wide and tall vehicle and from the driver's seat you cannot see all four corners, so extra care is needed to avoid colliding with things that would not normally be a problem. So:

- Do not try squeezing through gaps.
- Do not reverse unless you have someone behind looking out for you.
- It is taller than all of the locally based helicopters and it will not fit under their rotors – so keep well away from them.
- Do not take it onto the grass if the ground is soft – it may sink the mud and get stuck.

To minimise the chances of collision, the bus must be the first thing to be removed from the hangar at the start of the day, and the last thing to be packed away at the end of the day.

Starting it is no different from any diesel vehicle – it is an automatic so it must be in “P” before it will start, turn the ignition key until the instrument panel light up, wait for the glow plug light to go out, then turn the key to start.

It has a roof-top orange beacon, which is powered by the 12v power outlet at the bottom of the centre instrument panel. This is permanently live so provided that it is plugged in, the beacon will run regardless of whether the bus is running

When you are on the airfield and in motion you must have the beacon and the hazard lights working. It is good practice to turn the beacon on as soon as you are preparing to start the bus – it is a warning to others that movement is soon likely.

At the end of the day return it to the hangar into the space marked out for it. Before you enter the space, check that its actually clear and that there are no wings or tails overhanging the bus space, nor any other obstructions.

Always drive forward into the hangar and reverse out so you can see if you have a clear view of where you are heading.

The route to both launchpoints is across the apron and through the gates to the trailer park.