

Callum Jagger - Gliding Scholarship 2016

Having applied for the scholarship with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots I was distraught when my application was turned down, due to such fierce competition. However, to my delight I later received a phone call with news that my application had been accepted and I was invited to attend an interview at Cobham House in London. A panel of 2, whom were both former scholarship winners, interviewed me. Weeks later I was excited to learn that I had been accepted onto the gliding course and could not wait to start.

The course took place 19th – 26th August 2016, at the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre in Lee-on-the-Solent. Prior to this course I had very little experience in a glider, so everything I learnt was from the basics. Unfortunately due to the weather, we lost the first 1 and a half days of flying, but this time wasn't wasted as we spent the time learning the basics, such as; the pre-flight checklist that must be performed before each flight, how to climb in and out for the glider safety and how to operate the retrieve vehicles. Once, the weather had improved and we were able to go gliding, the day before had proved vital as it meant that we could 'turn around' the gliders effectively resulting in more flights.

My flights were carried out in an Ask 21 glider, which is designed primarily for beginner instruction, but is also suitable for cross-country flying and aerobatic instruction. I was a little apprehensive about my first flight, as this was the first time that I have been airborne in an aero-towed glider before. Although, when the time came my nerves were forgotten and I had what I can only describe as the most exhilarating experience. As the Tug-Glider combination climbed to 2500ft, the ground quickly fell beneath us, and we were surrounded by incredible scenery. As we hit 2500ft we released from the tug and I was surprised at how peaceful it was. During the flight, I was allowed to experiment with the controls freely under the supervision from my instructor, Paul, whom I quickly gained trust in.



It was a benefit staying in the gliding club, as it meant that I could help get the gliders out of the hanger each morning, clean them and put them back in the evenings. Whilst not flying I would work with other scholarship winners, who are good friends; to retrieve gliders, log flights, and set up the next aero-tow by attaching the tow rope to the nose of the glider and by holding the wing for launch. After only a few days most of us were doing the majority of the flight including the Aero-tows and landings.

The Wednesday was easily one of the best days of my life. I knew I was getting close to going solo as Paul, my instructor, disabled the IAS, the Altimeter and simulated hitting sink on my base leg by opening the airbrakes, to which he said I responded correctly by instantly dropping the nose, increasing speed and immediately turning towards the airfield. Later that day Paul took me for some aerobatics in the K21 which included g-turns, loops and negative g. After the blood pumping routine finished I was

full of adrenaline and performed my best landing so far on the course. Once the glider was recovered

and ready for its next flight I was surprised when my instructor asked whether or not I'd like to go solo; which of course I was ecstatic about. After releasing from the tug at 2500ft it was unbelievably quiet in the cockpit, and the realisation hit me that this truly was a solo flight. It was a gorgeous day for gliding, I was soon able to find a thermal and gain some altitude. However, shortly after my focus fell into setting up my approach. Once I had landed I was welcomed with a congratulation from my course colleagues and flying club members. I soon found out that I had broken the course record for the fewest number of flights before going solo; I went solo on my 12th flight, and the previous record was 13. I thanked my instructor for all his work and allowing me to go solo. I was still buzzing with energy from my solo, when I found out that I was able to have an aerobatic flight in the Tiger Moth, it was a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Overall, it was a fantastic experience and I thoroughly enjoyed my week. I am very grateful to Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre for allowing me to use their gliders and facilities, but also to the club members and instructors whom without I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go solo, and, of course, to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for making this scholarship possible. Lastly, I would like to thank Paul Nicholas for sponsoring me through the week and enabling me to get on the first step of my aviation career.