

India Smart – Gliding Scholarship

From the 25th to the 29th July 2016, I spent a memorable five days gliding at the London Gliding Club in Dunstable, courtesy of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. However, my journey began a few months before in February 2016 when I submitted my application. I found out about this scholarship from my older brother, who had been awarded a Private Pilot Licence Scholarship by the company the year before. With minimal persuasion I wrote and submitted my application. Less than a month later, I was contacted by the company and called for an interview at their headquarters in London. I felt that the interview passed extremely quickly, as did the time waiting to hear the result. When I found out I had been awarded the scholarship, I was delighted.



When I arrived at the London Gliding Club on the Monday morning, I spent the first part of the day not learning how to pilot a glider, but instead how to drive a golf buggy. This skill turned out to be extremely useful as this is how the recovery of gliders! Shortly after this lesson, I had a quick familiarisation lesson about the glider and then had my first aerotow in an ASK21. After towing to 4,000ft, I had my first experience of taking control of an aircraft without an engine. During this first flight, I learned about the main controls of the glider, pitching, rolling and yawing. The flight lasted around half an hour, and after landing, I learned about the process of recovering the glider by keeping hold of the wing tip. The rest of the day quite literally flew by, as I was never sitting around for long, with plenty of jobs to do on the airfield, such as sending gliders off and retrieving gliders in the golf buggy.

As the week progressed, I gradually became more and more confident taking control of the glider, ensuring wings were level and speed and horizon were kept constant in turns. Towards the end of the week, I was taught how to land the glider, and with prompts from my instructor, I was able to pull off a landing (although it was somewhat bumpy!). My favourite part of gliding was winch launching – although you do not get as much height, the thrill of going almost vertical is brilliant.

On the last day, the weather was pretty miserable, and it looked as if there would be no flying during the day. However, towards the afternoon, the weather cleared up and I was able to show off my newfound gliding skills to my father.

Overall, I had a fantastic week and would love to do more gliding in the future and I thank all the people who made it possible.