

Stuart Reece - Gliding Scholarship Experience

Day 1- Friday

I woke up early and prepared, but was sure to triple-check the kit list provided by The Honourable Company Of Air Pilots to make sure I didn't forget anything. The kit list was short and direct which was good as I knew exactly what to take and how much of it. Once packed, checked and goodbyes said and done I left to get to Liverpool Lime Street Station to catch the 10:47 train down to Euston. I had my hair cut the day before to make sure I looked smart and presentable for the Scholarship. I wanted to give a good impression to Ruth – the Honourable Company's representative, the instructors, Mandy and everyone else at the centre and planned to be helpful throughout the week as a gesture of my appreciation for allowing me to have this amazing opportunity.

Once I arrived at Fareham station, I had contact with everyone who was on the scholarship with me – thanks to the Honourable Company who gave us all the opportunity to message each other so we could share a taxi and relieve tensions. We arrived at the west gate of Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre at 17:30 and waited half an hour for Mr Lloyd Brown to collect us. We then went to the clubhouse and met everyone on the previous Scholarship and were guests at their presentation. After that, we asked them for tips and tricks to impress instructors and have some knowledge to take into the week ahead.

Day 2- Saturday

This was the day the scholarship officially started (Saturday 20th August). We were all up early and excited to get started. However, we got informed that we couldn't fly as the weather wasn't suitable for the gliders. Nevertheless, we were taken into the hangar and was showed around the gliders, learning all the safety procedures and how to handle them to make the rest of the days as efficient as we could. After that, Lloyd kindly took us to the local shops to get our lunch for the week with the £10 Ruth has given us. Once we were finished, we came back to the clubhouse where we were shown the cars, how to do the daily checks and were given the amazing opportunity to drive both the 4x4 and minibus. Not only was this to help us throughout the week, it was to pass the time as there was no flying. Throughout the day, we got to know each other personally and facts about the club. It was very interesting to learn about the iconic place we were gliding at.

Day 3- Sunday

Sunday was exciting, it was the first time our training was put into action and also the first time we all flew in the gliders. Even though like Saturday, the weather took a turn for the worse and I only managed to get one flight under my belt, it gave me a feel of how the glider flies and helped me bond with my instructor Mr Jerry Lee. We filled our logbooks in carefully, put the gliders away and went back into the clubhouse.

In the afternoon, Ruth had organised a guest speaker – Captain Phil Shaw- who showed us a presentation on what he did as a career when he was younger and what he does now (ferry piloting) and showed us videos of him flying. It was really interesting as it showed aviation under a whole different light and definitely opened more door for me. He also answered any queries we had about aviation or questions we had for him specifically.

Day 4- Monday

Monday was better for gliding as the weather was much better. The clouds were low and it was a bit windy but we still managed to get a lot more flights in. We were still slow at retrieving the gliders and hooking them onto the tow but we were still learning and getting better every day. This was the first time we met Mandy – who along with Ruth would be looking after us for the entirety of the week. Once we finished gliding and cleaned them, we went into the clubhouse and all asked questions to each other about their flights and reimagined the flight and going over all the controls and procedures. We also tested each other on CBSIFTCBE (the pre-flight checks) to make sure we all knew it and to again, impress the instructors for the next day.

Day 5- Tuesday

The early morning was definitely affecting us now. We were tired but still showered, fed and with the correct kit for the day ahead. However, the instructors didn't have to remind us about any of the equipment now as we all knew what to get. All they had to do was the checks on the gliders and enjoy the early morning sun. due to the direction of the wind, we took off on the opposite end of the runway which was a good experience as we had to do an opposite circuit. This only helped us with the training as it gave us a different view. This day was rather warm now and was 33 degrees by midday. It was lovely flying weather as there were some thermals and you could see for miles around us.

In the evening, we had another guest speaker – Mr John Denyer and Mrs Kate Denyer – who told us how they started flying and what they did to get their PPL (private pilot's licence). They also did a quiz with us which was knowledgeable and a good way to pass the time.

Day 6- Wednesday

Wednesday was also warm and there were no clouds in the sky, we were now all quick with sorting out the gliders and were ready early. Gliding – although hot- was also great as we could clearly see the landmarks and cities for miles and of course there were thermals. Also, we had the amazing opportunity to be taken up in a tiger moth by Captain Phil Shaw to experience powered flight and aerobatics. We learned a lot about propelled flight along with having control of the throttle, rudder pedals and control stick to see the effect each one had on the other and what to do to keep a straight and level flight. We also had someone on our course do their first solo after just 12 flights which was truly outstanding and inspirational.

When we got back to the clubhouse after a long but fun day flying, we all celebrated and congratulated the person who went solo! However, I was nervous for the next day as that's when I got my GCSE results but everyone at the club – especially Ruth- was there to support and comfort me.

Day 7- Thursday

On Thursday there were a lot of cumulus clouds so we knew that there will be thermals. In fact, in my first flight, we found a thermal and practised doing stalls and other things that needed to

be done on my checklist. In addition, this was the first day I did aerobatics in the glider, I followed through the controls and it was extremely fun. After my second flight I had ten minutes to check my phone for my results and after I received them I was happy and could no enjoy the rest of the day worry free. Again, the day was warm and nice but in the evening Lloyd took us to Portsmouth to look at Spinnaker tower and to get some snacks. The realisation started to hit us that it was our last full day and we made sure to make the most of it.

After all of our jobs were done, we had our final guest speaker – Mr Richie Piper – who told us about aviation for WW2 displays. He also told us about a theory and explained how different aeroplanes fly which is useful as there are many types of planes in aviation. He also showed us videos of him flying and explained what he was doing and the reason for doing this.

After the guest speaker, we slowly started to pack our bags, savouring every moment and memory. We also thanked everyone who we weren't going to see on our last day and made sure they had a cup of tea and were happy all the time!

Day 8- Friday

We all realised that this was our last day and was disheartened but we were still up early and raring to go. It was a lovely day for both gliding and helping out on the ground, we all made sure that the other club members were happy and hydrated and tried to let them relax. We knew we would have an early finish and that senior members of The Honourable Company would come down to watch the only person who soloed but we all still made ourselves look presentable.

When the other members did come, we shook their hands and engaged in conversation – mainly thanking them for this once in a lifetime opportunity – but talking about general aviation and what they did for work. They were all extremely nice and supportive and made sure that we got an extra flight in.

For the presentation, we were outside and always smiling, making the most of the weather and enjoying our final moments at the centre. We all received certificates and knew we would treasure them for the years to come. Once we got back to the clubhouse, we tidied up and finished packing the rest of our things whilst making cups of tea for all the adults. Three of us had to leave early so said our final goodbyes and thankyou's shortly after packing our bags. Captain Phil Shaw then kindly gave us a lift to the station where we exchanged emails to keep in touch in the future/ ask any questions about aviation in the future. We then waited for each person's train to come and then parted ways, promising we would keep in touch.