

## Honourable Company Of Air Pilots Gliding Scholarship 2017

### Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club

#### Joseph Wildman

During August 2017 I was lucky enough to be awarded a week of gliding through the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, funded by the Air Safety Trust. The gliding course took place at the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (Lee-on-the-Solent). Ever since a very small age, it has been my goal to be a pilot. I can even remember Concorde flying over my house on one of its final flights in 2003. I spent a lot of time researching scholarships after a post on my Squadron's Air Cadet page and I was keen to try gliding as it was something I hadn't experienced before. Before this scholarship I'd only had three flying lessons and never had any exposure to gliding.

After I received an email notifying me that I'd been successful, I was ecstatic and counted down the days until the start date arrived. After a short two hour train journey down from Bristol and a rendezvous with Stephen, a fellow course member, I arrived at Fareham and was kindly taken to Daedalus Airfield by Dave, the course manager. After all of the course members arrived at the airfield, we were given a safety briefing and then taken



out to the hangar. The hangar was packed with an array of gliders and powered aircraft. We were shown how the aircraft are inspected and how to get into the gliders.

On the first full day, all the course members helped get the gliders out of the hangar and we got them swiftly out to the launch point. Before I knew it was time for my first flight. The instructor carried out the aero-tow launch and handed me control after we had disconnected from the tug at 2000 feet. He taught me basic controls and some upper air work as we had caught a thermal. From the air the Solent looked amazing, and the views of Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight were spectacular. He explained the circuit and the radio calls he was using to communicate with the tower. After a 20 minute flight I was back on the ground and left startled at what an amazing flight I had just experienced.

On the days following this, I had experienced many different launches- including winch launches which were a lot faster paced than the aero-tow. One of the many highlights of the course was being taken up by Luke, a flying instructor who took me for an extended 45 minute flight. We gained considerable height due to strong thermals- allowing sufficient height to fly

spectacular aerobatics- including loops, stalls and tight turns. The following day the entire group were also incredibly lucky to fly in a vintage 1930 Gypsy Moth, owned by a BA captain. This was an added bonus to the already fantastic course. Lee, a Flybe Dash 8 Q400 Captain also took me up for two flights in the Grob 109 motor glider. On the second of these flights we flew just over a NOTAM in order to have a glimpse at HMS Queen Elizabeth as the carrier had just arrived into port.



On the fifth day I practiced doing the flight by myself with the instructor making no inputs. After doing this I practiced a cable break- the release was pulled at 400 feet and we made a swift turn back to the airfield and landed parallel to the runway. The instructor was then



happy for me to go solo. Going solo was an incredible experience, I felt an enormous sense of responsibility flying a £100,000 glider by myself. I thoroughly enjoyed the flight. To top off what was an amazing week, on the final evening I was lucky to be awarded 'best pilot'.

I learned an incredible amount from the course, all of the club members were highly knowledgeable and bursting with advice on how to pursue a pilot career. I'd like to thank

the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for allowing me to experience such an unforgettable course that will greatly help me in my future aviation career. I would also like to thank the Air Safety Trust who generously offered funding for me to do the course and Dave Howell, the course manager. He took really great care of us during the week and passed on a lot of his knowledge and advice to us. All of the instructors also did an incredible job developing our flying skills, they gave up a lot of their free time and some even took time off work to instruct on the Course. I also pass my thanks to Lee Allinson, the Flybe Dash 8 Captain who gave up a lot of his free time to take us up in the motor glider. Many thanks also goes to Nigel Reid, a BA 747 Captain who kindly took us up in his Gypsy Moth in his free time- a truly unforgettable flight. I would also thank the tug pilots, without them we would not have flown anywhere near as much. Finally, I would like to thank everyone at Portsmouth Naval Gliding club, the Chairman and the CFI for their amazing hospitality during the week.



The course was a week that I will never forget.