

Honourable Company Of Air Pilots Gliding Scholarship 2017

Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club

Rick Martin

During the summer of 2017, I was fortunate enough to successfully obtain a week's worth of gliding from The Honourable Company of Air Pilots (HCAP) at Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (PNGC).

Since I was very young I have had an interest in engineering. Through joining the air cadets, I found that I preferred the aeronautical side of engineering and decided that this was the career I was going to aspire to obtain.

Before looking for scholarships I was looking at funding my gliders licence through my summer job and saving up. However, this would have taken me a very long time to do as it is quite expensive to do. I decided that trying to obtain a gliding scholarship would be the preferable way to complete my solo wings through my cadets as it allows me to fully focus my attention on the course instead of work to fund the course.

The process of obtaining the scholarship was an exciting but worrying time as I applied quite early on so I had to wait a while before I heard anything from HCAP. However, when I received the email asking me to attend an interview in London at their head office I was over the moon and couldn't wait for the date to come around. After the interview, I had about a week wait to find out whether I had got the scholarship in which time I completed part of my Gold DofE award. When I found out that I had received a place of the scholarship I was over the moon and couldn't wait to get all my forms signed and returned to confirm my place.

As the week of gliding approached myself and the others that were on the course were messaging each other and helping each other make sure that everything that was needed was packed.

On the first night, we gathered around 17:00 hours to allow us to have the safety briefing and a view around the k21 gliders (shown right) that we would be using for the following week. The gliders seemed very small at begin with and I originally thought that it would be tight and very uncomfortable. However, once inside the cockpit they were very spacious and comfortable for short flights. We also met some of the instructors we were going to be trained by over the week.



My first flight consisted of an aerotow. An aerotow is where a powered aircraft tows you behind them up at approximately 150ft to a pre-arranged height normally 2000ft. The 150ft

may sound a lot but when you are traveling at around 80 knots (approx. 92 mph) it isn't much space if something goes wrong. For my first flight, I showed them my prior knowledge (very little in gliders) so they could work out where to start me with the lessons to make the most of the time. During my first flight, we were airborne for over 15 minutes with no engine and we managed to get over halfway over the Solent before having to turn back to have enough height to land back at the airfield.



As the week progressed we also had a go at some winch launches which involves the winch driver accelerating to 60mph in around 3 second... They said that it was fast but I was never expecting it to be that fast. The acceleration isn't far from the acceleration of an F1 car. You then go up at about a 75-degree angle to approximately 1000ft depending on the weather conditions and the winch driver's confidence.

I learnt a lot through the week course from the pre-flight checks to the way the glider functions and navigates the circuit round the airfield. Unfortunately, we lost a couple of days in total due to weather and a NOTAM (notice to airman) due to HMS Queen Elizabeth coming into Portsmouth harbour. However, because we couldn't glide we had a morning trip to see the aircraft carrier coming in to the harbour and then continued gliding as soon as the NOTAM ended at 12:00.



I would like to thank the members that assisted us with our week, the instructors that did the week voluntary and took time off work, Dave who took the week to spend time with us and supervise us 24/7, everyone at HCAP for allowing me this opportunity as well as my sponsors at 'The Air Safety Trust' to allow me to have the funding for this week.

Although I didn't quite achieve my solo wings I am hoping to continue to achieve them. To allow me to help others with theirs in the future. The experience was greatly received and is truly treasured and hopefully on day I will be able to return as an instructor to allow others to have the same opportunity I have had,