

Miles Heppel

The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and Red Arrows Trust Gliding Scholarship

I have been very fortunate to be selected for The Honourable Company of Air Pilots Gliding Scholarship, sponsored by the Red Arrows Trust. Following on from a trial flight with Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club in 2024 I was captivated by the thrill of gliding, combined with the flying skill to maintain an unpowered aircraft in stable flight led me to apply for the scholarship in early 2026.

I was delighted to hear that I had been offered an interview in March. I travelled to London and sat my interview and waited to hear back. A few hours after my first GCSE exam, I received the amazing news that I had been awarded the scholarship and my course would take place at Midland Gliding Club on the Long Mynd.

Arriving on Sunday afternoon, I was warmly welcomed by the office staff and Ricki the Spaniel and shown around the site. I soon went out to the launch point with my course mates to understand and learn the different roles required to launch a glider, getting swiftly stuck in to help out wherever possible. I soon settled in and together with my course mates had our evening meal.

Starting the course on Monday morning, we were immediately involved with the operations at the Club - from packing and unpacking to learning how to drive the retrieve winch and recovering gliders after they had landed. In the afternoon, I had my first taste of flight with my instructor, soaring for 36 minutes above the beautiful Shropshire countryside. After we packed away the hanger we had our evening meal, prepared by Helen, before spending some time on the flight simulator.

Over the course I completed a range of exercises including thermalling and ridge soaring, co-ordinated flight, effects of control surfaces, circuit and circuit planning, controlling speed with changing the attitude, winch launching and landings.



For me the greatest challenge, while flying, was the conversion from flying powered to unpowered aircraft. The main difference between the two is in a glider, maintaining a constantly pitched down attitude to maintain airspeed is completely different to how you maintain airspeed in a powered aircraft.

Aside from flying and the launch point operations, my fellow course mates and I spent a lot of social time together. I have made good friends and memories throughout the course and hopefully our friendship will last beyond the scholarship.



I am very grateful to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Red Arrows Trust for sponsoring my scholarship. I would also like to thank Sam, David and Helen and all the team at Midlands Gliding Club who made my week so enjoyable.