

David Ringelmann

The Air Safety Trust Scholarship

I am sure that if you are reading this, the prospect of a week's worth of flying at one of the UK's most beautifully located gliding clubs will be of great interest to you. As an Honourable Company of Air Pilots scholarship alumni, I can happily report that the course the Organisation arranged for me and the 5 other pilots I learnt alongside with is up there with the most memorable aviation experiences of my life.

The club in question was the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club, better known as its site name, Camphill. The club is excellently equipped with a range of gliders and support vehicles and excellent accommodation and training facilities, however none of these were as impressive as the outstanding landscape we were based in, made even more outstanding by the bird's eye view the aircraft afforded us.

During the Course



Arriving at the airfield early on Sunday following a 4-hour drive from Kent, I was met by members who gave me a look at day-to-day operations at Camphill, including the airfield's unique layout. I was shown the Hangar, jam-packed with a range of composite and wooden gliders, and got to meet some other pilots from the world of gliding.

It wasn't long before I met my colleagues for the week: Rafa, Charlie, Kai, Adam and Antony. Then came the instructors we would have to ourselves for the coming five days. Both proved brilliant teachers, Pete covering ground school and Alan as flight instructor for my half of the group. Over a scrumptious meal we got to know each other and were then shown around the site.

The week began with a light drizzle and an unsuitably low cloud base. No problem however, as we made the most of the unflyable conditions by receiving training on the 'ground crew' aspect of gliding. Gliding being a thoroughly teamwork-based sport, this was an essential part of learning how to get the most out of it. The weather would later turn to allow flight times in excess of an hour.

Ground training included ground handling of the gliders, the puzzle-like way a hangar is filled with sailplanes, setting up launches, driving the twin V8 winches and tractor driving, used on retrieves. We did perhaps enjoy that last one a little too much.

Across the group we had had a range of flying experiences, some from the air cadets, some in light aviation and for me some local gliding. We were all amazed in different ways at the performance gliders had to offer, the excitement of a winch launch providing an acceleration far beyond anything we had ever experienced and the air-to-air proximity in ridge soaring.



We were all put through our paces by learning stall recovery techniques and how to ride the ridge and the more elusive wave (atmospheric phenomenon allowing powerless climbing, often at great rates), as well as getting to grips with the low-altitude high-speed manoeuvres gliding involves.

Pete proved an excellent teacher in the classroom too, starting from scratch and leaving us with a complex understanding of atmospheric conditions and advanced flight characteristics. The odd wet or misty morning was enjoyably spent on the clubs immersive full-scale simulator and evenings passed pool and darts in the clubs own pub/restaurant.



Camphill was truly an awesome place to fly at, providing me with experience hard to come by anywhere else. If I was considering an aviation career before, I am thoroughly convinced now.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to all members of the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club that made my visit so enjoyable and productive, particularly Pete, Allan, John, Sylvia and Tom.

I'm equally grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Air Safety Trust for accepting me on their Scholarship, and hope their programme will continue to give like minded people opportunities like this for long to come.

