

Katie Rawlings – Air Pilots Flying Club Scholarship

It was a sunny day and perfect flying weather when I arrived on Sunday, so the club was busy with lots of gliders in the air and waiting to take off. It was my first time seeing a glider up close and watching winch launches, a member of the midlands gliding club explained the different stages of the winch launch, as well as the rivalry between glider pilots and paragliders!

Whilst watching the gliders launch, I also met some other HCAP scholars who I would be flying with that week and we began to get to know one another.



We shortly all received a tour of midlands gliding club by our instructor Mark, who explained the basics of flying ahead of our first lesson, showed us how to use the gliding simulator and gave us a tour of the hangar. In the hangar we looked inside the glider we would be flying, a K21 two seater glider, as Mark showed us all of the controls.

Throughout the week we were split into two groups of 4, with each group to one instructor and K21, my group's glider was called Yankee November. We first learnt how to turn using both rudder and aileron simultaneously, and fly in a straight line aiming at a point on the horizon, we improved this skill throughout the week so that we could work towards landing and tighter turns for thermalling. We all got around 2-3 circuit flights in the afternoon, and 1 soaring flight in the afternoon. The soaring flights were my favourite because we were learning how to thermal in rising air, and throughout the week I became a lot more adventurous with the tightness of my turns (a bit too adventurous at times). Midway through the week, we were all getting stuck into landing and taking off, becoming more and more independent with these skills. By the end of the week I had 3 hrs 26 mins of flight time and felt I had a good understanding and ability of how to fly a simple circuit. On the last day we all received certificates of commendation, awarded by Captain Robin Keegan from HCAP, which was a lovely way to end the week.

My favourite moment was ridge flying on the penultimate day, where Mark flew us up to 115 knots, whilst soaring so close to the ridge, followed by some aerobatics like chandelles and loops!

Thank you so much for this opportunity, this week was the highlight of my summer! I enjoyed spending time with the other scholars and learnt so much about flying. I am in Year 13 and am applying for university this upcoming academic year, where I will hopefully find the opportunity to continue my flying.

