

William Cooper Gliding Scholarship

I was fortunate enough to receive a gliding scholarship through the Honorable Company of Air Pilots, sponsored by the Air Safety Trust which led to a week's course at the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club. The course started on Sunday evening where I met the other 5 boys who were on the course with me. A crash course in tractor and bus driving followed which proved very useful for the rest of the course - retrieving and moving aircraft. We were also given a brief insight into how to attach gliders to the cable before having an amazing roast dinner cooked by the fabulous John and Sylvia.

Monday morning started with us meeting with our instructors and being split into 2 groups of three and our group's instructor was Peter. We were introduced to the Puchaz, the glider we would be flying throughout on the course. Then shown how to do pre flight checks, safely secure gliders for when they are not in use and how to prepare the gliders for the day ahead. It came to my first flight of the morning; I had some nerves as I had only ever launched once and that was off an aero tow. These were quickly overcome as I had my mind fully occupied focusing on the pre launch checks and the procedure of the launch itself. That day my group managed to get 4 flights in, in these flights I did some basic turns, reversal turns and on my last flight of the day I was in control of the launch. By the end of the first day, I had 20 minutes flight time.

Tuesday started off with some brilliant weather and a very busy airfield. This meant we would have to be on the ball with our retrieving of gliders to maximize our flight time for that day. That day I practiced turning onto a heading, flying to a point Peter tells me to, was introduced to circuits and practiced some approach control out of a total of 4 flights, even with the club being very busy that day. It was a great realisation when Peter pointed out that it had been our teamwork which had ensured we all made 4 flights on such a busy day on the airfield.

On Wednesday the weather did not look promising with some rain in the afternoon but that did not stop us. I managed to get a 22-minute flight just before the rain started with a thermal climb to 2000ft, as well as some practice stall recoveries, slow flight and topped off with a good circuit and landing. After the rain we all got another short flight, practicing the skills we had learnt earlier on the day.

We had an earlier start on Thursday so we could get some flying in before the frontal rain forecast for the afternoon. Before the rain we all got some good but challenging flying in with gusty weather and often strong crosswinds. We could not continue flying in the afternoon so spent it in the simulator, practicing spin recoveries, aerobatics and more circuits. This helped a lot so we could maximize our time developing our flying skills without the limitations of retrieving and launching gliders.

The final day (my birthday) began with little hope for much, if any flying. The forecast for Friday was very poor predicting a strong South Westerly wind and heavy showers. However, we still headed up to the launch site where Nat managed to get a quick flight in before the rain started. We made the most of our time sitting on the bus learning from Peter about the

rules and safety of ridge soaring. Once the rain had past, we moved down so that we were launching off the east ridge. The ridge was working very well and I ended up having a 40-minute flight, my longest of the course. This ridge soaring was a brand new and exhilarating experience. An excellent one which I wish to repeat

This as been a wonderful experience and I have made very good friends. I applied for the scholarship describing my passion for aviation and the course has made it a reality, fueling my determination to continue flying. The setting was stunning, the hospitality fabulous and Peter my instructor was brilliant. I will always be grateful to the Honorable Company of Air Pilots for this experience and can not recommend it highly enough.

Thank you.