

Thomas Barham Honourable Company of Air Pilots' Gliding Scholarship 2018

In July 2018, I completed a 5-day gliding course at the London Gliding Club based in Dunstable, under a gliding scholarship award to me by the Honourable Company of Air Pilots.

Arriving on Monday morning, I was welcomed by the team in Dunstable and introduced to fellow student Ellis and instructor István Tóth. I can only describe István as a gliding God! With over 43 years of gliding experience, I cannot imagine being in safer hands.



Following, a short briefing regarding the principles of flight, István was keen for us to take to the air. The weather was amazing, and we made the most of it. On our first day, we used the Aero Tow, which István controlled as it's a very difficult procedure with dangers for both the tug plane and the glider. Once in the air, I was allowed to quickly take control; working on straight and level flight, as well as turning. With the coordination of stick and rudder and the need for constant observation, there was never a moment to allow your concentration to lapse.

Over the following four days, I got to grips with winch launches, basic flight and landing. At times, we were in the air for up to two hours and enjoyed flights to Milton Keynes and over Whipsnade Zoo. The scenery and weather were simply beautiful.

When not in the air, there was always something to do at the airfield. Help was needed unpacking, launching, retrieving, cleaning and packing away the gliders. It really was a team effort. I also met lots of interesting people from all walks of life; all with stories to share about a common passion.



My thanks must go to all the Dunstable team.

István is a real inspiration and a most kind and patient man. Thanks also to chef Trevor for looking after us all and taking great pleasure in the challenge to fill us up!

I hope to become a commercial pilot, so this scholarship was an ideal way to take a first step towards this.



With no previous experience at all, I was delighted to be offered this opportunity and I am truly grateful to both HCAP and their generous sponsors.

Since completing this scholarship, I have taken a pilot aptitude test also organised by HCAP and have had a first flight in a simulator. I am gaining in confidence that a career in aviation is a possibility for me and Air Pilots have helped enormously in putting me on this path.