

The Honourable Company of Air Pilots

Gliding Scholarship Report

In the summer of 2023, I was one of a lucky few that got the opportunity to spend a week learning how to fly gliders as the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club in Middle Wallop. This report will cover my personal reasons for applying to the scholarship, my experiences throughout the week and how I intend to use the skills and experience I gained going forward.

Aviation and aerospace have been a lifelong passion for me. I have always been fascinated by machines that fly and how they work, and as such have pursued a career in the industry. I graduated with a master's degree in aerospace engineering in July and will shortly be starting an engineering role at Airbus. During my degree I got the chance to go up in a Cessna 172 light aircraft and was briefly allowed to take the controls during the flight. The experience was fascinating and amazing for me as it was a first-hand demonstration the theory I had learned in practice; as well as the realisation of a lifelong dream to fly an aircraft. After this experience I decided to pursue flying further, I felt that it was something that I had to do more of. My reasoning for applying to the scholarship therefor was twofold: firstly, improving my skills as a pilot would give me a far better understanding and perspective of the aircrafts that I have studied (very useful knowledge for an aerospace engineer), and secondly, I enormously enjoy flying.

The week itself took a very practical approach to teaching (my preferred way of learning) and as such I was in control of a glider from day one. Having almost never been in control of an aircraft before my initial attempt at flying the glider was not particularly impressive. By the end of the week however I was confidently flying the whole flight including winch launches and landings. The excellent teaching by my instructors and a full seven days in a row of practice allowed me to massively improve my skills as a pilot. I initially struggled with coordination of the rudder during turning (something I had not really considered before the week at all) and with the high level of multitasking that is required when flying an aircraft. Over the week I learnt how to fly straight and level, execute controlled turns, find, and gain lift from thermals, launch safely, complete a circuit, and land safely.



During the week, myself, and the other members of the syndicate that I was part of had to work together to prepare the aircrafts for flight safely and retrieve them once they landed. Other aspects of operating an airfield such as logging flights, operating the winch and general safety were also covered, and I finished the week with a much better understanding of the practical realities of aviation. These are highly valuable skills that I could never have learned from a degree. It was an absolute pleasure to meet and work with the other recipients of the scholarship throughout the week and I am certain that I will remain in contact with them for years to come.

Following my week gliding I am more motivated than ever to continue to improve my skills as a pilot. I intend to return to Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club to further learn from the instructors there and eventually work towards acquiring a sailplane licence. Gliding is a sport that I enjoy immensely, and I am sure that I will be continuing with it and progressing my abilities for many years. The skills and understanding I have gained from the week, and the connections I have made will be invaluable throughout my career in the aerospace industry. I want to express my immense gratitude to the air pilots flying club for funding this opportunity, it has been the start of my journey towards becoming a pilot and a life changing experience that I could not have had without their generosity. I hope to reciprocate this generosity and give back to the gliding and aviation communities in future.