

## **Roberto Hayward – John Brownlow Scholarship**

After completing my application form, I eagerly anticipated the email which would inform whether I had progressed to the next stage of the selection process. After a few weeks of waiting, I received the email inviting me to an interview at Air Pilots House in London. As I took the train to London, I naturally felt slightly nervous, and understandably so as I knew how important this would be in securing the scholarship. As soon as I arrived I met the interviewers, I immediately felt more at ease. The interview itself was quite enjoyable. We covered various topics such as my gliding knowledge and future flying aspirations. I left feeling particularly positive and highly anticipated the next email to hear if I had been selected or not. Several weeks later, I was delighted to receive the email saying that I had been selected. I then had the pleasure of selecting which venue I wanted to complete the course. My preference was Lasham airfield in Hampshire.

I arrived at Lasham on the Monday morning once again feeling slightly nervous but incredibly excited all at once. We began the morning by meeting my instructor for the first few days of the course followed by an introduction about the course. This presentation introduced me to the theoretical concepts of gliding and basic airfield information. Once this had been completed, the group and I went outside to assist with the moving of gliders. This was something that eased me into the day nicely as this is a task that I complete regularly at my day job. The weather on the first day was fantastic and offered solid conditions for learning the flight characteristics of the glider and its safe control. My first flight of the day was an aerotow up to 4000ft. It was a slightly surreal experience at first as I became immediately aware of how different it was to any flying that I had completed before. Once Claudia my instructor had stabilised the aircraft and flown us to a safe area, I was granted my first chance at the controls. The K21 glider that I was flying was particularly forgiving on the controls and flew very nicely. I practiced a few turns to get a feel for co-ordination and observations that were required for turns. Each day ended with a de-brief with our instructor where we would revise the events from the day as well as any potential areas for improvement.

On the second day I was able to get 3 winch launches flown in the morning. However, in the afternoon the weather had unfortunately taken a turn and the conditions made it impossible to fly. Instead we made full use of Lashams' comprehensive facilities by having a go in the simulator. This meant that we were able to maximise the use of time. In the simulator I was able practice some winch launches and co-ordinated flying.

By the third day I was becoming quite comfortable with flying the glider once in the air and was moving towards flying the winch launches, circuits and approaches. At first I began by flying the top section of the winch and gradually as I became more satisfied with this I took control from the start. As I prepared to take control of the first full launch I was feeling a lot of anticipation. Once the slack was taken up and I was forced backwards into my seat it suddenly all felt very real. My first independent launch was a success and my next task was to attempt some thermalling. Despite the searing heat on this day, there was a lack of

thermals in the vicinity of the airfield. I spent a while dipping in and out of scattered and broken thermals before ultimately I was at an altitude which required me to get into circuit. I had been introduced to power circuits on the ground and had followed through on the controls so I was fairly comfortable going into this manoeuvre. I was responsible for flying the glider to final approach. Then Claudia took over to guide us down safely. I believe that it was this day when I was introduced to stalling for the first time. This was an incredibly strange feeling at first as stalling is something that you are always seeking to avoid. Yet in this circumstance I was inducing various types deliberately.

Day 4 began with a new instructor, Izzy who was keen to get us flying despite the uncharacteristically scorching heat. On this day I was blessed with near perfect weather conditions for flying and soaring. By the afternoon I was comfortable with flying the full winch launch and the circuit. At this point though I had had a go at thermalling but not held it consistently for an extended period. On this day however I was able to find a decent thermal over Lasham village. This thermal took me from approximately 1300 feet to over 3000 feet. I was quite proud of this achievement it was also quite motivating as I now had a sense of how it felt and how to really hold it in the thermal and the exact feeling/co-ordination that it required.

On day 5 I had a new instructor once again, Ted who was to be taking me up for my final day. Out of all the days this was probably the most exciting yet challenging out of them all. On my last day I was flying the entire duration of the flight including the landing. This requires so much focus, particularly on the approach to landing as I was having to monitor my angle of attack, speed and altitude all at once. In the morning I also flew my final aerotow. Once I was up to 500 feet I was given control and instructed to follow the towplane. I had a go at this before for a short time so I had an idea of what to expect. What took me by surprise was the conditions for following the glider. The sunshine was deceptive and the cross winds made it a challenge its safe to say! On this day though I was able to do my best bit of thermalling. I was asked by Ted in the back to try and find a thermal. At this point I was at roughly 1300 feet as I had recently broken off from the winch as was flying just over the fields by Lasham village. I was having to really pick away at some broken thermals, waiting for the variometer to sound and then quickly put the glider into a tight turn. It was then when I noticed that just off to my right, and several hundred feet beneath me was a flock of seagulls, circling and rising. This was a giveaway that a thermal was present. I was able to roll the glider into the thermal and followed it up and round to around 3500 feet. Out of everything, this felt like my proudest moment as everything that I had learnt during the week felt as if it came together.

What really amazed me about the whole week was just how involved you are at all times. If I wasn't flying I was often driving around the airfield to collect landed aircraft. I quickly got a grasp at how much of a team effort gliding is and how to really must be on the ball at times. Not just from a safety standpoint but also out of convenience for others as everyone is of course keen to get back into the air as soon as possible. I also found that collecting the gliders was a very useful way of getting to know people around the airfield, naturally this helped build some positive relations during the week with some really great people.

At the end of my final day I was presented with my certificate by two representatives from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. I felt very proud to receive this as this was a week and process with immense learning curves, adventures and achievement. It was the amalgamation of all aspects of the course which were tied up in this moment and it came with an immense sense of achievement and excitement. This was as I knew how this was only the start and there are so many flying opportunities that are still to be discovered in the near and distant future.

I would like to personally thank each and every person who made this possible. Particularly the instructors Claudia, Izzy and Ted. They were all exceptional instructors with a real attention to accuracy and progression. Secondly I would like to thank all members of Lasham gliding club who were there to show me the ropes and answer my questions. Your support was second to none and I am incredibly grateful for all knowledge that you imparted. Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to everybody at the Honourable Company of Air Pilots who invested in me and granted me this fantastic opportunity