

Royal Air Force Charitable Trust Scholarship

Since I can remember, I've wanted to fly aircraft. When I was little, I would even rearrange the cushions on our couch to create a cockpit and I would have the most amazing adventures. Just that alone was enough to fuel my passion for aviation. The past week at this course allowed me to take my first real step to becoming a pilot.

When I got the conformation email, my first feeling was absolute joy and excitement, but there was also a slight feeling of nervousness; what if the people I was staying with weren't nice, or what if I wasn't very good at gliding? The truth is that the amazing community and instructors I was met with made me very quickly forget about all of these silly worries.

I was the first to arrive at the Midlands Gliding Club on the 28th of July, and I was kindly shown around by Martin, which is where I met the caterers Helen and Dave, who assured me that if I ever needed anything, I could come to them. I was shown the mess hall, the briefing room, the simulator room and the accommodation. The accommodation was so clean and comfortable which helped keep me energised during the week.

Once I had unpacked, I made my way over to the bustling airfield, where I was met with the rest of my group. In total, there were 8 of us and by the end of the week, I became closer with most of these people than my own friends at school. It turns out we had all been to RIAT, which helped us initially bond and talk about all of our favourite aircraft.



On the day of arrival, I had the opportunity to have a flight in a T-21, which, so far has been my favourite glider flight I've ever had. It didn't have a canopy and is just so unique compared to flying in the K-21 training gliders. In this first flight, I practiced turning in a thermal a few times, as well as straight flying.

Each day we all got around 3 flights with either one of the incredible instructors Tom and James in the K-21s. It felt like after every day, I had moved onto a new skill and was always improving thanks to them.

Every morning, breakfast was served at 8:00am, followed by unpacking the hanger. Then at around 9:00am, we would always have a briefing where we discussed the circuits, weather, NOTAMS and much more. After this, we would DI the gliders and head over to the launch point to begin our day of flying.

On the first official day of the course on the 29th, our group was swiftly shown all of the ground operations. These included running the wing, hooking the winch cable to the glider, logging the flights and driving the winch retriever. I managed to get a flight in the motor glider called the Falke. During this, a few types of stalls were demonstrated, and I even got a go at attempting and recovering from them myself which was very fun!

Throughout the rest of the week, I was in the K21s, and learnt many skills including: trimming, the slip and skid, dealing with crosswind and spin dive training. Eventually I even learnt to land, and winch launch by myself. At first, I struggled with keeping enough back-pressure on the stick when in the launch climb, which meant sometimes we went too fast on the climb. However, after much practice on the simulator, I managed to break this habit.

The simulator was amazing because it consisted of three flat screens, surrounding a model glider cockpit. Although it wasn't exactly like flying an actual glider, it was helpful to practice skills and develop a muscle memory for things like turns. It was also very fun to attempt aerobatics such as barrel rolls and loops!

Overall, I learnt much about flying gliders and it has made me so excited to continue this particular part of my journey with aviation. It has also given me a small introduction to life on an airfield and I absolutely loved it. In fact, I enjoyed myself so much that I stayed for another two days after the course to continue working on my flying. I've wanted to join the RAF for a while, and this course combined with talking to some ex-airforce pilots that attend this club has made me so excited for what my future in aviation holds.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Honourable Company of AirPilots for this scholarship opportunity and the RAFCT for sponsoring me and making this course possible. Also, I would like to thank Dee for coming on the last day of the course and helping to capture a snapshot of what our week was like.

