

Keith Squibb – AFG Gliding Scholarship 2024

What a week! It absolutely flew by (no pun intended) and it was a phenomenal experience. I was lucky enough to be awarded a gliding scholarship at Midlands Gliding Club, a lovely site near the border between Wales and England, fondly called the Mynd.



It was the first gliding club I had been to, and what a way to start. As you might be aware, the club sits about 1500 feet above sea level, which made for an interesting episode driving up and down it by myself (which included having to briefly pause going up the hill to wait for some sheep to clear the road) However, I can safely say, the journey I had made was instantly worth it.

Upon reaching the top on late Sunday afternoon, I was greeted by a breathtaking view, and some lovely people. After meeting others on the course, we were

then taken out to the airfield to get an insight into operations and how the club is run on a day to day

basis. We were instantly welcomed in, and allowed to help out with the manoeuvring of the gliders. The club had its charms and its quirks, the sheep that dot the grassland and hills surrounding was the most prominent, as well as the stunning location. After the airfield happenings had stopped for the day, we returned to the club house and had dinner with both course and club members. There was a wonderful community feel about, and a fantastic roast to eat.



After a bit more socialising, it was time to turn in for the night. The clubhouse had accommodation for us, it was comfy and made sure we got a good night's sleep every night. There was also a simulator on site, which we made sure to use in our downtime to polish our skills. We woke the next morning to a lovely breakfast (you might notice the good food is a common theme, it was stellar the whole week) and a briefing about the airfield and the launch directions. The weather was looking unfriendly, but safe, so we got to have the experience of gliding that day, and for many of us, it was the first time. The winch launches were fantastic. It was like an amazing rollercoaster, you start to roll and before you know it you're heading up, up, and away. The views from the top of the launch, and throughout the whole flight are just amazing. It can be a bit bumpy, natural due to the

effect of gusts and thermals, but nothing too unnerving, and no sudden drops or jumps were felt. It truly was unforgettable.

Over the following days we slowly gained more and more confidence, and took control of more and more of the flight. Soon I had my first landing, and then my first launch, and kept on progressing until on Thursday when I achieved a ghosted solo, meaning having control of the aircraft for the whole flight, takeoff to landing, with no prompting from my instructor



behind. This gave me a great sense of accomplishment, and I was proud of achieving that in just one week without having flown a glider prior. Another source of personal pride was when we experience a cable break on launch at about 800ft, and after my instructor recovered, I was entrusted to perform an abbreviated circuit and land after the fail, which despite the situation, I remember feeling calm and confident, knowing I was in safe company and that it was just another landing.

The community around the club and the one we formed on the course were both warm, welcoming, and a joy to be a part of. I am immensely thankful to everyone that helped to make this possible, namely the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, Midlands Gliding Club, and AFG for sponsoring my scholarship.

