

Sophia Rooke

The John Brownlow Scholarship

I had the greatest week at Midland Gliding Club, I learned so much in just one week! I can say with my whole heart that it was one of those weeks where I didn't want it to end! After a 3-hour drive riddled with doubts and nerves, staff very quickly put me at ease and I got stuck in, helping with groundwork and getting to grips with how everything worked.



My instructor, Sam, was amazing. Because of him I was quick to get to know the controls, and I was soon doing most of the flying myself. He was the most brilliant instructor who really put in the effort to help me with things I struggled with.



On my very first flight I was already learning coordinated turns, and before long I was landing the glider myself, with Sam calmly talking me through each step. That gave me such a boost of confidence, and from there each flight just got more exciting.

Food at the club was astonishing (a huge thank you to Jess and the team!) — mealtimes became a highlight of the day and gave everyone a chance to sit together and share stories from the air.

By the middle of the week I was confidently practicing take-offs, refining my turns, and starting to fly more independently. The moments up in the sky were breathtaking, I seriously doubt there's a better place to fly.



What stood out to me just as much as the flying was the sense of community at the club. Everyone was welcoming, supportive, and always happy to share knowledge, whether it was about launch systems, weather patterns, or flying techniques. I felt part of the team straight away.

This scholarship has been life-changing for me. It gave me the opportunity to step into a world I had only dreamed of, and now I'm determined to carry on with my training and work towards going solo. I'll always be grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me this chance, and to the Midland Gliding Club for making the experience so inspiring.