

Gliding Report

RAF Charitable Trust – Adam Woodburn

Midland Gliding Centre, Long Mynd

I found the HCAP scholarship opportunity when I was researching ways to get into flying, as this had always been an aspiration of mine, only prevented by the barrier of high training costs. Immediately, the chance of a week of gliding appealed to me, so after some further research, I filled out the forms and sent them to the admissions team, and was delighted to get a virtual interview, and following that, a confirmation of my place on a course. Although I live in Fife, Scotland, I chose to do the course at the Midland Gliding Centre, as I have heard many good things about the Long Mynd and the Gliding centre.

When the time came to go to my course, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was pleasantly surprised by the accommodation, friendly faces, amazing views, and the overall pleasantness of the grounds. I enjoyed getting to know the other members of the course whilst we were introduced to the operations around the airfield, such as running with the wing during the winch launches, attaching the cables, and retrieving the gliders after landing. I enjoyed getting the chance to drive the buggies to retrieve the gliders many times each day, and with so many jobs involving all of us, there was a sense of responsibility and involvement throughout the entire operation, as we work to ensure the process is as efficient as possible, which would result in more flights throughout the day.



When it was time for my first launch, I felt a mixture of both excitement and some nervousness, and while sitting in the cockpit and going through pre-flight checks with my instructor, Sam, I wondered what it would be like to suddenly rise up into the air, as I had seen other gliders do. I had been in a glider once, years before, but was towed up in an aerotow launch, rather than by winch. When the cable was pulled tight and we started moving forward, rising up and watching the land rotate until I was staring directly

up into the sky, I was sure that a winch launch was one of the most exciting things anyone could do, and I loved it.



My first flight involved learning the basics of flight controls, how to manoeuvre the aircraft, and how to manage airspeed and recover from stalls. It took some time to get the hang of maintaining level wings and correcting yaw with rudder use, but as the week progressed, this would become much easier. After around 20 minutes in the air, we landed, and I couldn't wait to get up again. Thankfully, we all managed to get multiple flights each day, so I wouldn't have to wait too long to go up again.

By the second day, we were already being taught how to fly our own winch launch, and allowed to do it whilst the instructor carefully watched to ensure there were no problems. This added another element of excitement to the launch, as

you have to fight to keep the wings level, and round off the launch before dropping the cable. I didn't get it perfect first try, but with repeated circuits, the practice meant that by the end of the week, I was confident in my ability to fully fly my own launch.

Alongside the launches, the most important part of a glider flight is the landing, and after observing my instructor's movements during the landings, and a sufficient briefing on the conditions and how to fly an approach, with the high key, downwind leg, diagonal leg, base leg and final approach, I was ready to do my own landings, and although not always perfect, with some mistakes during circuit planning and the touchdown, I was happy with how I handled the stressful but also exciting process of landing a glider safely.

My highlight of the week was the 1h 10m flight I had on the 2nd last day, where Sam let me fly much of my own flight while we searched for thermals and climbed higher and higher into the sky on the hot summer day. This really improved my ability to identify areas where thermals would be more common and stay inside one for as long as possible. On this flight, my instructor demonstrated some aerobatics like a loop, and allowed me to recover from several things like a spiral dive and wing-over stall. When descending, I was able to complete high-speed manoeuvres to lose altitude and change direction, before landing the glider.

Outside of flying alone, the course offered many opportunities to create lasting memories and a chance to socialise with people from all areas and backgrounds. The Long Mynd is famous for breathtaking views and amazing scenery, and it lived up to its name. I enjoyed watching the sunset as we ate our dinner from the top of the hill where the airfield was located, watching the solar eclipse occur whilst packing away the day's gliders, and seeing the stars in a way I had never seen before during meteor showers. Whilst the gliding was very fun and I loved learning how to fly independently, it was the combination of the exciting flights and these additional moments which made the course a truly unforgettable experience.

On the final day, we squeezed in as many last flights as possible before we had to pack up before the presentation ceremony, where we were presented with our certificates and said our final thanks to the club members and instructors for all of their help, before driving down the hill one last time to depart the course. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity that was given so generously to me by the RAFCT, and it was a pleasure to meet a representative of the trust to communicate this in person. The course gave me the chance to get experience in the aviation industry in the purest form of flying, whilst also making new friends and creating unforgettable memories.



