

HCAP Gliding Scholarship 2026

I am very grateful to both the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and Per Caelum (the Masonic Lodge) for allowing me to complete the Gliding Scholarship this year. Over the course of the week I have been given many opportunities to expand my knowledge on many subjects around the Derby & Lincs Gliding Club.

Upon our arrival on Sunday evening, we were cheerfully greeted by our instructors Pete and Alan, as well as John and Silvia, the owners, who would never fail to put a smile on your face. Additionally we were given a tour of the club while its regular members were still present, providing us with an excellent opportunity to observe the club's regular operations firsthand as well as a demonstration on how to drive the tractors. Furthermore, I was placed in awe of the surrounding landscape of the Peak District. We were then given some absolutely delicious food and a chance to get to know each other.



The days began by eating a delicious breakfast in the canteen and unpacking the two gliders from the hangar which we would use as a group as well as the other gliders which would be used by the club's members throughout the day. Despite not being the most exciting part of the day, it was crucial not only as a valuable routine but also as a great way of becoming a better team with my fellow scholarship recipients.

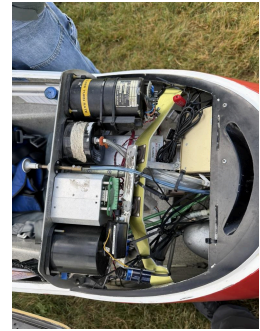
Throughout each day we would often have to work as a team to achieve goals to keep the airfield running smoothly. Such as the retrieval of gliders once they land, launching the gliders and repairing the gliders. Another vital role which everybody played was operating the lights which would act as communication between the winch driver and the launch point.

The retrieval of landed gliders would often make us work as a team. To help, we would use tractors, which I personally found terribly fun to drive.



The aircraft on which we received training was the PZL Bielsko SZD-50 Puchacz. The glider which I personally spent my time learning on had the registration G-DLGC (being the first Puchacz which the club had acquired it had been named after the club) with the callsign "GC1". Despite the airframe serving the club faithfully for many years it never failed to impress in flight as a fully aerobatic glider. Nevertheless, over the course of the week we had several issues which we had to address including a snapped air inlet scoop, a snapped rudder pedal spring and a loose tube of wiring. Both the air scoop and the rudder pedal were fixed in the

same afternoon where I got to assist in repairing the glider. The wiring tube was then tightened the next morning where we got to see the rear end of the instrument panel. Despite these repairs being minor I had learned a great deal more than I initially imagined about the way in which a glider is constructed owing to the incredible instruction provided by my instructor, Pete. He not only demonstrated how to resolve the issue but also actively involved us in each step of the process, emphasising the critical importance of safety.



The average flight consisted of either executing a manoeuvre which had just been explained on the ground, completing a circuit or wave soaring. For example, to begin we were taught the theory of adverse yaw and how to battle its effects using the rudder after which we got to apply that concept to actual flight. This pattern was repeated for the many concepts of flight which we were taught. Later on in the course we were given the opportunity to practice circuits. The purpose of these flights was to refine our ability to take off and land the glider successfully. Through Pete's persistence a clear improvement was seen throughout the course in my ability to handle a glider. His incredible expertise on so many subjects had proved to be an incredible way to learn. On one of the days the weather allowed us to take part in wave soaring due to the club's fascinating geography. This meant that the flights that day were much longer than usual as I was able to achieve a 43-minute-long flight.

Each flight began with the completion of pre-flight checks which was made easier with the use of the acronyms ABCDE and CBSIFTBEC. The vital importance of these safety measures was proven to me first-hand when I had a rudder spring snap while completing my control check before the last flight of the day.

Throughout the day we would get food from the control bus where not only were we provided with delicious sandwiches from John for lunch but also delicious snacks such as Silvia's flapjacks. Following each day of flying and assisting on the airfield, we would return to the welcoming atmosphere of the clubhouse. There, we would catch up on the day's paperwork, enjoy delicious meals, and engage in conversations not only with each other but also with the club members.



The week concluded with a ceremony presided over by the Past Master of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, Captain Robert B. Keegan, from whom it was a privilege and honour to receive my certificate beside my fellow course participants.



Overall, the experience had taught me far more than I had previously imagined possible in such a short space of time and I will be sure to strive to complete a solo

flight in my local club as soon as possible. It has inspired me to aim higher and work harder to achieve my goals. I am incredibly thankful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Per Caelum Masonic Lodge as well as both the people at Derby & Lincs Gliding Club and the people who had completed the course with me for making it such an unforgettable experience.



Benjamin Borshchevsky