

Daniel Nesbeth Gliding Report

Air Pilots Flying Club Gliding Scholarship

I was first introduced to gliding when I joined the Air Cadets, and I quickly fell in love with the sport. The sense of freedom you feel soaring coupled with the incredible views were exhilarating and I was determined to learn more about gliding and pursue it further. As a result, I applied for an HCAP Gliding Scholarship and following a successful interview I was offered a course at the Cotswold Gliding Club.

Naturally, I was quite apprehensive of being away from home and meeting new people but these nerves were quickly quelled when I arrived at the club. The course ran between a Monday and the following Friday, but I arrived on the Sunday afternoon, which happened to be a members' flying day. This was the perfect opportunity to get a feel for the club atmosphere and learn about ground operations and I was blown away by the hospitality of everyone I met. I had numerous conversations with club members of all ages and they were all warm, friendly, and they came from a wide range of backgrounds- engineers, financiers and, of course, professional pilots. This was the perfect introduction to the club and set the week off on a fantastic start.

The Monday morning began with some introductions, where the course members and I formally met our instructor, Keith Edmunds, and some other club members who would be helping us during the week. Following this we had a morning briefing which covered the plan for the day. During each briefing Keith explained the theory behind the flight exercises we would be completing and he delved into the physics behind gliding, which really fascinated me. Then, we moved the gliders from the hangar to the launchpoint and began operations. When we were not flying, there was always something to do, whether that be log-keeping; launching other gliders or, again, talking to other club members. It was really interesting to hear their perspectives on various topics ranging from aviation to politics to general life and I learned a lot from them.

The progress we all made was tremendous, especially when we look back and remember that we started the week having trouble making coordinated turns and ended it flying most of the flight, let alone the aerotow and circuit. Admittedly, I initially underestimated the mental and physical workload required not just in the critical phases of flight but the whole flight although I quickly grew to enjoy the challenge. Flying the circuit was easily my favourite part of each flight. It required constant judgement against your reference point on the ground and control input to ensure that you were at a perfect height by the time you turned for the final approach. The approach itself demanded precise coordination between the control column, airbrake and rudders all of which left you fairly exhausted by the end. I had my fair share of eventful landings but the thorough debriefs after every flight is where I learned the most; Keith and I thoroughly and honestly analysed every decision I made and the consequences of them, which helped me to be a better decision-maker and a better pilot.

As well as excellent instruction, being able to compare notes with the other course members and learn from each other helped us significantly in making such progress. We were all passionate about aviation albeit at different stages in our paths and from different backgrounds but we had a great time in each others' company. I am immensely grateful to them, Keith and the Cotswold Gliding Club for making the week so unforgettable. I cannot thank the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Air Pilots Flying Club enough for giving me this incredible opportunity which has allowed me to build my experience in aviation and set a strong foundation for airmanship that will help me throughout my career. I intend to study aerospace engineering at university and later apply to become a fast-jet pilot in the Royal Air Force which are two demanding and competitive fields but the lessons I have learned over the week will stay with me forever.

To anyone planning on applying for an HCAP gliding scholarship, my advice is to do it. You will gain an incredible amount of experience and be around people who are just as passionate about aviation as you are all while being taught by some of the best instructors. It is a tough week, with early starts and lots of mentally and physically demanding work but you will take away so much. I thoroughly enjoyed the week and I have no doubt that you will too!