

Sarah O' Connell The Air Pilots Flying Club Scholarship

On the 31st of August 2022 I commenced a week-long gliding programme at the Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club. This would not have been possible if it wasn't for The Honourable Company of Air Pilots who awarded me with the gliding scholarship. This unbelievable opportunity not only developed my knowledge of the principles of flight and the aviation world but also solidified my dream of becoming a commercial airline pilot.



I arrived at the club on Sunday and was greeted by all of the staff members who were most welcoming and helpful in finding my way around. I was then introduced to the other scholarship winners and immediately got along which led to a week of teamwork and many laughs. That evening we were introduced to tractor driving as it would be an essential for towing the gliders around the airfield, for me this wasn't my strong suit but eventually with a lot of practice and help from others my driving progressed over time. Before the day was over we all had the opportunity to fly a glider using a simulator we practiced and learnt the fundamentals of flight such as the effects of controls, turning and straight and level flight.

Our course commenced without delay the following morning and by 10 o'clock I had accomplished my first flight in a glider, my instructor Alan demonstrated basic maneuvers such as straight and level flight and turning which I improved on throughout the course. By the end of the day I had accomplished and learnt so much, most memorably was executing a launch and practicing the various types of stalling.

With every flight I continued to develop and progress, each day we build on what we did previously and moved on to something new such as circuit planning, spinning, stalling and winch launch failures. One principle of flight we focused on was lift, this led to finding suitable thermals and using them to gain altitude, one day I was successful in using a thermal to make it to 4,000ft allowing us to execute operations requiring altitude such as spinning, launch failures and 60 degree banked turns. The times I wasn't flying I helped out around the airfield as much as I could whether it be with towing gliders or assisting with the launches, at every opportunity the staff at the club didn't hesitate to teach me something new. We were extremely fortunate with the weather for the duration of our course, however due to poor conditions outside we had one morning of theory. We looked deeper into the principles of flight and how thermals are formed which I eventually applied to my flights. As well as flying we learnt the importance of teamwork gliding requires, we each had to play our part in getting the gliders to where they needed to be in a safe and efficient way.



By the end of the week I was executing all launches and landings and was in full control of the glider for the duration of the flights, for my last flight my instructor Alan allowed me to fly in the rear seat, we flew up and down the ridge while listening to Africa by Toto, it's a memory I will never forget.

Sadly, the week came to an end and it was time for me to return home, I created so many memories at the D & L gliding club and developed my knowledge of flying profusely. The course has been the first step in my goal of being a commercial airline pilot and it would have never happened if it wasn't for generosity and opportunities The Air Pilots offered me by creating the scholarships. I cannot thank them enough for the allowing me to have such an amazing week. I would also like to thank the Derbyshire and Lancaster Gliding club who looked after me the entire week, especially my fantastic instructor Alan who in so little time taught me so much and made me fall in love with aviation