



Micah Nortey

The Royal Air Force Charitable Trust Gliding Scholarship

Hosted by Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre



"Gliding is the foundation of flight." I'm sure I heard that phrase constantly during the application process, but during my gliding scholarship from 14th–21st August, I got to live it.

During the week we stayed at the Army Aviation Centre and spent our first two days gliding at Middle Wallop, where Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (PNGC) normally launches. Having not been in a glider for two years, I had long forgotten the feeling of going from 0 to 60 mph in 2.5 seconds, but after the excitement of the first launch, I was eager to go again.

The first day was spent being split into our syndicates and being taught how to handle the gliders correctly and safely and how to navigate the airfield, followed by the first round of glider launches. The day was mainly spent getting familiar with circling to gain altitude in thermals, adjusting to the sensitivity of the glider, and learning the basic controls, including how using both the rudder and the control column can change your experience of gliding entirely.

We also had the opportunity to fly in a motor glider, the Grob 109. It was a completely different experience from a normal glider: much louder, with many more vibrations. Having plenty of time on the stick allowed me to see the different approaches someone has to take when flying a motor glider. It was also interesting to see the thought process behind our instructor Barney's movements.



The first weekend at Middle Wallop came with many lessons. One was that safety is put at the forefront of every action; another was that gliding isn't a solo activity, and a whole team is needed to keep you safe, work efficiently and get as many launches in a day as possible.

As the new week started, we moved to a different airfield, Upavon. Being surrounded by restricted airspace and having a much smaller safe landing zone was completely different and changed the way I thought about gliding. At Middle Wallop, I thought only about the moment and what I could do while in the air. At Upavon, I was thinking about where I could land before I even launched, and the actions I would take in different situations.



As the week progressed, the other scholar and I truly started to settle into a routine. We would have breakfast (a full English), change into our airfield clothes and head to the airfield in our chosen rideshares, where we talked about our progress, sang songs and gelled together more as syndicates.

Alongside this, we also had talks after dinner from aviation professionals, who shared their inspiring stories of getting to a cockpit or flight deck, along with tips and advice for succeeding in the industry. They showed me more of the large range of options available in aviation. These talks gave me information I won't forget and will use when succeeding in my career in aviation.

Nearing the end of the week, we all saw clear progress: there was less instructor input, more independent flying and more student decision-making. Seeing the difference between the first day of gliding, with an unstable yaw

and under- or over-inputs, and controlled, co-ordinated flying is a great feeling. I was also able to experience spiral dives, stalls, loops and zero gravity, and all of these experiences have encouraged me even more to achieve my Sailplane Pilot Licence (SPL) and go solo.

The week ended with a ceremony, where we were all given certificates and showed our appreciation to our instructors. Thank you to Nigel for being an amazing instructor throughout the week; your humour and good teaching made the days informative and exciting, even when the weather wasn't in our favour. Thank you to Phillipa and Dave for being amazing hosts and organising this fantastic week, and thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust for continuing to inspire young aviators to keep pursuing a career in aviation.

