

Hannah Hockin
Air Pilots Flying Club Gliding Scholarship

From the 16th to 23rd of August, I attended a one-week residential with Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre.

The course was based at the Army Aviation Centre in Middle Wallop, where we stayed in the army barracks and had our meals in the Officers' Mess.

The Flying

On Saturday and Sunday, we were based at Middle Wallop Airfield. The weather was perfect, with clear skies and lots of sun.

We were first assigned to our syndicate of four and designated a glider.

I was fortunate enough to have flown in a glider before, though it had been quite a few years ago. My first winch launch was quite a shock- being launched into the air from 0 to 60 knots in seconds. After releasing from the winch cable, we climbed another

1,000 feet purely on rising air, side by side with a bird of prey. On the first day, I also had the opportunity to fly in the Grob, a motorised glider, for 20 minutes which allowed me to gain a broader understanding of controls and dynamics.



Later in the week, we relocated to Up Avon, about 20 minutes down the road. By the end of the week, I was performing coordinated turns, handling winch launches, recovering from stalls and flying the circuit. The landings still needed a bit of practice, though it was challenging to refine them in strong crosswinds. Still, even the imperfect landings taught me a lot!

Gliding is very much a team sport, and when we weren't flying, we were on the ground assisting with launches, retrieving gliders, and logging flights. This gave me an insight into the importance of ground operations in aviation.

Flying in the UK can be unpredictable, and we lost two days due to wind and rain. However, we didn't just sit around- we visited the Army Flying Museum, where we learnt about the use of gliders in World War II and even saw an Airspeed Horsa. We also attended presentations from our instructors, including ground school lessons covering topics like spinning and navigating airspace.

We were fortunate enough to be invited back to Middle Wallop to make up for the missed days. Overall, I had 16 flights during the initial week and reached 25 flights after returning to Middle Wallop.



Motor Glider



K21 Glider

Extracurricular Activities

Each evening after dinner, we attended talks from various individuals. One of the evenings we heard from a current Apache pilot, who shared firsthand accounts of flying in challenging conditions and offered valuable insights into the technical skills and resilience required in military aviation.

We also received insight from the PNGC Chairman, who shared his vast experience and provided guidance on navigating different aviation career paths. In addition, we heard from club members who have successfully gone on to complete their commercial pilot licenses. It was helpful to understand the steps they took and the challenges they faced.

Final thoughts

I want to say a massive thank you to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and The Air Pilots Flying Club for this amazing opportunity.

A special thank you also to the instructors, volunteers, and everyone at PNGC, especially Emre, Harry, and Dave, for being our points of contact and ensuring the smooth running of the week. Their dedication and support made all the difference.

This was truly an incredible experience, and if you're a potential applicant, I encourage you to go for it- especially if you're a bit older and have only just discovered your passion for aviation. I was initially worried about being on the older end of the scale, but I quickly realised that everyone was like-minded, sharing the same enthusiasm for flying, and I felt right at home. And even if you aren't successful on your first try, you have nothing to lose by reapplying the next year.

See you in the skies!

