

# Alexander Day

## The Duke Scholarship

For as long as I can remember I have had a rather strong distain for the ground, so I was elated to receive the email informing me that I had been awarded this scholarship.



From the Monday 8<sup>th</sup> to Friday 12<sup>th</sup> of August, I was lodged at Gransden Lodge airfield with my fellow scholarship student, Tyler Oxley. It was a week of fantastic weather, new friends, incredible experiences, and memories to last a lifetime.

On the first day the sky was filled with a beautiful smattering of small cumulus clouds which allowed for two circuits followed by two nearly hour-long flights. Having done nothing except read about gliders up to that point, the winch launches that started those flights were quite the

experience! During the flights I was introduced to the principles of thermaling. It was at this point I discovered that my previous light aircraft experience was starting to work against me, as I was using far too little rudder. My instructor then had to very diligently “untrain me” to allow me to better my soaring skills.

Over the next few days, the weather proceeded to get a little too good, and staying in the air for longer than five to ten minutes became a real difficulty. This was because of the lack of thermals below two thousand feet when the winch was getting us up to about one thousand two hundred. However, this, coupled with some time in the simulator, gave me some excellent circuit practice. This allowed me to get to the point where I was able to complete one completely un-aided on Thursday.

Other lessons that were covered were turns and stalls. The turning practice I found invaluable to the progress of my ability to ride thermals and while I never needed to recover from an actual stall, it helped build my confidence in handling the Perkoz.

There were other non-flying tasks that I learnt how to complete as well. These included hanger packing, glider rigging, attaching gliders to winch cables, and retrieving them with a buggy once they landed.

My flying culminated with an aerotow to two thousand feet, whereafter we hit a solid ten knot thermal that I rode all the way to six thousand eight hundred feet. From there we headed out to a local reservoir and nearby towns. The flight was a test of all the skills I had learned up to then and I was able to utilise them and make my best flight of the course.



Ultimately, I believe that the technical skills I picked up over this course have been a huge benefit and aid in the furtherment of my flying career. I would say that the thing that I enjoyed most was the challenge posed by the more technical nature of

glider flying compared to light aircraft. A challenge that I hope to keep rising to as I join my local gliding club and work towards solo.

I would like to extend a massive thank you to everyone at Cambridge Gliding Club for showing me a good time and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for the honour of being awarded this scholarship.

I would also like to give my my warmest and most heartfelt appreciation to my instructor, James Kellerman. An ex-NHS neurosurgeon and glider pilot of some fifty plus years, he made the week as special as it was and the learning curve a breeze with his kind and patient demeanor. It was with great sadness that, shortly after we left Gransden, me and Tyler found out that he had passed away. James was always talking about the privilege that glider pilots have, to be able to fly without power. Well, it was a privilege to be able to fly with you, and I'm sure you are out there now soaring far above the 7000ft we made it to on our last flight together.

