

Toby Ayres-

The Air Safety Trust Gliding Scholarship



From a very young age, I have always been inspired by my grandfather and great-grandfather who both achieved their dream of becoming pilots (privately and in the RAF). This hooked me into aviation, and ever since being gifted a gliding experience, for my birthday, I have become completely obsessed and captivated by aircraft (and being airborne!) After a long application and interview process, I was thrilled to be awarded a week- long, residential gliding course at the Midland Gliding Club, by The Air Safety Trust! This course allowed me to build on many core skills and principles of flying, as well as gain so much more experience in the air.

Midland Gliding club is situated in Longmynd which meant absolutely stunning surroundings

but a very daunting drive to the club house in the hills! It is one of the oldest clubs in the country and was chosen due to its six miles of westerly facing ridge- making it the best site in the Midlands! Although the English weather was unpredictable, I was so lucky to have 12 launches with just over two and a half hours of flying- with one of my flights lasting 43 minutes. As well as the ridge, we were able to find a bounty of thermals and quickly learnt the art of 'thermaling' with the help of our very skilled and experienced instructor, Andy. He was a massive inspiration as he is both an ex- RAF and commercial pilot. Not only was I able to build on my knowledge and ability of gliding but I also learnt a wealth of new skills on the ground such as: wing- running, winch driving, towing gliders, repacking the dreaded hanger and even herding sheep! The club couldn't have been more welcoming, with Dave and Helen making sure that we were always looked after and definitely well fed- I think our instructor was worried whether the glider would even stay in the air with the extra weight!

I thoroughly enjoyed myself, meeting other people who had a shared passion for aviation- making great friends along the way. This amazing opportunity has certainly further ignited my passion for flying and I am very grateful to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and The Air Safety Trust for allowing me to take another step towards my dream career of being a commercial airline pilot.

