

Matthew Evans

The Past Master Robin Keegan Scholarship

From a young age, I have always wanted to pursue a career in aviation more specifically, a career in the Royal Air Force. Ever since, I've seized every opportunity possible. However, being from a small village in Wales has made finding such opportunities quite difficult. Having never flown before, this scholarship was an opportunity I wasn't willing to miss. Luckily, my application was successful, and I was invited for an interview in April. To my surprise and after checking my emails almost religiously I was ecstatic to find out that I had been selected for a gliding scholarship.

The Week

After being offered a choice of gliding clubs, I selected the Midland Gliding Club and to be honest, I'm so glad I did. I couldn't have asked for a better place. Everything was exceptional the food, the accommodation, the views, the staff, and the people I was on the course with.

I arrived on the Sunday evening and was shown around the club, receiving a very warm welcome from everyone. The following day, we got straight into flying. I spent the week flying the K21 the club had two available, and the eight of us were split into four per glider. Each morning began with a briefing, where the instructors explained the plan for the day including the placement of the winch, the position of the launch point, and the circuit we would be flying. After that, we unpacked the hangar and got straight into flying. Throughout the week, we followed a routine of three circuit flights in the morning, followed by lunch, and then longer soaring flights in the afternoon.

Our instructors, Mark Sanders and Sam Prin, were excellent teachers. They taught me everything I now know about gliding. We covered a wide range of exercises during the week, including manoeuvres, maintaining specific speeds and headings, stalling, and much more. It was amazing to realize just how much we had covered. One of my proudest moments was seeing how much I had improved from struggling to stay airborne for more than 15 minutes, to soaring for 55 minutes by the end of the course. Tracking my progress through my logbook was incredibly rewarding. It was a great feeling to go from comments like "struggled" to "good" and "excellent" by the final day. I owe it all to Mark and Sam thank you both.

Even when we weren't flying, the learning continued. We were taught how to wing run, attach the stop, give the all clear, and retrieve the winch. It was great to learn how to launch a glider, and it meant we were never bored as there was always something to do.

The evenings were just as enjoyable, and the free time was much needed after full days of flying. We had time to rest, relax, play games, go on walks, and even use the

simulator something I found particularly helpful, especially after my first flight when I realized flying wasn't quite as easy as I'd thought.

The food was another highlight of the week. From the first night, when we were served a Sunday roast, I knew I wasn't going to go hungry. Breakfast ranged from cereal to a full cooked meal, and lunch included a variety of sandwiches and hot options. The café even served scones possibly the best scones I've ever had! The kitchen staff really didn't disappoint thank you.

The Honourable Company of Air Pilots has given me an experience I will never forget one that has helped me in so many ways. I couldn't be more grateful to the Company for organizing this course and making this opportunity possible. It has made me realize that a career in aviation is not only something I'd love to do, but something that is genuinely achievable. I also owe a heartfelt thank you to Past Master Robin Keegan. Fortunately, I had the chance to meet him in person and thank him as he presented me with my award. Without his support, this scholarship wouldn't have happened so thank you very much. Finally, a huge thank you to the Midland Gliding Club, its instructors, and staff for being so helpful, welcoming, and for making this an experience I will truly never forget.

Thank you.



