

SAM BUNNING

THE RED ARROWS TRUST GLIDING SCHOLARSHIP 2025

Since I joined the Royal Air Force Air Cadets and experienced flying with the volunteer gliding squadrons and university air squadrons I've been extremely fascinated with a career in aviation, coming from a military orientated family and being with RAFAC has driven my passion to fly with the RAF as a pilot. To pursue my dream career of being a military pilot I sought experience in the air and something that could significantly enhance my knowledge, understanding and ultimately, my chances for such a highly contested role. To advance towards this I found the honourable company of air pilots offering gliding scholarships which led to one of the best weeks in my life.



After a difficult but rewarding application process I managed to secure an interview which was thankfully successful, this led me to a week in the Peak District with Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club which was a fantastic club with really friendly members and amazing food! Everyone on my course was supported by the red arrows trust which gave us the opportunity to learn many practical skills including the flying itself but also ground operations like wing running, recording flights, retrieving gliders and so much more

Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club is a hilltop airfield based in Great Hucklow, in the Peak District and was founded in 1935. The drive from where I lived (down south) was extremely scenic and very beautiful with all of the architecture and nature, however, as I got closer to the club, the more nervous and daunted I felt. (It was definitely worth it!)

Throughout the week course I was provided with some amazing opportunities, I got to fly the Puchacz glider in beautiful scenery and lovely weather, this gave me some amazing flights including my longest flight of 38 minutes. This was due to the number of thermals and ridge soars we managed to get along the hill ridge and when the sun was out. Even when the weather was worse off and cloudy or drizzling we still managed to get up in the air even if they were much shorter flights doing circuits.

Through the entire week I managed to achieve 14 flights with a massive total of 4 hours 8 minutes flight time which was incredible. Thanks to my brilliant instructor, Alan, I managed to experience thermals, ridge soaring, winch failure practice, wave soaring and so much more like taking off and landing in my controls.

On the ground I learnt amazing skills such as how to drive a tractor (to retrieve the gliders), wing running, how to record flights, unpacking and repacking the hangers and a lot more. Thanks to the amazing John and Sylvia at the club who provided hospitality to all of us, this made the week even better.

The week course has been a fantastic step in my aviation career and will help me achieve my aspirations within the RAF. Not only was this amazing for my future, the other scholars and everyone else I met along the way made the course even better and so much more special than it already was. At the start we all began not knowing one another this changed within the span of 5 days where the 6 of us became a team. I will miss the course and everyone that made it as exhilarating, funny and amazing as it was, I wish it never ended. As the week came to an end I longed for so much more as my experiences turned to memories.

Thank you ever so much to everyone who made this incredible experience possible for me, from John and Sylvia providing hospitality, Alan for his knowledge and help, all the members for being so welcoming, the 5 other scholars – holly, Izzy, Mauwitz, Thomas and Adam - for making this my best experience and most importantly The Honourable Company of Air Pilot for making the entire course possible in the first place.

For anyone who is reading this, thank you so much, I would easily recommend this scholarship for anyone interested in aviation. Whatever you want to do, keep striving for it, keep working for it and don't give up, take every opportunity thrown your way and run with it. Chase your dreams and you will achieve them.

Photos!



