

Donnach Gibbons Gliding Scholarship

Between the 18th of August to the 25th I embarked in a one-week adventure which included soaring in the sky and aerobatics, teamwork and making long lasting friends which all have a common passion of aviation and adventure.

On Friday the 18th of August, I arrived in Army Air Corp Middle Wallop which is the headquarters of the Army Air Corp, I was thrilled that I had a one week scholarship of gliding and over the moon that I was staying in Army accommodation where active military personnel live and work, I was even more excited as just five minutes down the road was the Airfields/hangers of Apache attack helicopter, I felt honoured and privileged.

On Friday evening we had an introduction to the course and met all the instructors and the CFI which explained to us on what we would do during the week. I had the pleasure of meeting 14 other like scholarship winners, which 7 of them were from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. It was so nice being surrounded by people who all had a common passion and loads in common with. We then had dinner in the Army officer mess, and I must say it was delicious. I had Gluten free lasagne I was also very impressed with the gluten free food which the officer mess provided during the week.



On Saturday morning I woke around 6:30 to have a shower and was ready for my first flight. I had butterflies in my stomach knowing that in a few hours I would be winch launched on a glider going 0 to 80 knots in seconds. There is no better feeling then flying, on the first day I had the opportunity to get three flights which one lasted for 50 minutes during these flights I learned the basics of flying such as maintaining speed, turns, trimming and stall recoveries which were very fun.



As the week went on, I start getting more confident of my responsibilities which included collecting my syndicates gliders by getting a buggy and towing it to the lunch site, I felt like the ground crew after a spaceship land as we all rush to the glider to get it as quick as possible so we could have as many flights possible throughout the week we got better every day, there was averagely around 50 winch launches per day, I was really impressed of all the volunteers in the Glider club as they worked from 7am until to 5pm in the boiling heat ensuring that everyone had as many flights as possible, my hats off to them.

After a long day of no stop activity Saturday evening, we had a delicious barbecue which Austin and some of the other flight instructors made for us, it was really nice to be able to sit around the grill and relax.

Presentation

As well as having this amazing opportunity of flying I also had the opportunity to speak and attend some fantastic presentations from a Brigadier Nick English who was an Apache pilot for 22 years and served in two tours in Afghanistan, it was really fascinating to learn about his experiences and Army aviation. We also had a presentation from a Boeing 777 First officer for British Airways, he spoke how he was able to get into

aviation industry, it was interesting to hear his experience, he started as a Glider pilot to build up his hours. I meet two industry professionals which were able to give us a good insight of both incredible Careers in aviation. We also had a presentation from Adrian which was my flight instructor he is an ex naval Bomb Disposal Diver for the Royal Navy, it was amazing to hear his story on how he got into Gliding with the Navy.

By Day 4 for someone who had very limited flying experiences I was already felt confident doing the take off and the circuits by myself with very little input from my flying instructor, I was proud of my progress during the week and the skills which I have learned. I was a big fan of the stalls and learning to recover from them, this taught me how to react quickly and stay calm under pressure, lessons which I can put into use for my day-to-day life.

As all good things must come to an end the last day sadly finally arrived, however it was truly remarkable to see how far we came since the first day we arrived with little or no flying experience to doing take offs and circuits by ourselves. Friday was truly a fun a day, I manage to get 3 flights I asked my instructor if we could do some aerobatics such as loop to loop and close flyby, it was so fun experiencing the G forces in the loop to loop. After my last flight there was the presentation evening where we were awarded our certificates of completing the Gliding scholarship.

Let me start by giving a massive thank you to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and The Air Pilots flying club for giving me this once and a lifetime opportunity which has given me a massive boost in my pursuit on becoming a Commercial Airline pilot. And a massive thank you for PNGC and all the volunteers who helped us during the week.

I highly recommend to anyone who has a passion in aviation to apply for this scholarship as it gives you a great foundation in aviation. Even if you're not successful the first time keep on trying, for example I wasn't successful for applying for the PPL scholarship in 2022 however that didn't stop me, like everything in aviation perseverance is the key!

