

## Henry Smith – Gliding Scholarship

After hearing about this incredible opportunity from a friend of mine, I knew I had to apply and thank goodness I did! How many other 17-year olds can say they have been on a gliding scholarship? During the week I got a number of flights in a Puchacz and even one in a vintage open-air glider.

The day I arrived at the gliding club we had a warm welcome from the instructors who showed us around the club house, as well as talked us through what the week would entail. We were up early on the first day, ready and eager for a full day of flying. The first challenge of the day was getting the aircraft out of the hangers which proved to be a challenge because the wing span was twice that of the opening of the hanger. Needless to say, lots of careful manoeuvring was involved. Once the aircraft were out of the hangar, we had to learn how to drive the tractors in order to be able to tow the gliders up to the launch point. This proved amusing to watch, as a number of the students had never driven before meant stalling was a frequent occurrence. The highlight of the week was of course the flying. The way the aircraft handled was like nothing I have ever flown before; it was difficult to get right but so satisfying when I did. After learning how to turn the aircraft properly whilst maintaining the correct speed we progressed onto stalling the aircraft and learnt how to recover from such eventualities which is an important part of flying a glider. Due to the lack of lift on the airfield I amassed 84 minutes of total flight time throughout the week, whilst this wasn't enough time to enable me to conduct a flight unaided, I did manage to land the glider by myself once which filled me with an enormous sense of achievement and gave me a real thrill. As a whole the experience was one of the best I have ever had and is certainly not one I will ever forget. I am incredibly grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for awarding me this scholarship which has only boosted my love for aviation and enhanced my ambition to pursue a career as a pilot.

