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The Air Pilots Trust Gliding Scholarship

For the summer of 2025, I was very fortunate to be given a 6-day gliding scholarship from The Honourable Company of Air Pilots. This was truly an unforgettable and amazing opportunity, where I developed and learned new skills essential to flying.

My journey to receive this scholarship began all the way back in January, when I was researching and looking for opportunities to develop my knowledge and connections within aviation and gliding. Luckily, I found The Honourable Company of Air Pilots, and after reading through the previous year's winners' reports and seeing the amazing things they got up to, I was interested and applied. The wait between submitting my application and finding out if I had secured an interview felt like forever, especially as this was during the period in which I was starting to revise for my exams. Though thankfully, good news arrived that out of a large amount of people, I had managed to secure an interview, and words could not describe how joyful and thankful I was.

Despite being quite nervous before my interview, I began to feel at ease once I met the supportive and kind interviewers. The interview itself went a lot better than I thought it would, and afterwards, I felt incredibly proud of myself, knowing that, irrespective of the outcome, I had gained new knowledge and skills which would assist me in any future interviews or applications. After a couple stressful weeks, in the middle of my exam period, I received the thrilling news that I had managed to secure the esteemed week-long gliding scholarship from The Honourable Company of Air Pilots. This was not just an opportunity to develop my flying skills; it was an experience where I could learn and meet similar people with the same interests.

My scholarship took place at The Derbyshire & Lancashire Gliding Club, located in the heart of The Peak District, which made for some beautiful views. The club has been open since 1935, making it one of the oldest clubs in the country, and has established itself as one of the UK's premier gliding clubs. In addition, the airfield is also located 1350ft above sea level and is located on a hill, which makes landings quite challenging, but also rewarding and exciting.



For our course, we were split into 2 groups and assigned a glider and instructor that we would have all week. My group was given the exhilarating opportunity to fly the Puchacz, a two-seater glider, which is well known for its training-based design and its smooth flight characteristics. The glider is made of fibreglass, which makes it very robust, gives it its sleek and modern appearance, and relatively efficient aerodynamics. All these different things mean the Puchacz has great performance and excellent handling, resulting in every flight being an amazing experience.

Despite bad weather resulting in there being barely any flying on Monday and Tuesday, across the entire week, I was able to get 13 launches, which totalled to around 3 hours of airtime. My longest flight was 45 minutes, where I got to experience the art of soaring and using thermals, and be able to develop my soaring skills. Even when the weather was not on our side, we all still had a great time, talking to all the club instructors, practising on the simulator, and playing card games with each other. By the end of the week, when the weather had improved, I had developed my confidence and skills enough that I was launching, thermalling, doing circuits, and landing all by myself (with the instructor in the back)! It was an achievement that I was greatly proud of.



Even when I was not flying, I was still busy learning about essential operations on the ground, such as hooking the winch onto the glider, wing-running, operating the lights, how to drive the tractors, and how to tow the gliders. This was probably one of the best highlights of the course, as I got to experience and understand how many different roles and jobs are essential in gliding, so that everything runs smoothly. Helping on the ground also meant that I had the opportunity to get to know all the members of the club and be able to gain knowledge and advice from ex-RAF pilots and commercial pilots who had countless years of experience.

I cannot thank The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and The Air Pilots Trust enough for this life-changing and unforgettable opportunity, which will definitely help me progress my career into becoming a RAF or commercial pilot. This course has been deeply beneficial for me, as it has not only allowed me to acquire essential pilot skills but also served as a gateway for my aviation career. This opportunity is something that I will reminisce on fondly for many years to come. I would also like to thank all the members of Derbyshire & Lancashire Gliding Club for their amazing hospitality, and my instructor, Hans-Georg Werner, for his expertise and inspiring instruction.



Thank you for reading, and I hope that I have inspired you to be the next applicant for this life-changing scholarship. It is an opportunity that I deeply recommend you apply for, as it is truly an amazing experience, which I believe has greatly benefited my journey to my desired career.