

HCAP Red Arrows Trust Gliding Scholarship Report

Ameya Bhattacharya
Midland Gliding Club, Long Mynd
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I was delighted to be offered a place on a gliding course at the Midland Gliding Club through a scholarship from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. As an aspiring aerospace engineer with the long-term goal of becoming a military helicopter pilot, a gliding scholarship was a dream come true. The opportunity was made possible through the generous support of the Red Arrows Trust, and I am extremely grateful to both organisations for allowing me to experience gliding in such a remarkable setting and kickstarting my career in aviation.

The course took place at the Long Mynd in Shropshire. Its hilltop location, open landscape and legendary flying conditions made it an ideal place to learn. Arriving at the club on Sunday afternoon after multiple long train ride's up from London which included a sprint to catch one of them, I was excited to begin.

My training was conducted in the ASK 21 and K-13, with every flight launched by winch. The first winch launch was a memorable introduction to the course. The acceleration, steep initial climb and rapid transition into normal flight were unlike anything I had experienced before. Each launch demanded careful preparation and attention to the instructor's guidance, particularly as events moved quickly during the early stages of flight.

Across the course, I completed 18 flights. I began by developing a feel for the controls and learning how the glider responded to different inputs. Early exercises included flying straight, making turns and coordinating the controls effectively. One of the most important lessons was understanding that the ailerons and rudder need to work together. I gradually became smoother and more accurate as I learnt to recognise the attitude of the aircraft and make smaller, more deliberate corrections. I had the opportunity to fly two different gliders, one was an older vintage glider, and the other was a more modern glass fibre glider. I noted distinct handling differences between the two glider models. Notably, I thought the vintage glider was a lot more forgiving during circuiting training, especially on final approach due to its large airbrakes, which meant if I was too high on my

final, I had an ability to decrease altitude rapidly whilst maintaining air speed and full control of the glider.

As my training progressed, I spent more time learning the circuit and the sequence of decisions required to bring the glider back to the airfield safely. Unlike a powered aircraft, a glider commits to its approach without the option of adding engine power. Height, position, speed and judgement therefore have to be managed carefully throughout the circuit. Repeating this process over several flights helped me understand how each stage fitted together, from joining the circuit to establishing the approach and completing the landing.

I also learnt how to use trim correctly, how to recognise and recover from a stall, and how increased loading during a turn affects the aircraft. The accelerated stall exercises were particularly valuable because they demonstrated how the aircraft can approach the stall at a higher airspeed when additional load is placed on the wings. These exercises strengthened my understanding of safe aircraft handling and the importance of maintaining awareness of speed, attitude and control inputs.

Some of the most memorable flights involved ridge soaring and thermalling especially with other gliders and sometimes even with a bird.. These flights showed me that gliding is about far more than following a circuit around the airfield. Staying airborne requires an understanding of the surrounding landscape, the weather and the movement of the air. Ridge soaring allowed me to experience lift produced by wind passing over the Long Mynd, while thermal soaring introduced me to the skill of locating and using rising air. These experiences helped connect the flying theory with what I could see and feel from the cockpit. The weather during my week at the club was particularly outstanding due to the heatwave that was prevalent across England at the time, which helped with thermaling. However, with many



days with few cumulus clouds, it was more difficult to pick and find thermals.



The course also gave me a much stronger appreciation for the theory behind flight. I learnt about the effects of the controls, coordinated flight, trimming, circuits, stalls, soaring conditions and the judgement required during an approach. Applying this knowledge immediately in the aircraft made the theory easier to understand and gave it a clear practical purpose.

By the final part of the course, I was carrying out much more of each flight myself. My logbook records a whole flight completed with minimal prompting, followed by further experience of thermal soaring and stall exercises. Reaching that point was a significant achievement for me. It demonstrated how much my confidence, awareness and handling had developed across the 18 flights.

The experience also taught me the value of patience. Progress in aviation depends on building sound judgement and consistent

habits rather than chasing a single milestone. Every flight added something to my understanding, even when conditions limited the time available in the air. Looking back through my logbook, I can see a clear progression from learning the basic effects of the controls to managing circuits, soaring and completing a flight with very little instructor input.

My time at Midland Gliding Club has deepened my interest in aviation and given me an experience that I will remember for many years. Flying over the Long Mynd, learning to work with the air and gradually taking greater responsibility for the glider were genuine privileges.

I would like to thank my instructor, David, and everyone at Midland Gliding Club for their patience, expertise and encouragement throughout the course. Their guidance allowed me to develop safely while making the experience both challenging and enjoyable. I was grateful for the company and friendships that were forged during the week at Long Mynd. Helen's legendary pancakes and wonderful meals powered us through our busy days. All the staff at Long Mynd were kind and supportive and made the week at the Club feel like a home away from home.

Most importantly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Red Arrows Trust and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. Without their support, I would never have had access to this

wonderful opportunity and level of flying experience. The scholarship has given me valuable skills, greater confidence and an even stronger motivation to continue developing within aviation.



Ameya Bhattacharya

