

virgin atlantic



Yugesh Sundharam

"Don't tell me the sky's the limit when there are footprints on the moon." ~ Paul Brandt

Words cannot describe how fortunate I have been to be awarded a gliding scholarship from Air Pilots. This summer I gained valuable skills that I will be able to transfer to my future career. So before I explain how my scholarship went, I would like to thank the Company for providing scholarships and for inspiring the future generations about the aviation industry.

I was given a 4-day residential course with everything from food to bedding being provided for by the company. The chef at The London Gliding Club was top of the line. However, coming back to my scholarship, my first day was a little taster into what my next few days would get me into. On my very first flight in a glider, ever, my instructor and I went soaring to about 4000 ft using simply thermals and birds. Yes-birds. István Toth my instructor taught me skills that I would not have expected at all, including little tricks to keep my glider flying for a longer period, from looking at the thickness and darkness of clouds all the way to places where the birds fly. I learnt so much in the period of 4 days that it is simply hard to put all of them into words.



Day 2 was when the hard part kicked in since I have never flown a glider before, simply rolling the aircraft seemed almost impossible. However, unlike how I was conventionally taught about the control surfaces on an aircraft, the glider needed way more attention; it needed constant inputs from both the rudder and control column. If I was not paying attention for a second my attitude would change and would require a lot more work to bring it back into control. Attitude. One word that I was told to pay a lot of attention to during the course of my 4 days.

Day 3 I got the hang of rolling the aircraft smoothly and just after lunch that day I was able to climb the glider to about 3000ft on my own. Something I was truly proud of but only made me want to achieve the next big thing even more. Going, Solo. That was my mind-set, to achieve something that very few did in 4 days with 0 prior experience.

The afternoon of Day 3 was the hardest, WINCH FAILURES. Something that might sound scary but with enough practice, it becomes second nature. However, I must confess, low cable winch failures are not my favourite with a high chance of PIO to occur due to low visibility and tough speed control.

Day 4, Things start to get tense but I stay calm since I had to get my landing a lot smoother to go solo. One word of advice that I would give is, speak about what you are currently doing out loud all the time, It will keep your mind engaged with executing the task and will allow you to go through checks mid-flight. By lunch, HCAP arrived to present my certificate and I had a lovely lunch discussing my future plans and it gave me time to calm down and focus more on the evening. Going, Solo. I was even more determined on this as the sky got darker, time started to slip and the number of cables and staff available diminished. But I wasn't going to give up easily.



I was fortunate to meet previous PPL Scholarship winner Liam Bennet who gave me some advice on what my options are if I were to gain the PPL Scholarship the following year. He stayed for a while and helped with my last few cable launches, so thank you, Liam, for helping out.



It was the last 2 cables; I was given thumbs up to go, Solo. By the radio on the ground was a prior Vulcan Bomber Pilot, so the pressure was truly on. The pre-flight checks were on my fingertips and within a few minutes, I launched. The entire glider felt different, but I loved every moment of it. My landing was "excellent", words that still echo in my ear to this day.

I was given thumbs up to go solo again and it was the most amazing experience of my life, the sun setting in the distant, the calm breeze through the vent, the thermals kicking you higher into the sky, the most amazing experience of my life. However, I had to adapt to my situation I was flying too high and I had to decrease altitude quickly or else I would heading toward a hill at 60 knots. Not ideal, however, I pulled the airbrakes kept my speed high and altered my attitude, and my landing was amazing. A smooth flare and gentle touch; a tad bit too much rudder pedal though, but you only learn from your mistakes.

All in all, in these 4 days I learnt so much and got to know a lot about the other people flying at the club. Flying is one part of the experience; however, learning things about aviation from others in the club was something I am truly grateful for. From plane watching to riding a buggy across the hill all of which were amazing. So I would like to thank my Instructor István and The London Gliding Club for having me there.

One last advice to the reader, seize every single opportunity that you may have even if the odds are not in your favour. I learnt a lot about myself and I hope to continue my gliding and apply for the PPL next year until then the gliding will continue and my love for aviation will grow. Thank you Air Pilots and Virgin Atlantic, I am forever in your debt.

Achievements Notice

Name	Achievement	Instructor	Date
CHAS REES	XC ENDORSEMENT	CHRIS C	5/3/18
DAVE LYONS	1 ST SOLO	BOB DOWDY	16/01/18
JEREMY ABBOT	1 ST SOLO	BILL CREAK	23/9/18
WILL NICHOLLS	1 ST SOLO	ISTVAN TOTI	21/8/18
ALEX HORSTHANN	WINCH SOLO	ISTVAN TOTI	29/9/18
XUBESH SUNDHARAM	1 ST SOLO & 2 HRS COVISED FROM SCRATCH	ISTVAN TOTI	21/9/18

