

Alfie Johnston

The Air Pilots Flying Club Gliding Scholarship

Having always had a passion for aviation, I was delighted to be informed I was awarded a Gliding Scholarship with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots.



From Friday the 18th to Friday the 25th of August, as a course, we were accommodated at Army Air Corps Middle Wallop with Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (PNGC). Upon arrival we immediately bonded as a cohort, and I looked forward to spending the week ahead learning to fly with eager, like-minded individuals.

Early Saturday morning we headed out to the airfield at Middle Wallop. Not long after unpacking the gliders, it was my turn to fly. Having never been in a glider before, my first winch launch was an experience I will always remember. Being launched 0-60 mph in a K21 glider in a matter of seconds was so thrilling. Before I knew it, our cable was released, wings were level and we were gliding. Seeing the world below from the unique perspective of a glider was incredible. My instructor soon gave me the controls and I began learning the basics of lookout, and how the ailerons and rudder works to execute turns. One of my most memorable flights from the weekend was thermalling up past 3,000ft and then my instructor taking control for me to experience aerobatics, including loops! On the ground, what I really enjoyed was the collaboration in working as a syndicate in retrieving gliders and assisting with launches, and it highlighted the importance of teamwork in aviation.

From Monday to the end of the week, we flew from Upavon Airfield. Thanks to my excellent instructor Nigel, throughout the week I got more and more proficient at completing the pre-flight checks and flying most of the flight, including doing the winch launches, flying the circuit and executing the landing. We also advanced onto practicing how to deal with various stalls. Overall, we were very fortunate to not have a single day of flying postponed due to weather.

The learning on the course wasn't just limited to the airfield as, in the evenings, we had insightful presentations from military and commercial pilots, who shared invaluable insight into their careers and experiences in aviation.



I want to say thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and PNGC for really letting my passion take off. If anyone is reading this who has an interest in aviation - I urge you to apply. You don't lose anything doing so, but there's so much to gain!

