

## Gliding Report – Mark Sheilds

Driving along a narrow road in England's countryside, I arrived at the location of my gliding scholarship, Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club. Brimming with excitement I said goodbye to my family and entered the club house which would be my home (and school) for the next 6 days. Here I was introduced to a member of the club and given a tour of the building. Soon after I was given the keys to my room and met with the other 5 colleges of mine on the scholarship. We were all strangers, from different parts of the country and for this reason the first 30 minutes were met with silence. However, we would all come to find that we had 3 things in common: we were all members of a cadet organisation (5 of us were in the Air Cadets), we all were the same age, and we all had a passion for flying. These qualities would soon intertwine and allow us to bond together like family. On the first day at 9 in the morning we set off for the hanger, prepare and inspect our gliders. Our glider make for the week was the Puchacz. As soon as we set up the gliders and winch cables, I was the first to fly, and it was an exhilarating experience. One by one we were launched and even though we were on the ground we were always learning new skills, from driving the tractors which were used to collect the gliders, to the pre flight checklists. This was the day in which we became Aviators.

When dawn brought the second day it brought with it the mist, and unfortunately due to this we were not able to fly on the second and third day. However, they were not to be wasted and our instructors gave us a few lessons on the basics of gliding. We later had the opportunity to use the club's flight simulator which would refine ourselves into glider pilots.

On the fourth day the weather was perfect, determined we set off to prepare the gliders for the day. This day was not to be wasted and we were on the airfield for 12 hours, the day was amazing, and we all had 5 launches each. The simulator had clearly improved our skills and by the fifth day the instructors allowed us to fly the circuits and landings with their supervision. I also managed to cover several modules including: symptoms of stalls, stalling and high-speed stalls (on the previous days we covered: effects of controls, secondary effects of controls, turning, trimming, landing, and launch failures which were conducted in the simulator). And as the sun set on the horizon, our gliding course was brought to a close, we retired to the club house and received our certificates.

This gliding experience was a life changing experience, and I would like to thank The Honorary company of air pilots for this opportunity, I would also like to thank the Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club, the club members and instructors and my colleagues for providing support. Not only was the experience wonderful from the sense of community and warmth, but it also provides a base for my aviation career, and I urge everyone to apply for this opportunity as its essential for future pilots and one of the best experiences you could have in your life.