

The Honourable Company Of Air Pilots Gliding Scholarship Report 2024

- Leo Oxford

During the summer of 2024, I had the privilege of taking part in the Honourable Company of Air Pilots Gliding Scholarship. Having previously completed a powered flying scholarship and undertaken several powered trial lessons, I was eager to expand my aviation experience into the world of gliding; this opportunity exceeded every expectation.

The course was run by Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (PNGC), operating out of Middle Wallop and Upavon throughout the week. I averaged five flights a day, which gave me valuable hands-on flying experience in a relatively short period. From launch procedures and stall recovery to basic aerobatics and coordinated turns, each day built on the last, allowing me to grow rapidly in confidence and competence.

One of the standout moments for me was the chance to fly the motor glider, which provided a great way to use my powered flying and newly learned gliding skills. It helped me bridge skills from my previous flying experience and offered a new perspective on flight dynamics and energy management. I was also fortunate to be selected as one of just three scholars to experience a tow launch with a Piper Warrior tug aircraft which was an unforgettable highlight.



Launching a glider
with aerotow



Me gliding above
Middle Wallop

What struck me most about gliding was the sensitivity and responsiveness of the aircraft. Even the slightest movement on the control stick led to a noticeable change in direction, and learning to manage that finesse was both challenging and rewarding. The first launch was particularly memorable and the intensity of the climb and the transition into level flight was something I hadn't experienced before, but something I will remember forever.

Beyond the flying, the scholarship was equally impactful in other ways. I met a brilliant group of scholars who shared similar aspirations, and we quickly formed strong connections. The instructors were exceptional, many of whom had extensive military or commercial aviation backgrounds and their insights and support were invaluable. I had multiple opportunities to fly with a British Airways Boeing 777 pilot, which, as an aspiring commercial pilot, is an incredible thing to be able to do.

What I learned about gliding is how fundamental teamwork is. How to effectively work as a team and achieve something. Gliding is very unique as it requires multiple people to launch an aircraft, from the winch launcher, to the people pushing the glider into position, manning the ATC, instructors, maintenance, and many more.



Aerotow flight
from Middle Wallop
to Upavon

As scholars we got the opportunity to take part in every aspect of the launch (apart from the instruction of course) and by day 3 we were doing it all ourselves without any input from the course leaders which was an amazing achievement and something very unique to the sport. It provided us all with essential skills to progress in the field and essential for becoming a commercial pilot.

This experience has been instrumental in my development, not just as a pilot but as an individual. It has reinforced my passion for aviation, improved my teamwork and communication skills, and introduced me to a welcoming and supportive flying community. I plan to continue gliding in the future, with the aim of gaining my gliding licence and potentially entering competitions.

The scholarship has also given me a way to remain actively involved in flying while saving for further training. Gliding is a highly cost-effective method of developing core aviation skills, and it complements my ongoing PPL theory studies extremely well. It has also strengthened my applications for other scholarships and training opportunities by providing both practical experience and meaningful industry connections.



Launching a Duo
Discus glider with
winch launch



Me and my Mum
in the motor glider

To anyone considering applying: if you're serious about becoming a pilot, gliding is an excellent way to deepen your understanding of flight. It teaches skills that go beyond powered flying such as energy management, planning, and adaptability. It does so in a way that's accessible and community-driven. I would highly encourage aspiring pilots to pursue this route.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for offering me this opportunity and to the instructors at PNGC who sacrificed their personal time to teach us the sport of gliding. I am incredibly grateful to have been selected and have made the most of every moment. It has been a pivotal step in my aviation journey, and I look forward to building on everything I've learned.



Me with my
course mates
after our last
day of flying