

OLIVIA LARDNER

RAF Charitable Trust

This summer, I was honoured to receive a gliding scholarship from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, generously funded by the RAF Charitable Trust.

The course at Midland Gliding Club gave me an extraordinary experience of flying at a different club and adapting to a different field set-up.

From the moment I arrived on the airfield I was made to feel very welcome by everyone I met. It was fascinating to see how another club operated and I quickly got involved.

By the end of the week our group could run the winch-retrieve, launch gliders and bring them back to the launch point.

I was fortunate enough to have flown in a glider before the course started so I was able to fly confidently under the instruction of Sam, the course instructor for the week. We shared some unforgettable flights including a few aerobatic manoeuvres.

By the end of the week I was able to successfully judge a circuit, take-off and land with little to no prompting which was a huge milestone for me.



In this photo you can see me landing an ASK-21 :)

Each day followed a good rhythm. Mornings began with unpacking the hangar and carrying out daily inspections of the gliders. This was then followed by breakfast together with both the students and the instructors before the daily briefing. We would then head straight out onto the airfield to launch as early as possible. It was rewarding to spend the week flying as well as working as part of the team on the ground.

We were fortunate with the weather as most days were soarable. The mix of strong thermals, winds, and challenging conditions helped me build confidence in the air. The day that we could not fly due to weather conditions, was spent focussing on theory that was presented by the instructors in small seminars. We then went into the Flight Simulator where we spent time practicing circuits and landings. This was also a great time to get to know the fellow students on the course.

The simulator and theory sessions helped tie everything together and I found myself applying what we had discussed once I was back in the glider.



A highlight for me was flying along the ridge which was a brilliant experience and a reminder of what makes gliding so unique.

The scholarship has been a fantastic experience, not only in terms of improving my flying skills, but also in the connections I have made at Midland Gliding Club. Spending a week completely immersed in gliding has reinforced my determination to pursue a career as a pilot. I am extremely grateful to HCAP, the RAF Charitable Trust, the instructors Sam and Matt and everyone at Midland Gliding Club who made it all possible for me.

