

RAFCT Gliding Scholarship 2025 – Carl Robinson

I was fortunate enough to have been selected for the Gliding Scholarship with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots in 2025. I was so happy when I first read the email saying that I had been awarded a place on the 2025 scholarships.

I arrived on the Sunday, the day before the course started at the Midland Gliding club located along the beautiful Long Mynd in Shropshire, which allowed me to gain some experience in ground operations and familiarising myself with the layout of the airfield. I began learning how to launch the gliders as well as how to tow them back to the launch point using the buggies. At the end of the day, we helped pack the gliders back into the hangars. I also got to meet some of the instructors and the other scholarship winners that I would be spending the week with.



The first day began with unpacking all the gliders, learning how to set up the gliders and assisting the instructors with the daily inspections, ensuring that they are fit to fly. After then taking the gliders down to the launch point ready to start the day. This was followed by breakfast with the instructors and some of the other club members, which was prepared by the amazing kitchen team, and our morning brief for the day ahead. We then headed out to the launch point, where I was introduced to John, who taught me how to operate the retrieve winch, which I definitely enjoyed, especially as the Midlands GC is one of very few clubs to operate a retrieve winch and was a very

unique experience. Later on in the day I got my first launch of the week with my instructor Matt. Having only ever experienced two other glider launches, I was still quite nervous, but as soon as we were in the air the nerves disappeared. The first launch was absolutely amazing, the scenery around the Mynd was beautiful and like nothing I had ever experienced before. Matt soon handed me the controls, teaching me the basics of rolling the aircraft, maintaining pitch and attitude as well as how to turn the aircraft using co-ordinated controls, using the ailerons and rudder pedals together to achieve a smooth turn.

Over the next few days, I began to improve my confidence in the air, being given opportunities to practice my flying skills. Improving my turns as well as flying straight and level, which is more difficult than it sounds. I also got to do some soaring flights, learning how to spot a thermal and fly in it. I managed to get a flight of 1 hour and reaching around 2000ft QFE, just touching the cloud base meaning we couldn't go any higher. I was also taught how to do the pre-flight checks before launching, ensuring that the glider is safe and ready for take-off. As well as improving in the air, I also got to improve my efficiency on the ground, working together as a team on the ground to get the gliders back up



in the air as fast as possible, while working around the many challenges that were given to us throughout the week, such as launch failures and cable breaks.



Sometimes, the weather was too poor to be able to fly. In this time, we were in the briefing room, being given theory lessons on take-offs, general flight, approaches and landings, which I found really helpful when you're actually up in the air and flying. We also had the chance to practice our skills on the realistic flight simulator in the clubhouse, which was really useful to get some

additional practice, but also got to have some fun and do some aerobatics. Having times where we were not able to fly also gave us an opportunity to bond as a team and get to know one another better. On Wednesday, we all took a walk down the Shropshire countryside together, chatting to each other and enjoying the beautiful views.

As the week progressed, I was able to fly more and more of the entire flight. By the second day, I was able to begin practicing approaches and landings back into the airfield, which didn't always go to plan, there is so much to think about and I found it quite difficult to always get right. On Thursday, I was then allowed to begin flying the launches, initially letting me fly only the first half of the launch and gradually giving me more of the launch to fly and by the end of the week I was really proud to be able to fly the whole sortie, from the start of the launch to touching down back on the ground at the end of the flight.

Overall, the week spent in the midlands was an absolutely amazing experience. I met loads of amazing new people made some life-long friends. The skills that I had learnt over the week were a key stepping stone in my flying career and has inspired me to join my local gliding club and go solo. I want to say a massive thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me the opportunity to do this scholarship and to the RAFCT Trust for sponsoring me.

