

## RAFCT Gliding Scholarship Report

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This summer, I was given the invaluable opportunity to swap a regular week of my summer holidays for a week taking to the skies in a K21 glider, thanks to the RAF Charitable Trust.

My first gliding experience flight with the Air Cadets was an awe-inspiring introduction to what gliding is all about - and since then, I had been looking for ways to get into the air again and relive the excitement.

I'm glad to report that this course achieved that and way more!

It all began around December last year, when the Honourable Company of Air Pilots rolled out applications for the scholarships. Taking my chances, I applied for both the flying and gliding opportunities.



[Above, a K21 glider rested and waiting for towing]

After the completion of my written application and interview; all that was left to do was wait for the final decisions to be made. One unsuspecting afternoon on my commute back from school, however, I was delighted to hear via email that I had been granted a place on a course at the Midlands Gliding Club, a historic gliding club situated on the Long Mynd.

The journey from my home in London to Midlands Gliding Club was a four-hour drive, which gave me plenty of time to speculate on what gliding from the heights of Long Mynd would feel like; it all came into perspective when we had arrived at the bottom of Long Mynd and began the steep ascent up the narrow, winding road.

Upon arrival, I noticed some airborne gliders soaring gracefully along the side of the Mynd. I would come to learn that they were making the most of the lift coming off the ridge. On my second time airborne, I was able to experience this amazing phenomenon for myself!



[Above – Gliding scholars unpacking gliders from the hangar]

It didn't take long for me to settle into the daily routine; early rises, breakfast, then straight to the hangar to unpack and tow the gliders down to the winch launch point. During the week, there was always the opportunity to learn about the airfield operations at the Mynd. Whilst on the ground, my group did many tasks to keep a constant rate of gliders getting airborne. We drove the retrieve winch, retrieved recently landed gliders with the electric buggies, and kept a log of the ongoing flights.

My favourite task to do was running the wing for take-off – it was incredible feeling the glider slipping away from your hands as it picked up speed and knowing that someone's flight had just begun due to my assistance.

Our instructor reminded that efficiency and awareness at the launch point were key to safe and smooth operations, which gave me a real sense of responsibility.

When it came to flying, I was impressed by how much progress I was able to make in just one week. My instructor patiently explained the fundamentals of managing the glider: how to keep the wings level, judge speed, and coordinate turns. As the flights went on, I was trusted with more control. I quickly learned that gliding was not all about flying the aircraft – it is also about looking for thermals and constantly making small adjustments to stay aloft. Each launch felt unique, and every flight gave me something new to work on. My favourite flight was when I was able to fly along the ridge, which provided ample lift to keep us airborne for the 40-minute duration.



The highlight of my week was being given the opportunity to complete a 'ghosted solo', where the instructor followed through on the controls but let me take full responsibility for the flight. After hours of careful guidance, having that responsibility in the air made the experience so much

more real and rewarding. I came down from that flight feeling like I had taken a big step forward in my aviation journey.

In reflection, this course was the perfect way for a beginner like me, with no real flying experience to gain expertise and knowledge in gliding.

If anyone reading this is contemplating applying for a gliding course, my message would be not to hesitate! A massive thank you to my instructors, the RAF Charitable Trust and The Honourable Company of Air Pilots for providing this opportunity for me! It was a week I will never forget and has deepened my love for aviation!