

## Mia Laou – APT Gliding Scholarship 2025

I had the incredible privilege of attending a week-long gliding course at the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club in the Peak District, generously sponsored by the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Air Pilots Trust.

From Sunday through Saturday, I experienced 20 winch launches, totalling 2 hours and 18 minutes of flight time.

From the moment I arrived on the Sunday afternoon after driving down from Glasgow, I felt excited for the week ahead. We were given a tour of the clubhouse and then taught how to drive the tractors and buggy (Which are used for retrieving the gliders once landed)

On my first launch on Monday morning, we encountered a cable break due to the low cloud base which was a very exciting start.

Throughout the week, I focused heavily on circuit planning and approach control, often being given responsibility for all of the flying during each launch, under the instruction of my excellent instructor, Alan Jolly. Alan, on the final day, even put on “Dancing Queen” by ABBA on his phone mid-flight to prove I was completely in control. That moment really highlighted how far I had come in just one week.

Life at the club extended beyond flying. Each morning at 9, we unpacked the hangar and prepared the gliders (Daily inspection, inserting batteries and getting parachutes, etc..), this gave me a deeper appreciation for the teamwork involved in running an airfield. We'd be at the launch point from roughly nine thirty to six. The launch point bus was great as you could sit inside out of the cold whilst you waited to fly. Using the tractors to retrieve gliders quickly became one of my favourite ground activities, despite the fact I frequently struggled with releasing the handbrake!

Evenings were equally memorable, we would have our flying logbooks signed and then would have dinner which was absolutely amazing every night. Then we would just relax as a group from playing card games in the clubhouse pub or exploring the nearby village with the other students. The social side of the course was a fantastic balance to the intense focus of flying. We have all stayed in touch, even now, a few weeks after the course has finished.

I am extremely grateful to the volunteers and members of the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club for their dedication and hospitality, and especially to Alan Jolly for his excellent instruction throughout the week.

This scholarship has given me not only valuable flying experience but also a deeper insight into the world of aviation. It has confirmed that gliding is something I want to continue, hopefully progressing to solo one day.

Finally, I would like to say a sincere thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and the Air

Pilots Trust for making this opportunity possible. This experience has been truly life-changing, and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who shares a passion for aviation.