

Cameron Brown

Gliding Scholarship – Lasham



University sparked my enthusiasm for aviation and I have relished any opportunities to get myself up in the air.

Hence, I was thrilled to learn of my successful application for the Honourable Company of Air Pilots' Gliding Scholarship and I am extremely grateful to have been awarded this opportunity. Prior to the scholarship I had been very fortunate to have experienced powered fixed-wing and rotary flying, however I had never been gliding before and I was so excited to start after hearing about other peoples' experiences.

Prior to starting, I was put in contact with my peers attending the course and it was great to finally meet them in person. We got on really well which made the course even better.

I arrived at Lasham Gliding Club the day before the scholarship started to get settled in. The weather was fantastic which meant it was only appropriate to sit on the bench outside and watch powered aircraft and

gliders soar. Whilst in awe, a silver car with 'Gliding Heritage' written on its side pulled up in front of me and a lovely gentlemen got out to ask if I wanted to visit the Gliding Heritage Hangars. We drove around the airfield to get to the hangars, which was spectacular to see the mammoth lines of storage facilities and gliders parked around the runway, and 'wizzed' past the launch points for the gliders. I had not appreciated the size of Lasham as one of the largest gliding clubs in the world. It was a privilege to be shown around the heritage flight hangars and truly remarkable to see the evolution of gliders – I strongly recommend anyone who visits Lasham to see the Gliding Heritage Hangars.

The next morning I met my instructor (Mike Birch) and listened to the weather brief before the flight brief. My first flight was a winch launch. I was slightly nervous but very excited to get going. The thrill from a winch launch is truly incredible and left me with a beaming smile throughout



the flight. It was refreshing to do a form of flying that allowed time to soak in the view and appreciate the sensation of flying with a much quieter cockpit. The standard of instruction was very good and I quickly learnt just how much rudder you need to turn efficiently.

Although I was primarily with Mike, when I turned up to extra sessions in the evening, it was great to continue my learning with other instructors and I was made to feel confident with every single one. Lasham is fantastic because you had the opportunity to do both winch launches and aerotows. My favourite is the winch launch, however I absolutely loved the

aerotow because it was the first time I had ever done any type of formation flying – let alone fly that close to another aircraft.

The flying aspect of the course was incredible, this coupled with the club's family feel made it truly special. I loved the fact that everyone at the club works hard for each other whether you are flying or not. I thoroughly enjoyed the 'ground' aspect too. This meant picking up landed gliders, towing to the launch points, walking with the gliders and connecting the cables to the gliders before their launch. I had no idea that this was part of gliding and it was so much fun being shown the ropes in order to support each other at



the club.

On one of the days, Ben Griffiths from our sponsor 2Excel Aviation (based at Lasham) met with us and we were given a tour of their hangars on site. It was jaw-dropping to see the Oil Spill Response aircraft in the hangars - especially the opportunity to sit in the cockpit of a Boeing 727. It was remarkable to learn of 2Excel's engineering capabilities and of their fleet.

I found gliding to be even more enjoyable than I anticipated and, upon writing this, I am hoping to return to Lasham to fly solo. Thank you Mike, Jordan Bridge, HCOAP, 2Excel and all the other instructors who gave up their time for this fantastic experience. I would strongly recommend applying as this is an unforgettable experience and it is guaranteed to make you smile.

