

Samuel Jeffs Gliding Scholarship 2023

Having always had an appreciation for those who fly gliders, I never truly considered the impact Gliding could have on my flying experience. From speaking to pilots at my workplace, many suggested that the best aviators always had Gliding roots and when I learned about The Honourable Company of Air Pilots' Gliding scholarship, I eagerly seized the opportunity.

Following a successful interview in London, the course kicked off six months later on a Friday evening at AAC Middle Wallop. As I stepped into this new environment, I was initially surrounded by unfamiliar faces, each bearing a mix of anticipation, nervousness, and excitement. Little did I know at that moment that I was about to embark on a week-long journey that would forge lasting bonds with my glider syndicate, N7.



“Winch, launch point, K21, clubhouse cable, take up slack... All out, all out” is something that meant very little to me on the first day, nevertheless, by the end of the week it was something I was confidently calling down the radio for each launch. Aside from flying, we were taught a range of skills, including recovering the gliders,



attaching and retrieving the cables, and safely relaunching the gliders. By the end of the week, Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club (PNGC) had moulded us into well-greased machines capable of working together effectively as a team, enabling us to complete as my flights as possible as we strived to go solo.

From my exhilarating first launch, I found it hard to comprehend that by the end of the week we could be flying these gliders without any input from the instructors.

Initially I struggled with coordinating my turns using both stick and rudder. Nevertheless, with help from my instructor Neil, “stick and rudder” was sure enough engrained into my head. After each completed flight, and a debrief from Neil, my logbook was slowly becoming more and more signed off. This was an amazing motivator as it allowed me to track my progress and encouraged me to think about what I needed to learn next.

Our evenings were spent within the Middle Wallop Officer’s mess which was a fantastic opportunity to experience a small part of life as a British Army Officer. Fortunately, we had a variety of intriguing guest speakers including Brigadier Nick English who is not only an Apache pilot, but a very senior officer within the British Army, Lee who is a B777 pilot for British Airways and of course Nobby who is a former Royal Navy bomb





disposal diver. After a busy day packed with Gliding and socialising with other aviators, it took little effort to get to fall asleep each night

The final day Gliding brought with it a looming sense of sadness as I and the rest of the group realised that the week had to come to an end. Everyone felt gutted to be leaving, especially after creating close bonds not only with each other, but with Dave, our instructors, and the members of PNGC. Nevertheless, it allowed us to reflect on how far we had come. While I was extremely fortunate to complete eighteen flights in total and almost reach solo, I learnt more than I could have ever expected.

From split-second decisions in

changing conditions to heightened situational awareness, I believe Gliding has honed my problem-solving, concentration, and adaptability. The experience has shaped my leadership abilities through effective collaboration and communication within a team setting. Moreover, it's reinforced the importance of risk management and calculated decision-making, while a solid understanding of aerodynamics and navigation skills rounds out the package. I am extremely determined to return to PNGC to not only complete my solo flight, but to continue Gliding further as I aim to gain my Bronze and cross-country endorsements.

I would like to thank The Honourable Company of Air Pilots for providing this amazing opportunity, as well as Robert Owens and Air Pilots' Flying Club for sponsoring my scholarship. I would also like to thank Dave Howell and everyone at PNGC for giving up so much of their own time organising and ensuring the week ran smoothly. It was a week I will never forget, and I would recommend Gliding to anyone who has an interest in furthering their aviation career.

