

## Oliver Dales

From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of August I was lucky enough to attend a fantastic gliding scholarship at the Derby and Lancashire Gliding club.

I arrived Sunday afternoon and, after meeting our instructors and fellow scholarship winners for the week, we were straight on the tractors learning how to drive them as we would be doing our own retrievals for the week.

After semi-mastering the tractors (but not quite the clutch) we walked down to the hanger to help put the gliders away and then had a tour of the Puchacz glider, the one we would become very familiar with over the week!

During our first 'very tasty' dinner together, cooked and presented by the wonderful John and Silvia, I soon realised how like-minded my fellow students were about our mutual passion for aviation, so naturally we bonded very quickly.

After being shown to our very comfortable accommodation, we met with our instructors in the bar, where else, and were presented with our logbook and a great book on gliding called 'Passenger to Pilot' - my bedtime reading for the week.

The Derbyshire weather was kind to us, so we were very lucky to fly every day of the course and all of us racked up around three hours of flying.

A delicious full English breakfast greeted us from John and Silvia each morning, which helped settle the nervous excitement of the day ahead, not to mention the strength to take the gliders out of the hangers and up to the airfield for a day of flying.

My sorties varied greatly. At the start of the week, I learnt the controls and instruments and, as the week progressed, so did my knowledge. The sorties weren't just joyrides; my instructor Alan would tell me everything going on and what to do and then it was my turn! At the end of each flight, I felt such a sense of achievement and couldn't stop smiling.

I was able to backup manoeuvres and drills with the correct theory knowledge and therefore my flying got better.

Having learnt all the basics of gliding like stalls, turns, trimming, effects of primary and secondary control surfaces, Alan and I moved on to flying the winch take-off. The first winch was hair-raising but I soon loved the feeling of being catapulted into the sky. By flying and landing basic circuits under the watchful eyes of my instructor meant, by the end of the week, I was flying the glider myself with few verbal inputs from Alan.

I was lucky enough to do some ridge soaring and thermal soaring, which was amazing, as I would stay airborne for 30- 40 minutes. But my highlight of the week was when I caught a thermal that took me up to two and a half thousand feet above Camphill, which is about four thousand feet above sea level.

Another great moment was my first landing. I was so proud and as the wind was very low it was quite good. The weather was super all week so we would fly until six in the evening and with low sun and wind it was beautiful. I know it's a bit cliché but it felt like I was hovering.

The week ended with some time on the simulator where we flew around the Swiss Alps using all the knowledge we had gained over the week, which was funny and really good fun.

We then had our last meal and were presented our certificates. A fitting end to an amazing week.

I would like to thank the Honorable Company of Air Pilots and the Air Safety Trust for giving me an amazing opportunity and helping me get closer to my dream of becoming a pilot in the Royal Air Force.







