

HCAP Gliding Scholarship 2026 – Rebekah Nelson



I was incredibly happy when I found out that I had been successful in reaching the interview stage for my scholarship with The Honourable Company of Air Pilots. This was my first ever interview, I was very nervous beforehand. I researched the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and recapped my gliding knowledge so that I felt as prepared as possible. The interviewers were so friendly which helped me feel much more at ease. When I found out that I had been awarded the scholarship that was such an incredible moment, and I was extremely excited to begin my week at Derby and Lincs Gliding Club. Looking back, the whole application process was such a rewarding and beneficial experience too as it helped me develop important life skills such as preparing for an interview, researching an organisation and communicating with people I had never met before.

On the Sunday afternoon, I arrived at Camphill and was greeted by Peter, who showed me where I would be staying for the week. I then met Sylvia, who showed me around the clubhouse. (My dad and grandad were also very grateful to Pete for taking them on a little tour of the airfield before they traveled home where they were able to watch some gliders taking off). I was then introduced to the other scholars, who were all so lovely and welcoming. It was great to spend a week with so many likeminded people. We were taken on a tour of the whole airfield and shown lots of important features and landmarks that we would later use as reference points during our circuits. That first evening, we were able to watch some winch launches and were shown how to attach the cables to the gliders and do wing running. Due to our surprise we were unexpectedly taught how to drive tractors! it was so much fun! We were shown how to drive these as they are used to tow gliders around the airfield and back to the launch point.





Every morning and evening, we were also treated to a fantastic selection of meals, all were absolutely delicious. (I need to give a special mention to Sylvia's homemade flapjacks, they were amazing!)

Throughout the week, we learned much more than just how to fly a glider. We were taught how to carry out Daily Inspection checks, manoeuvre gliders out of the hangar tow them to the launch point, attach the cables and do wing running. We also learned how to operate the light system used during winch launches.

Learning all of these ground operations gave me a much better understanding of everything that happens before a glider even gets into the air. It also showed me how important teamwork is within gliding.

The gliding itself was absolutely phenomenal. I was incredibly lucky on my first day to land a glider with little assistance. I had some experience before starting the course, so this came as a huge surprise, and I was extremely happy to have landed a glider for the first time.

During the week, I learned how to carry out launches and gradually began doing them myself with minimal prompting. We also got the chance to do some hill soaring, where we managed to stay up for over an hour! (During that flight Alan had his music playing which made it a very memorable and funny flight)

I also learned how to perform stalls, which was exciting and gave me a much better understanding of how the glider behaves at different speeds and attitudes.

At the end of each day, we filled in our logbooks and had our instructors fill out our progress cards. It was really rewarding to look back at what I had achieved each day and see how much my flying had developed. I felt incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to go flying every day.

Camphill is quite an interesting airfield because its not completely flat. There are lots of slopes and hills, which can make taking off and landing more challenging.

Depending on the wind direction we would use different areas of the airfield for the launch point. This meant that we experienced different circuits throughout the week. The most challenging day for me was when we had a northerly wind, which made landing particularly difficult. It was a really valuable learning experience and It taught me how important it is to adapt my flying to the conditions rather than expecting every flight to be the same.

We were really lucky with the weather throughout the week though we did have one very rainy day however rather than letting the weather stop our learning, we had a lecture on wave flying and another on human factors! We also had the opportunity to use the simulator where we practised flying circuits!

Later on we took the gliders out and I managed to have a very short flight where we assessed how low the cloud base was. (Went straight into a cloud whoops!)



Unfortunately, the weather did not improve, and we spent around three hours in the bus waiting for the weather to get better. Although we didn't end up flying again, those three hours certainly didn't go to waste. We got listening to some very interesting stories, experiences and advice from our instructors and the club members, if it was a great opportunity to learn and hear from people with so much experience.

I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone at Derby and Lancs Gliding Club for making my week such an incredible experience. Everyone was so welcoming and willing to share their knowledge, and I am extremely grateful for all the time and effort that went into making the scholarship so enjoyable and educational.

A huge thank you to the amazing instructors Alan and Pete for teaching us and I would also like to thank John and Sylvia for providing such lovely accommodation and delicious food every day. Finally, I am incredibly grateful to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and to Sanjay Kashyap for making this experience possible and funding my scholarship. I cannot thank everyone involved enough for giving me such an amazing opportunity.

It was an absolutely incredible week. Most importantly, the experience has made me even more excited to continue my gliding journey!



