

Finn Hewitt – Honourable Company of Air Pilots Air Safety Trust Gliding Scholarship 2024

London Gliding Club, Dunstable

The moment I received a congratulations email, awarding me a place on the scholarship, I jumped with excitement and could not wait to get started. I arrived on Monday morning ready for a week staying down at London Gliding Club in Dunstable, eager to meet my fellow scholars and get flying! We got stuck into it straight away, helping to setup for flight operations. We met our instructors for the week, Mark, Trevor and Istvan, who guided us through unpacking the hangar and completing the daily inspection for each of the K21 gliders that we would be flying.

I went into the week excited to build on my previous experience of gliding at Buckminster Gliding Club in Saltby, where I have trained and flown around 5 hours, establishing the key principles of flight. I therefore set the goal to get as close as possible to flying solo. Once the tug plane was ready to go, we kicked off flying, the tug allowed us to get up to around 2-3000ft which was great and allowed me and Istvan the opportunity to go soaring on my first flight! We were up for around 50 minutes refreshing my previous experiences of flight, refamiliarizing myself with the controls and the necessity to coordinate movements. It was truly amazing to experience the feeling of being in control of the aircraft, gliding through the sky with no engine power, it will absolutely stay with me forever!



We were really fortunate to get all five days with great weather for flying, allowing us to make rapid progress through training. I quickly picked up more responsibility over my flights, working to



control the entire winch launch, the main section of flight and even some more soaring. The next step was thinking about circuit planning and flying the circuit, gradually doing increasing amounts of the landing. Over the last few days of the week, me and my instructor Istvan focussed on 'circuit bashing', flying lots of short couple minute flights, which allowed me to practise being in control from take-off on the winch launch to touching down when landing. Istvan would gradually make less and less comments, allowing me to take the flight into my own hands, with active decision making.

This was put into practise when we had a cable break and I had to react decisively and safely to get the aircraft's nose down to the recovery attitude and then fly the circuit for a safe landing. We also did a couple of slightly longer flights with some soaring, where I would practise manoeuvres like recovering from stalling, in different scenarios and conditions.



When we were not up in the air flying, we quickly bonded as a group and worked really well together, making sure to have an efficient turnaround of aircraft on the ground. We spent some time training to do tasks around the airfield like retrieving gliders, where we would use the club



buggies to collect and carefully tug the aircraft back to the launch point. We also launched the aircraft, making sure to check the cables and weak link, connecting the cables, and communicating the correct signals when it was clear, ready to run the wing and keep the aircraft steady for the initial part of the launch. In addition, we trained on radio communication, allowing us to pass messages between the launch point, gliders, tug planes and the winch.

At the end of each day, we would pack away the equipment and gliders on the airfield or prepare for the evening flying group. In the evenings we spent a lot of time on the club simulator, putting in extra practise on the manoeuvres that we did that day. I often spent time practising landings, take offs and circuit planning. My incredible instructor Istvan also massively helped further my training by recording our flights on a GoPro, which we would then look back over in our daily debriefs, pointing out what went well, mistakes, and suggesting improvements to my flying.

The group also spent time getting to know each other and talking about our ambitions in the aviation industry. It was very nice to spend the final evening trekking up the ridge next to the airfield, named the 'hill of doom', to get an incredible view and reflect on how far we had all progressed! In addition to the flying, we also had a lot of fun over the week, making great new friends and memories that will last for the rest of our lives.





I had set my goal to get as close to flying solo as possible and I had a particularly special flight on the final day, on my very last flight. I completed a virtual solo, where I was in control of the aircraft for the entire flight with no prompts or control inputs from Istvan. I was confident going into the flight and then felt really happy and proud of my progress, delighted to conclude the week with this successful flight.

Looking into the future, I am aspiring to become a commercial airline pilot, and being able to complete this scholarship has absolutely solidified that ambition, making me even more eager to get up into the flight deck. I look forward to continuing to take every opportunity, like this scholarship, to help me get closer to that goal. I am also really excited to continue my gliding training, aiming to reach solo in the not-too-distant future!

If anyone reading this is considering applying to a scholarship, I would absolutely recommend going for it, there is nothing to lose by applying! Finally, I would like to say a massive thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for this incredible opportunity, to the Air Safety Trust for sponsoring my scholarship and to London Gliding Club and my amazing instructor Istvan for providing such an incredible week of training!

Thank you!





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