

The AFG Gliding Scholarship 2024

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Over a seven days in August, I had the privilege of participating in a gliding scholarship that provided an immersive experience in the world of aviation. As well as giving me practical experience to boost my understanding of gliding itself, this scholarship gave me the opportunity to reinforce my teamwork and communication skills as well as my self discipline through the variety of activities we took part in. As soon as I arrived at the Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club I was thrown straight into the deep end which was really quite exciting- something that set the tone for the rest of the week. Though I had never driven a car or had any knowledge of how to do so, I was patiently talked through the basics of driving a tractor, a skill that ended up taking me a couple of days to master. We were treated not just as students but as members of the Gliding club- taught immediately the basics of handling a glider on the ground and the operations of the airfield which we were heavily involved with throughout the week.



Though the weather was less than ideal for most of the week, we managed to dodge the showers and get at least one launch in every day due to the determination of our instructors and the efficiency of our group. A typical day was jam-packed with activities. Early in the morning, after having breakfast with the other club members we would head straight to the hangar for an 8am start. We were involved in every step, from unpacking the hangar and inspecting the gliders to fitting the parachutes and towing the gliders up to the airfield. Throughout the day, everyone took on every task they could in order to ensure the gliders

were launched with the utmost efficiency and speed. From holding open canopies and pinning down glider wings to clipping on winch cables and retrieving the gliders from the airfield, I had the opportunity to try absolutely everything. Our day on the airfield typically ended around 5 to 7 pm, culminating in the chaos that was packing the hangar. Following this, we would head back to the clubhouse to order our dinner, freshen up and enjoy our free time for the evening. From chatting with our instructors to filling in our logbooks and enjoying some games of pool, it was impossible not to bond with the rest of the group.

On Thursday and Friday morning the wind gusts were too strong to even unpack the gliders. Though we were initially disappointed, after hearing that there was a flight simulator at the club we were eager to practice our skills by completing long-distance flights and landings. The gliding simulator was rather realistic with 3 large screens and a full cockpit, accurately simulating the experience of flying a real glider. This meant that after we were finally able to get up into the air, I found it much easier to control the glider, especially when climbing thermals, after practicing in a low stakes environment. I found that my flying technique had greatly improved over the course of this week. Under the supervision of my instructor Alan, I managed to climb up to over 3000ft in the glider using mostly the ridge at the edge of the airfield which was enthralling.



My perspective on gliding had completely changed over the course of the scholarship. I had originally thought of it as a stepping stone towards powered flight but I realised that gliding is its own sport- I am now looking forward to becoming a club member, hopefully even taking on competitive gliding in the future. I would like to thank both the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and my sponsor for providing this incredible experience, one which I will remember forever.