

Hashim Iqbal – 2024 Gliding Scholarship 2Excel – Lasham Gliding Society

After completing the application process, I received the email inviting me in for an interview for the 2024 Gliding Scholarship. Both excited knowing I was one step closer but nevertheless nervous as this was something I was very determined to get, it would mean to me.

Fast forward a brief time later, I received the magical email which had been aim for a long time, saying I had been selected for this years gliding scholarship at Lasham sponsored by 2Excel at Lasham Gliding Society. I was ecstatic and knowing I was unable to secure scholarships in previous years, the saying really did come true – “if at first you don’t succeed, try try again.”

Monday morning was up early, we met our gliding instructor who was assigned to us for the week. The weather unfortunately was not the best, so we couldn’t get any flying in - however benefit of being at Lasham, one of the largest gliding clubs in the world was there so much we were able to see and explore on the ground.



We visited the multiple hangars across the site where the gliders and aerotows were kept, with the opportunity to also understand the ground equipment needed, with an understanding of the part they play in gliding.

We spent some time in the simulator, which is based at Lasham, going over all the basic exercises and manoeuvres so we would know what to expect when in the air.

It was a great exposure on the first day, giving a great fundamental knowledge for the week!



Tuesday was much better and once again we met our instructor for another day of flying after a delicious breakfast, the weather was much better, and we could not wait to get in the air. The early morning consisted of us getting setup for the day, we really underestimated the preparation and team effort needed to get setup for the day.

A brief time later, we were all setup and ready. Sitting in the glider, cable connected and ready to launch, I could not wait to finally get in the air and what felt like such a long wait – everything I had worked towards led to this moment where all the hard work paid off. What felt like a millisecond later, we were rocketed to sixty knots and in flight at 1600 feet.

It was an amazing feeling, so peaceful knowing we were relying on nothing other than thermals and the environment around us. Whilst in flight, I was able to practice all the exercises and everything we did in the simulator the previous day. I was even able to execute a landing on my first flight which I could not believe!



When we were not flying, we were helping out on the ground collecting gliders, connecting ground cable and assisting in general at the launch point.

The usual great British weather unfortunately Wednesday was another morning which was rainy and cloudy making it a poor day for flying. However we were able to spend some time in the simulator once again practicing everything we did the previous day.

We however had an amazing afternoon, our very kind sponsors 2Excel based across the airfield at Lasham, invited us over to have a tour of their fantastic facility. We were honoured and very privileged to meet Matthew - CEO of 2Excel Engineering, Chris Norton - Director and Co-Founder of 2Excel Aviation & Ben the Group Communications Director at 2Excel.



Thursday was another great morning where we were able to get some flight time once again, practicing what we did on Tuesday and everything we went through in the simulator on previous days. Unfortunately, the afternoon weather deteriorated making unsafe to fly.

This however provided an opportunity for us to sit down with our instructor and go over the theory of everything which we had covered in past couple days both in the air and using the simulator.

As a lucky surprise, we were also able to see an Airbus A321 take-off from Lasham after having gone through maintenance at 2Excel, our sponsors we visited the previous day! It was interesting & fascination to see how the airfield transformed and transitioned from glider operations to a secure airfield just like any other international airport.



We also had a very nice surprise Richard Piper, the current Master at The Honourable Company of Air Pilots. We were very lucky to have a good chat and hear some amazing stories before being presented our certificates.

Friday morning our final day had arrived, we had been able to speak and build relationships with so many of the members at Lasham. It was great to hear the wide range of experience which people had, hear everyone's stories, backgrounds and how they got into flying.

The weather was clear, and we were determined to get in the air as much as possible on our last day! We were able to get a good number of flights in throughout the day with two aerotows in the morning up to two thousand feet. Definitely something which takes a lot of practice to master and get to grips with. As usual, we were assisting with ground operations when we were not flying. Truly a team effort with everyone playing a key role!

To top it off and end on a high, in the afternoon the weather was clear skies - we were able to do an aerotow up to four thousand feet. A completely new experience and I absolutely loved the peace, quiet and freedom it bought of being so high in a glider.



I would like to say a massive thank you to Lasham Gliding Society & all the members, instructors alongside our amazing sponsors 2Excel. Without the combination of support from both, this week would not have been possible, I would never have been able to experience this fantastic opportunity.

