

**Isabelle Wong**  
**RAFCT Gliding Scholarship Report 2024**

If you would like a taster into the world of aviation, this gliding course certainly delivered just that! Over the 4 days of flying, I flew nearly 5 hours across my 9 flights; there is no feeling like flying, especially without an engine. Hearing the air whip past the canopy was all that could be heard in the air with a view of the Welsh countryside.

The first adventure of the week was the drive up to the Mynd. Whilst driving up the hill, on my left was a climb of heather and shrubs, yet on my right was a sudden drop of hundreds of feet into the valley, where houses were scattered like miniature figures. We arrived at the clubhouse late afternoon, and I was greeted by the friendly staff and the other scholarship winners. We unpacked our belongings then wasted no time and headed straight into the airfield, where we were taught how to operate the return winch, run with the wing and attach the strop to get the glider into the sky- an art of teamwork. At around 17:30, gliding finished for the day, and we packed up the hanger. Then, we delved into an evening meal in the clubhouse.



The next morning, we were greeted with a haze of fog swimming over the valley- not a glider pilot's happiest sight. With little chance of getting into the sky, we settled for ground school and started to learn about the controls in a glider and pre-flight checks. Luckily, in the afternoon, the clouds started to disperse and after a met flight in the powered glider, we were clear to fly in the afternoon. I had 2 short flights (9 and 14 minutes) on the Monday due to the low clouds, so couldn't get much airtime. However, this did give me a great idea of the controls of the glider.



On the Tuesday, the weather was looking promising, so we got up early, and unpacked the hanger at 8:30, ready to fly. My flights this day were much longer (48 and 21 minutes) as I was introduced to thermalling in the glider and how to use the ridge lift- an amazing feature unique to the Mynd. We also were introduced to the cars- or sheep clearers as we called them! I have my driving licence so was able to drive these around the airfield, towing gliders and sheering sheep, which gave us some good fun whilst waiting for our flight. Wednesday was quite like this, but we started to learn how to land and I successfully completed these!

On Thursday, the weather was not on our side. We did a bit of circuit planning, learning where to find lift, excessive use of the flight simulator and careers talk with one of the ex-RAF and commercial pilots there who now takes pleasure in gliding. The highlight of the day was the chaotic 8 player game of monopoly that lasted 4 hours before we called it at dinner. Luckily the board was still intact by the end but there was some excessive cheating going on and rolling fast to avoid rent. This was excellent bonding time for us, and I am so lucky to have met such a great group of people on my course!



Cat (who works for HCAP) arrived on Thursday night and we all talked long past dinner. She then presented us with our certificates the following day at lunch. It was amazing to hear her aviation story, and she was such an inspiration for me, understanding us as prospective pilots and gave me some great advice.

Mealtimes were amazing too as we talked for hours about everything! What we did notice is that all the club members talked about was gliding. Something we promised not to talk about at the start of the week but were too excited coming into lunch on Friday after having looped the glider ourselves!!



Friday. The last, but the best day. The weather was immaculate- the sun was shining; the clouds were fluffy with black bottoms and the wind was perfect for a day of flying. It was my favourite day because everything I had learnt that week came together in my flights. I was able to take off, fly around and land! My new instructor Mark also helped keep up the motive. He has a passion for aerobatics which absolutely made the week! I did not realise how much fun you could have in a glider from climbing the ridge, thermalling then followed by some loop and wing drops!

As the week went on, I became more and more confident at gliding and was so proud of how I had come from no flying experience to being able to take off, complete a circuit and land alone (with my instructor in the back)! My longest flight was 50 minutes, climbing 300 feet yet could have been so much longer because of the unique ridge at the Mynd.

I cannot thank HCAP and my sponsor (RAF Charitable Trust) enough for the life-changing week, with my step into aviation, consolidating my love for flying and aspirations to become a female pilot! The course had given me so much confidence, teamwork skills and knowledge of what it is like to be on an airfield and fly. These scholarships mean so much to people like me with minimal flying experience to give a taster into flying. I'd lastly like to thank the Midlands gliding club for welcoming us- not just the gliding experience but the members too who have given valuable life advice.



I would recommend anyone who has an interest to apply for this scholarship. I applied in 2023 being unsuccessful, but then reapplied and won a 2024 scholarship. Like me, even if you aren't successful at first, I recommend reapply with a year of experience behind you, so if you get another interview, you can show how much mature and dedicated you are- a vital skill for a career in aviation!