

## Air Pilots Flying Club Gliding Scholarship at Midland Gliding Club 2024 – Ben Petrie

About 9 months ago, I attended an online talk from Air Pilots about scholarships. I was initially looking at the PPL scholarships but being too young to apply, I turned to the gliding scholarships. I had never considered gliding as an option in my flight training and saw it as somewhat as a lesser form of flying. It turned out that I could not have been more wrong. I put in my application and went through the interview process, hopeful but unsure of how I had done. I then received the best email I have ever had. I had got it. I really couldn't believe it; my first step towards achieving my lifelong dream of being a pilot was actually happening. So, a few months later, I arrived at midland gliding club, nervous but more excited than I had ever been before. I began to learn the jobs around the airfield and quickly became friends with the other scholars. I was having fun but it was at first not much different to any of the cadets camps I have attended. That was until I entered the glider. From the second the first all out was called I knew my week was going to be truly amazing. The sheer rush of the launch and the peaceful soaring made me realise the I had completely underestimated gliding. However, my next flight was not quite so fun. As soon as I took full control of the rudder, the coordination became quite difficult. Due to the strong ridge lift that day, the flight was about 35 minutes, a fairly long flight for a brand new pilot. As my early attempts at stick and rudder coordination being fairly unsuccessful, I left the glider feeling somewhat uneasy about my flying. It was not an enjoyable flight. The next day I did the only thing that made sense. I got back in the glider and gave it another go. To my great relief, I managed to significantly improve my stick and rudder coordination leading to a much more enjoyable flight. I was back to loving every flight. From there, it only got better. My flying continued to improve; I was learning the basics fast. The social aspect of the scholarship was also an unforgettable experience. I met other passionate aspiring pilots in the same position as me and we all received a warm welcome from the club members who were delighted to see the next generation of aviators beginning their journeys. As I had more flights, my skill and confidence in the air were also greatly improving, giving me the confidence to know that I can be a pilot. By the end of the week, I had gained skills in flying, discovered an incredible new form of aviation and made great friends who are just as passionate as I am about aviation. It was by all accounts an unforgettable week that changed my life for the better. I really cannot begin to thank Air Pilots enough for giving me this unique opportunity that helped me to gain my basic skills in flying and stand out from the crowd in my future career plans in a highly competitive sector. Since the scholarship, I have only been able to revisit the club once but I have more upcoming dates where I plan to fly again. My aim is to go solo by early next year. This has thrown me into an entirely new, wonderful world that I never knew existed, all thanks to this amazing scheme and the wonderful people who make it happen. In conclusion, thank you Air Pilots.