

## Eleanor Spencer

### The Royal Air Force Charitable Trust Gliding Scholarship

This Summer, I was able to complete a week's gliding course at Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club. Over the course of the week, I went from having never sat in a glider before to being able to confidently launch and fly the aircraft. I was also able to get a glimpse of life in the military, through staying in army accommodation and eating in the Officer's Mess as well as through talks given to us about both civil and military aviation.



We first started gliding on Saturday morning, where I was the second of the group to glide. I was sat in my glider, watching with increased nervousness as the one in front of me was launching; going from 0 to 60 knots in a matter of seconds as it went into a very steep climb. By the time it was my turn to launch, though I was a lot more nervous about launching than I was just a few

minutes ago, I was also excited to begin my gliding journey. I can also now assure anyone who has considered gliding that the launch looks much worse than it is.



When I wasn't gliding, I was helping other people in my syndicate assigned to my glider. This involved hooking the glider to the winch cable, running with the glider at the beginning of the launch to keep the wings level and, my favourite part, driving the golf carts to retrieve the glider when they land far. Gliding is definitely not a solo activity; while I usually had 3 or 4 flights a day, I was always busy helping and talking to people in both my syndicate or other syndicates, which definitely helped us to grow closer. I also had the opportunity sit in the winch driver to see what happens on the other side of the cable when the glider launches. Though it was not nearly as exciting as being inside the glider, it was definitely interesting to see how it works, and to watch the gliders climb from a different view.



During the evening we were given talks about where a career in aviation can take you. As an aspiring commercial pilot, my favourite talk was given by someone who recently gained his commercial license alongside a First Officer for British Airways. They explained how they got their license, their experience and shared advice on how to achieve a career in commercial aviation. Alongside the talks, many of the gliding instructors had interesting stories and advice to give about their careers, so you were able to ask them questions throughout the day.

The last two days of the course were written off due to poor weather, however the club has allowed us to come back for a weekend to officially finish the course for free. Despite this, in the five days we were able to fly, I achieved a total of 17 flights. No one on the course was able to go solo due to the two days we lost, but many of us on the course intend to continue gliding. The course not only gave me the chance to start gliding, but also form amazing friendships with people that share my passion for aviation and the newfound love for gliding.



I would like to thank The Honourable Company of Air Pilots for awarding me the Scholarship, the RAFCT for sponsoring me and to PNGC for organising the course.