

Eric Lane-Burslem BALPA Scholarship

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I was absolutely over the moon when I received a phone call from one of my interviewers to tell me that I had been successful in being awarded the 2026 Lane-Burslem Scholarship. I was so thrilled and could not wait to get started.

Last year I was fortunate enough to be awarded an HCAP Gliding Scholarship. I really enjoyed that gliding experience and I wanted to progress onto powered flying and combine the two to become a tug pilot for gliders.

From the very start, I received an incredible amount of support from HCAP. My scholarship buddy Basel, who

had previously been a scholar himself, was always there to offer great advice and encouragement. It was really valuable to be able to speak to someone who had already been through the process and could understand what I was experiencing at each stage of the training.

My chosen flight school - SEMET Aviation - made me most welcome and it was a really friendly environment to learn in. I particularly enjoyed my circuit training where I completed a total of 19 touch and go's in one day. It was so rewarding to see my improvement with each circuit.

As I progressed through the early stages of training, I started to notice the similarities and differences between gliding and powered flying. My gliding experience had already given me a good foundation in things such as lookout, circuit planning and handling the aircraft. At the same time, there was a lot that was completely new to me - managing the engine, radio work and the additional checks and procedures. I really enjoyed being able to build on what I had learnt through gliding while also developing a whole new set of skills.

Progressing onto the navigation part of the training was hugely enjoyable and it was exciting to land somewhere new. . I had great satisfaction There was something satisfying about planning a route, flying it and then eventually seeing the airfield appear in front of me.

One of my favourite experiences was my qualifying cross-country flight. My route was Blackbushe - Turweston - Kemble. When I landed at Kemble, the first person I met was the controller who came down to congratulate me. I was also lucky enough to have a tour of the 747 that is kept at the airport. Going from sitting in a 152 to sitting in the cockpit of a 747 on the same day was a very special moment. The airfield photographer also happened to be there and took some great pictures of me landing and then taking off to return to Blackbushe.



As the weather this summer was so glorious, I managed to complete my exercises ahead of schedule. Some exercises, such as getting the hang of VORs, took more practice than others. Balancing flying, studying and working was challenging in the beginning but I gradually found a good routine. I started to see how much progress I was making and the end goal was getting nearer.

Eventually after 2 months of training it was time for my skills test. The test itself was certainly challenging and I am so pleased to say that I passed!

Receiving my PPL has made me think about where I would like flying to take me next. I would love to become a tug pilot and tow gliders. I would also be interested in becoming a flight instructor in the future. However, my ultimate ambition is to continue my training and progress towards a career as an airline pilot.

I am incredibly grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me the opportunity to achieve my PPL and to BALPA for funding my scholarship in honour of their founder, Eric Lane-Burslem.

I would also like to thank everyone involved for their encouragement and support throughout the whole process. Going from flying solo in a glider to powered flying has been an amazing experience.

