

Sameer Patel

The John Brownlow Gliding Scholarship

This Summer, I was privileged to take part in HCAP's week-long gliding scholarship at Lasham Gliding Society. As the largest gliding society in the world, I didn't feel alone and felt well supported. I met a wide range of instructors, each with their own distinctive and supportive methods of teaching.



I flew 19 flights by the end of the week, taking me from a complete beginner to being able to comfortably land the glider, an incredible feeling! The 2 variants we used were K-21s and K13s. The K21 pictured here may be more modern, but each are a joy to glide.

We started each day with a morning briefing, introducing us to the main tenets of the weather and flying conditions for that day. The best advice I would give is to not be afraid of making mistakes, they are the only way to grow! Lasham is a training airfield and safety is always the priority. Everyone has the right to speak up.

On Monday morning, we started off with an aerotow to 4,000 feet. The initial feeling of lifting off the ground and manoeuvring to keep in line with the tow aircraft was incredible. 4,000 feet also gave us significant height for flying exercises – from stalling to soaring.

Learning to recover from a stall is an essential part of gliding training. Far from being frightening, it was reassuring to learn how to recognise, manage, and recover from a stall safely. The feeling of changing Gs, the gravitational force on us as pilots, is also thrilling. It is akin to riding a rollercoaster. These lessons built my trust in the aircraft and helped me feel more at ease at the controls.

Soaring was the most enjoyable, with my longest flight lasting 49 minutes. Lift is created by a column of rising air, allowing the glider to climb and “soar” upon entry. The gliders are equipped with a device called an Oudie, which beeps to indicate that the glider has flown into this column of lift, a “thermal”. Maintaining situational awareness, whilst keeping within this thermal was a challenge, but nonetheless essential to learn.

Alongside this, students are expected to help with all aspects of the gliding operation, learning by doing. When we were not in the air, we helped tow gliders back after landing, alongside “wing running”. For the first few seconds, this is helping to keep gliders' wings' level as they were winched into the skies.

The winch launch looks a lot more daunting than it actually is! Once you speed up, the feeling of being launched into the air is fun rather than scary.



In the evenings, we were able to unwind at the newly refurbished Flight Deck Café, which was a privilege. I caught up on the day's activities and consolidated any lessons learned from gliding. It also offered me a chance to meet other gliding pilots who share the same passion, which is always fun!

Many of us intend to continue gliding, and I have returned to Lasham for the Wednesday evening gliding sessions since the scholarship week finished. That way, I can keep up my skills as it really is an amazing feeling, and a key skill for a future airline pilot

I am extremely thankful to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots for awarding me this scholarship, and to Lasham Gliding Society for providing such a supportive introduction to the world of gliding. I can't wait to continue gliding, and continue to explore my passion for aviation

