

PM DOROTHY SAUL POOLEY – KEN LYNDON-DYKES
GLIDING SCHOLARSHIP 2026

JANSI PATEL

Receiving a HCAP gliding scholarship was nothing short of the highlight of my summer. What began with some hand-written answers sharing my motivation behind gliding and an interview (a both nerve-wracking and exciting one) at the HCAP office in London, soon led me to soaring in thermals above Midlands Gliding Club in late August.



Being an air cadet gave me the opportunity to get my first taste of gliding at a local VGS; from then on, I was keen to learn more about the handling and flight of an aircraft with no engine, solely relying on an understanding on the wind and aerodynamics. Therefore, learning about the HCAP gliding scholarship gave me the chance to take my first step into exploring this newfound passion for aviation.

The course began on Monday at 08:30 where we began by unpacking the hangar, followed by a morning briefing introducing us to some of the routines involved in flying a glider but also in running the airfield. We began the first few days with beautiful clear skies allowing for lots of practise at basic controls, maintaining and stalls. My first launch was a memorable one from pre-take off checks to reaching 1200 feet within a few seconds with a beautiful view underneath us. One teaching I'd pass on to the next

gliding scholarship holders is to appreciate that the glider can hold itself in the air without your input, so don't overcontrol its movements!



What was also incredibly rewarding along with the gliding progression itself was to be involved with the preparation and running of the airfield (the groundwork). Taking turns as air marshal, retrieving gliders upon landing and being the retrieve winch driver are all examples of important roles which I routinely was able to partake in. Not only did this give me a greater appreciation for the important factors considered for a glider to successfully launch, but also how much of a team sport it is – some of the best bonding amongst our team of 8

happened while maintaining safe operation on the airfield launch after launch. The airfield also offered some of the best views of the stunning landscape, especially during the solar eclipse! As my confidence on the airfield grew, so did it in the air as I progressed onto working on judging the circuits and perfecting landing technique.



Overall, the experience has played a huge role in growing my passion for flying and I'll be sure to carry all the lessons and memories made with me. I'd like to thank: PM Dorothy Saul Pooley for sponsoring my scholarship; The Honourable Company of Air Pilots for facilitating this incredible

opportunity; the Midlands Gliding Club, especially Sam, David and the team for their dedication to training and accommodating for us and my RAFAC squadron OC and aviation officer for introducing HCAP to me and their continued support.

