

Peter Hartshorne – Swire FI Scholarship 2016

As a freelance composer, I'd convinced myself by the mid to late 2000s that training to become a professional pilot in whatever capacity that might have been, was both financially and mentally impossible – even though all I ever wanted to do was fly.

I'm sure that many of you reading this are more than aware of the near-prohibitive costs of flight training. And if you've told yourself "I can't do this": whether you can't afford the training, whether you think you're not capable, or even if you feel intimidated by the process of the training itself, then I sympathise with you wholeheartedly.

Put simply, I wish I'd been made aware of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots sooner. Don't be put off by their grand-sounding title – Air Pilots are some of the kindest people I've come across. The Company is teeming with highly-skilled aviators and professionals of all backgrounds, who take an active interest in the next generation of pilots. They understand all of the ins and outs of flying training; both the good points and the bad points. They treat you as a human, not as a statistic. So if you think you're alone, you're really not.

My personal story was one of breaking down those mental "I can't do this" barriers with the completion of every stage of my licence. Ultimately, having worked, begged and borrowed to finance my training, I achieved my frozen ATPL in May 2014. As I progressed through the training, I became increasingly passionate about the prospect of training aspiring pilots.



I love the idea of teaching someone to fly from scratch and I wanted to emulate the passion, enthusiasm and kindness of so many of the instructors who taught me at Wycombe Air Park. The problem was that at this stage there was no way I could fund the training myself, so it was the instructors at Wycombe Air Park who suggested that I apply for a Flight Instructor Scholarship with Air Pilots.

I applied as soon as applications opened in January 2016 and was thrilled to be offered an interview in April. I actually really enjoyed my interview; my interviewers

were very friendly and didn't try to trip me up at all. I certainly felt that they were on my side. I was therefore even more thrilled when, a few weeks later I was told that I had been awarded the Swire Flight Instructor Scholarship!

I chose to undertake my FI training with Booker Aviation at Wycombe Air Park, the company with whom I've completed all of my training thus far. The course initially consists of a lot of ground school, and actually not that much flying, but it soon evens out. It sounds rather daft to say so, but I didn't realise quite how much information I'd need to rapidly absorb and process. It's one thing being taught



the theory and practical flying skill in order to be tested at the end of a course, but it's another thing entirely to be taught information in order to then teach said information to someone who has never flown before in a coherent, intelligible and confident manner!! It's a real skill that requires a lot of focus, but fortunately a skill that can be worked on and developed.

I enjoyed the flying element of the course greatly (obviously!). The FI course follows the PPL (A) syllabus from effects of controls and flying straight and level through to instrument flying and radio navigation. Personally, the most challenging part of the course was teaching circuits. It's so much information to deliver in such a short space of time, whilst flying the aeroplane accurately and talking to ATC. I slept like a log that night, and have nothing but respect for the instructors who taught me to fly circuits!

The most enjoyable element of the course was spinning. It's so much fun, and nowhere near as scary as it's made out to be. Those of you who have already spun in a Cessna will appreciate how funny the screaming stall-warner sounds...

The Flight Instructor course has without a doubt honed and improved my flying skill and theoretical knowledge. I'd say that it was the most informative and enjoyable flying course that I've completed to date. The fact that I'm now allowed to teach student pilots is a very exciting prospect and I greatly look forward to receiving my first students in January 2017!

It goes without saying that I'm incredibly grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for this fantastic opportunity, and I would like to say an enormous thank you to my sponsors. And to any potential applicants...this is an amazing opportunity. Apply for it!

