

Andrew Hadfield – Norman Motley FI Scholarship 2016

Like many people, my fascination with flight began as a child where I was fortunate enough to have parents who indulged my hobby of reading about military flying through numerous visits to the local library and bookshops. A career in military aviation was an obvious choice, and having pursued my love of white-water canoeing for several years post-university, I applied and was accepted into the Royal Air Force as a pilot. Subsequent political developments meant my career was short-lived, however, and I had to pursue the civilian route in order to achieve my flying ambitions.



During my time in the RAF I had the good fortune of meeting Flight Lieutenant Charlie Brown. Charlie quickly introduced me to the world of aerobatics and the flying of classic tailwheel aircraft, and it's fair to say I've never looked back since. Whilst I enjoy all forms of flying it quickly became apparent where my interests lie, and so having completed my CPL I decided to apply for the Honourable Company of Air Pilots Flight Instructor scholarship with a view to teaching, and hopefully inspiring others to get involved in the flying of tailwheel aircraft.

Having applied and been invited to interview, I was overjoyed to discover the following week that I had been awarded the Air Safety Trust Flight Instructor scholarship. The decision as to where I would undertake my scholarship was an easy one, with Central Flight Training based at Tatenhill Airfield offering high standards of instruction, and just as importantly, the flexibility to allow me to complete the course around a Monday-Friday office job. They also didn't have an issue with my wanting to learn to teach on a tailwheel equipped aircraft.

The plan was to fly every Saturday throughout the summer taking advantage of whatever good weather came our way. Starting on the spring bank holiday, we made good progress combining both flying and ground elements of the course. I quickly discovered that whilst flying wasn't a problem, and nor was talking, flying and talking simultaneously most certainly was. As with anything though, practice makes perfect – even if it does involve pattering the stall whilst driving to work, and before I knew it I was able to combine the two to a reasonable degree of proficiency! A week's annual leave at the beginning of July, and twice daily trips meant the bulk of the flying course was largely complete by mid-July. My summer evenings and weekends were then spent studying the finer elements of how to give briefings, debriefs, as well as how to explain things that I'd long since taken for granted (or indeed forgotten).

The end of the course duly arrived and with it the assessment of competence. Compared to my PPL and CPL skills test this was an enjoyable experience, not least because it mimicked the giving of a flying lesson and involved spinning and a few aerobatics for good measure. Having completed the long briefing part of the assessment I then received the good news that I'd passed and that I was now a Flying Instructor – apart from my first solo, it was without doubt the most satisfying moment of my flying career to date!

Looking forward I'm now eagerly awaiting the chance to put theory into practice. I've always been fortunate in that all of the instructors I've ever flown with have loved what they were doing, and as a result that passion and enthusiasm has shone through. I hope that as well as teaching people to fly, I can follow in their footsteps and instill a similar degree of enthusiasm, whilst simultaneously encouraging my students to pursue whichever avenue of flying interests them the most.

Lastly, thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, and in particular the Air Safety Trust for sponsoring the scholarship and for selecting me as its very grateful recipient.