

Mark Palmer FI(R) Scholarship Report

Like many young people I got involved in flying through Air Cadet gliding, and after a too-brief spell on Cambridge University Air Squadron I joined the British Army as a Royal Engineer. Since then, coincidentally, I have mainly worked with aviation; as part of the Parachute Brigade, with an Attack Helicopter Regiment and in Air Support building temporary runways for the RAF. In-between work I have managed to progressively collect licences and ratings with a view to an eventual second-career as an instructor. I applied for the Honourable Company's FI(R) rating at the beginning of the year and was really fortunate to be invited to interview.

I can recommend to anyone eligible to apply; the process is entirely relaxed and is really an opportunity to talk through your motivations and demonstrate a bit of theoretical knowledge. They clearly do not expect you to know the answers to every question – I certainly didn't. I was absolutely bowled over to find out I had been successful and set out to complete the course as quickly as weather and work allowed.

I had completed my CPL with Andrewsfield Aviation some time ago and so it was an easy decision to go back. Their school has an excellent flying-club atmosphere and really specialises in FI training. I completed the bulk of the course with two excellent instructors; Bob (Ex Airline Training Captain) and Paul (himself an ex-Air Pilot scholar).



Photo at Andrewsfield with one of my instructors, Paul (himself an Air Pilots FI Scholarship winner).

The FI course itself is not without its challenges. The flying requires a level of concentration and multi-tasking way beyond a typical Sunday afternoon pleasure flight and there is a huge volume of material to pore through on the evenings. I found breaking the lessons down to basics and putting yourself in the position of a fresh student to be quite difficult and strangely, the basic 'effects of controls' lessons seemed to be the hardest to teach. However, the course has a good flow and there

is the opportunity to practice the tricky bits more than once to help you to develop your own teaching technique. It goes without saying that covering the whole syllabus from start to finish does wonders for your own flying knowledge and ability.

The highlight of the course for me has to be conducting the 'teach' of the circuit exercises. The instructors are past masters at simulating a nervous student attempting their first approaches; I am sure that their simulations of wobbly landings will stand me in good stead for a long time into my instructional career. I have control!!

I completed my assessment flight with Carol, Andrewsfield's CFI and was extremely pleased to have passed at the first attempt. I fly at RAF Wyton with the Royal Air Force Flying Club, which caters mainly for serving personnel and young cadets who have an ambition to gain their licence. With the ink not even dry on my new rating I have been 'assigned' two PPL students and will supervise their remaining circuit solos over the coming few weeks. As always seems to happen when I strap into an aircraft the 'bug' has well and truly bitten again - I aim to add aerobatics instruction to the rating as soon as I am able.