

I completed my PPL training over the summer of 2017 at Cambridge Aero Club based at Marshalls Airport, Cambridge. In late June I first arrived to pick up all of the scholarship material, including theory textbooks for 9 written exams, a sectional chart and nav equipment, and after a few delays due to weather had my first flight. The aircraft at CAC are Cessna 172SP's, a reliable and easy aircraft to with great visibility due to the high wing, a great asset to have when the circuit gets busy near the end of the day! The first few lessons of the course are really fun, as you learn the basics of pure flying: climbing, descending and turning, with the instructor taking care of the radio and navigation. At the same time I began studying for the first theory exam: Air Law. Although slightly daunting at first, all of the information is interesting and overlapped with what I was already learning in lessons, and there were always instructors available to help if I had any problems.



As I progressed through the course, covering all general handling from slow flight to stalling, every hour I spent in the air was amazing fun, culminating with the chance to practice spinning in the CAC Extra 200 – a very different aircraft to the 172! After finishing the exercise, my instructor Sam showed me some aerobatics on the way back to Cambridge - aileron rolls, loops, a barrel roll and stall turns – thoroughly overcoming my initial hesitation towards negative G – and even a unique view of a US Air Force Osprey tiltrotor that passed by.

The next major milestone of my PPL course was my first solo, after a long day flying in G-UFCB on August 1st. Pushing forward the throttle for take-off, with no instructor next to me if anything went wrong, was an exhilarating feeling, and once the nerves had worn off I couldn't wait to get up again. As I had already flown the dual nav flights while waiting for my medical certificate, I was soon able to, flying from Cambridge up to the Norfolk coast and then again Eastwards towards Wattisham. It was great to see some new and different places, and to push the Cessna up to cruise at 105kts! Following these I completed my first land-aways which - despite one minor hiccup with the nose-gear oleo at Conington – went really well. Having always flown with ATC from a large airport like Cambridge, it was really interesting to visit places with FIS and Radio services, which definitely give you a lot more responsibility when circuit flying. Everyone that I met at both Sywell and Conington was really friendly, not to mention the food was great, so I will definitely be returning sometime soon.



I had been really lucky for nearly all of the summer weather-wise, however as my QXC approached, it seemed that all of the slots I booked came with low clouds and rain, stopping all VFR flying out of Cambridge. However, due to some cancellations and fortunate timing, on Saturday 25th August I planned and then flew my qualifying cross country flight, a 150 mile loop from Cambridge heading west towards Northampton, north to Kings Lynn, south to Peterborough and then east back towards home, with stops at Sywell and Conington. The weather for flying that day was perfect, with no clouds and air as smooth as



glass up to above 3000ft, and I even got the chance to watch the RAFA Blades display team over lunch during my first stop which was amazing. As my career goal is to become an airline pilot, it was great to experience planning and flying an extended route, with all the complications and decisions required along the way.

After finishing all the solo and dual hours required for the PPL, theory and FRTOL exams, and completing the practice skills test, the last remaining requirement was the real thing. I was very nervous in the days leading up to it, as it had to be postponed a few times, however I made sure I was well prepared, practicing my practice forced-landings the day before and planning the route and weight and balance calculations. When the day

finally arrived, the visibility was good with clear skies, but a challenging crosswind was blowing across the runway. We took off at 10:45, and flew a navigation section eastwards, followed by a diversion, general handling and circuits to finish. I was very happy with how these went, and, despite a few bumpy landings in the circuits section, I was thrilled to hear that I had passed.

I cannot wait to do more flying with my PPL, and take my parents up on a long-deserved thank you flight over Cambridge! Going forward my plan is to apply to an integrated ATPL course after university and join an airline and having a private licence and some experience going in is sure to help. I am really grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and Air BP for providing my this amazing opportunity and the best summer of my life, and also to all the instructors and administrators at Cambridge Aero Club who were always on hand to help me out over the past few months, without whom this wouldn't have been possible.

My sincerest thanks again to Air BP and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for this scholarship, I would have never thought 6 months ago that I would have a pilot's licence and the chance to learn to fly at 18.

