

# Jacob Cooper - The Bob Dawson BALPA Benevolent Fund Scholarship

Summer 2023 has definitely been a summer I will never forget. From starting the summer being apprehensive about the results of my recent A-Levels, to where I am today, only a few months down the line, with a pilot's licence in hand and confident about what the future has to hold.

My flying journey started when I was 13 when my mum bought me a flight experience flight out of Blackpool Airport (EGNH), which hooked me. Since then, I completed my first solo circuit flight with the Air Cadets Pilot Scholarship out of Dundee Airport (EGPN) with Tayside Aviation in a Piper Warrior (G-OWAP). After that inaugural solo flight, I wasn't able to fly as much due to the financial implications which came with learning to fly, and so my logbook gathered dust until I applied for a full PPL with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots.

Upon receiving the email that I had been successful in obtaining the scholarship, I was over the moon with excitement but also had slight apprehension, as completing a PPL in only a matter of months would be difficult, but not impossible.



*Final Approach to EGNH rwy 28*

I started my flight training with Westair out of Blackpool Airport (EGNH), where it all began, and took my first lesson on the 23rd of June in a C152. It was an intense programme, flying at least two flights each day, two or three days a week however was the best time of my life.



*Power checks prior to departure*

My first land away was to Sleaf, a small airfield in Shropshire, which involved flying down the Manchester Corridor on the way to the airfield, followed by a transit through the Liverpool zone on the return journey. This was the most challenging flight I had done so far, encompassing various types of radio transmissions, all whilst navigating unfamiliar areas, most of which had limited visual points and so relied heavily upon pre-planning to ensure the correct headings and timings were being used. Despite it being difficult, it was incredible to see the full potential of having your pilot's licence.

The next day I carried out my second land away to Caernarfon, which took a picturesque route along the North Wales coast and Menai Strait. The views flying between mainland Wales and Anglesey were incredible, and with little wind and

clear blue skies, it felt as though I was living the dream.



*My first trip to Caernarfon*

The following day I was able to complete my first solo navigation flight to Sleaf. This was daunting initially, as I had been struggling with the radio calls and often found it difficult to understand what the Air Traffic Controllers were saying, however, this flight reinstated my confidence and I felt comfortable in my abilities from this point onwards.

The 7th of September was by far the most stressful but rewarding day. In the morning, I had my written radio exam, followed by my practical radio assessment and finally my qualifying cross country in the afternoon, all of which depended on the success of the previous one. Thankfully, I was able to carry out my QXC that day, flying from Blackpool - Caernarfon - Sleaf - Blackpool. This was an incredible experience, being able to fly to different locations throughout the country on my own! Having said this, it was a race against the clock in order to get back to Blackpool before night dawned on the airfield.



*More views from the cockpit*

The final part of my PPL progression was my Skills Test. This, unfortunately, had to be delayed throughout September due to bad weather, however despite strong winds and the initial plan to only complete half of my test in early October, I passed my test after a gruelling two and a half hours of flying.

I am forever grateful for the funding supplied by The BALPA Benevolent Fund and the bequest in memory of Bob Dawson to achieve my dream of becoming a pilot, alongside the continued support of all the team at the Young Air Pilots. It has been an incredible experience, and one I will never forget.

I am now working for the North West Ambulance Service, with the aim to eventually begin my modular training to



*A photo taken following the completion of my skills test*