

## The Air Pilots Benevolent Fund – Elliot Archer

I am lucky enough to have been involved in aviation for the past seven years, but gaining the Air Pilots Benevolent Fund PPL Scholarship from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots has been the highlight. It involved 45 hours of flight training, including 10 hours solo, 5 hours solo cross country, a solo flight of 150 nautical miles landing at 2 different aerodromes, plus ground school study for 9 theory exams and was the best way to spend my post 'A Levels' summer and by far exceeded my expectations.

I was fortunate to do the PPL course with Aeros Flight Training (who I had previously had work experience with) at my local airfield, Gloucestershire Airport. I was under the superb guidance of two instructors, Steve Robinson and Rupert Hawkins so I was able to do 2 flights a day with lots of continuity and little interruption.

The weather was on my side and I got plenty of practise and began to feel right at home in the PA28-161 Piper Warrior. Gloucestershire Airport has a complicated airfield layout and complex radio calls which was useful to develop and refine my skills. It was the best feeling to have full control over an aircraft and land it back safely and as soon as I returned, I couldn't wait to take to the skies again. Each flight presented new challenges and experiences and gradually I flew further out and landed at new and trickier airfields such as Cardiff Airport and Wolverhampton Halfpenny Green.

I interspersed practical flying with studying and sitting for the 9 theory exams. I started with the intention of only doing the ground school when bad weather prevented me from flying. However, the weather was superb so in hindsight I wished I had completed all 9 exams at the beginning of the course to gain the knowledge before using it in the practical lessons.

I worked steadily on towards flying solo under much encouragement from Steve and Rupert and I really enjoyed the freedom of handling the whole flight from start to finish. I soon felt ready (but still waited for perfect weather conditions) to take my skills test with examiner, Kevin Bignell. Thankfully, there was an opening in the weather, and after completing 6 sections of the test we landed back safely at Gloucester and I was told I had passed my Private Pilot's License!

Finally, due to my lack of funds I would have spent most of the summer watching other people fly aircraft out of Gloucestershire Airport, but this PPL Scholarship from the HCAP has enabled that person to be me. I am truly grateful. I could not have gained my PPL without the help of HCAP.

Now, I am even more eager and inspired to continue flying by doing the night rating and beyond, to eventually go on to become a professional pilot. I am already passing on my knowledge and skills I developed to teach the fundamentals of flying to cadets from the Air Training Corps, so they have benefitted from my experience too.

For me, HCAP's PPL Scholarship has been the best.

Thank you.

