



Grayburn Scholarship Final Report – David Bell

Ever since I started school, when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would always answer: “I want to be a pilot”, so when I found out about the Honourable Company of Air Pilots’ scholarships I was interested immediately.

Over the previous few years leading up to my application, I had been a part of the Air Cadets, where I had been very fortunate to be awarded two earlier scholarships: the Leslie Worsdell Scholarship and the Air Cadet Pilot Scheme. From these scholarships I had developed a strong base knowledge of airmanship and had successfully gone solo during the Air Cadet Pilot Scheme.

After being awarded the Grayburn Scholarship to finish my PPL, I left my gap-year job at Amazon to pursue the PPL full time, and booked in two months of flying lessons with between 5 and 10 lessons per week at Cambridge Aeroclub, which – incidentally – was where I had first flown as part of the Leslie Worsdell Scholarship, so many of my instructors were familiar faces.

Getting back into the circuit had some challenging moments; I tended to fly the approach too high, and it took me a few lessons to get back on track. However, before too long, I was back to flying circuits solo again! The next major milestone was moving onto navigation. It was exciting to be able to go further afield, to see East Anglia from the air and land away at Sywell and Conington.

My favourite flight so far was my qualifying cross country – my route took me again to Sywell and Conington, then to the Norfolk coast where I was able to enjoy some impressive views before heading home for Cambridge. The feeling of accomplishment to have flown such a long route was immense and I was excited to be so close to my skills test and ultimately achieving my PPL.

I had my skills test in early August, which was both exciting and daunting – I knew it would be hard work but I couldn’t wait to get my licence. However, unfortunately during a diversion in the navigation section of the test, I became lost - it had been a few weeks since I’d used my diversion plotter and in the excitement of the test I misread the track to our destination. Despite this upset, I was able to complete the other sections of the test without a hitch. A few days later, on the 7th of August, I retook the navigation section, having ditched the diversion plotter’s compass rose for a small protractor, something I was far more familiar with from my maths lessons at school. This time I was much more successful!

Since completing the scholarship, I’ve been able to fly for a few more local flights, including taking my Dad flying for his birthday which was particularly poignant as it was his interest in aviation that kindled mine. I’m hoping to complete my night rating over the Christmas period and to try a farm strip course next summer. Once I’ve finished my degree in Theoretical Physics, I plan to work towards becoming an airline pilot, preferably through one of the cadetship schemes that some companies such as British Airways offer.



I’d like to use this opportunity to thank the instructors and staff at Cambridge Aeroclub for their exemplary instruction, the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me this wonderful opportunity to fulfil a lifelong dream, and Michael Grayburn, a Past Master of the Company for generously sponsoring the scholarship.