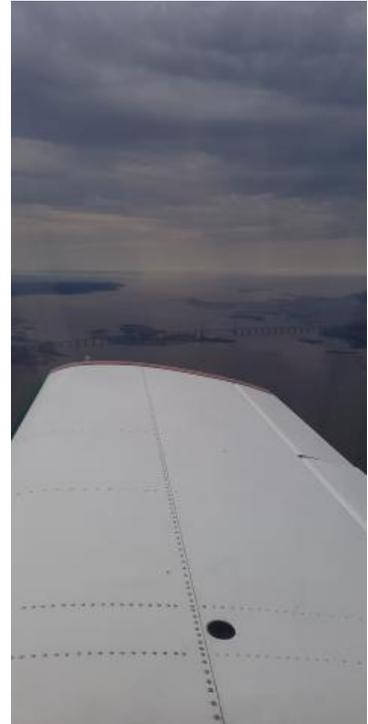


Oliver Summerell – Squadron Leader Brian Letchford Scholarship

My Passion for aviation started from a young age with my family being involved with Air Cadet gliding and also a vintage glider syndicate. This is where I first started to fly, in an old Air cadet Sedburgh (T21) glider with family members. At the age of 15 I was awarded a gliding scholarship at Bristol and Gloucestershire gliding club. Here I learnt to fly properly for the first time and after a few months training I finally completed a solo flight in a glider. The following year I was lucky enough to be awarded the Air cadet pilot scheme scholarship. I was given 12 hours of powered flying which I completed at Tayside Aviation in Dundee. Unfortunately, due to weather I did not go solo. Being close to solo I continued to fly at Staverton with Cotswold Aero Club and after a few hours completed my first powered solo flight. Since then my main hobby has been gliding at Nympsfield with BGGC where I have now completed over 150 hours, completed my Bronze and Cross country endorsement, silver, gold distance and diamond goal badges. I recently completed my Basic Instructor qualification where I take trial lesson flights with members of the public. I have also competed in 2 UK Junior gliding national championships, where this year I won best under 21.



It was my ambition to complete my PPL and progress my powered flying so I first applied to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for the scholarship in 2018 and reached the interview stages. Unfortunately, I was not successful. I was not deterred by this I reapplied for the 2019 Scholarships and again was selected for interview. A few days after the interview I was so happy to find out that I had been successful this time and was awarded the Squadron Leader Brian Letchford Scholarship. I chose to complete the Scholarship with Cotswold Aero Club at Gloucestershire airport as this was local and It was already familiar.

In June I successfully completed my A Levels and so had the whole of the summer ahead of me to focus on the scholarship and completing my PPL. A few weeks before the end of my A levels I took a trip to Cotswold Aero Club to meet with the CFI Phil Mathews, I picked up my bag of equipment ready to start the course and booked flying slots for the next few months . I booked 3 lessons a week in 4 hour slots which gave me flexibility depending on what the weather was like and also the option to book more if needed. With the theory exams I set myself a goal of completing at least 3 each month and as soon as I had completed my A levels I was straight into reading the flying books.

I completed the exams in 3 stages taking 3 in the first month, 4 in the second and 2 in the final weeks, I passed them all first time and also completed the radio telephony license test.

I started flying on the 19th June after a 2 year gap of not doing any powered flying. After a few hours of training and getting back used to it I re soloed. This time the aircraft I was flying was different to what I had flown before. My course was primarily flown in the Robin R200 with a few flights in the Robin DR400 which I had flown before, there are some differences between the two aircraft. My instructors were Phil Mathews and Pete Dunkley

After going solo again I did some more dual flying in the local area before then flying solo away, but near to the airfield. After that it was onto cross country and navigation which I had done many times in a glider before with a navigation device and chart, I soon learnt for powered it was quite different. This took careful chart planning which I soon learnt to be a real help in the air and the first cross country showed me this with heading error corrections. After a couple of dual cross country flights and practises at diversions I did a dual land away to Sywell. This was great fun as it was somewhere I had never been before. On the flight I spoke to London Information, it was good practise. After The Sywell visit I flew my first solo Cross country navigation flight which was a small triangle that took about an hour. The following week I did a dual land away to Wycombe air park which involved a transit through Brize Norton class D airspace. This was an amazing experience as our route took us directly over the top of the airfield and you could see all the aircraft out on the ground. Also on the way back as we transited overhead again this time an A400M was taking off and disappeared up into the cloud. My next flight was again navigation practise and this time a practise at going into Oxford for a touch and go. I then went on to do some tail wheel practise in the Citabria and we went over to Shobdon and practised more navigation and a land away. We picked up the R200 which was having work done to it and I flew it back solo. I also did one other flight in the Citabria and we went to local airstrips to practise take offs and landings.



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On the 29th July I completed my Qualifying Cross country and planned to land at Shobdon and Sywell. The flight went really well and was great fun. I went to Shobdon first and got the tower to sign the form before then heading off to Sywell. Again I got my form signed before having lunch and a drink in the café watching other aircraft before heading back home to Gloucester.

After this I did another dual land away, this time to Dunkeswell. This route was interesting as it meant getting clearance through Bristol and took us directly overhead the airfield where at

the time an Easy jet was taking off. It was also a great experience being on the same frequency as airliners and hearing the radio calls. Finally, I completed my solo hours with a land away at Halfpenny Green. After this the rest of my flights were in preparation for the skills test which was booked ready for 18th September.

Then the big day finally came, I had done a lot of preparation in the days leading up to it to be ready. I was nervous when I got there, I was nice and early to be prepared and ready. I went and refuelled the plane and waited for the examiner to arrive. At 10 Max the examiner arrived and we went into the briefing room to talk about the flight and what he was looking for. We then booked out checked over the plane and we were off. We started on the first leg of the flight to Banbury with a small heading correction needed which put us overhead Banbury perfectly. Then onto Bridgnorth which was all okay, we tuned into Birmingham listening squawk. Part way down this leg my examiner told me to divert to Bromyard and after this the navigation part of the test was complete. We then went on to do stalls, steep turns, practise engine failures and after this returned to Gloucester for circuits. We did a normal approach, flapless, glide and short field landing and after this the test was over. After we taxied back in and shut down the engine he told me I had passed and I was super happy.



I now hope to keep building hours at Cotswold Aero Club and to finish tail wheel training so I can go on to do a glider tugging course so that I can tow gliders at my gliding club. This will help me build hours which I will need if I want to complete my ATPL and go into a career as a commercial pilot. The Scholarship has been a great step forward in my flying progression and potential career prospects in the RAF or becoming a commercial pilot.

Finally a massive thank you to my Instructors Phil and Pete for the great training and the Cotswold Aero Club for their warm and friendly environment. Also the Honourable Company of Air Pilots and to the family of Squadron Leader Brian Letchford for this Scholarship as without it I would not have been able to complete my PPL.