



The Honourable Company of Air Pilots  
Private Pilots Licence Scholarship 2021  
Generously Sponsored by The Air Pilots  
Visits Team

Scholarship Report by  
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25<sup>th</sup> September 2021. A historic day for me, the realisation of a dream I have been chasing for as long as I can remember, from my first air show aged eight in Perth, watching aerobatics and having the privilege of speaking to the RAF Typhoon Display Team, to taking the National Express bus from Scotland to England just to attend flight school open days down south and purchase some second-hand PPL and ATPL theory books. Chasing this ambition, I joined the Air Cadets and got involved in as many aviation related circles as I could. I worked multiple jobs to afford my first trial lesson and the experience was life changing. I loved the sense of freedom and responsibility, and I instantly knew that I had found my purpose.



1st Air Show

At University, seeking to further my interests, I joined the Air Squadron where I was lucky enough to fly on the Grob Tutor T1 from Glasgow International Airport and RAF Leuchars and completely fell in love with flying. Wanting to share my passion with others, I founded Glasgow's first ever Aerospace Society. It was as part of this society where I met my fellow avgeeks, one of whom was Fahim Ahmed who is now one of my close friends and a previous scholarship winner who recommended that I apply. I had heard of flying scholarships and would read the stories growing up, but for some reason it never occurred to me that I should apply! So, after several months revising my application, I finally sent it away.



Flying from RAF Leuchars in 2019

A month later, I received an email on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March stating that I had been shortlisted for the final stage of the selection process and needed to submit a short one minute video about myself. After literally hundreds of practice takes to get the perfect video before sending it in, I was happy to receive word after a week that I was one of 24 candidates to have passed the application phase. My interview was via Zoom on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Feeling prepared and excited, I was honoured to be interviewed by Chris Ford, Past Master of The Company, Almoner to The Air Pilots Benevolent Fund, Ex RAF transport aircraft pilot, Instrument Rating Examiner, Standards Evaluator, Air to Air Refuelling Instructor and Balloon Pilot. And Kat Hodge, Airline Pilot for Virgin Atlantic, Cadet Liaison Pilot for their Virgin Atlantic Future Flyers Cadet Scheme, founding member of the Young Air Pilots and winner of the Breitling PPL Scholarship in 1999. I can happily say that it was the most interesting and enjoyable interview I've ever had. I was able to talk about aviation with people who related to my passion for it and made such a huge impact, which was a sensational feeling.



GU Aerospace Banner

I'll never forget, a few weeks later, after relentlessly checking my emails, I received word that I had been awarded the scholarship as I was sat in a booth at my University Library at 9:30 am. Containing my excitement at this point was probably the most difficult part of the scholarship!

Eager to get started, I immediately obtained my Class 2 Medical from an AME in Glasgow. I began my training at ACS Aviation in June, training on the Piper PA28-161 Warrior II. My first solo came the same month in G-BODD, on RW09. Resulting in the completion of Phase 1 that I had planned out. Consisting of Aircraft Familiarisation, Emergencies, Taxiing, Effects of Controls, Slow Flight, Turning, Climbing, Descending, Stall Recovery and Spin Avoidance/Recovery.



Flying from Perth

Time-management was crucial - studying textbooks daily, teaching myself the theory online, memorising my checks and analysing my previous flights for future improvement. I experienced some turbulence in the second phase of my training - I had to balance a full-time job to fund my accommodation and was called in by the RAF to serve at Wimbledon for two weeks. I later fell ill with Covid-19 which also delayed my training. Upon return, due to a change in instructor availability, I began flying with three different instructors to ensure I maximised my hours during the week. I had to study every free moment and ensure I was prepared for the next flight. Unreliable weather also meant some days we couldn't take off, or if the weather deteriorated en-route, having to fly home and delaying the exercise until better weather arrived. I would sit



Poor Weather Days = Self Study

every day and armchair fly every lesson beforehand, looking at potential winds the day before trying to plan my departure and the potential runway in use, all things which can help make the day of the flight smoother prior to departure.



1<sup>st</sup> Solo Navigation

The training included more Emergencies like the PFL and Glide Approach, some touch-and-go circuits, Advanced Handling, Airmanship, Radios. After which I had begun the navigation sorties. These consisted of MATZ penetration over RAF Leuchars and CTZ crossing over Edinburgh. After my instructor was happy with my ability to navigate and fly the aircraft, my first solo nav was Perth - Stanley - Brechin - Dunkeld - Perth where I spoke to Scottish Information. The subsequent solo nav consolidations were through the Leuchars MATZ and Edinburgh CTZ.

Then came the Aerodrome Landaways, first a dual to Dundee and back with an instructor. Then to Cumbernauld and back. Following which I completed my Qualifying Cross Country. The +150 nautical mile QXC flight was Perth - Cumbernauld - Dundee - Perth and couldn't have gone better despite poor visibility on the way and a very busy ATZ at Dundee. This was one of the special moments I began to truly feel everything come together and the sense that I am the pilot in command of an aircraft. So, after paying my landing fees and getting my QXC certificate signed in each tower respectively, I made my journey back home to successfully complete the flight.



Successfully completing my QXC



Landing at Dundee

After my QXC, all that was left was preparing for my skills test and building some solo hours I had spare. So, I decided to have my mock skills test first and use the time I had left to practice anything I wanted to work on afterwards. In the mock test we covered slow flight, stalls, spin recovery, steep turns, PFLs, gliding turns and the different types of landings. After a successful mock skills test, I then used my hours to practice as planned. A few days and many emails later, I came in prepared to complete the real skills test and greeted my examiner. However, my suspicions about the weather leading up to the day were quickly realised when, after many hours assessing the weather in the morning, I decided that it was too poor to allow for a reasonable flight, and with my

examiners approval we rescheduled the test. All those who were there that day calling it a “very wise decision”. Then, after over two weeks of postponed flights due to 30-40kt gusting winds, poor visibility, and low clouds, I was finally able to get my skills test done on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September. The route for the test was Perth - Lower Largo - Edzell - Perth. As we taxied into ACS Aviation after the test, I was told “Congratulations, you’ve passed”. The examiner later remarking that “If you can navigate in that, you can navigate in anything” which instilled me with confidence after the test. Throughout my training, I also passed the 9 theory exams and the Practical Radiotelephony exam.

The same day, I said my goodbyes to everyone at ACS and headed home to Paisley. After 2 months of training, I had finally obtained my PPL.

Becoming a pilot means much more to me than just flying. It's about community, integrity, and ambition. Being awarded this scholarship was one of the best things to happen in my life. A sincere thank you to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots and The Air Pilots Visits Team. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity and will use it as a jump-start on my journey of becoming an airline pilot.

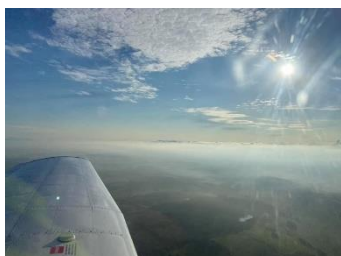


Flight over Forth Bridges

Thanks also to those who supported me throughout the scholarship, firstly to my family for their motivation and support, it goes without saying I would not be where I am today without them. Thanks to Fahim for informing me of the scholarship and his support, and to QFI and Deputy Officer Commanding of UGSAS, Flt. Lt. Barrie Mason for his Character Reference and introducing me to the beauty of flight. Of course, thank you to my instructors, Sheldon Cholwich, Brad Marriot and Alastair McNaught, whose banter and enthusiasm made flying even more fun. Final thanks go to ACS Aviation, for providing the location and aircraft for training. With the friendly people and large fleet, my training there was top class and would highly recommend it to anyone.

As for the future, I intend to work as an engineer until I can afford modular training, whilst building my hours and working towards becoming a flight instructor amongst gaining other ratings. I have already began looking into potential schools abroad, namely Poland and Hungary for building my hours. I am in contact with a few students at these schools who are informing me of the ‘pros and cons’ of each school respectively and have made friends with a few fellow aviators who I intend to fly with. I also stay up to date on many piloting forums which I would recommend to anyone interested in aviation!

***Blue Skies Everyone!***



Inversion en-route



G-GFCE



Afternoon Fleet



Solo Navigation



Model Spitfire



Dual Navigation