

Freddie Bull, Sir Sefton Brancker Scholarship Report

Having been actively involved in aviation since joining the Scottish Gliding Centre aged 14, I had long been aware of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots PPL scholarship and it's ability to enormously help me fulfil my goal of becoming a commercial airline pilot. Applying in February 2019, the scholarship would allow me to complete my Private Pilots Licence in the summer straight after leaving 6th year of school, in time to progress onto ATPL ground school programmes beginning in October 2019. Alongside completing the application form I drew up a detailed plan of exactly how I was going to manage my summer in order to allow successful completion of my PPL within the given time. My plan also detailed my skills and personal qualities which I would utilise to allow me to meet the target dates. The application and interview process was successful - albeit nerve-racking - and I was absolutely delighted when I received the email to say I'd been awarded a scholarship.



Standing in front of the Pa28-161 I had just landed at Fife, on my first solo landaway

I commenced my training at Tayside Aviation, Dundee, in mid June 2019, starting with the basics of handling the aircraft. With over 140 hours in gliders I found the initial lessons second nature; more challenging however was getting accustomed to the secondary controls not found on the gliders I had flown, such as carb heat, mixture and flaps. I quickly progressed onto stage 2 - Circuits. I was used to flying circuits in gliders however again, I found the differences both interesting and challenging. Different flap settings altered the approach dynamics while practice emergencies required memorised checklists and radio calls as well as flying the aeroplane. Both made interesting additions to my existing skills, let alone the fact that I now had the ability to go around if the approach wasn't going well! Stage 2 concluded with a 45 minute check flight followed by first powered solo flight, a special moment made even more memorable by having to go around and change runways on final due to a change in the wind.

Stage 3, an introduction to navigation, started with an equally as memorable moment. When checking the NOTAMs pre flight, my instructor and I noticed that the Red Arrows were forecast to pass through the area around Dundee during the time of our flight. This momentarily perked our excitement however we quickly moved on as we got on with the flight planning process. This calm of routine was short lived as during our power checks Red Arrows squadron leader Martin Pert contacted Dundee tower. He reported they were 50 miles to the south of the airport, cruising at 1000ft and estimated passing three miles to the west of the airport in five minutes time. My instructor and I continued our checks, ensuring we didn't step on a radio transmission from the Red Arrows, and departed the westerly runway soon after. At 400 feet on the climb out I spotted the nose lights of the approaching Hawks, around 10 miles to the south, slightly above and, most notably, on a constant bearing. As we neared 1000ft, with the Red Arrows having declared us 'in sight', my instructor and I concluded we might be about to get slightly too close to the jets and so turned left, continuing our climb to allow to the Red Arrows to pass around 500ft below us! Looking down as the Red Arrows pass beneath you is certainly a unique view and definitely a stand out moment in my flying experience so far.

The remainder of stage 3 passed without incident. Particularly interesting was the extent of planning that goes into each flight and the accuracy of navigational techniques involved, with some navigation legs working out to the second!



With my Mum and younger brother after landing at Fife. (My Dad took the picture!)

Next was solo navigation and landaways in preparation for my Qualifying Cross Country flight. My first solo landaway was to Fife airport, a 700m tarmac runway, around 20 miles to the south of Dundee. This was a particularly special flight as Fife airport was where my passion for aviation began. With the runway just a few hundred yards from my house, every day before and after nursery I would go with my parents down the country road and watch for hours as everything from Sopwith Camels and Tiger Moths to Cessnas and Beechcrafts flew circuits and aerobatics around the airfield. To land there myself, with my family watching, felt like I'd come full circle and was a satisfying waypoint to see how far I'd come from the four year old who watched with awe from the other side of the fence.

After a few false starts due to weather, I successfully completed my QXC, landing at Fife and Cumbernauld airports as well as transiting Leuchars and Edinburgh airspace before flying over the mountains to Laurencekirk and then back to Dundee.

Preparation for my skills test largely consisted of navigating to yellow dots on the map to test my accuracy as well as some revision of upper air work covered in stage one. After a successful mock skills test, my actual skills test passed with little issue and after a brief revision of field landings the following morning, I had passed!

Following my skills test I signed up to the Fast Track commercial course at ACS flight training in Perth, where I have converted to and started my hours building in their Cessna 152 aircraft. I have also started studying for my ATPL exams with my first three exams booked for November 2019 and I have logged three hours in a PA-18-150 Super Cub, which will assist me in commencing glider towing at the Scottish Gliding Centre early next year.

I would like to sincerely thank the Honourable Company of Air Pilots giving me such invaluable assistance, not only through this scholarship but also via several gliding scholarships, such as funding my instructors rating. This support has fast tracked key landmarks in my journey towards becoming a commercial airline pilot, improving my flying skills along the way as well as developing the soft skills necessary for each achievement.

Without financial support I would still be working to save up enough money to fund my Private Pilots Licence. The Sir Sefton Brancker scholarship from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots has allowed me to not only complete my Private Pilots Licence, in as short a time as possible but also to commence further training towards gaining my commercial licence.



With my instructor, Callum Doherty, after passing my skills test

Freddie H. C. Bull