

Khalid Abdulghani Lane-Burslem Scholarship (BALPA Benevolent Fund)



As the saying goes; “life is a journey to be experienced, not a destination to be reached”, and as such, every successful pilot out there started their journey somewhere.

Mine started, not at an airport or on an aircraft, but rather, at home. My dad and I have always shared a similar passion for flying whereby his interests lied in general aviation and RC planes and mine... big jets!

At the age of 7, my dad had bought me a home flight simulator which I installed on my computer, and that was where it all started. I would tend to fly anything from small general aviation aircraft to large

airliners, and that was when I saw myself becoming a commercial pilot one day.

It is no secret that becoming a commercial pilot is expensive and thus, puts many aspiring pilots off. However, I was not prepared to give up. During sixth form, I had the opportunity to partake in work experience with British Airways at flight operations and there, I had the opportunity to take control of a glider for the first time. Feeling astonished, I was eager to do more gliding and thus, in 2022 I won Air Pilot's gliding scholarship which I did at Portsmouth Navel Gliding Centre (PNGC) in Middle Wallop. The gliding scholarship (unlike the PPL scholarship) was a residential-based scholarship with the aim of taking scholars solo in 7 days. Despite not having achieved solo, I have learnt a lot during this jam-packed week and thoroughly enjoyed it and was undoubtedly a week I will struggle to forget.

At this point, I was still adamant I wanted to do more flying, especially powered-flying and that was where Air Pilots' PPL scholarship came in. Finding a full PPL scholarship is quite rare these days and although most charities and organisations only give one or two per year, Air Pilots are much more generous, having given out 9 this year. What Air Pilots really look for in a candidate is someone who can demonstrate their passion for flying and, unlike the gliding scholarship which gives you a “taste” to flying, the PPL scholarship is for someone who wants to take it to a career level. One criterion required for a successful candidate is to have some experience of flying, whether powered or non-powered. I would highly recommend for those applying to the PPL scholarship to get some experience in flying, and that may just be to book yourself a trial lesson at your local flying club.

Completing my PPL over the summer had been an incredible experience for me and most definitely rewarding. Having been undertaking my training at the Pilot Centre in Denham, I was privileged to be taught by two highly experienced instructors,



one of whom was also an examiner. The school were also very supportive of me during my training, allowing me to use their facilities such as their briefing rooms when I was studying for my theory exams.

Some of my highlights during my training were my first solo, first 'land away' and the best part, my qualifying cross-country. Despite how misty it was, I was lucky to have done my qualifying cross-country with three other student pilots, and it sure was awesome hearing my fellow peers on the radio! Flying to both Coventry and Duxford was an incredible experience for me – especially since Duxford is a much-loved airfield to many general aviation pilots and is an airfield that also houses the Imperial War Museum – a must-visit museum for any aspiring pilot.



One of my highlights flying into Duxford was watching three Spitfires flying right above the airfield. That... was really cool!

I would often think back to 7-year-old me who would fly a Cessna on a computer screen, imagining to one day do it in real life, and it was only thanks to The Honourable Company of Air Pilots who granted me the Eric Lane-Burslem Scholarship, allowing me to complete my PPL much sooner than I would have anticipated. And, like I said at the beginning, life is a journey – and getting my PPL fully funded by the BALPA Benevolent Fund was just part of that journey, and I hope this for me is just the beginning.

If you're aspiring to find a career as a pilot, why not apply to Air Pilots' PPL scholarship? You have nothing to lose, and it may just be the beginning of your journey into aviation!