

Josh Fagan CADOGAN Scholarship

The Honourable Company of Air Pilots have allowed me to have the most interesting, rewarding and at times challenging summer of my life, all while doing the best thing in the world: flying.

I will attempt to give a brief dit of how the course went here, but first, let me set the scene ...

The genesis of my flying obsession began back when I was 6 or 7 years old, when I was being looked after by my grandparents one weekend, and through what I now see as a stroke of luck, was forced to go with my grandad to help him out with his hobby of flying remote control model airplanes. So reluctantly I went along, but soon was transfixed with these Tiger Moths and Hurricanes in miniature giving an entire private airshow to 7-year-old me. At that moment a spark in me was ignited and my love of aviation had taken off (excuse the pun) forever.

From here on out it was all about doing everything I could to be a pilot, and I joined my schools CCF unit on the first day I could, RAF section of course, and long story short it culminated after a great 5 years in my receiving an initial 12 hour flying scholarship at the now defunct Tayside aviation flying the rather sleek Aquila A211. There I went solo for the first time and those first 5 minutes of freedom completely supercharged my need to make flying my profession.



By now it was time to go off to uni and attempt to understand how aeroplanes really fly, by doing an



aerospace engineering and pilot studies degree. However after 3 years I found out that I would probably be better off flying aeroplanes than designing them, (as several questionable design tasks can attest to), but I digress. Whilst at university I joined the Liverpool University Air Squadron who offer what closely mirrors the RAFs elementary flying training course on the mighty Grob Tutor T.1. There I went flying whenever I possibly could, more often than not at the expense of my uni attendance scores and made steady progress through the syllabus despite COVID and the Tutor's penchant for getting

themselves grounded. My final flight on the Tutor before I started my PPL was solo aerobatics, quite the day out!! The quality and comprehensiveness of the instruction I received there was vital in providing a springboard to the HCAP PPL scholarship ensuring I had a good head-start.

Towards the end of my time on the UAS and uni I applied for the HCAP PPL scholarship with a view to opening the door to the civilian aviation route. I had previously got to the interview stage twice, but due to a number of reasons, which I had attempted to improve in the meantime, had not been successful.

Thankfully I was told I had been successful on my third attempt and it remains some the most life changing news I have ever received. The first of a few curveballs myself and the excellent staff of HCAP (who I can't thank enough for helping me out during all of this) had to deal with, was trying to find a flying school in the vicinity of Liverpool which could do the course within the scholarship's funding limits. The main issue being, unlike the south of England, which is blessed with an abundance of smaller WW2 era strips where operation is comparatively cheap, the few airfields in the north west are all international airports commanding large landing and general operation fees leading to a considerably larger overall PPL course cost.

In the end we arrived on going with the fantastic Merseyflight operating out of Hawarden on the Wales/Cheshire boarder.

The first task was getting acquainted with the Piper Tomahawk, which when compared to the Tutor, was almost a culture shock in its lack of facilities and a bit of a regression in terms of performance. However I soon came to greatly enjoy the back to basics flying the T-Hawk offered. Initially I focussed my attentions on getting through as many ground exams as possible whilst I essentially re-tread the airborne content I had done on the Tutor previously to satisfy the CAA requirements.



Finishing the solo circuits aspect of the syllabus, we moved on to what would become my nemesis – navigation. All seemed to go as planned during the first few sorties although I found that I needed to invest particular attention into my allocation of mental capacity, in essence making sure I was far enough ahead of the aeroplane to be able to take the time to figure out how to translate what I was seeing on the ground into what was on the map and vice versa. I saw steady improvement in this until my first solo navigation sortie. I made the fatal error of second guessing my stopwatch and heading, and convinced myself that the town passing underneath the wing looked sufficiently similar to the one that was meant to be my turning point. So I turned onto my new heading (about 5-10 miles short of where I should've been) and rather quickly realised I was 'temporarily unaware of my location'. Luckily, I was able to obtain a visual position fix and thought at that point it was best to throw it away and RTB.

This caused a bit of a crisis of confidence at first but on reflection I believe it made me a better and more diligent navigator. Also, RT, which always seems very difficult at first also begins to come naturally during this phase, which feels oddly satisfying but useful to further confidence.

From there on out the training was relatively uneventful whilst progressing through the syllabus, learning more and more with each flight. Landaways were a great experience, especially Halfpenny Green which is a great little airfield that I would encourage anyone who gets the chance to visit. The QXC, which of course I did on the hottest day of the summer, (the T-Hawk is also a very effective greenhouse), was actually a very enjoyable day despite the possibly daunting prospect it seems beforehand. It involved the whole 9 yards of MATZ crossings, radar services, crosswind landings, uncontrolled airfields and one particularly stealth capable Cessna keen on trying his hand at aerial combat!, but that's a story for another day. In all I would say the 150nm trip was the highlight of the entire course!.

In the run up to the skills test we mainly focussed on GH and Nav, although the deadline was approaching rapidly. After 5 attempts where the particularly underwhelming British summer, (even for its own standards), had forced cancellations, we eventually managed to get the test done and dusted first time round, thanks in part to my great examiner Angus who made the event seem less of a trauma and more of a routine flying day.



In conclusion, the summer I spent flying Tomahawks round the skies of Cheshire and Shropshire was unbelievable and hasn't quite sunk in yet just what I have achieved, however I would never have been able to do it without the help and support of the HCAP team and everyone at Merseyflight, especially Ollie, Tania, Steve and Neil. All great individuals who went above and beyond to help me achieve my dream.

As for what's next? Well, against their better judgement the RAF have offered me a job as a pilot starting in February 24, so if you ever hear of an RAF jet that got lost on the way to Gloucester ...

