

Mollie Wadsworth Air BP Scholarship

It has been an ambition of mine to complete a PPL ever since I found out what a PPL was, so this summer has been incredibly special to me, and easily the best one of my life.



On the left, I was 9 years old and sat in the cockpit of Concorde, and on the right is a photo of my first ever flight with cadets when I was 13!



My passion for aviation started when I was really young. After being very interested in car games, bus driving games and train driving games thanks to my uncle, I discovered the wonders of flight simulators, and from then on, all I wanted to do was be around aircraft. My parents took me on days out to plane-spot at Leeds Bradford Airport and Manchester Airport, leading me to think, "Nothing could be cooler than watching planes all day, I want to be an Air Traffic Controller", and stated that, very proudly, at about the age of 8. This quickly changed to wanting to actually fly the planes, and so it began - I dedicated everything I did to becoming an airline

pilot. I used to watch Boeing documentaries on YouTube and videos made by pilots on things like what a TAF is, METARS, VORs, and so on, before I was able to learn to fly. I got my first aircraft model (A380) and a tour of Concorde for my 9th birthday and joined Keighley Air Cadets at age 12. I had my first ever flight in a Grob Tutor at age 13 and I can remember thinking that flying is definitely what I want to do. I was lucky enough to have 3 more flights with cadets and got to glide twice. With this passion, I was invited to join the Central and East Yorkshire Wing Aviation Team at the end of 2022, where I teach cadets about all things aviation using VR flight simulators. This is where I learnt about the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, and just at the right time to apply for their PPL Scholarship.

So, I did! It started with a short, handwritten application, which I sent in really hoping for the best, but expecting the worst - I was the youngest possible age, not very many flying hours, and it was my first time applying. I never expected to get this far at all. A few weeks later, I was thrilled to find out I got through the first stage, and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots wanted me to send them a 60-second video briefly explaining who I am. Then I found out I got through to the interview. For this, we flew down to London. I had never been to Heathrow Airport before, so I was in awe of the place and spent a lot of the time after the interview plane-spotting before flying home. The interview was scary - it was the biggest day of my life and I had never been to anything so formal and so important before. There was a short aptitude test we carried out in pairs followed by an approximately 40-minute interview. After that, there was a week-long wait until I found out I didn't get the scholarship. It was truly heartbreaking, but nothing would stop me from applying again next year.

June 27th comes around, and I get a call during my break at school. It was Angie, from The Honourable Company of Air Pilots, telling me they received extra funding from Air BP for a scholarship and would like to offer it to me. When I say there were tears, I mean it. I immediately rang my mum and dad, who were so happy for me, and after some waiting



One of my first flying lessons.

I thought the clouds looked amazing!

and communication with the flight school, Yorkshire Aviation Academy (YAA), I started my training on July 17th.

The training at YAA was split into 4 phases:

Phase 1 was effects of controls, turning, descending, climbing, slow flight, and stalling. A lot of this I had learnt through cadets already but it was great to go over it again and actually experience it all! I also found out that it's extremely hard to stall a Cessna 152.

Phase 2 was circuits to first solo. I absolutely loved doing circuits, and it was even better after my first solo. It was the best feeling ever. It was very emotional (apparently Air Traffic Control could hear me crying - they were happy tears I promise) and I almost couldn't believe it. It's hard to explain the feeling of flying by yourself for the first time; I had just done something I had been dreaming of since I was so young, so it was a weird mix of pride and complete shock. My dad was watching from a viewing platform on the control tower, and he took a lot of pictures. Phase 3 was more circuits, advanced



Pictures taken of my first solo!

turning, PFLs, general handling, and solo general handling. The solo general handling was AWESOME - nothing can match the feeling of being able to fly around by yourself, practising handling the aircraft whilst also admiring the views. Leeds East is near to some disused airfields, RAF Linton-On-Ouse being one of them, so I got to fly over it a few times which I found really cool. An instructor and I even practised some precautionary landings around the airfield - we descended to about 50 feet above the ground!



My instructor and I flying at 50 feet over the disused RAF base, RAF Linton-On Ouse. My first ever flight (with cadets) was from here!

Finally, Phase 4 started with more solo general handling, then instrument flying, navigation, solo navigation, and the Qualifying Cross Country (QXC). I have to admit, I wasn't looking forward to navigation as I could never grasp it when I learnt it in cadets, but I really loved it, and got the hang of it quite quickly, and now I'm actually starting to run navigation courses for my wing! It all happened so fast, and before I knew it, I had done two landaways with my instructors and was ready to do the QXC. It took 8 days

from my last landaway and 3 cancellations (due to technical issues and weather) to finally do it. It was definitely worth the wait. I flew from Leeds East to Teesside to Gamston and back to Leeds East. It took about 4 hours in total, and it was just incredible - I got some amazing pictures too!



Photo taken at Teesside on my QXC. One of my favourite pictures!



My skills test examiner and I about 10 minutes after I passed!! Best day ever.

Alongside the flying, I had to complete 9 exams and a Flight Radiotelephony Operator's Licence (FRTOL) to complete the licence. These were probably the hardest parts of the course, leading to a fair bit of stress and many late nights of revision. Often, taking these exams was what allowed me to progress to the next stage, for example, I couldn't do any solo navigation before taking the navigation exam, so there was a lot of pressure to pass these to keep up with the very fast-paced flying.

And I can't forget to mention the feeling of actually passing the skills test on September 14th and getting my licence. My mum came into the office after I passed and, with her and my examiner's help, I applied for my licence right there and then. At the time of writing this, it has been about 4 weeks since I passed and I still really can't believe I actually have a PPL. My dream became a reality in only two months, and they will forever be two of the most memorable of my life. It was really difficult, especially the exams, but so, so worth it. I am so grateful for all the support from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, YAA, Air BP, my fabulous buddy Amy, and my family and friends. Without everyone, I could never have gotten this far so quickly. It really has been the best time of my life, and I can't wait to go back to YAA to fly more!