

Air Pilots Benevolent Fund PPL Scholarship 2023

Jack Lippiatt

Aviation has always fascinated me and I have wanted to pursue a flying career from a young age. I joined the Air Cadets at age twelve, eager to fly in a Grob Tutor. It was on a summer camp in 2018 where I had my first air experience flight at RAF Benson and absolutely loved it. It was my first time in a light aircraft and I was gutted when we had to come back to land. I was lucky enough to fly a few more times at MoD Boscombe Down before being awarded an Air Cadet Pilot Scheme scholarship, which I completed at Tayside Aviation, Dundee in the Aquilla A211 in August 2021.

The scholarship provided me 11 hours of flying training which culminated in my first solo flight. Though only a short one-circuit flight, it is a memory I will carry with me forever and came with an immense sense of achievement (and relief when I landed in one piece). The scholarship reinforced my desire to pursue a career as a pilot.

Currently, I am studying Aeronautics and Astronautics at the University of Southampton and I am a student on Southampton University Air Squadron (SUAS). It is a privilege to be able to continue my flying training alongside my degree, back in the Grob Tutor at MoD Boscombe Down where I was flying as a cadet only a few years ago. Whilst waiting for the application process I was able to build my hours reaching 19 before my PPL scholarship interview in April.



This was the second time I had applied for this scholarship. Last year I made it through to the interview stage, but unfortunately was unsuccessful. This motivated me to work harder and improve my application for this year. I was over the moon to find out I had been successful in securing one of the scholarships. It was the culmination of two years of hard work and I knew there was a lot more to come but I was eager to get started.

I chose to complete my scholarship at Freedom Aviation, based at Cotswold Airport (formally RAF Kemble) due to its proximity and their availability over the summer. I had a tight window to complete my training, just 12 weeks as I had committed to take part in a trek to Everest Base Camp to raise money for Marie Curie at the start of September. Therefore to ensure continuity, I set myself a deadline to complete my scholarship before leaving.

I completed my first flight in the PA28 on the 10th of June and walked away a bit overwhelmed as we had covered a large number of sorties, but I was determined to get my head in the books and progress to solo as soon as I could. Due to other SUAS and university commitments, it was a relatively slow start flying-wise, which allowed me to focus on the theory side of my training and get my first few exams done.



I made numerous bookings but unfortunately strong crosswinds delayed my first solo. However, we adapted and decided to move on to the navigation sorties whilst we waited. Ultimately, this worked out well and I was ready to do my first solo nav as the weather calmed down. In the space of two days, I completed my first solo in the PA28 and my first solo navigation sortie which took me from Kemble – Abergavenny – Newent – Stroud – Chedworth – Kemble.

I then began land-aways to larger airports, such as Cardiff and Oxford, which exposed me to different RT and busier airspace. Flying through Brize Norton's Zone and the Fairford MATZ built my confidence and after completing the majority of my theory exams, including my FRTOL exam, I was ready to complete my Solo Qualifying Cross Country flight. I flew from Kemble - Cardiff - Oxford (where I stopped for a snack and drink) – Kemble. It gave me a tremendous sense of pride flying over 150nm for almost two and a half hours on my own. From this point, it was a matter of brushing up my general handling before booking my mock skill test.

I was quite nervous for my mock skill test. Flying in unfamiliar airspace and having to divert through the Boscombe – Middle Wallop MATZ was a challenge but came with a great sense of achievement when my instructor said I was ready to do my actual test. I booked it for the next day as the examiner was free and spent the evening planning my route and completing all the mass and balance calculations. Fortunately, I arrived early as I was faced with a route change. I didn't let phase me though, I quickly replanned and was ready to go. Though it was an immensely stressful flight, I tried to remain calm and put all my hard work into practice. It had all paid off when I was told I had passed and was now a qualified pilot.

I would like to thank Freedom Aviation for being so accommodating and getting me through the entire syllabus in under three months. It often required juggling the program and they ensured I could fly at every opportunity that arose. I couldn't have progressed so quickly without my amazing instructors Matt Cox and Gareth Hare who were incredibly supportive and attentive throughout my training.



Most of all I would like to thank the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me the opportunity to gain my Private Pilot's Licence. This is a summer I will never forget. I look forward to making the most of being part of the company and helping future scholars. I hope this is just the start of a long flying career and I look forward to progressing further, first at university and hopefully in the RAF after I graduate.