

Matthew Beckett - Flight Instructor Certificate Scholarship 2023

This summer, I was incredibly delighted to have been awarded the prestigious Swire scholarship by the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. It was a competitive but thoroughly enjoyable process. For the second stage, in submitting my two minute video on “Teaching Threat and Error Management”, I realised only too late that I’d left some trousers hanging up in the background of my video!

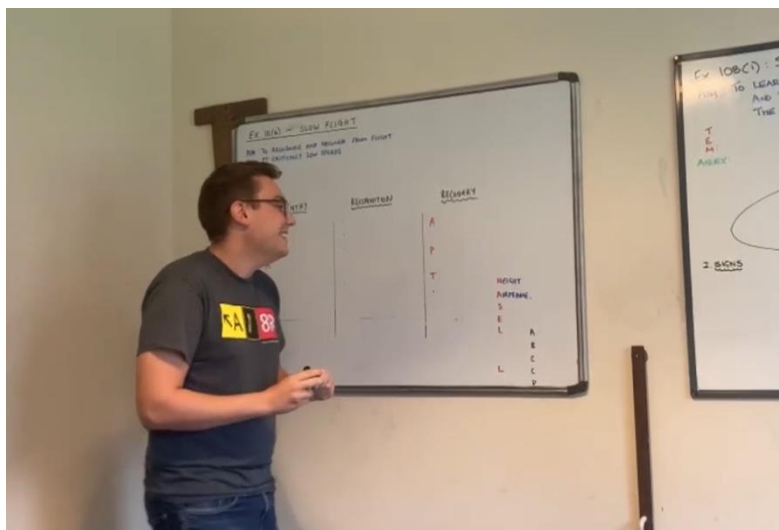
I elected to do my scholarship with Caroline and Les at Windsock Aviation, based at White Waltham airfield. They use West London Aero Club’s (WLAC) extensive PA28 fleet, meaning that aircraft were always available for training.



The course began with a Teaching and Learning week. It was fascinating learning about the different ways in which we learn, the different behaviours and personalities you can expect to see as an FI, and all the tips and tricks as to what makes a good FI. Caroline and Les have a fantastic website for FI candidates and proudly maintain a collection of resources which made the course just so accessible and structured.

In around 5 weeks, we managed to navigate around most of the bad weather and cracked through the syllabus. I was humbled and a little unnerved initially by just how tough it is at first. Discovering a good briefing style in the classroom, not saying ‘we’ so much, and flying as accurately as possible, remembering that the student you’re teaching will take your flying as the example to follow, is quite a tall order.

My accuracy soon improved and before long, I was proud to be flying comfortably and accurately whilst being able to teach the more advanced exercises effectively, and whilst having the capacity to enjoy it so much! Another great part of an FI course is having other FI candidates whom you can learn alongside, and regularly fly ‘back seat’ in their lessons and get another insight to being an FI.



Test day soon came round, and it was, I believe, the hottest day of the year. Having made the effort to dress smartly for my examiner, I was definitely glad of a cold beer after the day when he gave me the good news. The morning consisted of giving a pre-flight briefing before then flying the exercise in the air. One bit of feedback is that a lot of initial FIs talk a lot, keen to impress! But sometimes, less is more, and I found this a really great thing to take away.

Upon our return, I gave my long briefing on Gyroscopes (I had so much fun doing this, spinning chairs are a great way to visualise the effects). The day finished with a fairly extensive question set on the PPL theoretical syllabus. At this stage, I hadn't found the time to study the ATPLs around my full-time aerospace engineering job, so my initial instructing is restricted to LAPL only, but nonetheless, I passed.

Now having the ability to teach everything I love to passionate people is a dream come true. My course instructors Caroline and Les have been absolutely fantastic, and what a blast it has been – I can't recommend them highly enough.



Lastly, an enormous thank you to the Swire foundation as my sponsor and to the Honourable Company for facilitating this scholarship. Without this, I would not have had the opportunity to become a flight instructor at this stage in my life, and I could not express my gratefulness more. Thank you for recognising my aptitude and passion, and I would strongly encourage anybody who enjoys both teaching and flying to apply!

