



CAPTAIN GAVIN SHAW SCHOLARSHIP

Andrew Power

To me, flying is a glimpse of absolute freedom, a harmony of trust, precision, and curiosity. My aviation journey started on my fourteenth birthday at the Scottish Gliding Centre. I remember my first flight vividly; the euphoric experience of flight. From then onwards, my head has been turned skyward, and I feel incredibly privileged to have discovered my true passion so early.

At the start of the year, I sent in my application for the scholarship. I was then shortlisted for an interview, requiring a video about myself. After countless takes, I sent the video in. This was the stage I had not progressed past the previous year, so when the video was followed by an invitation to an interview, the news felt truly surreal.

I flew down to London from Edinburgh the night before the interview. After the flight, I was able to talk to the pilots, who shared stories about their careers and some invaluable advice for myself; it definitely did calm the nerves for the following day. Everyone in the air pilots' house was extremely welcoming, and I thoroughly enjoyed the day. It was great to meet so many like-minded individuals.

The next day, during my lunch break at school, I received the call telling me that I had been awarded the scholarship. This was one of the proudest moments of my life - the culmination of hard work and perseverance was paying off.

After passing my Class 2 medical, I had my first flight on the 18th of July at Leading Edge Flight School, flying from Glasgow and Cumbernauld airfield in the PA38-112. Each

location provided two different airspace types, meaning unique challenges and opportunities which helped make the course a well-rounded learning experience. My gliding knowledge was invaluable for the course; many of the first few lessons felt instinctive and were covered quickly. It did serve as a good opportunity to learn the differences between gliders and powered aircraft, such as using the carburettor heat and thinking about the engine management.



Flying out of an international airport was an incredible experience. A memorable moment was landing ahead of an A380; a small but thriving glimpse into professional aviation which I aspire to join.

Next came circuit work. I was familiar with circuits through my gliding, although there were many subtle differences. Powered circuits lessons are much more demanding, due to the ability to complete multiple circuits in one flight rather than waiting for the next launch between each flight. At the start these flights felt intense and required attention to detail and focus throughout.

In my opinion, flying is about developing clear visual pictures and understanding each aircraft's individual characteristics, so that is what I focused heavily on in these lessons. I recall feeling much higher on landing than in a glider. It was intriguing that fundamentally aviation is the same throughout, although each different aircraft type can have so much individuality.

Next, I was sent solo. Taking off on my own again, although this time in a completely different way. It was every bit as special as my earlier gliding solos. Being entrusted with command of a powered aircraft and being able to fly independently was a proud moment for me. I had long aspired for this moment, and reaching this milestone after so much hard work and dedication made it all the more special.

After my solo, the focus shifted to navigation. This was the part of the course I enjoyed the most. Seeing Scotland's landscapes unfold beneath me in a way few get to experience was unforgettable. A sunset flight to St Andrews stands out in particular. It was a breathtaking reminder of why being a pilot is one of the most freeing and rewarding careers a person can pursue. The training started with navigation flights to overhead different areas, learning that precision and accuracy in flying is essential, although understanding the importance of being flexible as a pilot and understanding how to adapt if it goes wrong.



Then it was time for the stage I anticipated the most, the Qualifying Cross Country. I flew from Cumbernauld to Prestwick, Prestwick to Dundee, and Dundee back to Prestwick. Being able to fly to such large airports as part of this flight was truly special and a big confidence

booster. This flight especially taught me resilience. A few unsuccessful attempts the days before due to weather and numerous flights planned to try to optimise the route, for the days' ever-changing weather, showed me the importance of resilience and to find value in every experience, even when the outcome was not what was expected. Being able to fly past Portmoak airfield (where I used to glide from) was a huge milestone. It was a proud moment to see how I was continuing the passion I began there at fourteen and a reminder of how fortunate I am to receive such a generous award.



Following the Qualifying Cross Country, my focus turned to the skills test. I was treated to several gin-clear days after some typical Scottish weather. The mock test offered as a good opportunity to revisit some of the exercises and refine my skills. Having a different instructor critique my flying was invaluable; the feedback helped me iron out any issues and further develop my skills as a pilot. Humility is essential in aviation; I have been told a pilot cannot have an ego when it comes to criticism and I now appreciate this more than ever.

After a successful mock test, it was time for the actual test. As any pilot knows, preparation is key, so trying to put this into practice I made sure everything was ready for the examiner's arrival at the airfield, including all the mass and balance, take-off and landing performance calculations. This helped hugely as it started the exam on the right note.

The route took us from Glasgow to New Cumnock, onwards to Ballantrae, and finally Prestwick, where I completed the required circuits. This area was relatively new to me, having only flown into Prestwick once before from Cumbernauld. I quickly realised that being adaptable and able to plan for unfamiliar areas was a key skill for a pilot. The ability to trust in my training and preparation allowed me to meet the challenge confidently. During my general handling and practice field landings near Ballantrae, I was treated with an incredible view; flying over the ocean and even glimpsing Northern Ireland in the distance was a unique opportunity.

Flying back into Glasgow was a bittersweet moment. I did not know the result of the test yet, but I knew this would be my final time flying back into Glasgow for a while, as I was due to start university down south a week later. After landing, a few more oral exam questions followed, then I was told I had passed my skills test; the feeling was indescribable. I achieved the next step towards my dream of becoming a professional pilot, continuing the passion I found through gliding.

This scholarship taught me so much - not only on the flying side but also about myself. It provided me with a community of like-minded individuals and lessons that extend far beyond the cockpit. Communication is key for this scholarship; liaising with instructors, operations managers, and examiners, all while managing a busy schedule, requires self-discipline and clear organisation. You learn how to manage your time, as the scholarship is busy. A key bit of advice would be to focus on the exams as these can make you fall behind easily and are equally important to the completion of the scholarship as the flying; also have a good plan and start early. This scholarship taught me how to stay calm under pressure and take

responsibility, a vital part of being a pilot and growing up. At 18, the scholarship helped me mature; it provided skills transferable to the cockpit but also skills that are invaluable to life outside of flying.

To anyone considering applying to the scholarship, my advice is simple: do it. I know I will be thinking back to the past summer as one of the fondest memories of my teenage years. Make a plan and stick to it and remember to enjoy every moment. Every late-night studying, every hour of flying, and the moments you have to pinch yourself as you experience the scenery like few others will ever have the chance to.

I am now at Durham University studying economics, a bit unconventional from the usual start of an aviation career; although I will continue flying through university, hopefully flying the tug for my gliding club. Once I graduate, I plan on fully focusing on achieving my dream of becoming a commercial airline pilot.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. The support, dedication, and encouragement from the team made all this possible. I am especially grateful to Captain Gavin Shaw for his generosity and inspiration. Being able to get to know Mr Shaw has been a delight. Hearing about a fascinating career and his passion for giving back to aviation has motivated me to do the same. Thank you to Leading Edge Flight School, to my instructors Matthew and Izzy, for providing a fun and interesting training environment, I hope to be flying alongside them again soon. I would also like to thank Ben ,in operations, who was always on hand to help and kept everything running seamlessly. Many thanks to Freddie Bull, who mentored me through the application and interview process. To Will Cooper, my mentor for the scholarship, the effort, interest, and guidance you provided was invaluable throughout my scholarship.

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