

Air Pilots Trust PPL Scholarship – Thomas Laidlar

This summer, I have greatly enjoyed learning a new skill. I find that gaining competency in any difficult task is a highly rewarding process and in no other setting have I revelled in that challenge to quite the extent this scholarship has offered. The range of new knowledge I have acquired, be it meteorological, aerodynamic, or even legal, has been huge. I feel this opportunity has opened my eyes to the sheer depth of the aviation industry, and even if I now am certain that I have more to learn, at least I am now considerably more aware of what I don't know.



The results of my Bristol Trip

bookings, and helping me schedule lessons in advance. My flight training was conducted on a Cessna-152, which I found to be a brilliant aircraft to learn on. (It's almost like it was designed for it ?!) The downward visibility helped enormously with visual navigation later in the course, which was handy, as the aircraft featured no Nav-Aids of any kind! As such, I've become fairly good at feature crawling.

Having completed around 7 hours of flying with my University Air Squadron before starting the Scholarship, I was able to launch straight into the late general handling phase of training and was solo within 16 days of starting at Oxford! I kept up this

This year was my second attempt applying for this PPL Scholarship. Despite being unsuccessful the first time around, I still gained useful experience of an interview process, and I feel certain this helped me for my application this year. However, this year was by no means without stress. I found out after my interview that I was the first reserve in case a spot opened, so when I was called by the office a month later, and told that a new sponsor had been found, I could not have been more thrilled. It was easily the best surprise news I have ever received.

I completed my flying with Pilot Flight Training, based at Oxford Kidlington Airport. Despite largely being a decision based on proximity to my home address, this turned out well. The school have been nothing but helpful this summer, from getting me introduced to the flight booking and exam system early on, to remaining flexible with



Land Away at Blackbushe



First Solo!

rapid pace nicely for the next few weeks, as I started my Navigation training, which is where I really enjoyed myself. Keeping a course using only a compass, map, and stopwatch gave me a feeling of freedom I've yet to find elsewhere. My QXC came and went without incident, featuring landings at both Gloucester and Peterborough. A word of warning; copy down the taxi instructions at Gloucester. They are complicated. Post QXC, I had yet to complete 10 more hours of flying to reach the necessary forty-five before I could test. Therefore, I now had ample time to engage in fun solo side-missions, including a transit of Bristol's Zone, a landing at Blackbushe Airfield, and the obligatory 'sector recce' over my house.

The skills test took only two and a half hours, and just like that, I was a pilot!

The opportunities now opened to me by this scholarship are exceptional. I have improved my knowledge of aeronautical concepts, practised general handling, and gained more awareness of airmanship principles. No matter the flying career I now aim for, I can be sure I am better prepared for it.

My thanks go out to Pilot Flight Training for taking me on, and to my instructors; Oscar, Alex, George, Adrian, Ronnie, Kosta, James, Mehran, and Dave. You have all been insanely committed, and each taught me valuable lessons and perspectives.

Of course, I am also deeply indebted to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. This has been quite the summer, and I've felt nothing but lucky to be chosen, and supported by the amazing team who administrate the scholarship. Finally, I must also thank my assigned 'buddy' Freddie, who has been calling and messaging me remarkably often to make sure I am progressing well, and to offer useful advice.



Post Solo Consolidation in Fine Weather