

## **PILOT INFORMATION PACK**

- The Path to a “Frozen” Airline Transport Pilot’s Licence (ATPL)
- The Typical Pilot Career Path
- Sources of Funding
- Becoming a Military Pilot
- My Contact Details

*This guide is one of a series intended to illustrate the experiences of ASP’s Ambassadors across the six areas of aviation. By their nature, they can often offer personal opinions which may not necessarily reflect that of ASP and its Partners.*

## **THE PATH TO A “FROZEN” AIRLINE TRANSPORT PILOT’S LICENCE (ATPL)**

In order to become an airline pilot, one must first obtain an Airline Transport Pilot’s Licence (ATPL). For various reasons, airline pilot/flight school graduates will earn what is known as a “frozen” ATPL; I ask that the you accept that this is the licence name, because explaining why the licence is referred to as “frozen” takes a little time to explain, and, as will be seen in this information pack, there is a lot of information to cover. This information pack is intended to be what the Americans call a primer, i.e. a little something to get you started; further information will be required, and, to that end, my contact details can be found on page 20 of this information pack.

The steps to take are as follows (**PLAY THE LONG GAME**):

- Consider sitting the pilot aptitude tests hosted by the Honourable Company of Air Pilots.
- Obtain an EASA (**NOT** FAA (i.e. American)) Class One medical certificate from the Civil Aviation Authority at Gatwick.

### **PLEASE DO THIS BEFORE YOU INVEST ANY MONEY, HOPE OR EMOTIONS IN FLIGHT TRAINING.**

- Choose a flight school. Look for “ab-initio frozen ATPL courses”, if you have the means to do the course full time, a.k.a. residentially; this is called the *integrated path*, although it is possible to follow the modular path (see below) as a full-time course as well.
- If you don’t have the means to attend full time, then don’t worry! Most people don’t, so they follow the *modular path*. This involves step-by-step training, over a long period of time, covering each module of frozen ATPL training one at a time, while being in full-time work, which will pay for the training as one goes along with, for example, one flying lesson a week. The integrated path involves mixing the theoretical training in with flight training. On the whole, the airlines don’t mind which of the two paths an individual takes; you will graduate with the same licence, the frozen ATPL, at the end of it all, and all of the same modules are covered, as listed below in both paths. The modular path usually takes longer, but, again, the airlines don’t mind that.

The modules involved in the training are as follows, and are usually completed in the following order:

- Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) training and flight test
- Hour-building to 150 hours' total flight time. This includes your PPL training and testing, and can also include further training courses, such as:
  - Night Rating;
  - Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC) Rating, also known as the Instrument Rating (Restricted) or IR(R);
  - Aerobatics Rating;
  - Glider tug towing (if you've reached at least first solo standard on gliders);
  - Flying friends and family on pleasure flights. The unwritten rule is that, if you offer to take people flying, then you should cover the cost of the flight; however, if people ask you to take them flying, then you can ask them to split the cost of the flight equally with you.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CAN ANYBODY FLY FOR FINANCIAL REMUNERATION/PROFIT AS A PPL HOLDER (E.G. EMILIANO SALA'S PILOT)**

- ATPL theoretical knowledge exams (14 subjects). These can be studied for via distance learning (with, e.g., Bristol or Oxford). Groundschools) while in full-time work. Again, the airlines don't mind if you obtain your ATPL exam passes via this route.
- Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL) training and flight test.
- Conversion to complex aircraft training and flight test. A "complex" aircraft is one that has wheels which go up and down, and a propeller that is more complicated in its purpose, design, and construction (a "variable pitch" propeller) than the "fixed pitch" propellers that you would have dealt with up to this point. Students will do this course, usually, on a twin-engine aircraft; this will allow them to obtain their Multi-Engine Piston rating at the same time. This particular phase of training may be done at a different point than that listed here, but this is the normal time to do it, on the whole.
- Multi-Engine Piston Instrument Rating (MEP-IR) training and flight test.
- Multi-Crew Co-operation (MCC, a.k.a. Crew Resource Management/CRM) course; this is conducted in a classroom initially, and then in an airliner simulator. There's no test/exam. Completion of this course marks the end of your training!

- When choosing a school, try, wherever possible, to select one that does not train airline-sponsored cadets; it's not unknown for self-sponsored students to be treated as second-class citizens in such establishments, i.e. the airline-sponsored cadets are sometimes prioritised over the self-sponsored ones.

**NEVER, EVER, PAY UP FRONT FOR FLIGHT TRAINING, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

If a school suggests that you do so, or even pressurises you to do so, it's usually a sign that it's in financial trouble; sometimes, discounts (usually 10% of the cost of the course) can be offered as a temptation to induce a student to pay the whole course up front; please resist any temptation to do so, and pay as you go. If the school goes bust, you stand to lose all of your money, and you won't be able to get it back; if you took out a bank loan, the bank will (usually) not give you a second loan, and will still expect the lost money to be repaid under the agreed terms and conditions. Having said all of this, it is not unreasonable for a school to ask you to pay for a trial lesson upfront, given that such a lesson is, most commonly, given as a gift for someone's birthday or Christmas present.

## **THE TYPICAL PILOT CAREER PATH**

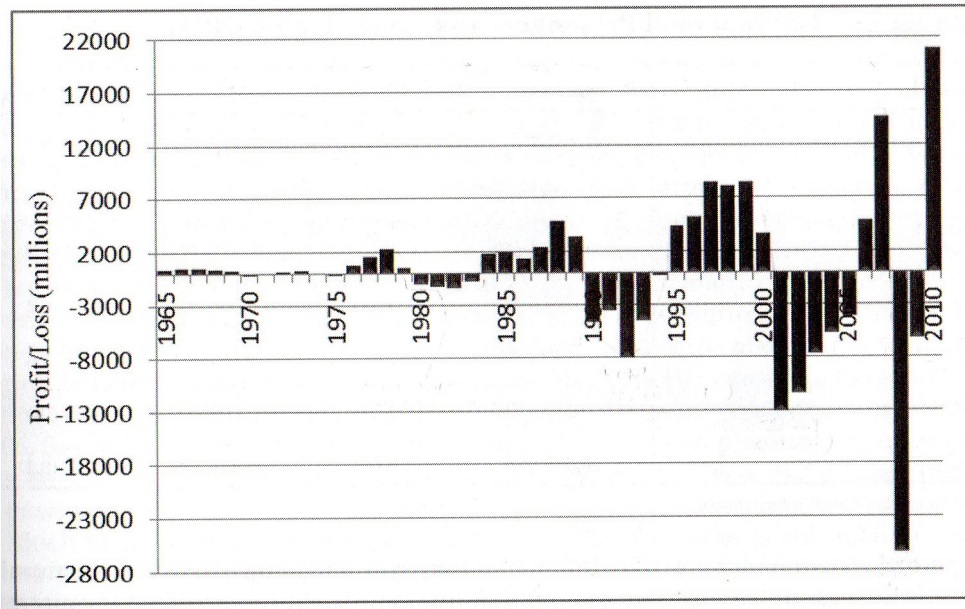
- **Once you start your CPL training, start sending your CV and covering letter out to the airlines, and anyone else that might offer you flying work (see below);**
- **Graduate with your frozen ATPL;**

**UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR FIRST COMMERCIAL JOB MAY NOT BE WITH AN AIRLINE!**

- Keep a close eye upon the economic circumstances of the times in which you are at flight school; the health of a country's/region's airline industry is linked directly to, and follows precisely, that country's/region's Gross Domestic Product. If your country (e.g. the UK) and/or the region that your country is in (e.g. Europe) is in economic stagnation (e.g. the Great Recession, which afflicted the U.K. and Europe from 2008-2014), then, as a general rule, the airline industry of your country and/or the region in which it lies will be affected, and will be in stagnation/belt-tightening mode; in other words, they will not be recruiting pilots, or pilot recruitment will be much reduced.



Be aware also of events which may affect the airline industry, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks (which caused the worst downturn in aviation history until the Great Recession), as seen in Figure One:



**Figure One:** World airline operating profits, 1965 to 2010, from *Introduction to Air Transport Economics: From Theory to Applications* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2013, page 3) by B. Vasigh, K. Fleming, and T. Tucker

Other factors may affect regional airline economics as well, such as the SARS epidemic in South-East Asia, November 2002 until July 2003.

- Even if the airlines are recruiting widely (as they may well be; the effects of the post-9/11 downturn and the Great Recession upon aviation were freak circumstances), please understand that pilot recruitment is always a competitive, closely-fought process, so it may be a while before airlines start offering you interviews. This is not a problem! It's the normal way of things.

Bearing all of this in mind, **the next step in your job-hunting should be...**

- **...applying for jobs in what is known as the GA (General Aviation, i.e. non-airline and non military) worlds.** Such jobs include, but are not limited to:
  - Flying instructing (for which a Flying Instructor's rating would need to be obtained);

- Glider towing (if you've flown gliders, and have attained at least first solo standard); a Sailplane Towing rating will need to be obtained;
  - Banner towing;
  - Parachute-dropping;
  - Aerial photography;
  - Flying radio station traffic reporters around big cities so that they can report on traffic conditions;
  - Aerial survey work (e.g. overland oil pipelines);
  - Flying corporate (private) jets;
  - Air taxi work.
- **While keeping an eye out for opportunities in these worlds, apply also for jobs with regional airlines and Low Cost Carriers (LCCs).**

Regional (a.k.a. commuter) airlines are small airlines that fly regional jet and turboprop airliners on, primarily, domestic routes and to nearby destinations in Western Europe. These aircraft represent the natural step-up from the multi-engine piston aircraft that you'll have finished your frozen ATPL training on, at the Instrument Rating training and testing phases. Such aircraft include the ATR42/72, SAAB 2000, Jetstream 41, Embraer ERJ135/145, Dash 8-Q400, ERJ170; such airlines include Flybe, Eastern, Blue Islands, and Loganair, to name but a few.

LCCs are airlines such as Ryanair (who operate the Boeing 737), and Easyjet. They have had a habit of recruiting flight school graduates in times past, because their low flying hours (usually 190-250 upon graduating from flight school) mean that they will be at the bottom of that airline's pay scale for a while; airlines often pay co-pilots on a scale, whereby the fewer flying hours a co-pilot (a.k.a. first officer) has, the less they have to be paid.

The regional and LCC airlines are the most likely first recruiters of flight school graduates; you should focus your job-hunting efforts on them, while simultaneously searching for, or being employed by, pilot recruiters in the GA world.

- **Once some experience has been gained with the regional and/or LCC airlines, you will then be in a position to apply to the big, long-haul airlines like British Airways, Emirates, Virgin Atlantic, etc.,** should that be your aim. Exactly how much “...some experience...” comprises will depend upon the luck of the draw, but, as a rule of thumb, expect it to be at least 6 months of line flying, at the very least. Please understand that applying to the big airlines, without the experience mentioned, will, most likely, be a waste of your time and money; *they generally will not consider applications from those without regional, LCC, or military experience.* **You will not be the one who breaks the mould.**
- In 2005, I was asked to write a job-hunting guide for flight school graduates, having been job-hunting since September 2001; I managed to become a flying instructor in July 2002, and, for three and a half years, I was job-hunting against the backdrop of the post-9/11 downturn in the global airline industry while acting as deputy chief flying instructor of a flying school in East Anglia, UK. The request to write the guide was made by both the British Airline Pilots’ Association and the Independent Pilots’ Association, with whose Careers Officers I had been in regular contact with since I graduated from flight school on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2001, 10 days before the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and with whom a close rapport had been generated. Although a few books existed at the time whose purpose was to offer job-hunting guidance for pilots, I found that they were aimed wholly at experienced pilots looking to make the step up from the regional and LCC airlines to the big, major airlines; there was no literature anywhere to aid and guide flight school graduates. It is my understanding that flight school graduates are still left to fend for themselves once they graduate, although some schools do offer some help; it was this way when I graduated, and most flight school graduates with whom I’ve spoken in times past have told me that that was their experience as well. In mid-2005 I ended up writing a 30 page primer for flight school graduates, as a means of getting them started, and to pass on the lessons learned from my own experiences. It covers a lot, too much to include here, but I can send an emailed copy of it to you when you yourself graduate with your frozen ATPL in the times to come. Until then, though, please understand that, as someone with a frozen ATPL and a lot of hopes and dreams, you are very much at the bottom of a big pile, and will remain there for a while depending on the luck of the draw that you experience on your career path. Therefore:
- **WHEN YOU GRADUATE, YOU WILL BE A BEGGAR;**
- **BEGGARS CAN’T BE CHOOSERS;**

- **TAKE WHATEVER YOU CAN GET, WHEREVER YOU CAN GET IT, EVEN IF IT'S POORLY PAID OR UNPAID, FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, OR AD HOC.**
- **You will probably have had to have had a job in another industry to fund your flight training (see next section); be prepared to go back to that line of work when you graduate while you're looking around for, or working part-time for, your first employer.**

## **SOURCES OF FUNDING**

This is, by a country mile, the biggest sticking point when it comes to pilot training. Many people are deterred by the sometimes eye-watering figures that are quoted, anywhere from £75,000 to £130,000 at one particular school. When given a quote, always remember that accommodation and food, plus all other expenses involved in the logistics of a life will need to be considered, so ensure that your quote includes those costs as well.

However, please understand that these costs are usually those quoted by the big schools for those following the full-time (a.k.a. residential), usually integrated courses, which take two years to complete from start to finish.

**By far the more common of the two course types taken by aspiring airline pilots is the modular route**, whereby one has a “normal” job for some years, and uses this job to fund their training from the beginning of the PPL, all the way up to the achievement of their 150<sup>th</sup> flying hour, as listed in the first section. You can then remain in that job while you study for the ATPL theoretical knowledge exams via distance learning, as previously discussed. Once you have the 14 exams passed, you can then go to a bank and ask for a loan for your CPL, MEP-IR, and MCC training, to finish off. These three modules have to be sat full-time, but, by now, the vast bulk of the eye-watering amount of money quoted will have been paid for already by your previous career.

I have compiled a list of the jobs that all of my students, and as many commercial/airline pilots as I can remember, held before their careers as professional pilots began. These jobs funded the modules up to and including the theoretical knowledge and distance learning; thereafter, the people concerned were able to obtain bank loans for the final three modules, which would then have to start to be paid off in monthly instalments 6 months after graduation from flight school. The careers of my students, and as many previous careers as could be remembered of those professional pilots with whom I have spoken, are listed below, out of interest, to give you, an aspiring

professional pilot, ideas as to how to fund your dream job. Your close family members, friends, and your partner (if applicable) may also read this; my intention is to generate ideas in their minds as well, because they may see possibilities that you may well not see.

**Let's start with me.** Upon graduating from university in 1996, I secured a job as a labourer at a grainseed factory for 6 weeks during the harvest, hauling bags of grain around and loading them onto pallets or into containers. This was a 6-day-a-week job, starting at 0600 in the morning and then finishing at 1900 in the evening; although I have always been a fitness fanatic, such a working week left me in no physical state to go out and spend money partying.

During the 6 weeks of this job, I was living with my parents, and, therefore, had no outgoings related to food and accommodation.

Once the grainseed factory job finished at the end of the 1996 harvest, I went immediately into a two-year-long position as an assistant schoolmaster at my old school, following that school phoning me out of the blue to see if I fancied the job. It lasted for two years; being a boarding school, I was on duty 7 days a week; accommodation and food were provided, so, again, I had no outgoings.

Once this job ended, I then spent 6 months working as, predominantly, a receptionist, but also as a barman and waiter, in a country hotel and restaurant. As with the grainseed job, I was back living with my parents again, and so had no outgoings; the weekends were the busiest times, so, although all staff had 2 days off a week, they never fell on the weekends, because, with wedding functions to stage every Friday and Saturday, and Christmas and New Year functions to stage most nights for the first three months (up to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999), it was all hands on deck; my social life was non-existent during this 6 months, so, again, all pay went into the flying fund.

I was, therefore, able to save a lot of money over those two years and nearly 8 months to put towards my flight training. I also had savings from an inheritance, which, when combined with the money saved as a labourer, assistant schoolmaster, and receptionist/barman/waiter, provided the funding for my training.

The list of my pilot acquaintances' pre-pilot careers, where known and remembered, now follows, in no particular order or importance. It does not include anybody who obtained their pilot's licence having served as a military pilot, because all of their military and conversion-to-civilian training was paid for by HM The Queen; I want to make a point to the reader that the modular route is the normal, but, above all, *viable*, route.

**Airline pilots with whom I have flown while in airline service:**

Agricultural engineer  
Office worker for Sea Link Ferries  
Glass blower, making beakers, test tubes, etc. for NHS hospitals  
Truck driver  
Marine engineer (oil and gas industry)  
Music amplifier maker and aerial photographer  
Royal Marine musician and stretcher bearer  
Builder  
Policeman  
Pharmacist (who continued to run his pharmacy until he retired, employing assistants to do so)  
British Airways aircraft mechanic/engineer (**note: one can train to be an aircraft mechanic/engineer at the International Aviation Academy in Norwich, and then, over time, use your job as a mechanic/engineer to fund the bulk of your flight training... ;-)**)  
Cabin attendant, Monarch airlines  
Two air traffic controllers  
Maritime and Coastguard Operations Monitoring Officer, RAF Nimrod fleet  
Royal Navy Observer (i.e. flight navigator)  
Jockey and horse trainer  
Nightclub doorman  
Royal Marine Commando  
Airport baggage handler (among other things)  
Farmer  
Fireman  
Events organiser  
Engineer/mechanic, Luftwaffe

**Some of my classmates at airline pilot school:**

- Carpenter and brick layer from Macclesfield, who left school at 16 with 5 O levels; worked on building sites for 20 years to fund his flight training; started flying at age 36; **having been a flying instructor, is now a Captain with FlyDubai on the Boeing 737-800;**
- North Sea Oil and Gas Industry engineer from the Shetland Islands; **is now Chief Pilot for Direct Flight, flying the Britten-Norman Islander around the Scottish Highlands and Islands;**
- Farm hand, bank clerk and accountant from Dublin; **is now a Captain with Loganair on the SAAB 340;**



- Fishmonger from Guernsey; **is now a Captain with Aurigny Air Services on the ATR42/72;**
- British Airways mechanic/engineer; **is now a Captain on the Boeing 747 with CargoLogic Air;**
- Bomb disposal expert (the highest-paid job in the British Army); **is now a pilot for Titan Airways.**

**My students, flown with while I was a full-time flying instructor in the post-9/11 world**

Student/life guard/worker at Aviva  
 Managing Director of an organic produce company, and consultant in that field  
 Shiatsu practitioner and teacher; jazz saxophonist  
 University student on an R.A.F. flying scholarship  
 Wind-surfing instructor, about to commence pilot training at R.A.F. Cranwell  
 Haulage contractor and lorry driver  
 Engineer  
 Armed response police officer  
 Company director  
 Health care assistant  
 University tutor and designer, AppleMac computers  
 Director of a company specialising in fire alarms and extinguishing systems  
 Co-director of a herb and vegetable importing and distributing company  
 Retired R.A.F. Electronic Warfare Officer  
 Chef and restaurateur  
 Electronic components assembler  
 Ex-infantryman, UK Armed Forces; kitchen installer  
 Dispatch officer and Air Traffic Information Officer, CHC Helicopters  
 Electrical engineer  
 Laser technician  
 Publican  
 Librarian  
 Nightclub manager and computer designer  
 Harley Street surgeon  
 Energy company rep  
 Health Inspector, meat and poultry  
 Allocation engineer  
 Company manager, bathroom supplies  
 Bus company director and driver  
 Retired electrical engineer  
 Sales manager, leisure and tourism  
 Trainee chartered surveyor/photographer

Retired R.A.F. air traffic controller, Berlin Airlift  
 Sign printer and manufacturer; **is now a captain on the Global Express corporate jet, VistaJet**  
 Mental health nurse  
 Retail manager, Tesco's; **having been a flying instructor, is now a co-pilot with Loganair on the Embraer ERJ135/145**  
 Radiographer, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital  
 Police officer  
 Company co-director and author of Aga cookbooks  
 Company director  
 Ex-electrician; cabin attendant, KLM Cityhopper; **is now a training Captain on the Boeing 737 with Jet2**  
 Sales and Marketing specialist for building insulation, and Chairman of the Board of Governors of a secondary school  
 Barrister  
 Airport fireman  
 Company co-director, lumber business  
 Bus company director and driver  
 Marine engineer  
 Technical manager, heating engineering firm  
 Publican  
 GP  
 Bus driver  
 Computer engineer  
 Cellist and cello teacher of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra  
 Aerospace engineer (airships)  
 Trainee chartered accountant  
 Radio station technician  
 Agency care nurse and assistant  
 Lorry driver and drayman  
 Consultant anaesthetist  
 Driving instructor  
 Marine research scientist  
 Lorry driver  
 Company director, radio communications  
 IT contractor  
 Company secretary  
 Warehouse and storage facilities owner/manager  
 Retired estate agent  
 Builder; director/owner of a CCTV company  
 Retired R.A.F. engineer and technician, Red Arrows maintenance team  
 Floor layer  
 Director in charge of business mergers and acquisitions  
 Geriatric care specialist  
 Company director, garden centre  
 Manager, Aviva



Martial arts instructor, champion in both karate and kick-boxing  
Marine co-ordinator, offshore platforms  
Housing allocation manager  
Heating engineer  
Boiler engineer and plumber  
Double glazing and window salesman

I assume that you are probably crying out for mercy by now; however, hopefully the point has been made that “normal” jobs can fund flight training, over the period of some years.

### **Further tricks and tips re: funding**

- Contact the big schools to see if they can advise on funding. For example, Oxford Air Training used to have a system whereby those who they accepted onto their full-time, residential courses were given a letter confirming this, which, when presented to the local branch of HSBC, would secure the loan for the funding. I don't know if this is still the case, but it can be looked into nonetheless; I would welcome any feedback that you can offer me as a result of your own experiences, given that this section of this information pack is a work in progress. **People do not welcome questions about their finances, on the whole, so it may take a while before people are willing to talk to me about their circumstances.**
- Look into applying for airline sponsorship schemes, such as the British Airways Future Pilot Programme. These have become few on the ground these days, as a result of belt-tightening during the Great Recession (among other reasons), but they offer considerable – sometimes complete – funding of your frozen ATPL training. As such, they are ferociously competitive; however, no-one is born with an airline uniform on, so there is no reason why ***you*** shouldn't get such a sponsorship. You must be in it to win it, and you can always keep trying, time after time, if you are unsuccessful; it's not a case of “one strike and you're out”. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Keep on going. Please understand that you can apply for sponsorships etc. even after one has commenced flight training.
- There is a multitude of flying scholarships and bursaries available which offer part-funding of some of the frozen ATPL training; these modules are listed in Figure Two below, in the most complete and up-to-date list of such scholarships and bursaries available in the UK at the time of writing (June 2019). They offer some relief of the financial burden of flight training; something is better than nothing, after all. Apply to all that you can apply to, and, if you don't succeed, try again



the next time; don't give up; keep on going. The scholarships and bursaries listed below can be Googled by you and those who surround you for further information; also, I have literature pertaining to some of the scholarships listed, if you would like to see it (my contact details can be found on page 20 of this information pack).



**2019**  
**Where to Apply Guide**  
**quick reference guide**

	Fixed Wing Basic	Fixed Wing Advance	Helicopter	Gliding	Airsports	Air Experience	
Aerobility		•				•	www.aerobility.com
Air Cadets	•	•	•	•	•	•	www.aircadets.org
Air League Flying Scholarships	•	•		•			www.airleague.co.uk/scholarships
Bristol and Gloucester Gliding Club				•			www.bggc.co.uk
British Gliding Association				•			www.gliding.co.uk
BMAA Young Persons Flight Training Bursary	•						www.bmaa.org
British Womens Pilot Association	•	•				•	www.bwpa.co.uk
Cotswold Airport Aviation Scholarship	•					•	www.cotswoldairport.com/kemble-airport-aviation-scholarships
de Havilland Educational Trust		•				•	http://www.dehavillandeducationaltrust.co.uk/
Fly 2 Help						•	www.fly2help.org
Flying Scholarships for Disabled People	•					•	www.fsdp.org.uk
Girls Venture Air Cadet	•	•				•	www.gvac.org.uk
Helicentre Aviation Academy Professional Helicopter Scholarships			•				www.helicopterscholarships.com
Heli Air Helicopter Pilots Scholarships Programme			•				www.helair.com/pilot-scholarships/
Helping Wings Jersey						•	www.helpingwingsjersey.org
Honourable Company of Air Pilots'	•	•		•			www.airpilots.org
Light Aircraft Association Foundation Scholarship	•	•					www.lightaircraftassociation.co.uk
Man Sat						•	www.mansat.org
The Mike Langley Foundation		•					www.mikelangleyfoundation.org
Nick Davidson Memorial Scholarship	•						www.bigginhillairport.com
Royal Aero Club Trust	•	•	•	•	•	•	www.royalaeroclubtrust.org/bursaries
Royal Aeronautical Society Centennial Scholarship Fund	•						www.aerosociety.com
RAF Association Flying Scholarship	•						www.rafa.org.uk/What-we-do/Air-Cadets/ Flying-scholarships
Royal Navy Gliding Scholarships			•				www.fleeaiarmona.org/ faaoa-gliding-aviation-scholarships
The Scouts				•		•	www.scouts.org
Strathaven Young Persons Bursary	•						www.strathavenairfield.co.uk
Take Off Scholarship	•					•	www.take-off.org
Ultimate Aerobatics		•					www.ultimateaerobatics.co.uk
University Air Squadron	•					•	www.universityairsquadrons.com
Upward Bound Trust Gliding Club			•				www.ubt.org.uk
Vintage Aircraft Club's Liz Inwood Scholarship		•					www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk

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**Figure Two:** Flying scholarships and bursaries available in the UK, 2019 (from May 2019 issue of *Flight Training News*, page 18)



- Remember that funding doesn't necessarily have to come from just one source; scholarships and bursaries (if you're fortunate), plus a full-time job, plus some savings (if you have any) is but one potential mix of funding sources, although there can be many according to your circumstances, both as they stand now and also as they evolve during the times to come.
- The International Aviation Academy – Norwich is finalising an arrangement with Middlesex University and Tayside Aviation in Dundee regarding providing a Professional Pilot Studies degree course, which will result in candidates graduating with not just a degree, but also a frozen ATPL. Because of the degree aspect, candidates on this course will be able to claim the standard student grant of £27,000 (over three years) to put towards their flight training. Karen Patterson and Jo Derby at the Academy can offer more information on this course.
- If your circumstances allow – either now or in the future – then consider becoming what the Americans call a “hangar rat”. Flying schools often need help in non-flying roles, such as running reception, answering the phone and taking messages, secretarial duties, cleaning aircraft (both inside and out), to name but a few, and the instructors are (if fortune looks upon a school favourably) usually too busy with their instructional duties to attend to these matters themselves. To enlist someone to do these things will require any school to add another person to their payroll.

You will find that it's worth approaching any flying schools local to you, and asking if they need any help with such duties. I have now worked for two flying schools which offered their hangar rats a free flying hour for every 7 days that the rat worked at the school, a “day” usually being defined as 0900 to 1700. The rat will receive no payment, but will be rewarded with a free flying hour instead, under the terms described. If accepted, this will alleviate the financial burden of the PPL etc., up to 150 hours' total time, that must be met.

Please understand that you may have your offer to work for free received with open arms, but that your request to be rewarded instead with a free flying hour may not be greeted with the same warmth by the flying school concerned. Such are the sand dunes of our lives on which we walk. However, the sands of time change constantly, and what is true on one day may not remain true in the times to come; if a flying school accepts the reader's offer of volunteering to help out, but isn't keen initially to reward the reader with a free flying hour, as described, then please do consider helping out anyway. Once the school gets to know you, and/or if the school's fortunes change, then the circumstances may change too, to your advantage. Then again, they

may not. You will have to be the judge of whether or not the arrangement/s with which you are presented will work in your favour or not. However, please be aware that hangar rats do exist, and need not be considered pests.

## **BECOMING A MILITARY PILOT**

In 1999, I passed the UK Armed Forces (UKAF) pilot aptitude tests at RAF Cranwell, and then went on to pass the Royal Navy Admiralty Interview Board (i.e. officer selection procedure) at HMS Sultan at Gosport in Hampshire. A cruel twist of fate meant that my ambition of becoming a Royal Navy fighter pilot went unfulfilled, but I did at least have some insight into the UKAF pilot selection process, and the passing of the aptitude tests and the officer selections have been a proud point of discussion on my CV ever since.

Although the International Aviation Academy – Norwich doesn't offer military training, I've included the following advice which has been gleaned from my own experiences in 1999, should you be considering a career as a military pilot as a precursor to becoming an airline pilot. Because considerable time has now elapsed since I went through the UKAF selection procedure, I ask that you discuss the following with the appropriate UKAF representative when you make your first visit to your local UKAF Careers Office, as suggested below; if it turns out that anything has changed significantly since 1999, I ask that you contact me ASAP (my contact details are on page 20 of this information pack), so that the necessary corrections to the text can be made.

- Visit your optician for an eye check, especially re: colour blindness. All three branches of UKAF will reject any application for pilot training from those who wear spectacles, and/or who have colour blindness.
- On that note, you may consider obtaining a Class One medical certificate from the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), as aspiring commercial pilots are required to do. This will help to give you peace of mind, although the eye-watering cost (£696 at the time of writing) will detract somewhat from any peace of mind gained.

I suggest that you take this course of action because all three branches of UKAF conduct their medical examinations *after* the candidate has sat their aptitude tests and officer selections, *not before*. The aptitude tests and officer selections will involve a lot of preparation, hard work

and emotional investment; you will not want to discover, after all stages of the selection process have been passed, that you have a medical problem that will prevent you from becoming a military pilot.

I have witnessed, at first hand, the devastating impact that such a finding can have upon somebody. The person concerned was not a candidate for military pilot training, but had hoped to become a Royal Marine officer; having trained/prepared for, and having passed, the extremely exacting selection procedures to become a Royal Marine officer, the medical examination raised doubt about his colour-blindness, and the axe fell upon his application, permanently. I was asked by the Admiralty Interview Board Directing Staff to drive the person concerned to the train station in Portsmouth at the end of the selection process; the conversation that we had in my car in 1999 has spurred me to mention this experience here, and to urge all those I can communicate with who are considering a career as a military pilot (or Royal Marine, or Paratrooper, or SAS, or SBS; the list is endless) to ensure that they are capable of meeting the medical standards required before they invest many waking moments of their lives, and the powerful emotions of their hopes and dreams, in preparing for the selection process.

In a nutshell, the passenger who I was driving in my car to the railway station in Portsmouth that day in 1999 was a human being whose entire world had just collapsed, extremely violently, in one brief moment in time.

- Visit the local UKAF Careers Office to commence your application process.
- Beware of being shepherded into another career in whichever branch of the UKAF that you're applying to. Many, many people will want to become a UKAF pilot, and there will only be so many UKAF pilot jobs going around at any one time; all three branches of UKAF will have many other jobs that must be filled, and, depending on the circumstances prevailing at the time of your application, it is possible that a recruiting representative may try and persuade you – indeed, may be under strict orders to persuade you – to consider other career paths other than becoming a UKAF pilot. Resist the pressure that may be applied, and stand firm for what you want.
- Be aware that becoming a military pilot is, and always has been, an extremely competitive process, and that most applicants will be unsuccessful, ultimately; however, one has got to be in it to win it, so one must at least *try*; no-one is born with a pilot's uniform on, so there's no reason why you should assume that you will be unsuccessful.

- If your **attempts** [don't give up if you don't succeed] to become a military pilot prove to be unsuccessful, this *does not* mean that you will be unsuccessful in the civilian aviation world.
- The military will not always need new pilots. A lot depends on the following: the British government's ability to fund its military; if it can't, then there will be cut-backs in the military; current serving personnel leaving the UKAF; the need to fill job vacancies; etc. etc. Essentially, there is a bit of luck involved in the timing of your application, and you won't have any way of influencing that luck. I applied to the RAF in 1998, hoping to become a fighter pilot, only to find out that the RAF had too many pilots, especially going through training; as a result, the service had a moratorium [i.e. a temporary prohibition of an activity] on pilot recruitment, and the role of pilot could not be applied for under any circumstances.
- The UKAF pilot aptitude selection procedure is conducted over the course of a day at RAF Cranwell in Lincolnshire. It consists of three batteries of tests, to assess aptitude in the three roles of pilot, air traffic controller, and observer (Royal Navy) or navigator (RAF). The candidates have to sit all three batteries of tests, regardless of which of the three career paths that they wish to pursue. Candidates aren't told which tests pertain to which battery/career; **I beg you, as with anything in life, to aim to excel in every test that you face. Don't be someone for whom attaining merely the minimum pass mark is an acceptable state of affairs. Do your best to smash it, each and every time.**

The end results are absolute, and are not open to discussion or debate.

- If you're successful at the aptitude testing phase, you will then have to undertake the officer selection procedure for whichever branch of the UKAF that you wish to join. The officer selections are held at RAF Cranwell for the RAF, HMS Sultan for the Royal Navy, and Leighton House, in the Wiltshire town of Westbury, for the Army.
- Once you have passed the pilot aptitude tests and the officer selection procedures, you then enter one of the UKAF officer training schools, namely: RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire; Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; or the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.
- During your pilot officer cadetship training, you will be graded, and then streamed into, one of the following categories:

- Fast jet ( RAF and Royal Navy)
  - Heavy transport (RAF)
  - Helicopters (RAF, Navy and Army)
- Once you have completed your training, you will then be deployed to a squadron.

The careers rep with whom you deal will be able to provide all further details; the information provided here is meant to be a primer, or basic overview, rather than the complete picture.

## **MY CONTACT DETAILS**

As may be gathered from the length of this information pack, becoming a pilot is not a simple business! There is so much more information that could be included, but there is already plenty here for you to digest.

There are bound to be plenty of questions engendered by this information pack; if I can help further in any way, then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Those who have researched the matters discussed here may wonder why I've not mentioned the Multi-Pilots' Licence (MPL), which is another way of becoming an airline pilot; I've omitted it because MPL holders will, as a general rule, be more limited in whatever job opportunities that they can apply for once they graduate, because of the way in which the MPL is taught, and because of what the MPL entitles you to do. As always, it's a long story; don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to know more.

### **SIMON ROLFE BSc (Hons) MBA ATPL CMILT AMRAeS**

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As I've said, don't hesitate to get in touch if I can help in any way. All the best with your flying careers in the times to come! Please read the attached article re: the lady BA training captain, which I've attached as a bit of proof that things can be done as I've described in this pack.

### WORKING WEEK

WORK EXPERIENCE MEREDITH BELL

## The passions of a professional pilot

Meredith Bell discovered a love of flying at the age of 13, and gained her private pilot's licence just four years later. Now she is a captain on British Airways 787s, and also a type rating instructor and examiner

**Have you always been interested in aviation?**

I grew up living directly under the extended centreline of runway 14 at Leeds Bradford airport. Concorde flew over our house occasionally. The first time I saw and heard that aircraft I was mesmerised – who wouldn't have been? My father travelled a lot on business and our family would go to the airport to say goodbye and to welcome him home. I loved the excitement of those journeys beginning and ending. **Why did you decide to become a pilot?**

I was given a trial flying lesson for my birthday when I was 13 years old and from that early age I was sure I wanted to be a pilot.

**Can you describe your journey to becoming a pilot – and your career so far?**

My path followed the classic self-sponsored route – I just missed out on sponsorship opportunities and was determined to find a way to achieve my goal. I gained my private pilot's licence when I was 17 years old, soloing on my 17th birthday – it meant learning to fly a light aircraft before I passed my driving test. While at university I worked as a glider tug pilot during my holidays to build up hours towards my commercial licence. After graduating, I trained to be an assistant flying instructor and worked for the Yorkshire Flying Club. The Field Aviation Scholarship helped financially with my instrument rating and my first commercial flying job was with Dan Air in 1989. I was sent to the



Bell is working to encourage more women into commercial aviation

Shetland Islands on the Hawker Siddeley HS 748 in the Highlands division, where I really learnt to fly. I discovered there was a big difference between the theory of meteorology that I'd studied as a student pilot and the actual weather those beautiful islands threw at us. I transferred to the Boeing 737 at London Gatwick and was lucky to be in the right place at the right time when British Airways acquired Dan Air. I continued flying the 737 at Gatwick for BA and became a captain in 1996, then a training captain in 2001. I was privileged to close my time at Gatwick as a training standards captain (TSC), a job that I will always regard as the highlight of my career, becoming BA's first female TSC. I transferred onto the 787 fleet just over four

years ago, where I am a type rating instructor and a type rating examiner. I absolutely love the 787, it's a fabulous jet. Our route network on the 787 has expanded enormously over the past few years, with exciting new destinations including Osaka and Charleston. The training element of my job will always be the foundation of my commitment to my profession and it is a genuine privilege to be part of the 787 training department.

**What were the challenges?**

My challenges have been the same as any commercial airline pilot – it's very competitive. Keeping up with the technical and regulatory changes in the industry and maintaining the highest possible personal performance continues to be my focus.

**What are your challenges now?**

I am involved with BA's campaign to encourage more women to choose a career in commercial aviation. We are hoping that by raising the profile of women within the industry we can highlight the fantastic career opportunities available for everyone.

**What advice would you give young girls wanting to pursue a career as a pilot?**

Study hard at school to give yourself as many choices as possible. Choose subjects you enjoy and are good at; you don't need A-level maths or physics to be an airline pilot, although if you are good at maths, that's fantastic. But if you're not, don't let it stop your flying dreams. It didn't stop mine. Speak to your school careers department or flying organisations to get advice. Look out for cadet schemes with the airlines, including BA. You can also read *Flight International* and airline websites.

**Could schools play a bigger role in encouraging girls to consider a flying career?**

Yes, definitely, but it's vital that the industry continues to positively promote career opportunities for all genders. ■

**Looking for a job in aerospace?** Check out our listings online at [flightglobal.com/jobs](http://flightglobal.com/jobs)

If you would like to feature in Working Week, or you know someone who would, email your pitch to [kate.sarsfield@flightglobal.com](mailto:kate.sarsfield@flightglobal.com)



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