

# SO YOU WANT TO BE A COACH?

Chris Thompson gives us a brief insight into what it takes to become a coach

**>** BACK in December 2008, I read an article in my LAA magazine about the Pilot Coaching Scheme. I had what I believed to be adequate qualifications (little did I know what I was in for!) to be an LAA Coach, so I dropped a line to Jon Cooke, LAA Pilot Coaching Scheme chairman and head of training, and asked if they were short of people and, if so, what would I have to do to become a coach. Jon's initial reply was that the LAA actually had enough coaches in the south at present, but he would bear me in mind if any requirement came up in the future.

As a background to all this, I originally learned to fly in Texas some 28 years ago and now hold full US, UK, and Hungarian licences together with relevant single, multi, night and IMC ratings, all current. I have flown over 100

aircraft including tricycle, tailwheel, turbo, etc, from the tiny 170kg CriCri to the mighty 5,600kg 1,000hp supercharged AN2 for which I also have a display licence. I also hold a BPA parachute pilot licence for the Cessna C207 and the AN2.

Jon later contacted me and said he would like to meet up for a chat and I drove to the Birmingham NEC to meet him at the SPLASH light aircraft show. He said the LAA was putting in place its own training scheme for LAA Coaches. The CRI course, required for all new coaches, must be held at a licensed airfield, a Flight Training Organisation, and in a CAA approved aircraft. Jon then spent a good deal of time working to obtain CAA approvals in association with Leicestershire Aero Club.

It was late in 2009 when I got an email from Jon saying we were 'go' for the end of November. He asked me to revise all PPL subjects, to read up on the requirements for the CRI course, and to think about answers to the questions in the Appendix to CAA Standards Document 10(A) – have a look at this if you need some light bedtime General Aviation knowledge questions!

As I started to get stuck into this I immediately began to realise how little I actually knew about anything. The questions expected me to "demonstrate knowledge equivalent to CPL standard" and I realised I had forgotten even the most elementary theory items taught to me in my Texan PPL past. It was like someone being asked to take a modern driving test and answer intricate details of the current Highway Code – only 200% harder!

My CRI course was held at Leicestershire Aero Club with just over three hours of flying and 30 hours of ground school. Meeting with Jon at Leicester on the first day, the course started with board presentations and general instructional techniques. It seemed that every other sentence Jon uttered was, "You need to know this" or "You should also know that." During the course, I had to prepare a long briefing on a subject of my choice. I chose Constant Speed Propellers (I thought this was safe as I used to own a Turbo Arrow), but Jon soon found holes in my knowledge of that as well.



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As the days passed, my board presentations improved, my flying as instructor took shape, and my worries about how little theory I had remembered from 28 years ago got worse (I can still hear those words, "You need to know this"). I have been a check pilot at Popham for many years, so flying from the right seat was not a problem. The patter of who has control, together with other student errors, was interesting as Jon played the 'dumb student' to perfection, always subtly managing to do things 'wrong' expecting me to notice and correct the fault.

My exam was the following Saturday, again at Leicester. The examiner arrived at nine o'clock and gave me a task to brief him on the scenario

## REQUIREMENTS

### Requirements to obtain a CRI Rating

- Valid SEP Land Class Rating
- 300 hours' P1 flight time
- 30 hours' P1 on the applicable type or class of aeroplane prior to commencing the course
- Complete an approved course of at least three hours' flying instruction and 25 hours' teaching and theoretical knowledge training
- Pass a Skills Test with a Flight Instructor Examiner
- JAR class 1 or 2 medical

### CRI Privileges

Instructional hour

(BFR) for pilots doing Class Rating Revalidation by experience.

Differences Training:

- Tricycle
- Tailwheel
- VP propeller
- Retractable
- Undercarriage
- Under 140kt
- Microlight to light aircraft NPPL(M) to NPPL (SSEA) upgrade
- Lapsed pilot re-training prior to a GFT Club check rides
- Type conversions, eg PA28 to C152
- Cross Channel checkouts
- Long-distance navigation checkout
- Non-UK Airspace experience
- Strip flying



Jon Cooke passes on his coaching skills to a happy student.

that he had just sold his PA20-140 (old style, no toe brakes) and had bought a C152. He then disappeared for an hour to do something else while I prepared the full board presentation on the differences. There then followed lengthy probing of my knowledge where he would reel off some information regarding his Cherokee, usually with some incorrect statements embedded. Every time I was a little vague on something, his probing got deeper and deeper.

During this session, I also had to refresh his 'knowledge' of Practice Forced Landings as he stated that he had made a real mess of his last one. Having survived this, discussion turned to the C152, and after explaining the walkround, it was time to take him on a flying lesson.

The flight test lasted one hour and 20 minutes and I had to teach the 'naïve' examiner all aspects of flying a C152, including general handling and stalling. We then came back to Leicester for me to demonstrate a Practice Forced Landing and several circuits and landings in different configurations. This was much harder than I had practised with Jon the week before, because Leicester was using their short southerly runway and the wind was quite strong, making judgement more difficult.

Relocating to the briefing room, the examiner then wrote numerous questions on the board

while I sweated to get the answers. What followed was another hour's chat about my answers and then I was informed I had actually passed. All we had to do was the inevitable CAA paperwork. By the time we had finished, the test had taken the whole day.

After completing the course, a further day was spent with Jon at LAA HQ at Turweston going through the necessary requirements to be an LAA Coach. All LAA Coaches have 'R' status, with CAA Revalidation Examiner privileges in order to sign Class Rating Revalidations.

My thanks go to LAA Pilot Coaching Scheme chairman Jon Cooke who patiently taught my course and John Pugh, the CFI at Leicester Aero Club, who placed himself at my service while the exam was taking place, in case I needed anything.

In conclusion, this was the hardest thing I have done for a long, long time and certainly something that should not be rushed into lightly. Bear in mind that we did almost a full Instructor course (normally a minimum of 30 hours' flight training and 125 hours' theoretical ground school) in a very short space of time.

It was extremely satisfying to refresh all my own general knowledge of aviation and I hope I can now pass some of this on to you in the manner that I was taught.

## TRAINING IN-HOUSE

All coaches are current Flight Instructors or CRIs, and must maintain a valid Instructor Rating to retain authorisation as an LAA Coach. A CRI rating is a CAA issued JAR-FCL Instructor Rating, which the coach is responsible for maintaining.

Individuals who wish to become an LAA Coach now receive training in-house for qualification towards the CAA CRI rating. I have introduced training for CRI ratings, together with continuation training, which is now available to LAA

Coaches through the Pilot Coaching Scheme. I have also introduced annual one-day instructor seminars to provide up-to-date information about instructing techniques and changes in legislation.

Details of the LAA Pilot Coaching Scheme are contained in Coaching Scheme Leaflet 3.1 "Becoming a Coach" available on the LAA Website.

My gratitude to all at Leicestershire Aero Club for allowing the Pilot Coaching Scheme to use its facilities to conduct training on behalf of the LAA. - Jon Cooke