



Per Ardua Ad Astra

On the path to my chosen career as a Royal Air Force Pilot I, Corporal Alex Scully, from 134 (Bedford) Squadron decided to apply for selection for a Sixth Form Pilot scholarship at RAF College Cranwell. The process only lasts two and a half days as it is only the first phase of the full Officer and Aircrew Selection which lasts four days.

Day 1

After a midday departure, three trains and a bus, I arrived at RAFC Cranwell, the time was 1530hrs and the other candidates and I were all eagerly waiting in the Candidates Mess for the Initial Brief at 1610. The time came and we made our way up to the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC), the brief was short at only 10 minutes but that was all that was needed to outline the next 2 days. After the brief, time was our own until 0710hrs the next morning when we had to be back at OASC to start our aptitude testing.

Day 2

After being woken at 0615hrs by the fire alarm, and breakfast at 0630hrs, the rest of the candidates and I were at the OASC ready for testing. After a short wait, we were escorted to the briefing room where we were given a run down on the what was to follow. The tests were there to assess our hand-eye-foot coordination, maths, verbal reasoning and memory, this lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes, but we were told that this was a shortened version. We did not do the full 6 hours of testing so as not to use up one of the two attempts that are allowed.

After the aptitude tests we were then bussed to the gymnasium for our fitness assessment, which consisted of a 'Bleep' test and as many sit-ups and press-ups possible with one minute. This lasted half an hour and we were back in time to have a quick shower and have lunch at 1230hrs.

Next on the agenda was the preliminary medical assessment, this initial check was designed only to take measurements, the full medical was to happen the next day. As we had some time left over the candidates and I were shown around the exercise hanger which is where the group exercises are conducted on the full 4 day course.

Day 3

It was time for the full medical; elements assessed at this stage were eyes, hearing, past injuries, medical background and a body examination. For a few candidates there was disappointment at this stage, as some were a couple a centimetres too short or too tall, but we were not told the final result until the medical debrief later on in the day.

The interview was next, considered by many to be the hardest part of selection. But I was not daunted by this; with help from staff, cadets and friends alike I was able to walk into the interview with confidence in myself. The interview board consisted of 2 officers from the RAF, one officer asked questions on my past, schooling, other activities, cadets and sport and fitness. The other was probing my knowledge of the RAF, where they are in the world and why, and my understanding of current affairs. Again like the medical we were not told straight away of the outcome until the final debrief.

The medical debrief was successful, all measurements were well within the requirements, so the head of the medical board declared me fit for all air and ground trades.

Now feeling slightly better from the news of the medical, I went for the final debrief ready for anything. All was well, I had passed all sections of the testing. But this does not mean that I will get the sixth form pilot scholarship, I will now be placed in competition with the other candidates which passed and will find out the final outcome by post around the Easter period.

The three days spent was a very good experience and has opened my eyes further to the possibilities of the RAF. Ever anxious to find out how I did, I wait for the letter, fingers crossed.

Cpl Alex Scully