

Doing the CRI



Ever thought of becoming a CRI? Richard Warriner and Pete Williams tell how it was for them

The Class Rating Instructor is one of those things that people talk about, but no one seems to be too sure of exactly what they are. After some basic research, we found that this was a rating which allowed unpaid instruction to be given to those who already had a licence. Not a lot of use, you might think, but it does mean that you can do things like tailwheel or complex aircraft conversions. You can also do the Hour's Instructional Flight, or BFR as it's become colloquially known. One thing that did cause concern was whether Class Rating Instructors would be taking work away from real flying instructors. We were assured that many clubs can only run with the help of volunteers, and that no instructors would go hungry as a result of our efforts.

Richard's View

While at a fly-in at Andrewsfield earlier in the season, I chanced to catch Carol Cooper when she had a microsecond to spare and asked about the rating. The wise words of wisdom were 'great if you are going to use it'. A little while later, while lurking around Headcorn, I asked Glyn at the Tiger Club if he thought it was worth doing. The reply was that it was, and that there might be some flying with that organisation if I managed to achieve the rating. Armed with a potential use for the qualification, I started to pester Carol about arranging a course.

A couple of years earlier I'd done the Microlight AFI course. One thing I discovered from that was that if you want to do an instructor course of any hue, it's a lot better to do it with a fellow student. After a couple of false starts, I was lucky enough to get paired

Above: Pete Williams (left) Carol Cooper and Richard Warriner at Andrewsfield

up with Pete Williams. Pete flies his Mooney around Europe and occupies the opposite end of the general aviation spectrum from my farm strip flying.

The course consists of twenty-five hours of classroom and self-study, plus three hours of flight instruction. This might not sound a lot, but with an entry requirement of at least three hundred hours of flight time, the course is about learning how to teach. I'd had the advantage of the AFI(M) course, so was aware of horrors of 'patter' and 'short briefing'. Pete didn't seem to be at any disadvantage from not having had the benefit of this introduction. Perhaps he's just a better pilot than I am.

Another advantage of multiple students is that the one who isn't under the gun on a particular flight can observe from the back seat of the Cherokee. This is invaluable, as you pick up so much more when you aren't under pressure. At this point I must commend Carol's ability to morph from 'student' to instructor instantly. This allows points to be made and learned, before rapidly reverting to the role-play.

My first take-off in the Cherokee made me wonder if there was a gotcha for rookie instructors and that the control locks were still in. They weren't, it just felt much heavier on the controls than anything I'd flown in the last eight years. Needless to say, my first hour's flight was a bit of a re-learning curve. The airborne side of the course covered circuits, steep turns, stalls and practice forced landings. The real learning element was how to patter and when to take over control. If a steep turn

has degenerated in to a spiral dive, no amount of talking will get it back. Particularly if Carol is resolutely in 'student' mode.

The course was run over three days, by the end of which I was marginally better at flying the Cherokee, but still tended to drop the aeroplane to fly the checklists. The flight test would normally have been on the following day, but the Examiner wasn't available until the next week. This gave a breathing space to prepare a long brief on weight and balance. It also gave some time to peruse the topics that might come up in the oral part of the test. Looking at the list of questions stirred some vague memories; I must have known some of this stuff a long time ago.

The CRI flight and ground tests took the whole day. As with any test, it's another learning experience. One comment from the examiner indicated that I wasn't setting up and maintaining the bank angle correctly for steep turns. I later realised this was because none of the aeroplanes I usually fly have an Attitude Indicator. The whole course was well worth doing. I felt much more confident after this than after the AFI(M) course. Armed with a freshly minted CRI ticket and a small group of victims, ...er, I mean students, I'm ready to give it a go.

Pete's view

I felt a bit nervous joining in with Richard, who clearly had many more years and flying hours experience than I did. By comparison I'm a relative 'newbie' pilot – PPL just three years ago. However, I'd been lucky enough to amass nearly 500 hours at the start of the course, including numerous flights across Europe including the Alps and Malta (my motto: "if a things worth doing, it's worth

What is the Class Rating Instructor (Single Pilot Aircraft) Rating?

Privileges

The holder of a CRI(SPA) rating can instruct licence holders for the issue of a type or class rating for single pilot aeroplanes. The holder may instruct on single pilot single-engine or multi-engine aeroplanes, subject to being appropriately qualified.

Requirements

An applicant for the issue of a CRI(SPA) rating shall have the following:
(differences for multi-engine in brackets)

- A valid SEP (Land), SET (Land), TMG Class Rating or a Single-Pilot Single-Engine Type Rating (A valid Multi-Engine Piston (Land) Class or Single Pilot Multi-Engine Type Rating).
- Completed at least 300 hours (500 hours) flight time as pilot of aeroplanes.
- Completed at least 30 hours as PIC on the applicable type or class of aeroplane prior to commencing the course.
- Completed an approved course of at least three hours (five hours) flight instruction on the aeroplane or a flight simulator given by an instructor approved for this purpose and 25 hours teaching and learning theoretical knowledge training.
- Passed the relevant elements of a FI Skill Test in a single pilot, single engine (multi-engine) aeroplane with a suitably qualified FIE(A)
- JAR-FCL Class 1 or 2 medical.

Things you can do with it:

- Instructional Hour (a.k.a. BFR) for people who are doing their two year revalidation by Experience.
- Differences Training, i.e. Tail wheel, Complex Aircraft etc.
- NPPL(M) to NPPL(SSEA) upgrade.
- General instruction for people whose licence has lapsed and require practice and confidence building before doing a revalidation flight test.
- Checkouts (not a formal CAA requirement, but often a Club requirement or a sensible action by someone out of practice, lacking in confidence or doing something they've not done before). Includes:
 - 30 and 90 day check rides
 - different aircraft conversions (e.g. from PA28 to C172)
 - cross Channel/cross water checkouts
 - long distance navigation checkouts
 - non-UK airspace experience

doing to excess!" accompanied by a roll of eyeballs from my long-suffering wife).

But I needn't have worried; he's a modest guy willing to share his expertise and helped put me at ease. Like Richard, I found sharing the course and being able to back-seat the training flights doubled the learning experience. And learning something new, to improve my own flying skills, was one of my drivers for doing the course.

The course was excellent, especially flying with Carol and Anthony (our examiner) who played the 'Muppet' student to perfection. Just when you started to relax they, with immense subtlety, found a way to do it wrong... "That's good, but watch the airspeed; careful now, you're drifting right; left a bit; left a bit... I HAVE CONTROL!" Each of us flew for three hours training plus the one and a half hours for the test - I hadn't realised how many different manoeuvres you could do in such a short time. When it was our turn in the front seat both Richard and I managed to sweat for England; hard work but rewarding. It's one thing to fly the aircraft, but 'pattering' it at the same time takes some getting used to.

While there are no written exams, the CAA advise that the CRI should be able to "demonstrate knowledge equivalent to a CPL level" certainly focussed the mind. Intensive study of a shelf full of books kept me out of mischief for some time and really helped extend my understanding. While it is true that the course focus is learning how to teach, it is without question that I got a lot out of the course extending my knowledge and adding a new confidence in my own flying. Now I'm keen to make use of those new skills and put something back into an activity that has given me such pleasure. ■

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