



Photos supplied by George Minors

George Minors after flying solo for the first time, 31 March 2008.

Pilots as Lifelong Students

Richard Pearse probably didn't think when he made his first powered flight of 320 metres in March 1903 that just over 100 years later, jets capable of carrying more than 800 people would be scooting around more than half the earth's circumference.

While technology continues to shape aviation, one of the key ingredients has remained – the pilot. And perhaps it's the mind of the pilot that has evolved the most as we continue to learn more about flying.

Vector caught up with three pilots at different stages of their careers to see how they got to where they are now, and what they continue to learn.

Jeremy Yardley, 39, started working as a first officer on Jetconnect's fleet of Boeing 737s in July 2014. That came after seven years at Vincent Aviation, in Darwin and Wellington, flying turboprops. He had 4500 flying hours before joining Jetconnect and is now approaching 5000 hours.

George Minors, 26, is a graduate of the Bachelor of Aviation Studies programme at Massey University. He now flies Beechcraft 1900s for Air New Zealand. A one-hour trial flight was all it took to hook him into a career in aviation.

Hayden Corney, 30, is a recreational pilot who first took to the air in March 2009 and flew on and off for the next three years. While other priorities meant that he hasn't flown since 2012, he is looking forward to getting back into the cockpit soon.

Jeremy had wanted to be a pilot ever since he was young.

"I did my PPL at Mainland Air in Dunedin in 2002 on weekends, then took the plunge, stopped work and, over a year, did the

full-time course covering CPL, instructor rating, and multi-engine rating.

"Following that, I started work at Mainland Air flying Cessnas and graduated through to Chieftains, then on to Vincent Aviation's 1900s and Saabs for seven years, before moving to Jetconnect and the Boeing 737s."

The one constant in all of this for Jeremy was the continual learning involved.

"You'll be flying with another pilot and they'll mention something different or new, and you then need to check it for yourself in your manuals.

"The environment we work in can change quickly due to weather, ATC clearances, restrictions, or tracking requirements. This can cause some heavy workloads and requires pilots to think on their feet and adapt quickly to changes.

"Whether you are a first officer or a check and training captain, being open to others' ideas is important in supporting each other and making the right decisions," says Jeremy.

"That increases our knowledge and skills and as a result keeps us constantly learning in an ever-changing workplace."

George hadn't always dreamed of flying planes. "I had no idea what I wanted to do. I had studied physics, maths, computing, electronics, but no career path shouted out to me. Then a friend said he wanted to be a pilot, and it really got me thinking.



George, with Air New Zealand's Chief Pilot David Morgan, at the Wings Ceremony at Massey University School of Aviation, 10 May 2010.



George having just passed his check to line as a first officer at Eagle Airways, Air New Zealand, 16 October 2013.

I went for a trial flight to see what it would be like, and that was when I got hooked. It incorporated everything I love about technology, physics, and the thrill of flying that every pilot knows."

George chose Massey University's programme so that he could have a Bachelor's degree to go with his commercial pilot licence.

"The workload is very high with up to six papers a semester, and we were taught beyond the minimal requirements for a typical pilot licence. It's worth it in the end as having knowledge and understanding beyond the minimum makes you all the more prepared for your career.

"Massey also set me up for a lifetime of learning. Of course, that's something that comes with being a pilot, as well as the impact strict schedules and flexible hours takes on your social life!"

Staying up-to-date with the industry is important for all three pilots. George is constantly reading aviation news online and in magazines. "I love hearing about new technologies and innovations."

George says that as an employee in the aviation industry you are constantly being challenged and expected to provide the highest standard of aviation practice. "The whole industry is changing all the time. This means you must be flexible and adaptive to anything that gets thrown at you. It encourages you to work hard and succeed, and this success spills into every area of your life."

For Hayden, the meteorology section of the PPL syllabus was a surprisingly interesting subject. "The courses offered by the Wellington Aero Club to prepare for the met exams were excellent. I thought I knew a fair bit about weather, but as pilots we have to learn so much more."

Met is one of the most important areas of aviation to get right. Head along to this year's AvKiwi Safety Seminar, *Wx Matters* – see the back cover for the first schedule.

"There is always something to learn, no matter how experienced you are," says George. "The AvKiwi seminars are a great way to stay current. At Massey we halted all flying and classes so everyone, including instructors, could attend!"

All three agree that technology is one area where pilots really need to keep up-to-date.

Hayden says, "I think electronic flight bags being so widely available will really help pilots, so long as they don't rely on them too much. They can take some of the navigation workload from the pilot and let them focus on other tasks."

Jeremy says, "There are constant changes to VFR flying and airspace. But when the majority of your work is IFR, those sort of things don't have as big an impact on you. So you really have to make sure that you are aware of changes in the area where the bulk of your work is. Staying up-to-date is essential."

Hayden's looking forward to returning to flying soon. "Time hasn't really allowed me to keep up with it, although I do still play a lot of flight simulator. While it's not the same as actually being in the air, I find it helps with things like practising radio procedures."

While Jeremy, George, and Hayden have all had very different paths and experiences in aviation, one thing they all agree on is that nothing compares to flying, and as a pilot you are a student for life – learning something new every time you take to the skies.

Aviators who know their limits continue learning, and practise regularly, to ensure that we can all be safe in the air. ■