2026 marks the 80th anniversary of Market Harborough Model Aero Club

Over the next few months Heather will be researching the history, events and characters involved with the club from it's pre war beginnings, through to 1946 when MHMAC was formed and up to 2026 our 80th anniversary year.

Information sources:
[1] Northampton Mercury
[2] Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph
[3] Market Harborough Advertiser

Part1, Beginnings pre WW2 and wartime.

Although there was at this time no Market Harborough Model Aero Club in existence, the events leading up to the formation of MHMAC in 1946 are interesting and can be considered part of the overall history. It is also worth noting that these early clubs had modellers from Market Harborough area.

10th June 1932: there was a report of Northants Model Aero Club holding a competition with members of Northants, Leicester and Warwickshire Model Aero clubs at Sywell. Councillor WJ Bassett-Lowke was in attendance (some of you may recognise the name synonymous with the model railway company Bassett-Lowke of Northampton).



MODEL AEROPLANES AT SYWELL

COUNCILLOR W. J. BASSETT-LOWKE (left) testing an entry at a display of model aeroplanes at Sywell. In the centre is Mr. E. W. Twiming, who judged the flights.

(Photo credit: Northampton Mercury)

21st September 1934: Sywell saw a gathering of full size and model aircraft at which Northants Model Aero Club attended.

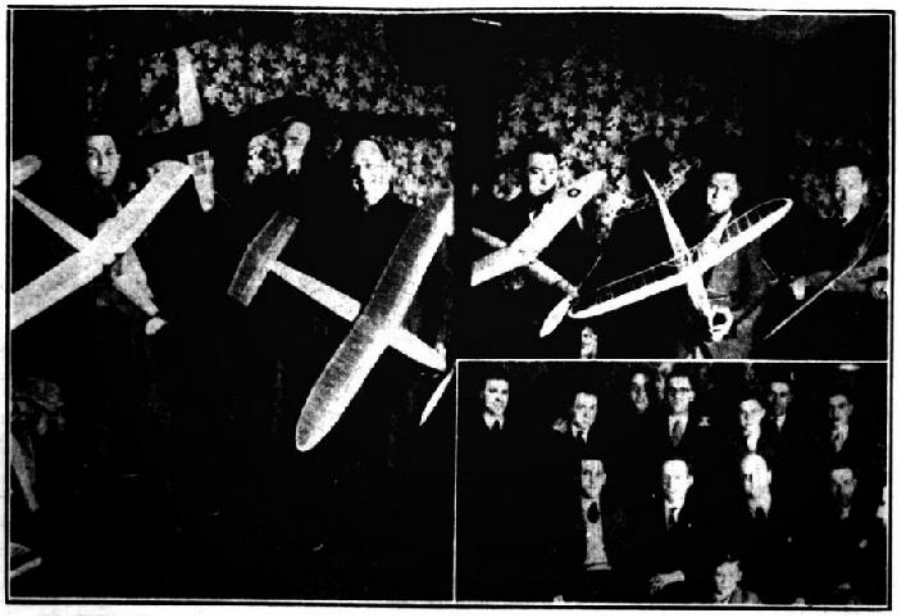
1937: At the February meeting of Northants Model Aero Club there was reported a large increase in membership. This led to the formation in March of 1937 the Kettering section along with a sub-committee. The group will fly at Wicksteed Park, Kettering.
Later in the month a meeting was held in the Co-op & Labour Institute and was attended by messrs Martin, Mole, Snowden, Pettit, Fowler, Toseland, Minney, Cragg. Also in attendance was one Mr D.A Russell of Market Harborough, one of the foremost petrol model authorities in the country.
During the summer of 1937 the group visited Stoke Dry near Uppingham at the invitation of Mr G. Snowden.

1938: The Kettering section is now well established and they meet at their club room in Regent Street, Kettering. By December 1938 the Northants Model Aero Club split into two separate clubs, Northampton and Kettering each with 40 members.

January 1939: The first meeting of the Kettering and District Model Aero Club was held. Mr D.A Russell, assistant engineer at Corby tube works accepted thepresidency of the club.
An internet search for “D. A. Russell” yields a number of books he had authored on model aircraft design and construction. Some were also referenced in the Aeronautical Journal (scroll to the bottom of the article).

17th March 1939: A meeting is held at The Hind Hotel, Market Harborough (now gone) to form ***The Market Harborough Model Aero Society***. It started with 18 members and for a week from the 3rd April held an exhibition of 50 model aircraft at the hotel.

Market Harborough Model Aeroplane Society.



Members of the newly-formed Market Harborough Model Aeroplane Society proudly display their own models at the Society's headquarters, Hind Hotel. Inset: A group picture of the members. The membership of the Society is about eighteen and it is hoped that this number will be considerably increased before the summer. An exhibition is being held on April 3rd. (See advert onpage 5.)

(Photo credit: Market Harborough Advertiser)

Summer 1939: saw a busy calender of events:
– Competition at Lubenham football field, loaned by Mr. Pick.
Senior winners were W Pettifer, A Glover, S West.
Junior winners were P Easterby, S Capell.
– Mr Pick's field feature regularly and during the summer. The best flyers were picked to represent Market Harborough in the Midland Area Flying Competitions, to be held on Bedford Igranic Sports Ground on September 10th.
– On 20th August 1939 a "temporary loss" of a model was noted during contest between Kettering and Market Harborough. The model was eventually found 1 1/2miles from its launch point. Kettering Model Aero Society is recorded as beating Harborough Model Aero Society in that competition.
– On 1st September 1939 there was a challenge competition between Kettering and Market Harborough clubs and notice of a return match to choose teams to represent the two clubs in the Eastern Counties Area Championship.
– Members of Market Harborough Model Aero Society at this time included Mr Seaton of Welford "well-known aero modellist", Mr A Glover, who has set an unofficial English record for a 21min 6sec flight of a petrol model plane and Mr S Weet, who made a flight of 8½mins with a rubber-driven model.
– At the November club meeting the holding of an annual dinner was discussed.

1940: Flying continued every Sunday with a number of competitions. At one such competition on 26th April it was noted there were around 200 spectators in attendance.
Later on 28th June the club staged a model aeroplane display with exhibition flights during the Hospital Carnival.

1941: nothing found yet!

19th June1942: A successful model aero exhibition was held with 47 models on show and approximately 300 visitors. Prizes awarded:
1st prize Mr W. Walker of Broadway Terrace
2nd D.E. Griffin of Oxendon
3rd C. Coles of Great Bowden
Consolation prize D.E. Griffin.
Special mention of Eric Coles aged 13.
Judges were Mr Gilbert, Logan Street & C.E. Choules, Coventry Rd.
The planned flying competition had to be postponed due to other events taking place.

1942 – 1946: Market Harborough Model Aero Society temporarily suspended activities. Aero modelling was still going strong and the Co-op Youth Club were also building models under the guidance of Mr G.B Heighton. However it has to be recorded that some members were now on active service including on Ordinary Seaman Vince Redfern, a name we will hear more from in later years.

…to be continued, **Part 2, The formation of MHMAC.**