

Early in 1925 four people, Mr. Kermode (since Air Vice Marshal, Director of Educational Services) Mr. Needham, Mr. Cullis and Flt. Lt, Hart, started work on the design of a light aeroplane. As their plans advanced, they founded the Halton Aero Club on the 3rd December, 1925, with the aim of building the machine and entering it for competitions.

As with all ventures where perseverance and dogged determination are required in no small measure, this one had its critics. There were some who said that the machine would never be built; others declared that, even if it were built, it would certainly never fly, and naturally the most pessimistic group of all stated that, if it did fly, it would break the pilot's neck. However, immediately on its foundation the Club started work on the machine and within three months, had over one thousand Apprentice members and a balance of some £250.

After a series of set-backs which would have daunted those less determined, The H.A.C. 1 made its maiden flight from Bicester on 31st January 1927. Flt. Lt. C. F. le Poer Trench was the pilot and the machine was airborne for ten minutes. The first official flight took place on the 11th March 1927 and, after a number of modifications had been made, the aircraft received its certificate of airworthiness on the 11th May.



The H.A.C. 1 after its first flight

The H.A.C. 1 was entered for a number of air races in the Hampshire Air Pageant at Hamble on the 15th May 1927. 500 Aircraft Apprentices went to Hamble and were thrilled to see their aircraft dive past the finishing post

leading a score of other aircraft by a bare length. On the 16th the H.A.C. 1 returned to Halton proudly bearing the Gold Cup for the President's Cup Race.

The Editor of the 'Aeroplane' wrote 'The Halton Light Aeroplane is undoubtedly one of the finest light aeroplanes in existence.' The machine was quite clearly one great triumph of co-operation and liaison. The Aircraft Apprentices paid every penny of the £185 for the small twin-cylinder engine. Over 200 Carpenters of the January 1924 Entry worked day and night in order to complete the aircraft which, during the summer of 1927, was to fly in competition races all over the country.

The H.A.C. 1, christened 'Mayfly', soon changed its shape. It shed its bottom wings and took to the air again on the 4th May 1928, as the H.A.C. 2 . or 'Minos'. The Apprentices had an opportunity of seeing this machine take part in the Air Parade at the Royal Air Force Display on the 30th June. Even as this second machine was flying around the British countryside, plans had been approved for the construction of The H.A.C. 3, or 'Meteor', which was to be a tailless monoplane, driven by two 'Cherub' engines.

At the time of the Halton Aero Club's formation, there were only three clubs in existence. All were Service clubs and no civil aeroplane club had been started. However, in the late 1928s several light aeroplane clubs, flying standard firm-built machines, sprang into being with such rapidity that the more amateur clubs faded into the background. This, coupled with the fact that the nature of air competitions had been so completely altered as to offer little inducements to club-built aircraft, led to the gradual abandonment by Halton of its aircraft building programme. Accordingly, Halton Aero Club, by a quiet process of metamorphosis on the 31st December 1930, became the Halton Aeronautical Society, a branch of the national organisation. Thereafter, the Society's programme was designed to provide a wider approach to aeronautical engineering and developments.
