



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JACK WOMERSLEY HEADLEY



Written by RDS, LH-R (2017), transcribed and reformatted by JS (2017, 2018)

The following was written by Ronald Douglas Starwalt with guidance by Lisa Headley-Rist, c/o J. W. Headley estate, 2016, and submitted to the AMA History Project in 2017.

Jack Womersley Headley

Born: Feb. 6 1929, Lytham St. Annes, England

As a youth in the early 1940s, Jack Headley was a member of the Air Training Corps (ATC). The ATC was a British youth organization sponsored by the Ministry of Defense and the Royal Air Force.

In 1945, the Society of British Aircraft Constructors awarded Jack a scholarship in Aeronautical Engineering upon completion of his apprenticeship in the works of Blackburn and General Aircraft Ltd. (1945-1950). He became an associate fellow of "The Royal Aeronautical Society" in 1950s.

All through his work and apprenticeship Jack was active in aeromodelling. In the family collection are competitor ID tags. In 1950, Jack competed in the Society of Model Aeronautical Engineers' (SMAE) British Nationals as competitor #362, held at Blackpool, York. He also competed in the National Model Aero Rally as competitor #459 sponsored by the *Daily Dispatch* (date unknown). Jack was a member of Beverley Model Aircraft Club in Hull during this time.

In 1954, the Lytham St. Annes Express ran an article on Jack. "Warton's Model Plane Star" was an account of the then 25-year old Jack Headley's experience with a Jetex powered model that he nearly lost. During this time, Jack was working at the English Electric Company working with the twin jet Canberra bomber. The family collection contains Jack's photo scrapbook filled with many model aircraft of the time and several of Jack during his work at English Electric.

In the late 1950s, Jack moved to California. Photos from the family collection show a young Jack wearing a San Valeers Club hooded sweatshirt while holding a towline glider with an AMA number of 11756. The San Valeers Club was still in operation at the time of the writing of this biography. Some surviving papers from 1959 place him as an aeronautical engineer employed with the Wiancko Engineering Company. An announcement document from the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences has an excellent brief bio of his education and experience in England. The topic of this announcement was Jack's presentation on "Direct Measurement of Acoustic Impedance In Simple Ducts at High Flow Rates."

One of the first modelling friends he made on his arrival to the US was Kevin Flynn. The

friendship they developed was significant. Photos in many of the articles published by both of them will show either Kevin (Jack as the photographer) or Jack (Kevin as the photographer) with the subject aircraft. Several of Kevin's published articles have Jack listed on the plans as the draftsman (a skill he developed during his apprenticeship in England).

During this time in California, Jack met and married Pet, who was also from the UK. According to Lisa Headley-Rist (their oldest daughter), they moved to Alabama in the early 1960s, and Jack continued his work on wind tunnel experiments. Jack was elected a member of American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in April 1964.

One photo in the family collection and material found at the National Model Aviation Museum (NMAM) in Muncie, Indiana, gives us the earliest record of Jack's employment with the Norair division of Northrop Corporation in Hawthorne, California. The black and white family photo is of Jack posing with wind tunnel components. "Northrop 1963" is written on the back. In the NMAM materials are some newsletters of the Northrop MAC. The earliest is the January/February 1965 issue of *The Norair Modeler*. "Jack Headly" (sic) is listed in the July/August 1965 issue as the Vice Commissioner of the club. The May/June issue also lists Jack as the Contest Director for the club.

The newsletters often had articles that were not completely credited to a particular author. People in photos are often not identified. Jack certainly is the subject of the fun photo on the back of the May/June 1966 issue. The airplane in the photo is the "Yellow Peril," a round-the-pole model featured by Jack in the April 1967 issue of the *Norair Modeller* (UK spelling). Jack became the editor of the newsletter as well as being listed as the Commissioner of the MAC. This issue appears to be the launching point for Jack's second career as a model airplane designer, author, and aircraft photographer.

The first year of the "Flying Wing Contest" sponsored by the Northrop MAC was 1967. Jack was principle in the original idea for the contest, but the usual credit for the popular and long running event is given to Carl Hatrak. (See his biography on the AMA History Project website.)

In 1969, Jack was entered into Northrop's Honor Roll of Inventors in the field of Aerodynamic Devices. This occurred again in 1977. Jack's name and address is seen on page 64 of the 1972 *Royal Aeronautical Society List of Members* as an Honorary Companion. Along this time, John Northrop gave Jack a signed copy of *Northrop: An Aeronautical History*. At the writing of the bio, this copy is in the family collection.

Jack's first publication in a commercial model aircraft magazine was in the October 1968 issue of *Aeromodeller* (UK). The "Beagle Pup 150" article included the free full-size plans. The same model appeared in the summer issue of *R/C Limited*, a one-off publication from the US magazine *Radio Control Modeler* (RCM). During this time, it was often the case that Jack's full size plans, provided free in the Northrop club newsletter, were later sold for publication in commercial magazines. At the time of this writing, the NMAM collection stopped with the Winter 1972 issue. It is not known if more issues were published.

While at Northrop, Jack published "Analysis of Wind Tunnel Data Pertaining to High Angle-Of-

Attack Aerodynamics Volume 1 and 2" in July 1978. For his efforts in the development of the F-20 Tigershark, Jack received a patent for the nose design. Jack's article in the September 1982 issue of *RCM* focused on the first radio controlled model of the F-20 Tigershark built by Larry Wolfe of Jet Hanger Hobbies. The same issue of *RCM* featured Jack's modifications to the Gentle Lady to give it the appearance of an ATC training glider.

In November 1982, Jack passed away unexpectedly. This did not end the appearance of Jack's designs and articles. Six commercial magazines either mentioned Jack or published his designs posthumously. The last published article, "Walfisch," was in *Model Builder*, February 1987. A footnote on the first page of the article reads "After receiving this construction article from Jack, we learned of his untimely passing; we present it here as a small tribute to a wonderful person and a fine modeler."

Among the US modeling community who knew Jack included Kevin Flynn, Tony Naccarato, Gus Morfis, Fred Reese, Bill Hannan, and Bill Northrop.

After extensive research and accounting, Jack Headley left us with at least 61 different model designs and 23 commercial published articles about model aircraft. There were many more models built and flown by Jack as is evident in the photos of the family collection.

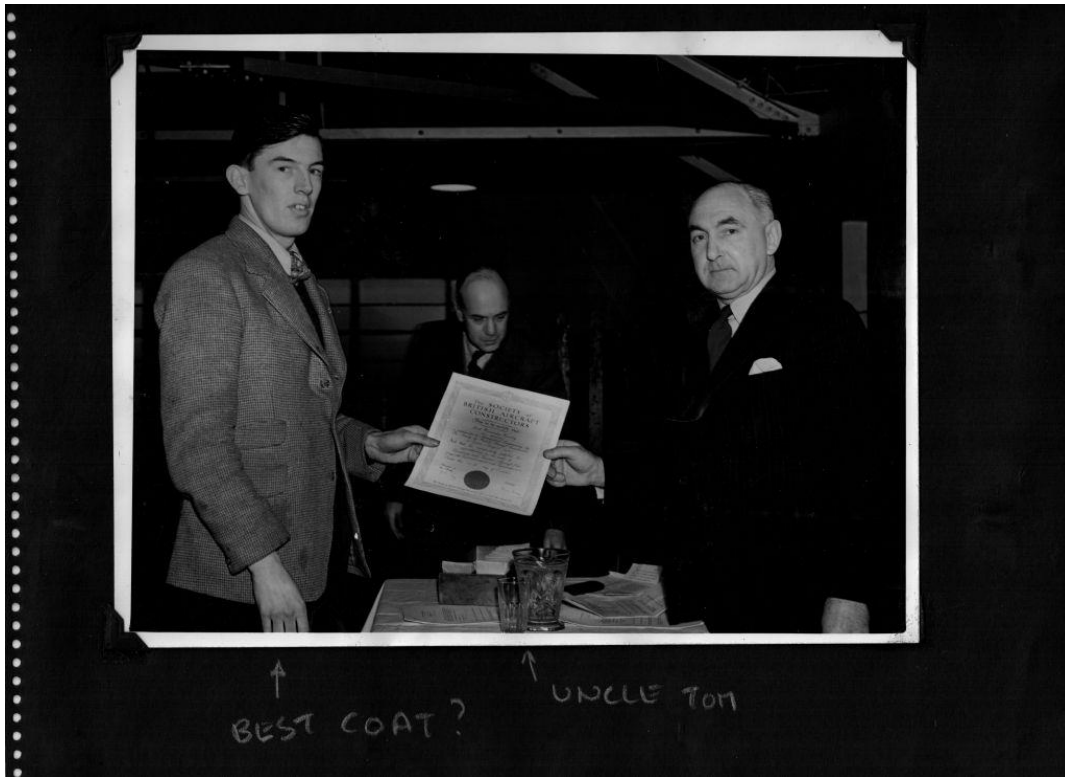
A chronological list of all known designs and publications by or co-developed by Jack is available upon request.

-Written by Ronald Douglas Starwalt with guidance by Lisa Headley-Rist

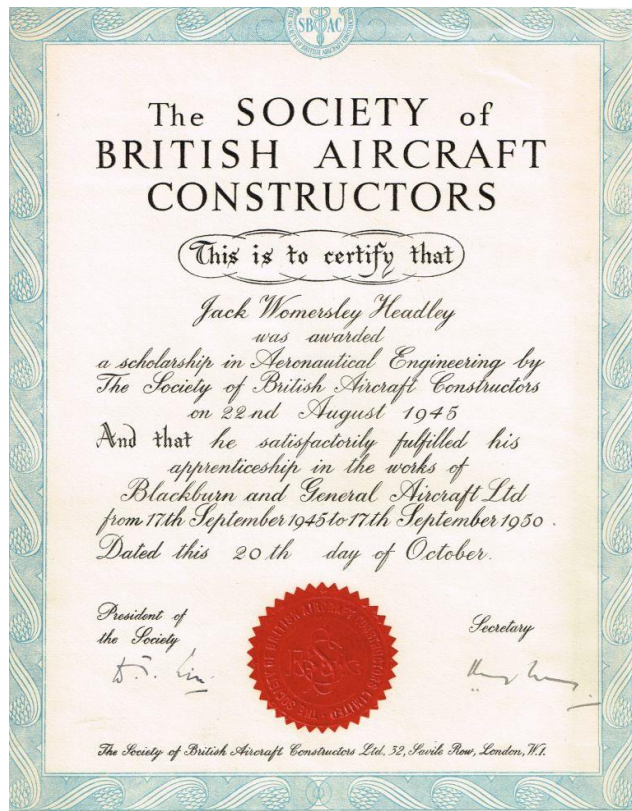
Photographs below were provided to the AMA History Project from the J.W. Headley photo archive.



1944: Headley in the 678 Squadron Air Training Corp. (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)



c. 1945: Headley receiving Society of British Aircraft Constructors (SBAC) scholarship certificate. (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)



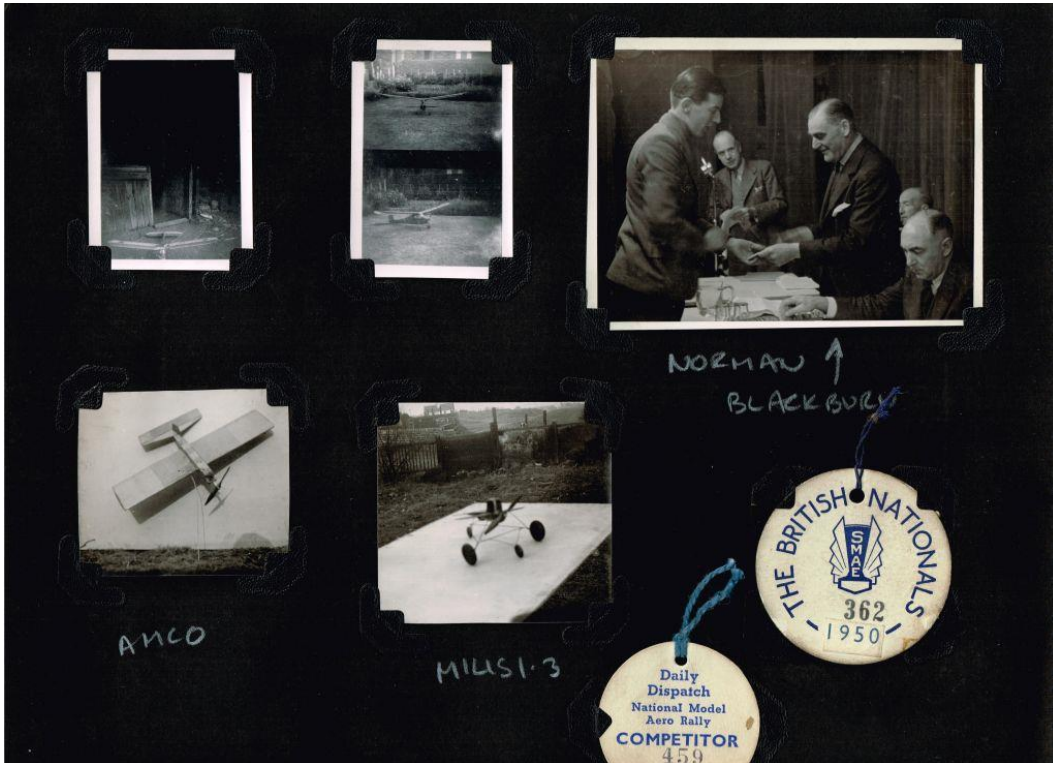
1945: Headley's SBAC scholarship certificate. (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)



Beverly Model Aircraft Club display at the Westwood attracted entries from Hull, Scarborough, Bridlington and Scarborough. Picture of some of the competitors includes Derek Uphill of 79, Tickton-
 gr., Hull with his model—the largest at the display. It has an 8ft. wing span and a 15cc. American engine.

(Above and below) Pages from Headley's scrapbook.
 (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)





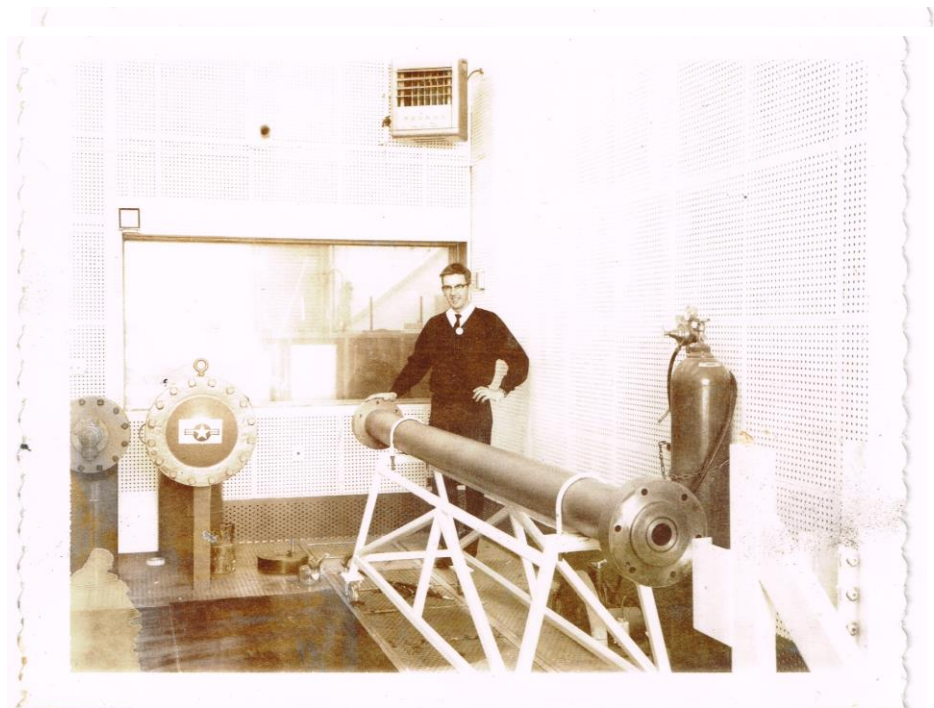
*Page from Headley's scrapbook about the 1950 British Nationals.
 (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)*



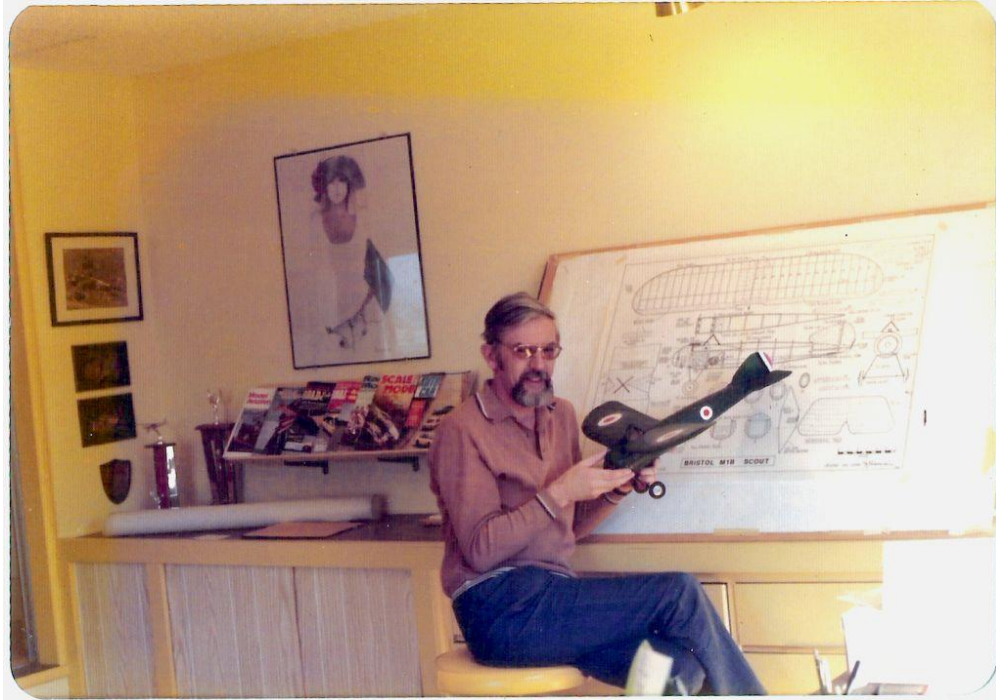
*c. 1957: Headley in his San Valeers hooded sweatshirt, photo taken in California.
 (Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)*



*c. 1957: Headley's model airplane up close. Photo taken in California.
(Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)*



*c. 1963: Jack Headley at Northrop with high speed wind tunnel equipment.
(Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)*



c. 1977: Headley pictured holding a Bristol Scout model design. This was the first model that he authored for Model Aviation magazine (March 1977). Behind him appears to be the original plans for the model.

Also behind him, among the magazines pictured, is the March 1975 issue of American Aircraft Modeler in which he published an article on the 'Pfalz Alarm' model.

(Photo credit: J.W. Headley photo archives)



“Charming Lisa Headley poses with her father’s tiny lightweight RC design. The original was covered with tissue and given two coats of clear dope, followed by two coats of red (except for the rudder).” (Photo credit: August 1983 issue of Model Aviation magazine, p. 87)

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