

# TIGER RAG



NEWSLETTER OF THE TIGER MOTH CLUB OF NEW ZEALAND INC

**FEBRUARY 2025**



Darren Luff and his Tiger Moth pause on the Air Safaris airstrip at Franz Josef before retracing the original route back north to Greymouth.

*Dear Tiger Moth Club Members,*

*There's a lot of information within, so grab a hot drink, sit back and enjoy some light reading!*

It's fun competition time again at Karamea on the 8th March during AGM weekend. Planning is well underway but here are some notes so that you can prepare.

On the day for those not flying we will need volunteers for marking of the various competition's, runners etc. Those marking bombing and landing competitions on the airfield will need hi vis vests, so if you have any club vests please make sure you bring them to Karamea.

We will appoint some specialist judges for non instrument circuits, aircraft judging, aero's etc, but there is plenty more help required...please let me know if you can help. Volunteers are always welcome.

Entry to the competitions is required prior to the briefing which will be held at the airfield at 0930. Entry forms will be available at the Friday evening function, so please ensure your name is down, earlier rather than later.

There are some great trophies up for grabs, tiger moth aerobatics, perfect loop, non instrument circuit, spot landing, bombing, air race, novice aerobatics... so get practicing.

As well there are some wonderful non flying trophies and prizes, most original moth, most magnificent moth, most interesting flight to Karamea, best return to service, longest flight in an open cockpit, best vintage aircraft, most helpful member and so on, it will be fun.

We have been advised that there is minimal fence security at Karamea, just one gate access by the terminal building. Locals will be out in force so we may have to post a gate guardian to ensure only members go airside. We all know the hazards and competition time is a busy time, so if you see strangers wandering amongst the aircraft, please ask them to return behind the fence. If you have visitor's airside, please keep them on a short leash!

Looking forward to a great AGM  
John Baynes

A pair of Moths over Mandeville (John King photo)





# UP AND COMING EVENTS

## TIGER CAMP 2025

It's the middle of the decade and to celebrate being halfway through the twenties for Tiger Camp 2025 we're going to circumnavigate the South Island! Meeting in Omaka on Thursday 27th February, on Friday we'll head out to Cape Campbell for the first lighthouse of the tour, then south along the coast, around Banks Peninsula weather permitting and into Rangitata Island for the evening to stay at Geraldine.

On Saturday we'll pop into Oamaru for fuel then on to Taieri for lunch, then further down the coast to Balclutha for the night. Sunday sees us out to the Nugget Point lighthouse then following the Catlin's coast around to Slope Point (the southernmost point of the South Island) then around the Stirling Point lighthouse at Bluff and up to Mandeville for lunch before heading to Mossburn for the first of two nights.

Monday we'll aim to do the south coast out to Puysegur lighthouse then weather permitting over the passes to the power station and into Te Anau. Then back to Mossburn for a second night. Tuesday we'll head through the mountains to the sea then up the coast to Haast with our route dictated by the weather on the day.

Wednesday's itinerary will also be weather dependent, perhaps a day trip to Wanaka or south towards Martin's Bay and Milford depending on the route taken the day before. Returning to Haast for a second night.

Thursday we'll track north up the West Coast to Greymouth for the night, and after passing the lighthouse at Cape Foulwind (the southernmost of only three on the entire West Coast of the South Island), Friday will herald our arrival into Karamea for the annual Tiger Moth Club fly in and AGM. Should the weather not be suitable for us along the West Coast, the alternate route from Mossburn to Karamea will be Wanaka, Omarama and Hanmer Springs. After the club AGM in Karamea on Sunday we'll continue north up the coast and around the lighthouses at Kahurangi Point and Cape Farewell, then past Tākaka and the lighthouse at Separation Point, along the Abel Tasman to Motueka for the night.

On Monday weather permitting we'll head up around the Marlborough Sounds - extra kudos to those who are brave enough to round the lighthouses on Stephens Island and The Brothers on our way back to Omaka. Finishing up on Tuesday 11th March heading home to our respective locations around the country.

We have allowed for a couple of two night stopovers to allow us to catch up if we get stuck with weather - over a long event like this there's bound to be at least one front come through if not more. Please order the good weather well in advance, particularly for our multi day run up the West Coast.

Thursday 27th February Blenheim  
Friday 28th February Geraldine  
Saturday 1st March Balclutha  
Sunday & Monday 2-3rd March Mossburn  
Tuesday & Wednesday 4-5th March Haast  
Thursday 6th March Greymouth  
Friday & Saturday 7-8th March Karamea (for AGM fly in)  
Sunday 9th March Motueka  
Monday 10th March Blenheim

**A seat has become available in a Tiger Moth taking part in the Tiger Camp Light House Tour of the South Island. The pilot is an experienced Tiger captain and CPL. If interested, phone Graham on 0275446029**

## 2025

21-23 Feb Wings over Wairarapa

27 Feb-11 Mar TIGER CAMP 2025 (Round the South Island) (see above)

7-8 Mar Tiger Club Fly-in and AGM at Karamea  
(for more details see next page)

18-20 Apr Classic Fighters Omaka

17-20 Oct Tiger Moth Club Fly-in & Competitions at Taumarunui

# YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

## NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS WANTED FOR 2025

The AGM is sneaking up fast and so it's time to give it some thought. This year we have the first steps to take in having our constitution updated to meet the needs of the new Incorporated Societies Act of 2022. This re-registration with its compliances is a requirement by law and must be done by 5/4/26. All our changes must be passed at an AGM or a Special General Meeting.

John King has put in an enormous amount of work on modernising our very good constitution in conjunction with the committee and we are now at a point where we can plan for its presentation to the AGM. A revised constitution will be forwarded to members in the future with the changes noted. We will then vote on those changes and if approved, the revised constitution will be forwarded to The Companies Office.

Office Bearers for 2025:

Our club depends on the organisation done by our committee and Office Bearers. We have been very well served over the years and it's always good to see new people getting involved. If you want to have more involvement in the running of the club and make a positive contribution to its wellbeing, please consider putting your name forward for the committee. It's a rewarding task in a great club.

This year our **Treasurer** Amanda Rutland is stepping down from the committee after a long stint of excellent service and we thank her very much for her time and effort. She leaves the treasurer's position well organised for the next person and we are inviting a person with treasury skills to get in contact with the committee to fill this vital role.

Bobbie Preston has done a great job as **secretary** this year but it was always only for a short term to help us out ( thank you Bobbie ) so if you are keen on taking over this clerical position in the club please give thought to putting your name forward or contact me for a talk.

Wendy Tantrum has also helped us out tremendously over the years with competition organising and merchandise handling. She took on the **Club Captain** role for this year but wishes to pass it on so we are encouraging members who would enjoy the arranging of our social side and club functions to consider the Club Captain's position. We have a long history of fun times and a long future with new members to look forward to so it's a great role for a member who wants to take the ball forward and enjoy everything the club offers to our members.

The other ad-hoc position that we wish to create is that of a **safety officer** who would be on hand at our two fly-ins, Taumarunui and the AGM or any club organised event that required safe practice oversight or input. The position would help maintain good aviation culture and assist with briefings and planning.

Please give thought to keeping the club administration strong by putting your name forward or contacting me.

John.

## LATE NOTICE—SPECIAL EVENT

To commemorate the first flight of the de Havilland Moth, the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand invites all pilots and owners of de Havilland Tiger Moths, and the Gipsy Moth, to be in the air on Sunday 23 February 2025 (the NZ date equivalent to 22 February UK). The first flight of the DH 60 Moth took place in the afternoon of 22 February 1925 but Flight magazine gave no exact time. That is why the Tiger Moth Club is not providing an exact time either.

Spread the word and send us details of your flight as well as photos if possible.

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TIGER MOTH CLUB OF NEW ZEALAND  
9 MARCH, 2025, AT 9:30 A.M.  
KARAMEA**

**Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand, Inc. will be held on Sunday, 9th March, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. in the conference room at "The Last Resort," 71 Waverley Street, Karamea.**

For your reference, please see the following: AGM Agenda, Committee Nomination Form, Minutes of the 2024 AGM and Financial Report for 2025. Also included are documents relating to the changes in the Tiger Moth Club Constitution.

Several Officer positions are becoming vacant: Vice President (currently held by Keith Skilling), Treasurer (currently held by Amanda Rutland) and Secretary (currently held by Roberta Preston). We are also looking for volunteers who are willing to join the Committee. Our Officers/Committee work behind the scenes to ensure that your club functions effectively and meets the needs of its members. If you have the time and willingness to do that little bit extra to help our club please do not hesitate to contact the President, John Baynes at [jcbaynes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jcbaynes@xtra.co.nz) or fill out the nomination form which is enclosed in this package.

(NOTE: Only financial members may nominate members for the Committee or Officer positions. Furthermore, only Financial members can vote at the AGM.)

Thank you to those members who have already paid their dues for 2025!

In order to comply with the Incorporated Societies Act, 2022, the Tiger Moth Club Constitution of 1996 has had to be completely rewritten. John King took the lead with extensive help from Don Ryder after which a lawyer reviewed the draft and suggested a few changes which have been made.

This document now needs to be ratified by the membership. Therefore the Committee wishes to put forward the following motion for approval at the AGM:

**MOTION: That the entire existing constitution be amended by deletion in total with replacement by the proposed clauses and wording as circulated to the members.**

Proposer: The Committee of the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand. (Rationale the changes made by Parliament to rules governing incorporated societies under the Incorporated Societies Act. 2022, require a great many amendments and new inclusions. This also alters the number and sequence of existing clauses. It is, therefore, more feasible and accurate to amend the constitution by wholesale replacement. Signed: John Baynes, President, Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand.)

We very much look forward to seeing you at Karamea!

Kind regards,

Roberta Preston  
Secretary, Tiger Moth Club of N.Z, Inc.

## THE DE HAVILLAND MOTH FIRST FLEW ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The clear leadership of Geoffrey de Havilland and Charles Walker had assured the early success of the small de Havilland Aircraft Company, assisted by a dedicated and loyal staff under Frank Hearle's guidance. They did not lack expertise. Geoffrey de Havilland had been one of Britain's aviation pioneers and had taught himself to fly, been the Chief test pilot at Farnborough, and the first to fly an aeroplane from which a gun was fired. He had a string of notable designs starting with the F.E. 2, B.E. 2 and later the D.H. 4, D.H. 6, and D.H. 9.

At Airco, where Geoffrey de Havilland was joined by Charles Walker, the team designed warplanes culminating in the D.H. 9A day bomber and the extremely advanced D.H. 11 Oxford twin-engined bomber. The post-war slump in aircraft sales precipitated the demise of Airco and in those uncertain times de Havilland and Walker formed their own aircraft manufacturing company at Stag Lane, on the Northwestern outskirts of London. In the first two years the company built the D.H. 18 and D.H. 34 airliners, considered to be among best in the business. This reputation brought Alan Butler to their doorstep and his investment in the company ensured that civil aeroplanes would be built.

Butler's D.H. 37 sports tourer, built at great expense, was not for the "man in the street". The problem with the D.H. 37 was that the next wealthy owner would want something different and could afford the luxury of having it specially made. The aeroplane for the private pilot had to be much cheaper and this meant mass production. Henry Ford had built a car for the general public, the Model T, but his attempt to build a small plane, which he called the "Flivver", ended with just a few completed. Not the success he was hoping for.

A cheaper version of the D.H. 37, the three seat D.H. 51, equivalent in size to the popular American Waco and Travel Air biplanes, proved to be too big and too expensive to appeal to British private pilots. At the time the Air Ministry had another idea. They would promote the small aeroplane, single-seaters powered by a motor cycle engines, and there would be a competition to find the best design. The Air Ministry was full of enthusiasm that such aircraft (microlights by modern standards) would be cheap, and hundreds, if not thousands, of young Britons would flock to fly them. De Havilland built two D.H. 53 Humming Birds for the competition, but due to the unreliable Douglas engines, they were not among the prizewinners yet the Press considered them the most practical of all the designs. A few months later, the Hummingbirds fitted with Blackburne Tomtit engines derived from a motorcycle engine designed by Geoffrey de Havilland, won the speed race.

But it was in the hands of Alan Cobham that the D.H. 53 achieved real fame. St Barbe decided that the Humming Bird should appear at the Brussels Automobile Exhibition in December 1923. The plane was named L'Oiseau Mouche, and Cobham was to go with it to Brussels.

"What's its range?" Cobham asked.

"Don't worry," said St Barbe, de Havilland's salesman supreme, "you can read all about that in the train."

"Why in the train? Won't it fly?"

"Do you mean you'd fly it there?" exclaimed St Barbe.

Of course Cobham would fly it there but the tiny plane needed more fuel if it was to make it safely across the Channel - just two gallons more. Hagg, the designer of many de Havilland types including the Fox Moth, had a small fuel tank made which fitted neatly behind the pilot's head. Tests showed that it was not high enough for gravity feed and as there was no pump small enough to do the job, Hagg fitted a rubber tube. All Cobham had to do was blow down the rubber tube and the petrol would be transferred to the main tank.

The flight was planned for Friday 7 December 1923, but it was far too foggy for flying. The next morning, conditions were slightly better, so Cobham flew over to Croydon to clear customs. He left Croydon shortly before 10 a.m., but the visibility was so bad that he landed at Lympne. When he got there, the 100-gallon bowser (petrol-tanker) trundled up to refuel the plane for the Channel crossing.

"Two gallons, please," said Cobham, trying to maintain his dignity. He took off and headed for Cap Gris Nez. "This is the maddest thing I have ever done," he thought. "No wonder they named it the Humming Bird - this little propeller is revving at 3,000 rpm! And there's only one magneto!"

Midway across the Channel, Cobham flew into a heavy rain-storm and then, much to his relief, he finally crossed the coast near Calais. It had been one of the longest twenty minutes of his flying career. Slowly Cobham flew up the coast helped by a tail wind. Needing more fuel, he blew down the rubber pipe. A little later the engine started running roughly, then kept cutting out, coming on, cutting out and coming on again, due to his saliva in the carburettor resulting from his over enthusiastic efforts at blowing. Cobham landed at Brussels at 3 p.m., and, in typical St. Barbe fashion, a great fuss was made about the fact that the trip had cost only 7s 6d. Cobham had taken 4 hours to cover 150 miles.

In the Exhibition the placard on the de Havilland stand described the flight achieved on Saturday 8 December as "Le plus long cross-country vol d'une aviette de 6 c.v. effectué jusqu'à ce jour" - [the longest cross-country flight of a lightweight plane achieved to date] but it took the wit of Charles Walker to put it into perspective. "Cobham," he said, "did that flight by sheer force of character."

On the return journey, Cobham crouched in the cockpit of the D.H. 53 and flew just above the snow-covered fields of Flanders. It was very cold, and he was making some headway when he saw a Belgian goods train appear from under the leading edge of the wing, puffing black smoke up at him, and drawing steadily ahead. That did it. As far as Cobham was concerned, the Humming Bird was useless. Eventually he landed at Ghent and wired Stag Lane for someone to come and get him and take the machine back by whatever means they could think of. That night it snowed. When Elliott arrived from Stag Lane to help Cobham, they went out to the aerodrome and looked around for the plane. At first they couldn't see it anywhere. Where had Cobham left it? Then they noticed a hump in the snow. Sure enough, when they dug down they found the Humming Bird. Later, the ferryboat people refused to take the plane back to England because they had no scale for charging an aeroplane but, after much haggling and procrastination, the ferrymen relented and the Humming Bird returned to Stag Lane.

Regardless of what the Air Ministry boffins promoted the Humming Bird was not the practical light aeroplane of the future. Besides it cost nearly as much to build as a bigger, more robust aeroplane. The only difference was the cost of the engine and there lay the problem. There was no engine available in the 60 horsepower range.

Geoffrey de Havilland had used a war surplus Renault V-8 in the prototype D.H. 51, the same engine that powered the B.E. 2 back in 1912, but this engine had single ignition and the Air Ministry refused permission to fly beyond the aerodrome where the flight had started. This would not encourage flying. But a twin ignition and improved version of the engine was available. It had been converted by Frank Halford, a racing car enthusiast and engineer. So de Havilland asked if Halford could build a 60 horsepower engine?

The Aircraft Disposal Company agreed to fund the project and Halford stripped down a Renault V8 and laid the components on a bench. Four pistons, four cylinders, and associated parts were laid out as a four-cylinder in-line, essentially half a Renault V8. Halford designed and built the cast aluminium cylinder heads, fitted new connecting rods, and added a new crankcase. The engine passed the required 100-hour Air Ministry test and was dubbed the Cirrus. With hundreds of Renault V8 engines in stock, the Aircraft Disposal Company could see that stock diminish while their Cirrus engines would power a whole new generation of aircraft.



De Havilland test pilot Hubert Broad and an assistant set up the prototype Moth for another flight

Back at Stag Lane Geoffrey de Havilland drew up the main layout of the D.H. 60, smaller than the DH 51, but big enough and strong enough for use as both a trainer and suitable for cross-country flying. The wings could be folded in about two minutes so that owners could store their aeroplane in a normal sized garage. The tailskid could be attached to the rear of a car for towing, should the owner want to bring the aeroplane to his home garage. The D.H. 60 was fitted with dual controls, although it was normally flown from the rear cockpit. There was a locker shelf in front of the front cockpit suitable for light luggage and a tool kit was supplied.

The de Havilland salesman, St. Barbe, wanted a catchy name, which would appeal to buyers, and it was Geoffrey de Havilland who came up with the simple name - Moth. Despite the fact that Moths were regarded as the poor cousins of butterflies, he felt the name had the "right" sound, was easy to remember, and had the potential to expand into to whole series of different Moths. But there was one problem. The trade name "Moth" was registered to John Morton & Co. Ltd. of Wolverhampton for a range of machinery. Negotiations gave de Havilland's permission to register the word "Moth" as the official trade mark for light aeroplanes and for many years the appearance of a biplane overhead was greeted by many "that's a Moth that is", even if it wasn't.



Line up in front of the de Havilland works at Stag Lane in 1925

DH53 G-EBHX	1 seat	26HP 2-cyl Tomtit	Top speed in air race: 57.5 mph
DH60 G-EBKT	2 seats	60HP 4-cyl Cirrus	Top speed in air race: 90.8 mph
DH51 G-EBIM	3 seats	120HP V-8 Airdisco	Top speed in air race: 101.11 mph
DH50 G-EBFN	5 seats	230HP 6-cyl Puma	Top speed in air race: 106.6 mph
DH37 G-EBDO	3 seats	270HP 6-cyl Falcon III	Top speed in air race: 120 mph

On the afternoon of 22 February 1925, the prototype Moth, G-EBKT, wings and tail still clear-doped and the fuselage in grey undercoat, was pushed onto the muddy Stag Lane aerodrome, and Geoffrey de Havilland climbed aboard. Waving away the chocks, he taxied out and, turning into the wind, took off in a mere 100 yards. Steadily he climbed, banked and banked again. He checked the stall and landed. He taxied over, beckoned to Broad, who climbed onto the wing for a hasty word, then hopped into the front cockpit. This time de Havilland made a more extended flight and Broad tried the dual controls. They returned jubilant. This was the aeroplane they had been waiting for.

On 2 March 1925, the Moth was exhibited to the Press. Captain Hubert Broad took off from Stag Lane and stunted the Moth as if it were a fighter. Later, he took up several passengers and proved conclusively that the Moth was sturdy, could take off quickly, land slowly, and be controlled perfectly in the air. By then the Moth had been fitted with larger wheels to cope with the soggy aerodrome. Several types of propellers were tried, and eventually the one that gave the best compromise between climb and full-out revs was chosen.

It was the attractive shape that drew admirers to the Moth. Here was a plane that the weekend flyer or the young pupil wanted to fly and St. Barbe's publicity made the Moth the most desirable aeroplane to own, and everyone in aviation wanted to see if it was as good as rumour had it. Within a week, the Air Ministry and the Light Aeroplane Clubs were invited to Stag Lane to see for themselves. Meanwhile, Broad flew the Moth about the country to emphasise that this was indeed a practical aircraft. The Air Ministry was in a quandary, for they could not deny that de Havilland had produced an excellent machine but, if they were to order Moths, then what were they going to do about the other aircraft built to their own light aeroplane rules?

To thwart any further criticism regarding favouritism, the Director of Civil Aviation, Sir Sefton Brancker, said, "It's no good talking like a lot of old women. What we've got to do is get on with the flying." He announced, on 16 April 1925, that the Air Ministry ordered two Moths with a spare engine for each of the five Light Aeroplane clubs they were promoting. Each club would have a different fuselage colour, silver (later changed to brown, then yellow) for the London Aeroplane Club, red for Newcastle Aero Club, green for Midland Aero Club, blue for Lancashire Aero Club, and red and orange for Yorkshire Light Aeroplane Club. Settled.

In the meantime the de Havilland Company continued to promote the Moth. Alan Cobham flew the prototype from Croydon to Zurich and back in one day and St. Barbe ensured that the newspapers gave the Moth plenty of coverage so that the public began to associate the Moth with the name de Havilland.

At last, the great day came when the Lancashire Aero Club would get their first Moth. It was to fly from Stag Lane to Woodford, and arrangements were made to give it a great reception. All the members were urged to bring as many friends as possible, and notices were put in the Press inviting the public. As hardly anyone in the north had seen a light aeroplane, a large crowd was expected. The landing and reception were timed for seven o'clock in the evening.

In a test flight that morning, Broad noted a mysterious loss of "revs" and mechanics were working frantically to find the cause. Arriving at Stag Lane, Leeming was told that the Lancashire Moth had engine trouble. Two hours before the Moth was due at Woodford, the mechanics discovered the trouble, which was serious and would take at least two days to fix. Leeming knew that if no aeroplane reached Woodford, the future of the Club looked grim for ridicule would kill it. de Havilland's could not help for their own machine, G-EBKT, had gone to Coventry that morning, and nobody knew when Cobham would return.



Leeming was about to panic when, at 5:25 p.m., Cobham returned. They decided to go to Woodford in G-EBKT, as few people there would realise that it was not the Lancashire machine. They landed at Woodford at 7:30 p.m. to the appreciation of a large crowd. Only Tom Prince, a committee member, noticed the Moth was different.

“Have you signed for this machine?” he demanded. Leeming nodded.

“Then we’ve been done. I knew it would happen. They’ve framed us. They’ve palmed off an old machine on you. I tell you, it’s one painted up. It’s been used and...”

“Hush!” Leeming implored. “I’ll explain later.”

“It’s not new!” Prince shouted. “We mustn’t take delivery. I’ll talk to the pilot!”

The next day the local Press applauded the safe arrival of the Moth. By the time folk got to read the paper, Cobham was on his way back to Stag Lane in the Moth. That evening Leeming’s telephone rang, and at the other end was a very worried Club member.

“I went down,” he stuttered, “thought I’d just have another look at it, and the Moth’s gone! It’s gone! Just isn’t there! The farmer says two men came about eleven o’clock this morning, and one of them flew it away! Aren’t you going to get the police?”

Leeming assured him that wasn’t necessary.

But the engine in the Lancashire Moth continued to give trouble, and some said it was a plot so the London Aeroplane Club could be the first Club to get a Moth, which did happen. The opening ceremony took place at Stag Lane on 19 August 1925 and to be fair, the first Lancashire’s Moth was delivered just a few days later.

The first eighteen Moths were hand-built and all showed slight differences and improvements were incorporated as they were produced. Each successful modification was installed in all the following machines so that production Moths had horn balanced rudders and a spring-dampened exhaust pipe that ran along the left side of the fuselage as well as several minor changes.

Orders for Moths increased as the planes flew further afield, and Frank Hearle devised ways to reduce the assembly time so the factory could build the Moths already on order. This could only be done by using jigs. Harold Povey, having recently moved to Stag Lane from Southampton, where he had built aeroplanes for the Airco owned firm of May, Harden & May, was asked to build them. To save time, Povey designed the jigs at home. Hearle wanted them built of spruce to save money, but Povey insisted on making them of teak for strength. Soon Povey’s teak jigs reduced the assembly time from one week to one day. The rest is history.

Miss Winifred Spooner is applying oil to the exposed rocker arms of the Cirrus engine prior to her participation in the 1928 King’s Cup Race from London to Glasgow and back over two days. Her Moth was three years old and the engine had already accumulated over 1,000 hours flight time, yet she managed to beat the handicappers and come in third at an average speed of 83.5 mph. The race was won by a Gipsy Moth at an average speed at 105.5 mph.



# NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST MOTH

By Murray E. Kirkus



NZ's first Moth taxiing at Tamaki

All photos with permission from Auckland Libraries Collection



Douglas Mill (left) with Williamson of the NZ Herald holding the Eagle camera at Tamaki prior to the first flight.

DH60X Cirrus II Moth serial number 500 was an improved DH 60X Moth with the engine seated lower so the tops of the cylinder heads were in line with the fuselage decking giving a much improved performance. The new owner, Mr F. Douglas Mill, of Hobsonville, had learned to fly with the New Zealand Flying School at Kohimarama, and had travelled to London with his wife to take delivery of this machine. While there he had flown another Moth with the London Aeroplane Club to refresh his flying skills. G-NZAT was modified for aerial photography with an Eagle 7" x 7" format camera mounted in the front cockpit. Mill and his Moth sailed from London on the Mataroa and arrived at Wellington on 17 Feb 1928. Taken to Auckland the Moth made its first flight from a large field at Tamaki, Auckland, on 11 March 1928.

Douglas Mill formed the Aerial Survey and Transport Company Ltd at Hobsonville with the intention of training other pilots, aerial photography and making airmail deliveries around New Zealand. In addition de Havillands had appointed him as their agent for New Zealand.

Taking off at Tamaki







Douglas Mill and his wife Audrey with the Moth loaded up. All the camera gear went into the front cockpit

Shortly after test flying the Moth, Mill flew it to Hobsonville where he built a hangar for it. Then he and his wife, Audrey, embarked on an extensive tour of New Zealand during which they took aerial photographs of Town and country, the first civil registered aircraft to undertake such work in this country.

Departing Auckland on 27 March 1928, Mr and Mrs Mill flew to Hawera, where they overnighted, demonstrating the aircraft to interested parties before flying to Blenheim the following morning where the aircraft was again put through its paces. Next day they flew to Christchurch. On 12 April they flew back to Blenheim and then across Cook Strait landing at Trentham race course. Setting out for Auckland the following day the Mills were forced to spend the night on the beach near Kawhia after encountering strong head winds and running out of daylight

Early in July 1928 G-NZAT was again flown south to Blenheim this time as guest of the newly formed Marlborough Aero Club who were without an aircraft. In November 1928 G-NZAT was again engaged in aerial photographic work. This work involved photographing a large uncharted area of the King Country near Te Kuiti from a height of 12,000 feet. To reach this altitude the aircraft took off from Hobsonville and climbed at its maximum from takeoff until overhead the Te Kuiti area. Flying in those pioneering days was not without incident and when landing at Bell Block, New Plymouth on 20 December 1928, when enroute from Ausckland to Hastings, one wing struck a large gorse bush swingng the aircraft around just so the other wing could hit a fence post damaging the leading edge. When the revised system of international aircraft markings came into effect on 1 January 1929, G-NZAT became ZK-AAB and soon after Douglas Mill sold the machine for £675 to the Hawke's Bay Aeroplane Club which had been in operation for some months with T. W. (Tiny) White giving flight theory tuition. At last they had an aeroplane to put the theory to the test.





The temporary hangar built by Douglas Mill at Hobsonville

Reference to the late group captain T. W. White's log books put the date of the first dual instructional flight in AAB as February 17, 1929, preceeding the Marlborough Aero Club by just two days. Geoff Field, now a life member of H.B. & E.C. Aero Club was the first pupil. This early flying was carried out from a field at Longlands about 3km from the present Bridge Pa site. A second mishap befell AAB only three days after the commencement of flying training, repairs taking close to two months. AAB appeared to have had an uneventful life for the next three years. However, in June 1932 whilst being flown by Simon Baring, a Gisborne member of the aero club the aircraft was spun into the Poverty Bay golf course during a landing approach resulting in substantial damage. During the rebuild which took almost two years AAB was re-engined with a Gipsy I motor recovered from the club's Gipsy Moth which had crashed at Napier, Christmas Eve 1933 with fatal results. In April 1935, AAB again came to grief at Gisborne when it struck a fence, back in the air two months later it wasn't long before the aircraft was in the limelight again, 16 months later at Waimarama when it flipped during an attempted beach landing. No sooner had repairs been effected from the Waimarama incident when AAB, showing a liking for golf courses, stalled and crashed onto the Maraenui golf links near Napier on March 8, 1936. The club's engineer repaired the aircraft which was flying again in late May the same year. The final years of ZK-AAB's life were very busy but fortunately accident-free - it is recorded that 1000 hours flying were logged in the aircraft during the month of January 1937. Following a C of A renewal in August 1937 the aircraft was seldom flown and early in 1938 it made its last flight. Flown to Hobsonville the aircraft was dismantled and the fuselage scrapped, the registration ZK-AAB was cancelled in May 1938, thus ending an interesting chapter in aviation of what must surely be one of the most notable aircraft flown by any Aero club in this country.

Mill's Moth at Otaha with Michael Studholme on the horse





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# Aviation100

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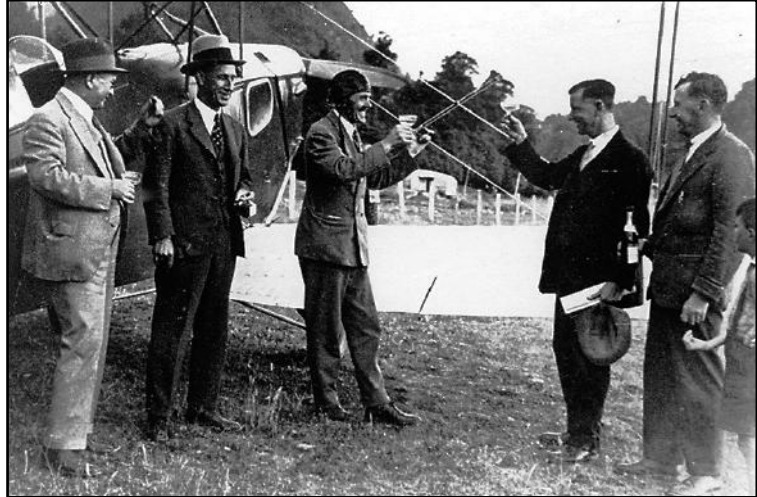
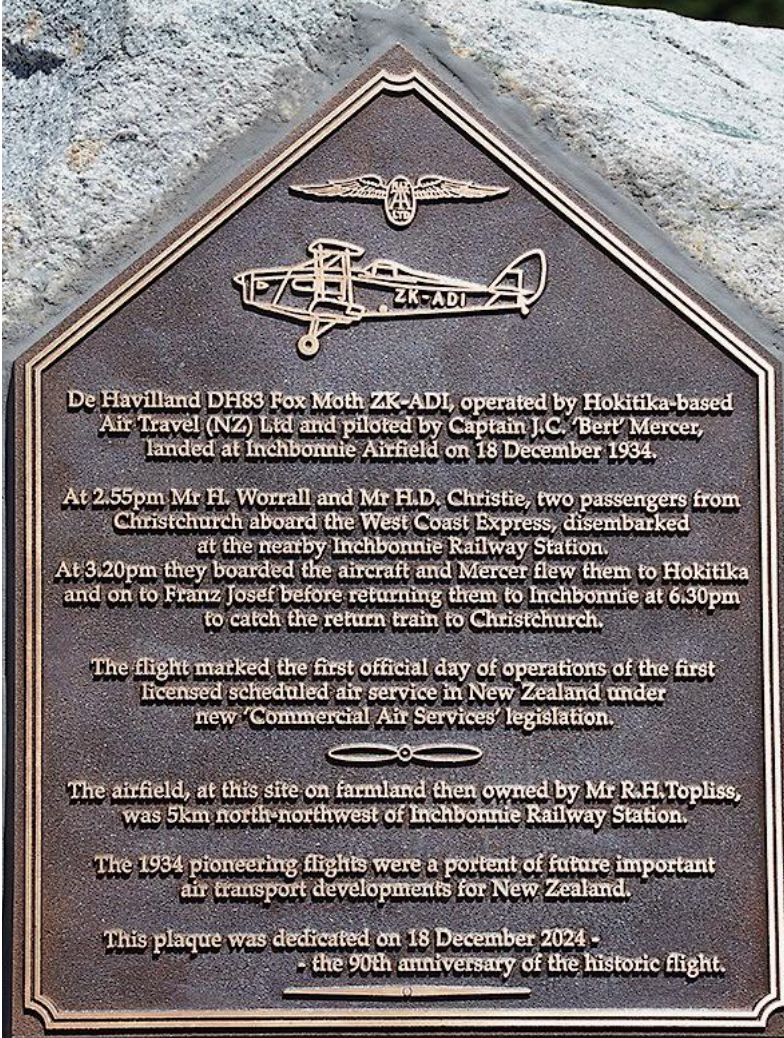
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From left: Harry Worrall, James Delahunty, Bert Mercer, Peter and Alex Graham at Franz Josef on 18 Dec 1934 Cheers!

## Inchbonnie 90 years on

*John King words and photographs*

The first airline to start, even if it was the second to be granted a licence under the new regulations after East Coast Airways, was Bert Mercer's Air Travel (NZ) Ltd, based in Hokitika and serving the remote hamlets and farmsteads of South Westland. His choice of airliner was a DH83 Fox Moth, already familiar to him during his time as instructor and commercial pilot with the Canterbury Aero Club on the other side of the Southern Alps.

On 18 December 1934 New Zealand's continuing and unbroken airline sequence began. Mercer flew Fox Moth ZK-ADI from Hokitika to a newly established—and still being developed—aerodrome near Inchbonnie, midway between the Taramakau River and Lake Brunner, east of Hokitika and on the Midland Railway, whose completion in 1923 with the Oтира Tunnel had meant so much to the Coasters.

The express arrived from Christchurch at the Inchbonnie railway halt at 2.55pm, depositing two passengers, Hume Christie and the airline's chairman of directors, Harry Worrall. They were driven the few kilometres from the railway to the aerodrome, and Mercer took off at 3.20, landing briefly at Hokitika 20 minutes later. Airborne again at 3.55, they landed at Franz Josef Glacier on the original airfield under the hotel less than an hour later, having circled the glacier.

Together with Alex and Peter Graham, the well-known mountain guides who ran the hotel, they celebrated the flight with a glass of bubbly, had afternoon tea at the hotel and were airborne again at 5.35, landing back at Inchbonnie 55 minutes later, in plenty of time to connect with the 4.30pm mixed train from Greymouth which picked them up at 7pm. For the first time a return trip for tourists from Christchurch to the glaciers had been made in one day, even if the mixed train meant a slow trip home with its many stops and shuntings.

Celebration of the Midland Railway's centenary, benefiting from local government and other official support, helped facilitate a 90th anniversary celebration of that first scheduled air service. The site of the original aerodrome was identified and the tired railway shelter, long blown off its foundations, was refurbished and placed back on its feet, sporting a new name board courtesy of the Ferrymead Trust.





**ADI start Greymouth:** Armstrong start at Greymouth before joyriding and flying over the Inchbonnie celebrations. (Actually it's Glenn Armstrong in the cockpit and Ben Morrison doing the hard work.)

An estimated 300 people, including the entire roll of the Lake Brunner School dressed in period clothing over their normal school uniform, gathered at the side of the Kumara Inchbonnie Road for the unveiling of a plaque and interpretation board overlooking the original aerodrome site in a picturesque valley between 4000ft hills on either side. In perfect sunny weather, vintage cars shuttled people between the station and the celebrations, while overhead flew that very same Fox Moth that had started it all, exactly 90 years ago.

ZK-ADI was unable to land there as the aerodrome had long reverted to a set of large farm paddocks, recontoured to help drainage. A basic airstrip with only a slight dogleg had been arranged close to the station, but the Fox Moth had been out of the air for the preceding six years and neither Glenn Armstrong nor Ben Morrison, its pilots from Mandeville, was particularly current on type or felt comfortable about risking such a historic aeroplane—not to mention his reputation—on anything but a decent runway. (Nobody said anything about the insurance aspect...)

**Inchbonnie airstrip:** Local aeroplanes and Darren Luff's Tiger Moth from Whanganui gather at a temporary airstrip behind the railway halt at Inchbonnie.





The Inchbonnie railway halt after restoration in December 2024.



**Inchbonnie flypast:** DH83 Fox Moth, which operated New Zealand's first licensed air service, from Inchbonnie to Franz Josef Glacier on 18 December 1934, flies over the old aerodrome site exactly 90 years later.



Still, five local aeroplanes landed on the strip to provide aerial support—plus Darren Luff from Whanganui in his Tiger Moth ZK-BEF. Darren also undertook a re-enactment flight to Franz Josef, in company with Tom Williams in the Greymouth Aero Club's Savannah, ZK-SUA, and back to Greymouth. Even better, Darren offered this reporter the front cockpit for the occasion, and the opportunity to retrace that route of 90 years ago in a de Havilland biplane really capped off an already memorable day.

Conditions were perfect for the entire flight. The inland route southwards, direct from Inchbonnie to Franz Josef, showed signs of blue thermals at a couple of thousand feet, and the highest Southern Alps looked spectacular above some local stratus. Air Safaris' narrow gravel/sealed runway, never ideal for tailskids, showed the wisdom of carrying a savvy passenger when needing to do a U-turn to taxi back to the parking bay, but it was soon time to head northwards again.

The return flight was even better, in the relative warmth of 500–700ft along the coast with a gentle sea breeze quartering tailwind and not a bump anywhere. This was true Tiger Moth territory, I thought, even if the beachside airstrip at Okarito looked more suitable for Super Cubs and 180s than for Tigers.

I can also report that Darren's flying of his Tiger Moth was exemplary, with full attention to balance and approach speeds, and his gentle three-point landings showed the mark of a pilot well familiar with his aeroplane.

As custodians of working pieces of history, our club members have obligations. Among those are recognising our aeroplanes' part in this country's aviation and reminding the public of that by being seen out and about at appropriate times. The 90th anniversary of the start of New Zealand's airline industry was a good example, and the centenary of the DH60 Moth on Saturday 22 February will provide an opportunity to demonstrate that history is still being carried on.



**Inchbonnie gathering:** Richard Waugh addresses a large gathering of West Coasters, including the entire Lake Brunner School pupils dressed in period clothing over their school uniforms and suffering in the heat.



**Inchbonnie Tiger Moth:** Darren Luff's ZK-BEF is ready to depart from the Inchbonnie airstrip for the re-enactment flight to Franz Josef, exactly 90 years after the first licensed air service.



**Okarito:** The airstrip along the beach at Okarito, as seen from ZK-BEF, looks more suitable for Super Cubs and Cessna 180s than for Tiger Moths.







ZK-ADI in February 1997 over South Westland after refurbishment by Croydon Aircraft Company at Mandeville. (John King)

### **The repatriation of ZK-ADI** *by Gerald Grocott*

I'd always been aware that G-ADHA was NZ's oldest airliner, originally ZK-ADI. It grieved me somewhat that the DH83 Fox Moth had been sold out of NZ in the first place. I had kept an interest in its domicile, firstly USA and then in the UK, and I had bumped into Brian Woodford at various de Havilland flying events in the UK. He had a glorious collection of de Havillands and a stack of vintage cars too, all down at Chalmington Manor in Dorset. Nothing was for sale, not at any price.

In early 1995 I caught wind that things were not so matrimonially wonderful in the Woodford world. The wife, Laura, was Asian, I think Singaporean. She had supposedly heard whispers of her husband's impropriety while away in Asia and as a result had a serious sense of humour failure. The word was that she wanted out of the marriage, Chalmington Manor, the de Havilland aircraft and the vintage car collection.

I decided that a visit to Chalmington Manor was probably in order, and off I went by rental car from Heathrow. It was winter time. It was a distinctly chilly, grey day with heavy rain showers.

I pulled up under the portico at the rear of the Manor to see a pile of clothing on the bitumen, mostly in a large rain puddle. The pile was being added to from an upper storey window by a very motivated young Asian woman. She was definitely on a mission of removal of what looked to be male clothing. The upper storey Energiser-bunny turned out to be Laura Woodford.

Yes, everything was for sale, including the owner of the Manor! She made me a tea and we chatted amicably. She produced a list of the aircraft and vintage cars, clearly an accountant's summary because it contained all the present book values of each item.

The Manor phone rang elsewhere and Laura left me alone with this list for a few minutes. I had no camera or cellphone with me, but I quickly realised that some of this data was of priceless to me and needed to be recorded. She'd left a felt pen on a nearby table, so I rolled up my sleeve and wrote down on my arm the values of around five aircraft before I heard rumblings outside that pre-empted Laura's return. Sleeve down, list restored to the coffee table and a fake serious face shown to suppress my inner delight!

I exchanged some fax numbers for she, me and Brian in Singapore, and a promise was

I exchanged some fax numbers for she, me and Brian in Singapore, and a promise was made that I would deal directly with “his lordship” in Singapore for any interest that I had. I sent several faxes over a month to Brian in Singapore but never received any reply. Bugger.

Over Christmas 1995 I was flying an MD-11 for Swissair to Nairobi for a few days. We stayed then at a rather exclusive safari/golf resort. On the 28th I was checking out at the reception when I saw Laura. We recognised each other.

“Oh”, she said, “his nibs is downstairs having breakfast.”

“Really? I thought that you would have slain him by now, if our last meeting was any guideline.”

“No, it’s all lovey-dovey again. Come and say hello.”

So I popped down to say Hi to Brian ...

“Have you still got the Fox Moth?”

“Yes, why?”

“Well, why didn’t you answer any of my bloody faxes that I sent to you in Singapore?”

“Never received any faxes from you, Gerald.”

“OK. Be that as it may. Is the Fox still for sale?”

“Yes.”

We exchanged email addresses. I promised to contact him. He promised to answer my emails. Within a week I had purchased G-ADHA. The Fox hadn’t flown for a few years. The airstrip at Chalmington Manor was quite short in length but smooth grass because it was also the front lawn of the Manor. Going to be interesting getting a Fox Moth airborne off that strip, I thought ... I contacted Henry Labouchere in Fakenham, the best and most practical de Havilland engineer/pilot that I knew in the UK. He said, “Not a problem ole chap. I’ll pop over next week and fly it to my base in Norfolk.” I met him there the following week and he flew the Fox off to his base. I never flew G-ADHA in the UK. My first chance was at Mandeville on 29 March 1997 (1h 45m) after Rod Hall-Jones had earlier done all the ZK-ADI test flying.

Two views of ZK-ASP at Abbotsford, BC during the airshow on 8 August 1975

(Photos Janic Geelen)



John King adds: Myles Robertson took the Fox Moth, still with its postwar ZK-ASP registration, to the USA IN April 1974 for a tour of that country. At the July 1974 EAA convention and airshow at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, it was judged the Most Unusual Antique, and in September the following year it was registered N83DH to Hamburg Aerodrome, Lakeview, New York. In December 1984 the historic Fox Moth went to the UK, now registered G-ADHA, to join the growing vintage aircraft fleet of Brian Woodford at 17th-century Chalmington Manor in West Dorset.

Nigel Hitchman reported: “When ZK-ASP/ADI arrived in the UK from Hamburg, NY, it was a basket case in need of a total restoration. This was done by Ron Souch and his company Aero Antiques, and the completed aircraft was painted as G-ADHA in the King’s Flight colours.”

The Woodford collection was extensive, financed by his Monarch Aviation, a large Singapore-based company dealing in military and commercial components and aircraft. In December 2007 his wife Laura Lang-Woodford, a US citizen, was arrested in San Francisco and charged – together with her husband in absentia – with illegally exporting controlled US military aircraft components to Iran. She was sentenced to 46 months in prison and ordered to forfeit US\$500,000 to the US Treasury Department, while Brian Woodford remained a fugitive.





### **The background to the photo** *Story and photos by John King*

Back in the 1980s a Warbirds New Zealand syndicate bought DHC-2 Beaver ZK-CKH and, after much research, painted it as a genuine warbird – representing NZ6001, the RNZAF Beaver that served alongside Auster NZ1707 with New Zealand’s participation in the 1955–58 Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

That original NZ6001 first flew at McMurdo Sound on 15 January 1957, was returned to New Zealand in 1958 but was shipped south again for the 1959–60 summer season. When somebody remembered that the RNZAF’s first jet aircraft, the Gloster Meteor displayed so enthusiastically around the country that it was retired to the back of a hangar with a wrinkly airframe, had worn the serial NZ6001, the Beaver was changed to NZ6010 in August 1959, not long before it crashed on the Beardmore Glacier where it remains 65 years later, slightly lower in elevation as that outlet from the Antarctic Plateau gradually adds to the Ross Ice Shelf.

While appreciating the colour scheme of the Warbirds’ “NZ6001”, I’d always thought its bright orange was wasted on an aeroplane based at Ardmore, a couple of hundred kilometres from the nearest even seasonal snow. Still, it proved useful occasionally as a camera platform, and in August 1991 demonstrated another use.

Glenn Thompson had been flying ZK-ANQ, the Tiger Moth he shared with Alan Land and Martin Burdan and temporarily painted overall red, on film work in the Mackenzie Country. On experiencing an engine vibration that he, as a LAME well acquainted with Gipsy Majors, associated with a centre main bearing problem, he nursed the Tiger Moth back to Lake Tekapo Airport and tucked it into the back of the Air Safaris hangar to await retrieval.

A rescue mission was mounted from Auckland. Into the Beaver’s cabin early one winter’s morning were inserted four full-size blokes, their luggage with plenty of winter woollies, two engineer’s large toolboxes and a complete Gipsy Major engine lashed down on its stand, all of which made little apparent difference to the performance of the Beaver.



Chief pilot – indeed the only pilot on this occasion, as he was the member of the Beaver syndicate – was Greg Bryham, accompanied by engineer Glenn Thompson and with Alan Land and me as willing assistants. We dropped into Palmerston North to collect Kelly, Glenn’s fiancée, as the fifth member of the team, and trundled off southwards.

Refuelling at West Melton revealed a minor technical hitch in the form of a lazy generator and not enough battery power to turn the engine over. Not a problem, said Glenn, son of veteran Fieldair pilot Bruce Thompson, who had grown up surrounded by topdressing Beavers. We weren’t going anywhere to need radio on the last leg, so he demonstrated the ease of an Armstrong hand start on a willing Pratt & Whitney R-985 Wasp Junior.

Since I’d learnt to fly in Canterbury and was familiar with that part of the South Island, I was nominated right-hand front seat navigator for this sector. The weather closed in as we crossed the South Canterbury hills, and by the time we passed Fairlie it was raining. Burkes Pass was open, if not by much, but it was still light enough to see the cars on SH8 had their wipers going as well as their headlights on. In the distance through the rain was the welcome sight of Tekapo’s wet runway, and the Beaver was tied down behind the wind fence and its crew driven into town by Air Safaris’ hospitable Richard Rayward.

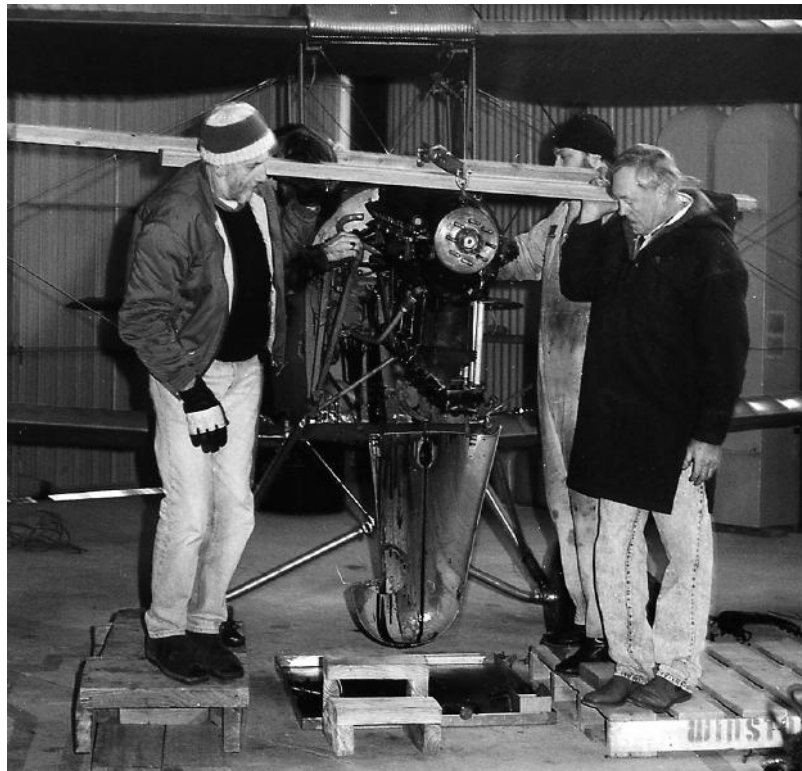
Next morning the rain turned to snow. The good news was that we’d be swapping Gipsy Major engines inside a hangar. The bad news was that the hangar was unheated. But undaunted and wearing all the gear we’d brought with us, we carried the engine inside to the Tiger Moth and set to work.

Unloading the Gipsy Major at Tekapo



Changing engines without the benefit of any lifting device revealed the wisdom of mustering a multi-bloke team, backs for the straightening of, and the use of pallets and ropes to ease the suspect Gipsy Major out of its bearers, realise something hadn’t been disconnected, ease it back again and later place it carefully on something soft, then reversing the process with something Glenn assured us would go better. That took pretty much all of a short winter’s day, following which we retreated into the warmth of a Lake Tekapo hotel with plenty of hot water as the aerodrome’s pipes had all frozen.

Lifting the Gipsy



Snowplough hard at work clearing the runway at Tekapo



Bright sunshine, blue skies and an oops! icy main road, plus a cheerful Richard and warm van, greeted us next morning. The last things were connected and checked, and while Richard ploughed the runway's snow ZK-ANQ was wheeled outside for a test run-up.

As the day progressed and the team members were cycled through the Armstrong volunteer/conscript list, the Gipsy Major's complete lack of response was starting to receive a certain amount of criticism. Glenn was finally persuaded to go back to first principles and discovered that in predictable midnight-oil conditions when assembling the engine he'd timed the magnetos 180 degrees out. That was soon sorted, but he did have to provide the beer that evening.

Day four dawned again clear and blue. Any fresh engine installation requires a test flight, but the thought of landing a brakeless Tiger Moth back on an ice-covered sealed runway delineated by snow banks brought suggestions that, unless something really serious was encountered immediately, the first takeoff would have to be the start of the trek homewards.

Alan was nominated test/ferry pilot and I, with ideas of photographing an Antarctic Beaver against an appropriately white landscape, volunteered to go with him all the way back to Auckland. With both of us and our luggage aboard, the Tiger Moth was carefully aimed down the centre of the runway and we took off. Considering the potential drama involved, that proved something of an anti-climax, but we circled the airfield area just in case, keeping a close eye on the oil pressure and waiting for the Beaver to take off – which it duly did once somebody remembered the flaps – and catch us up for an external in-flight inspection for obvious oil leaks and a few photos in the other direction.

Yes, an open cockpit a couple of thousand feet above a completely snow-covered Mackenzie Country can be on the cool side. So cool, in fact, that one camera refused to function, but that's what multiple cameras were for back in pre-digital days, and I did manage a couple of medium-format photographs before we headed north, with the air noticeably warmer back the other side of Burkes Pass.

The first stop was Simon Spencer-Bower's Claxby farm, northwest of Christchurch, for a thorough engine duplicate inspection by Bob McGarry and Glenn. Alan then did another test flight, solo this time but with the opportunity for an unusual tail view of a Tiger Moth in flight, courtesy of Simon's R22 helicopter.

With a stiff southerly tailwind we probably set a new Cook Strait crossing record for DH biplanes, even with the obligatory circling of the ferry in mid-strait, but after negotiating the tricky airspace around Feilding and heading towards Taumarunui, things became less straightforward.



Gipsy starts in the cold

Low cloud around the jumbled Matemateaonga Range tiger country prevented any straight-line progress, and one farmer doing some fencing on a ridge was doubtless startled by a red Tiger Moth suddenly appearing out of the murk, but eventually a town came into view. The only problem was that it bore no resemblance to the desired Taumarunui but looked much more like Raetihi, not far from where we'd started this scud running. Never mind; the road down to Pipiriki was obvious and the Wanganui River (as it was known last century) from there led right past Taumarunui, so navigation was no longer a problem.

Except for the rain and low cloud, which meant flying this grey-roofed, green-walled, brown-floored tunnel with all its twists and turns. For some reason I was doing the flying from the front cockpit – map in the back and with no intercom – head out the side and rather enjoying myself, until rounding one bend it looked to me as though the next stretch was impenetrable. So with one swift U-turn we were flying back downriver, thankful for the long-range tank which let us reach Hawera with no further worries. (Previously untested oil consumption turned out to be another matter.)

Alan reckoned he might have gone one bend further, so we decided we were a compatible Tiger Moth team. He also related the tale of Charlie Down, who retired from aerial topdressing in 1977 after 20 years on the job.

Charlie and his young offsider were topdressing in the Taumarunui district and having their Tiger Moths maintained in Wanganui, typically on days when weather prevented any work. One wet day Charlie sent his young pilot ahead, with the brief that if he saw him coming back he'd know it wasn't possible to fly all the way down the river. Charlie then took off and flew through the murk, head out to the left as one does in a Tiger Moth, wiping the rain off his goggles and concentrating on his navigation, but when he reached Wanganui there was no sign of the other pilot. He'd turned back, so at some stage the pair of Tigers passed each other at low level down the river, each pilot with his head out the left and peering through the rain, missing the other aeroplane by probably not very much.

I must have occupied the driver's seat for the last leg, because my logbook records 2hrs 25min in ZK-ANQ from Hawera to Ardmore on 22 August 1991 (thanks Alan!), but that was entirely uneventful. As so often happens, the allegedly "easily washed off" temporary red paint proved otherwise, and until rebagging a few years later ANQ had the look of somebody with a particularly serious skin ailment. The Tiger Moth is now based in Masterton as part of the TVAL stable, useful for keeping pilots current and proficient in flying elderly biplanes, even if it was designed several years after the World War I focus of its stablemates.





Prop start at West Melton

The wreck of the original NZ6001 in Antarctica with the RNZAF Auster in the background.







## In a high tech world, you still can't beat seat of the pants.

I'm 50 feet above Ardmore's grass runway in an 82-year-old aeroplane, seconds from landing in a somewhat gusty wind. My feet, hands and face are numb after an aerobatic flight 3000 feet over the Hunua Ranges. The engine is throttled back as we fly slower and slower, aiming to pull off that perfect "three point" landing all vintage aeroplane pilots shoot for.

The only niggle is that I can't see where I'm going.

Forward visibility in the 1931-designed Tiger Moth is poor to start with. The long nose and the way that its biplane wings connect to the fuselage and each other by a forest of struts and wires are part of the problem. On top of that, the passenger's open cockpit is in front of the pilot's, adding another obstruction.

Right now, my passenger is causing another issue. It's winter, so he's wearing a heavy hooded jacket. For most of the flight, his hood has stayed tucked down against his neck.

Now, 50 feet above the ground, some combination of airspeed, sideslip and propeller slipstream has conspired to catch and inflate his hood behind him and in front of my face, like a goose down-stuffed frilled-neck lizard.

What little forward visibility I had has gone.

I can see with my peripheral vision though that we're both pointing and travelling the right way (two subtly different things) and the aeroplane feels like it's descending at about the right rate and speed.

If I'd looked down at my airspeed indicator it would probably have told the same story too. The Tiger Moth I'm flying has a fancy (1942-style fancy) dial that indicates speed based on air pressure hitting its intake. Older models had a weather vane on the wing that was forced back against a spring and pointed to a speed scale.

But there's no need to look down. I know what our approach speed should feel and sound like. The wind on my cheeks, the sound of the engine, the downward angle of the nose and what the stick is telling me about the airflow over the tailplane all confirm that we're on the numbers.

Luckily, the passenger and his inflated hood are within arm's reach in front of me, so I stretch forward, grab his hood and stuff it down. He gets the idea and holds onto it until we settle to earth.

The landing is a tidy three-pointer.

I'm flying these old aeroplanes a bit these days. The De Havilland Tiger Moth was designed in 1931 and as it was available and easy to build, became the standard British Empire training aircraft in WW2. The one I fly was built in 1942 in Rongotai, in a shed that became Wellington Airport's domestic terminal. I also fly more modern aeroplanes, with autopilots, computer screens and all sorts of navigation equipment and instruments. Even without all these gadgets, they're just plain easier to fly. You don't really have to pay much attention to them. The Tiger Moth does need attention though. And the attention it demands, the constant movements of stick and rudder, listening to the engine, feeling and hearing the difference between flying straight and sliding sideways, teaches me things that make me better at flying modern aeroplanes. Flying the old, low-tech aeroplane teaches me to be a better pilot in 2024. I'm not a full-time pilot anymore. In my day job in advertising, I use a keyboard, a word processor that checks my spelling and grammar, and occasionally AI. Sometimes, though, I use paper and a favourite pen. My dictionaries and grammar guides get pulled out now and then too. When we're working on something big in the office, we pin scribbles and printouts all over one of the noticeboards we keep just for that purpose.

Using the same old real, low-tech tactile tools an ad agency would have used in 1960 make us better at our work in 2024.

Our clients are modern. We use the latest digital channels to connect with customers who might never have touched a printed newspaper or watched linear TV. But we walk backwards into the future, and we're better for it. Ka mua ka muri.

### Vaughn Davis

Creative director and owner helping brands innovate and connect at The Goat Farm



## Are you prepared for the unexpected?

During the ten years or so that I have been involved and participating in the Tiger Moth Club's fly ins and competitions, I have been impressed with the standard of airmanship and professionalism displayed by members. The only ill discipline I have witnessed has been from visitors, probably trying to impress but in fact doing completely the opposite. When watching some of these antics, thankfully few and far between now, I reflect that in days gone by flying training including wing overs and max rate turns, some at low level, were taught and practiced at an ab initio level. Training aircraft then, like Tiger Moths, we're generally underpowered and had vices that made spin training and such like imperative.

With modern training aircraft most of these gotcha's have been designed out and the current training, in my opinion, has been "dumbed down" removing these requirements. The majority of current aircraft if handled badly, will still stall and spin and if the pilot has not been properly trained and practiced, the inevitable will happen. My reading of the Tiger Moth accidents over the last few years in the UK show several of these kinds of accidents... it's still happening.

Hence our excellent spin training course, it's not there for fun, but to protect you and your airplane. Have you completed the course? Have you been taught how to do wing overs and max rate turns correctly and safely? Think rapid deteriorating weather, the valley that is closing in on you or the ground that is out climbing you. You shouldn't be there, but what if?

As an aside, back to the top, anyone can do a low pass, but not many can do a safe wing over. Go back through the files and find out for yourself that it's not the low pass that wrecks the aircraft, it's the bit at each end that gets you. So, the guts of this message is training and anticipation. The US Navy Seals have an apt saying: "you don't rise to the occasion but sink to the level of your training". It emphasises the importance of preparation and the idea that you perform to the level of your preparation, not to your expectations. Nothing could be truer than this in aviation, if things go wrong and a rapid fix is required, our training and discipline takes over.

With the upcoming Tiger camp, how current are you? and how much training have you had in VFR cross country flying and navigation with a bit of loose formation thrown in? Have you been trained in formation flying and have you been trained in follow-the-leader trail while enjoying the scenery? Nothing is nicer than flying along at a sedate speed in an open cockpit watching the beautiful coastline or countryside going by, that's why we do it and love it. But without spoiling our fun there are hazards, and they generally happen quickly, so are we trained to anticipate and deal with these so that we can enjoy our travels in a relaxed and safe manner?

What's around the next headland, a paraglider, a flock of birds, a kontiki kite, what's over the next ridge, a top-dresser, a power line... stay up, anticipate and stay safe... and if the unexpected happens do you feel confident enough to cope? It's great to travel in small groups and we encourage that for mutual SAR, comradeship, look-out and learning for the inexperienced members etc. But, do you know how to fly safely and avoid collisions and what to do in the event of encountering bad weather in a group? Or what to do if the aircraft just in front of you makes a sudden unexpected move or has an engine failure? These and a host of other events can catch us if we don't anticipate and we all know this, but when they occur, are we ready?

There is a vast amount of experience within your club so please don't be afraid to ask for advice. Don't follow along if you feel uncomfortable about something, say so, there should be absolutely no embarrassment in doing so. We do our fly-ins and Tiger camps for the joy of the flying and friendship, but as with any recreation, there are hidden hazards. How we cope with them determines the outcome for all. As always, it will be fun!

Keith Skilling

Photo John King

ZK-ANQ flying over Canterbury. This is the kind of flying all Tiger Moth pilots dream about.





## ALAN LAND 1930–2024

The passing of Alan Land on 29 November has severed the Tiger Moth Club's links with one of its earliest, longest-standing and most loyal members. Until health problems hampered his movements in more recent years, Alan was proud of his record of having attended every single one of the club's AGM fly-ins, either by Tiger Moth where possible or in his aging but ever-reliable Subaru.



Alan was born in Tonga the year before the Tiger Moth saw first flight in England. His father, from a Canadian family but raised in Fiji, was responsible for Tonga's military radio communication system, while Alan and his sister and older and younger brothers were educated at boarding school in Cambridge. Following the Pearl Harbor attack and the sudden vulnerability of South Pacific nations, the family moved permanently to New Zealand, where Alan trained as an architectural draughtsman. He spent most of his life in Hawke's Bay, designing and building an elegant redwood home for his wife Alison and their three children, Kathy, Rose and Roger. Much of his flying was based at Bridge Pa, towing gliders, and he also officiated in the local Air Training Corps squadron. Alan part-owned two Tiger Moths – ZK-DAM with Murray Kirkus; and ZK-ANQ with Martin Burdan and Glenn Thompson. It would be fair to say that his aeroplane ownership (there was also a Piper PA-25-150 Pawnee later on, rescued from a barn), in the days before immaculate Tiger Moths attracted six-figure prices, was towards the threadbare end of a shoestring budget, as for various reasons Alan's business ventures never seemed to generate the expected income. Of a practical bent, Alan was willing to turn his hand to most things and was always helpful to others.

With the addition of a dangerous goods rating to his heavy traffic vehicle licence he drove the fuel truck the full length of New Zealand in support of two North Cape to Bluff vintage air rallies (the nearly compatible speed of truck and Tiger Moth was negated somewhat by winding roads), and his general can-do attitude helped his election as a Life Member. Alan's latter years were spent in a Katikati retirement village, not far from his daughter Rose in Waihi, but even in failing health he resisted going into a rest home on the basis that they were "full of old people". Last October, however, after another spell in Tauranga Hospital, he was persuaded to move to Athenree Rest Home and Hospital – where he died mere weeks later. His family respected his wish to have no funeral, and he was cremated on 2 December. Alan Land was good company with a fund of stories. As a friend he was reliable, and as a pilot he was careful and safe, not given to showing off but demonstrating the proper method of flying elderly aeroplanes. He will be missed.

John King

A memorial service for Alan will be held at the Waihi Memorial RSA at 10 am on 8 March 2025.





Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection Photo Murray Kirkus Hastings 1975

Built by de Havilland Aircraft Co of New Zealand Ltd, Wellington 130HP 4-cyl DH Gipsy Major  
 NZ1485

RNZAF [49]

INST 151

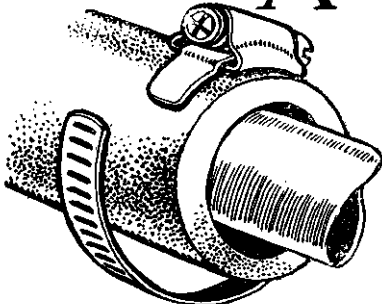
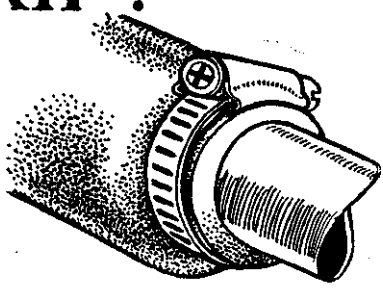
ZK-DAM 23 Dec 1969 29 Sqn ATC, Rotorua (with c/n 1485R)  
 16 Dec 1974 R. Alan Land & Murray E. Kirkus, Hastings  
 Crashed at Masterton 8 Dec 1976  
 Crashed at Gisborne 27 Jan 1979  
 17 May 1979 J. P. Bowcock & R. Alan Land, Gisborne  
 30 Sep 1981 R. Alan Land, Gisborne cancelled 2 Jun 1982  
 Exported to Australia

VH-JKE

VH-NVT 23 Sep 1986 K Alderman, Nowra, NSW  
 Flown by RAN Museum as A17-692  
 5 Jan 1999 William McKinney, Runaway Bay, Q  
 14 Dec 2001 John G. Peaker, Hervey Bay, Q  
 28 Aug 2003 Wills Hall Pty Ltd, t/a Fraser Aviation, Wondunna, Q  
 4 Jan 2006 Wills Hall Pty Ltd, Wondunna, Q

Wondering why this is here? Just happens the Jubilee Clip came out at the same time as the DH 60 Moth

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Alan Land refueling Photo Janic Geelen Masterton 29 Jan 1984

	Built by The de Havilland Aircraft Co Ltd, Hatfield	130HP 4-cyl DH Gipsy Major
R5011	28 Feb 1940 Royal Air Force 4 MU, Ruislip	(packed for shipping)
	Exported to New Zealand	Shipped abd RANGITANE arr Wellington
NZ892	23 Jul 1940 RNZAF Unit 18, Rongotai	
	RNZAF 3 EFTS	
	RNZAF 3 ASU, Taieri	(storage)
	T. E. Lawrence, Dargaville	
ZK-ANQ	21 Jan 1947 T. E. Lawrence, Dargaville	
	3 Aug 1948 Kaitaia Aero Club, Kaitaia	
	11 Jun 1953 Ray Webb-Pullman, Kaitaia	
	28 Jan 1954 Aداstra Ltd, Tauranga	(swapped for ZK-BCF)
	1 Jul 1955 D. A. Norman, Whangamata	
	9 Nov 1959 R. L. Scrivener, Tauranga	
	9 Aug 1983 R. Alan Land & J. F. Smith, Gisborne	
	1 Feb 1984 R. Alan Land, Gisborne	
	3 Nov 1987 G. S. Thompson & M. Burdan, Levin	
	Crashed near Palmerston North 15 Jul 1990	
	22 Jan 1992 Thompson, Land & Burdan Syndicate, Wellington	
	3 Jul 1992 Burdan & Cook Syndicate, Wellington	
	14 Feb 1996 Stuart A. Tantrum, Blenheim	
	1 Jul 2002 Omaka Collection Ltd, Masterton	
	1 Jul 2007 The Vintage Aviator Ltd, Masterton	

Photo Peter Lewis Ardmore



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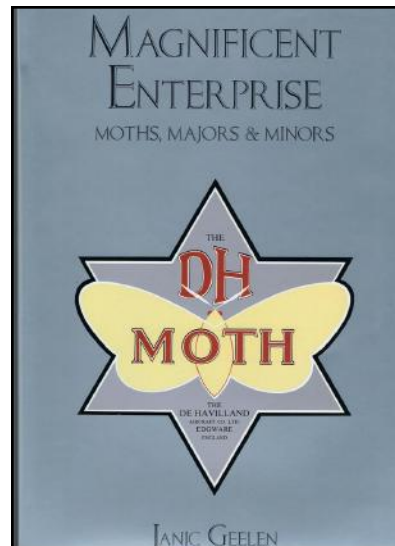
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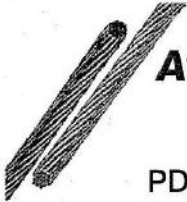
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### TIGER RAG PUBLICATION DATES

The Tiger Rag is your magazine so if you have any ideas or suggestions regarding what you would like to see included, please contact the editor:  
e-mail: [janic\\_g@yahoo.com](mailto:janic_g@yahoo.com)

Feb 2024 AGM info

May 2024 AGM pictorial and report on  
22 Feb 2025 Moth Centenary Day

Sep 2024 Taumarunui Fly-in info

Nov 2024 Taumarunui report



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Club Captain: Graeme Wood Phone: (09) 266 5044 Mobile: 027 293 2318

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LIFE MEMBERS: Simon Spencer-Bower, Jim Lawson, John Pheasant, Loretta McGarry, Bob McGarry, John King, Les Marshall, Eddie Doherty, Jeanette Lei



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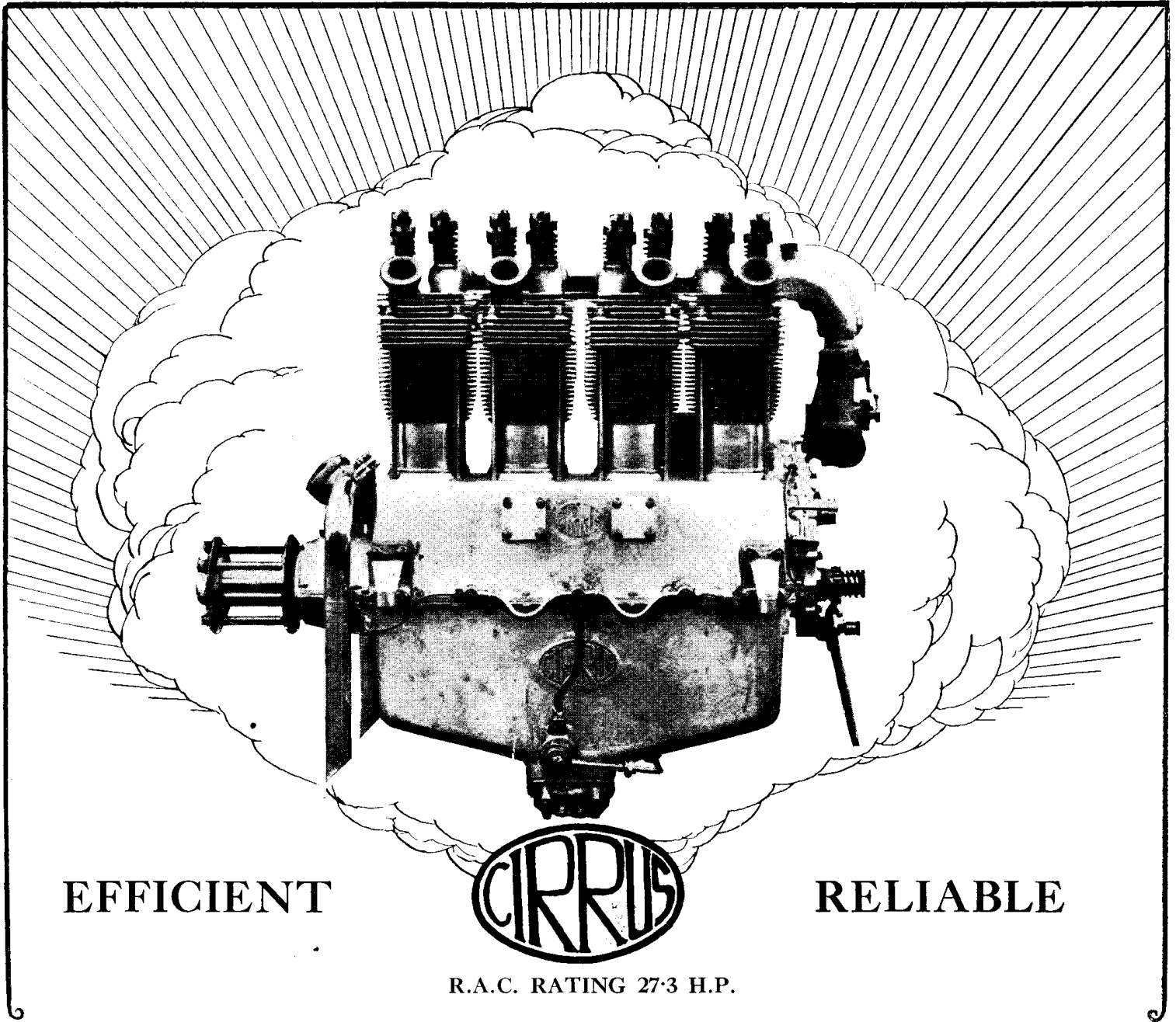
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