

# TIGER RAG



NEWSLETTER OF THE TIGER MOTH CLUB OF NEW ZEALAND INC

**FEBRUARY 2026**

Something you won't see at Kaipara Flats but don't let that stop you  
from getting to the AGM Fly-In



# PRESIDENTS REPORT 2026

Hello Members,

It gives me pleasure to forward this report of the Tiger Moth Club of NZ for 2026. The past year has been an active one as the club continues to champion the activities and things that brought it into existence so many years ago. Our last AGM Fly-in held at Karamea was well attended and very successful. The picturesque West Coast provided some outstanding flying for those who took part in the pre-AGM Tiger Camp entourage to the venue. This group circumnavigated the South Island commencing and ultimately finishing at Blenheim. Although not an official club event, these trips embody so much of our reason for being a special club of enthusiasts. Well done again Amanda Rutland for organising the group. At the AGM we ratified our newly updated constitution, and it was duly forwarded to the Companies Office. It was accepted immediately without alteration, and we thank John King for his efforts and for leading the update team. We also elected the incoming club officers, and I would like to touch on the administration at this point. As with all clubs, we encourage members to take a turn around the table and to consider what you can offer the club in terms of supporting it and strengthening its future. We need to keep an attitude of continuity and succession through the ranks for our own good. Anyone with the club at heart can fill these roles well and we particularly encourage people with administrative or secretarial skills to put their hand up.

Our spring fly In at Taumarunui is always a highlight and this year was a good one with the return of good weather for the Friday and Saturday. The airfield was presented in beautiful order for the large number of TMC arrivals and visitors and we thank the Taumarunui Aero Club for their invitation, especially Jeanette Lei for her co-ordination and effort. Competitions were well supported and once again the NZ Warbirds Association delegation from Auckland gave their time and expertise freely to a group who are advancing their formation flying skills. Our club very much appreciates this expert training being made available. A team of TMC members will perform a group fly past routine at this year's Warbirds Over Wanaka Airshow and other club members will perform solo demonstrations. Alas, an approaching weather bomb forecast to cover much of the country from Sunday for up to a week sent many attendees scarping late on Saturday afternoon, so missing the dinner and trophy night. It was a very enjoyable evening. A feature of the evening was the gifting of some excellent aviation collectable books by a founding member of the club, life member Loretta McGarry. A stalwart of a great many fly Inns, Loretta was unable to attend but wanted newer members to share her passion of vintage aviation. She also arranged for her unique car number plate **DH 82A** to be auctioned. Both the plates and Loretta hold significance.

Our involvement with the NZ Aviation Federation continues to keep us inside the tent of aviation governance and direction. With representatives from almost all major aviation participants, the NZAF is frequently addressed by and meets with top civil aviation governance officials who appear to value the contact with the federation. This can only be good and as an aviation group we are ultimately beneficiaries of the structure. This year our club donated \$1,000 to a school science model that was recommended by the NZAF. It is a travelling kit that teaches the science of flight with the aim of sowing seeds of aviation in an exciting and interesting way in the minds of children from 5 to 12 years old. I was at a presentation given to the NZAF and saw that same intrigue being aroused around the table of the country's leading aviation more senior people. The "toolboxes" as they are known will travel to schools around the country and we are likely to continue to support the scheme if it lives up to its promise. The government has announced its backing of the model.

Our scholarship for flying training in vintage aircraft was also continued with the recipient being Tom Koppen who has shown the qualities that we want to support. de Havilland aircraft, especially Tiger Moths continue to be rebuilt around NZ and one in particular, ZK-ATN, was a significant and high quality rebuild. The NZ origin of this aircraft was the first completed Tiger Moth from the de Havilland New Zealand Rongotai hangar, with serial number DHNZ.1. It was rebuilt for the NZ Warbirds Association and was shown off at Taumarunui by Graeme Wood as well as Warbirds President Frank Parker and Liz Needham. At least 10 Tiger Moths are currently under (re)construction with five in advanced stages.

The club continues to extend its welcome to all other aviation participants, especially vintage types, and we are pleased to offer the camaraderie enjoyed. Vintage aviation has some special needs in select areas such as engineering where the skills of yesteryear are no longer found in all maintenance businesses. Maintenance manuals and airworthiness literature are still available, but the human interpretation is an important factor, as is the knowledge of parts. We encourage all our members, especially aircraft owners, to financially support de Havilland Support in England which plays such an important part in keeping our ageing aircraft flying. The TMC makes an annual donation to DHS which is financed from a part of our club subscriptions, and we encourage members to also donate personally.

Our Tiger Rag publication is always a superb production, and we are so very grateful to Janic Geelen for the huge amount of work that he puts into its compilation. Thank you, Janic. We were informed this year that the Tiger Rag is archived by national archivists which is an honour indeed and more reason to get things accurate. Our club finances are in good shape, and we again thank our able treasurer Amanda Rutland for her hard work and diligence in managing the accounts and books. We maintain a low-cost subscription deliberately to encourage membership numbers, and the club very much appreciates the strength of that. We are also very thankful for the many donations that are attached to members payments for subscriptions and registrations. This money goes into our education fund for use in fostering our vintage aviation and encouraging the next generation of enthusiasts so thank you again.

Copies of the club accounts are being sent to members with this report. The Membership Roll is ably managed by Rupert MacLachlan, and we thank him very much for handling what is a big job. If you experience any communication glitches or know of someone who has, please contact us in order that we can find and resolve the issue. I take this opportunity to thank Penny Baynes for taking over the club's Secretary position and also to thank Bobby Preston who continues to help the club through her work with the website.

Finally, on behalf of the members, I thank the committee and club social officers for their astute involvement and management of the club during the past year. It is an area where we have always been well served and I encourage any members wanting to see the club continue in good stead to consider getting involved at committee level. If that is you, please contact me for a talk. This year we farewell Alan Butler and Ross Brodie and thank them very much for their time on the committee. They of course remain keen club members and will be out and about as ever. Keith Skilling is retiring from his position of Vice President. He has been a great help to us in the top roles and will again put his name forward for the committee. Nomination forms for club officers accompany this report. I wish you all a very enjoyable year of Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand activities.

John Baynes

## OUT FOXING THE MACRAE'S

It was in 1934, when the Customs Department and the Police were waging war against the infamous illicit whiskey stills operating in the rugged Hokonui Hills not far from Gore, that aviation history was created through the use of a de Havilland Fox Moth to catch the criminals.

The accused at the time were Billy and Toby McRae and their alleged crime was operating an illegal still and selling their prime "Hokonui" whiskey making sure that no Customs excise tax was paid. A crime it was but the case against the MacRae's was far from "done and dusted". The problem for the law was that the alleged still was not on McRae's Dunstable farm but on the Government Reserve land that bordered the farm. Also neither of the two accused had been caught in the act of actually operating the alleged still, so the case put forward by Customs against the McRae brothers relied entirely on circumstantial evidence.

The Collector of Customs in Southland at the time was Hugh Corderey, a man of gentle humour and refined taste, but also a man determined to do his job. For that he was ruthless and aptly earned the nickname the "hammer of the scots". Corderey was particularly keen to knab the McRae's and it was Corderey who led the Police raid on the MacRae property. He also gathered all the evidence which would curtail the family's involvement in the illicit whiskey trade for all time.

Corderey was assisted by Crown Solicitor Horace MacAlister who advised Corderey that if he was to win the case in court he would have to prove the McRae's access to the still hidden in dense bush and pin point its exact location. MacAlister suggested that Corderey photograph the area because this would go a long way to convincing both Judge and Jury. Fortunately Corderey was a proficient photographer and keen to take up the challenge helped by MacAlister who just happened to be president of the Southland Aero Club at the time.

Both men concocted a rather complex plan to get the evidence they needed. The Police were to go into the bush, find the still and light a fire so the site could be pin-pointed from the air. All went well, the Fox Moth, ZK-ADC, was prepared, Corderey sat in the cabin, camera ready, and the pilot, John Smith, a private pilot who had owned a Gipsy Moth, was hired to fly the plane. What MacAlister and Corderey did not take into account was the widespread sympathy for the Hokonui whiskey distillers by Southlanders from all walks of life including the pilot, John Smith.

The Moth, ZK-AAG, used by Southland pilot John Smith, on his barnstorming tours.  
Note the painted-on passengers





Photo RNZAF Museum Wigram

As far as MacAlister and Corderey were concerned they had chosen wisely for John Smith was an experienced pilot having first flown as a 17 year old in 1923 with none other than a family friend, Captain Geoffrey de Havilland. Smith had then flown with the Cambridge Air Squadron which was part of the Royal Air Force, before he arrived in New Zealand in 1928. On 1 May 1930 a pioneering joyriding company, Hamilton Airways Ltd, was declared bankrupt and John Smith purchased one of their Moths, ZK-AAG, with which he continued in the tradition of Hamilton Airways by touring the country, first displaying some aerobatics over the town, and then offering joy rides. He barnstormed around New Zealand eventually ending up at Invercargill where he decided to settle down. He sold the Gipsy to the Southland Aero Club with the added bonus that he was employed by the club as instructor. John Smith was associated with the club until around 1937.

It was during this time that the Customs Department asked John Smith to fly Corderey over the Hokonui Hills to find the site of the illicit still. Several flights were made, notably on 15, 19 and 23 February 1934 and John Smith used the new Fox Moth, ZK-ADC. John Smith wrote in his log book on 19 February "2000 feet over Hokonui re still, Customs" He later added: "a north west gale, Mr Corderey, the customs officer could not locate the whiskey still because I knew where it was and the weather was rough and he and his son who came for the free ride, were both sick!" John Smith maintained that he flew over every valley in the Hokonui Hills except the one where the still was located. Corderey, however, claimed that he was successful in getting the photographs of the smoke signal he needed for the court case.

Later, in the Invercargill courtroom Corderey presented his evidence but despite the efforts of both the Police and Customs, the jury concluded that the MacRae's were "Not Guilty" It was a disappointment for Corderey who stated that in his opinion no Southland jury would ever convict a Hokonui whiskey distiller no matter how strong the evidence.

Based on an account written by Sue Wilson for the Hokonui Whiskey Museum, Gore



A view of New Zealand's first Fox Moth, ZK-ADC flying over a remote part of Southland

## COLLECTING “CAPTAIN BLI”

My first encounter with Tiger Moth, ZK-BLI, was during the 2000 Tiger Moth Club safari from North Cape to Bluff. I was flying Tiger DHA and on February 15, 2000, we had gathered at the field waiting for a local identity to arrive. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, there he was. Sir Peter Elworthy, rolling to a stop and hopping out of his Tiger ZK-BLI. Sir Peter had come straight from the farm, in his farming gear, complete with utility belt containing a large knife and the sharpening steel to go with it.

Sir Peter led a gaggle of Tigers to his farm airstrip at Craigmore, inland from Timaru, set in an increasingly narrow valley. We all got there in our loose formation and where we enjoyed the Craigmore hospitality before continuing South to Omarama.

Sadly Sir Peter passed away in January 2004 but in 2005 I found out that the Elworthy family were considering selling BLI. In early 2005 Woodsy and I drove to Craigmore, again enjoying that Craigmore hospitality and reminiscing about Tiger Moths with Lady Fiona, Sir Peter’s wife. Proceeding to the airstrip, there was a somewhat tired BLI sitting in the sun, ready to go.



With Woodsy at the controls, it was a poignant and emotional farewell for the family as the Tiger that had created such fond memories while owned and flown by its larger than life pilot, and enjoyed by his family, circled and departed Craigmore for the last time.

Photo Dave Welch taken at Wellsford



And so a new life began for BLI in the north, based at Ardmore with a group of us who had owned DHA, continuing our interest. (Tigers have been in my blood since 1972 when I did a quick type rating in Taieri one morning in ARJ with Jack Bindon and then flew it to Hamilton, instructing and joyriding with it there.)

BLI was never the neatest Tiger around. ( I think Sir Peter used it as any other of his farm implements and it suffered from time to time as a result) but Woodsy unfailingly addressed all of the ongoing issues that existed and from that arose a Tiger - admittedly a well worn one -and kept her in the best shape we as a group could have hoped for.

Without Graeme, maintaining and operating BLI would have been expensive and difficult. The BLI syndicate has been extremely fortunate to have had his expertise and level-headed and practical approach to maintenance and Tiger flying for me (and I'm sure I speak for the rest of the syndicate) led to many great adventures as have all tigers no doubt, but a few that I have been involved in include :

A 'food for the soul' trip to TeAnau, Hollyford Valley, Martin's bay, beach touchdown at Big Bay, Haast, Wānaka and on to Taieri for the 2008 Tiger club AGM.

Heading home wafting over a high hedge into Lismore for a cup of tea and a chat and then on to Rangiora.

-In Jan 2006 I had the pleasure of flying BLI one morning and then flying a 747-400, NBT to Los Angeles that evening. MAUW's -800 KG and 396,000 KG.

-BLI in conjunction with the Tiger Moth Club visited Matamata on several occasions during the Walsh Memorial Flying School and I recall in January 2017, 2018 and 2019 doing up to 12 flights each day in BLI with students, instructors and ATC alike. It was fun to be able to give something back having flown my first solo at Camp 4 in 1970.



Woodsy had many flights in BLI with various hardy (or foolhardy) souls strapped to a frame on top of the fuel tank.

-BLI also served faithfully as an adventure aircraft operated for the NZ Warbirds Association for many years flown by Woodsy mainly (and others).

-BLI only let me down once in the air. Out to the East of Clevedon a broken engine valve punched a hole in the crankcase and a piston, part of it denting the cowl on its hasty exit. Spewing oil we limped back to Ardmore and landed uneventfully after a high side-slipping final approach to the runway, the Gipsy dry sump and oil tank helping considerably.

-In BLI we have won various Tiger club competitions with various pilots, at many Taumarunui and Tiger Moth Club AGM weekends. All great fun, but strangely BLI never did win the trophy for the most magnificent moth?

Peter Bradfield



The burned out piston with a valve hole!

Dave Phillips about to give an aerobatic display in ZK-BLI photo Colin Hunter



# UP AND COMING EVENTS

**2026**

6-8 March Tiger Club AGM & Fly-in, Kaipara Flats

15 March NZ Warbirds Association Airshow, Ardmore

3-5 April Warbirds over Wanaka Airshow

## **2026 TMCNZ AGM FLY IN WEEKEND**

### **KAIPARA FLATS AIRFIELD, NEAR WARKWORTH**

We are set to enjoy a great weekend at Kaipara Flats Airfield from the 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> March.

Registrations have now closed. If you are planning to attend and haven't yet registered please contact our Club Captain at [wendytantrum@gmail.com](mailto:wendytantrum@gmail.com).

#### **Programme for the weekend**

Friday: Arrive at Kaipara Flats then meet at RSA Warkworth. There is no set time, just head on down when you're ready.

Saturday: Competitions with briefing at 930am at the Rodney Aero Club at Kaipara Flats, then Dinner at the Bridgehouse Lodge Warkworth at 6pm. We have arranged for a coffee cart to be onsite at the airfield from 9am Saturday, please support him. Lunch will be available at the airfield.

Sunday: AGM at the Rodney Aero Club hangar at 9.30am.  
Remember to bring your trophies or send them in advance. Jan Chisum has been doing an excellent job contacting all trophy holders for the upcoming weekend. Thank you very much Jan.

Mogas and S100 oil will be available at Kaipara Flats, please see Woodsy.

Registration fees for the event are:

- Saturday only to compete in competitions is \$20 per person plus be a current financial member of the club
- Friday night dinner is pay for yourself on ordering
- Saturday night dinner is \$80 per person, \$160 per couple

Please deposit funds into the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand Incorporated bank account:

12-3194-0023828-00 with the reference AGM.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Photo Jim Lawson Taumarunui Oct 2011

Built by The de Havilland Aircraft of New Zealand Ltd, Rongotai, Wellington 130HP 4cyl DH Gipsy Major  
 NZ1448 10 Oct 1942 RNZAF Unit 18, Rongotai  
 RNZAF 1 EFTS, Taieri  
 RNZAF storage  
 22 May 1955 NZ Government Stores Board declared surplus  
 7 Jul 1955 Hawera Aero Club, Hawera (£505)  
 ZK-BLI 6 Jul 1955 Hawera Aero Club, Hawera  
 Sep 1956 South Otago Aero Club, Balclutha  
 Crashed at Balclutha 22 Nov 1957  
 Side-slipped too low and hit ground at Balclutha 13 Sep 1962  
 Got away on hand prop start and hit Cessna 180 ZK-BUG  
 at Balclutha 2 Feb 1963  
 4 Apr 1963 Andy J. Padgett t/a Rexair Flying School, Balclutha "Captain BLI"  
 28 Aug 1979 Dave J. MacMillan, Dunedin  
 31 Aug 1984 Ian H. Atkinson, Hanmer Springs @1,960 hrs FT (\$30,000)  
 12 Sep 1984 Ian H. & J. N. Atkinson, Woodbank Station, Hanmer Springs  
 20 Aug 1985 Peter H. Elworthy, Craigmore  
 Nosed over when landed on long grass near Timaru 30 Jan 1988  
 Wing clipped fence during take-off and ground-looped at Rangitata Island,  
 near Ashburton 1 Oct 1990  
 14 Mar 2005 Tiger BLI Syndicate, Auckland

## Tiger Moth Club Official Merchandise



Lightweight Denim Blue Shirt 2017 Safari  
was \$75 now \$ 50.00



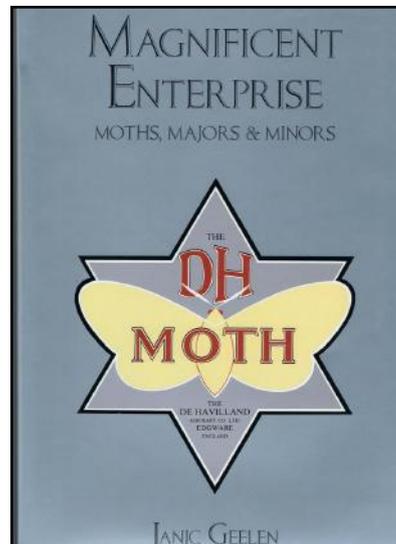
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**MOTHS, MAJORS & MINORS** by Janic Geelen  
One of the finest books about the golden years of de Havilland. Full page 3-view drawings, accurate gen on all the Moths, Dragons and other 1930s designs. Includes the engines, propellers and racing successes. Hardbound. 214 photos; 56 Three-view drawings  
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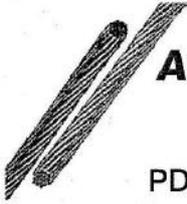
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### TIGER RAG PUBLICATION DATES

20 April 2026 AGM report

15 September 2026 Taumarunui lead up

20 November 2026 Taumarunui report



Oil Supplier for Tiger Moth Club Members.

With the recent substantial increase in cost, the Club has been looking at better options for members to purchase Aviation Oil for use in their aircraft. We have come to an arrangement with Ardmore based AeroShell oil supplier ICEA, for members to purchase their oil requirements from them at a most competitive rate. This rate also includes delivery of the product to a nominated New Zealand address. Delivery takes approx 2 to 3 days. Minimum order is six 1 litre containers.

To obtain the latest pricing, or place a order for your oil requirements, call Leanne at ICEA on 09-2999289, or email; [leanne@icea.co](mailto:leanne@icea.co)

You will then be invoiced, and the order will be despatched, or can be picked up, from Ardmore Airfield, after payment. **VISIT OUR ONLINE STORE** <http://icea.co>

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**Leanne Butler**

*Supply Manager & Technical Administrator*

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LIFE MEMBERS: Simon Spencer-Bower, Jim Lawson, John Pheasant, Loretta McGarry, Bob McGarry,

John King, Les Marshall, Jeanette Lei, Jan Chisum, Graeme Wood