

CYBER MOTH - JUNE 2026



TE KOWHAI 23RD MAY 2026

DHC-1 Chipmunks 80th Birthday. By Jim Lawson.

At the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand annual general meeting, held at Kaipara Flats airfield, in March 2026, I suggested that we have a special Fly In at a suitable airfield to commemorate the first flight of the DHC-1 Chipmunk. This was agreed to and the wheels were set in motion to prepare for the event.



In due course Pete McVinnie, a retired Air New Zealand Captain and Committee member, put his hand up to organise the proceedings. We firmed up on Te Kowhai, provided we obtained the correct approvals from the owners. This proved to be quite a

*Suzy Hall with Jim
Lawson's former Chipmunk*



difficult exercise because nobody was answering their telephones. Eventually, with the help of a resident Chipmunk owner, Neil McHugh, Pete was able to contact one of the owners, who turned out to be Dan Readman, an old friend and colleague of his.

After a tricky start everything began to fall into place, the date was confirmed, the request for a place to show a film, *The Poor Man's Spitfire*, somewhere to get coffee and tea and a barbecue lunch, was no trouble. An arrival time was made and a spot landing contest was arranged for arrivals, Neil McHugh being the judge. A NOTAM was arranged to close the airfield, at lunch time, to allow the Chipmunks to carry out their display flight.



Vaughn Davis, a Chipmunk owner and team leader of the Chipmunk display team, arrived overhead in tight formation, despite bad weather on the way. Also, Jerry Chisum in Chipmunk ARL arrived having flown over from the Hawkes Bay, making a total of six Chipmunks on the ground, ZK: ARL, CHP, LOM, RFS, UAS, SAX with one weather cancellation. To compliment the Chipmunks, their fore runner, the Tiger Moth, four of

Jim Lawson & Trevor Hall with the Hall's Vincent

which arrived: ZK: ASV, AUD, BEF and BFF with ATN turning back due to deteriorating weather. The Miles Messenger ZK CMM was flown in by Club Captain Woodsy with former Chipmunk owner (in the UK) Jonathan Pote who learned to fly there in the Chipmunk that was to become ZK TAZ... Rob Gordon's former Chippie. They were in company with our club historian and Vice President John King. In total, I was told that 29 aircraft attended the Fly In with weather preventing more others from arriving.

Being a member of several other Clubs, I invited the Vincent Motor Cycle Club, The Aston Martin Car Club, and the Auckland Vintage Car Club. The Auckland Vintage Motor Cycle Club had a meeting on the same day, so were unable to attend. I had to leave early so I cannot report on the attendance of these Clubs. Likewise, I cannot report on the Chipmunk performance, which took off prior to my leaving. But I did hear that it was held up for a little while because of an influx of rain showers. No doubt it went off as planned.

As mentioned before, I had to leave early, which was to attend the funeral service for a friend and long-time member and Treasurer of the Tiger Moth Club, namely Robert Gordon from Tauranga. Robert's wife, Jenny, also a Tiger Moth Club stalwart and



aerobatic pilot, said that Robert only wanted a low-key affair when he passed away. Despite this there were about fifty or sixty people in attendance. Accompanying me was another old friend of myself and Robert, namely Lou McAlister, who had flown up from Christchurch for the occasion.

I must mention here that I used to have a formation flying team of eight Chipmunks who performed at the opening of both Warbirds Over Wanaka and the Omas Airshows, which we did for seven years starting in 1996 and had a whale of a time. Robert Gordon was part of our Team and from experience we found him best suited to lead the formation, which he did with great accuracy. Lou McAllister was part of that team and is the only one left still flying his Chipmunk, the others have retired or passed away. Lou is the same age as his Chipmunk.

Not only was I at Robert's funeral service as a friend, but also as a representative of the Tiger Moth Club, which I was pleased to do. I had the opportunity to speak, on behalf of the Club, so I was able to outline Rob's services to the Club and the manner in which he carried them out, which raised a bit of laughter. There was only one Robert Gordon. Also present at the service was Sandy and Bryan Stokes, John and Gloria Pheasant.

Remembering the Occasion with Darren Luff

With our Tiger Moth BEF topped right up with fuel, Christine and I set off from Hawera Aerodrome for the direct flight to Te Kowhai Aerodrome for the Chipmunk's 80th anniversary fly-in. A few scattered showers were dodged later on but we arrived at Te Kowhai in nice clear weather with a steady stream of attending aircraft. Having been briefed on the intricacies of landing on Te Kowhai's cambered runway, caution was exercised, but everyone was fine, even those of us normally spoilt with massive flat grass runways!



Well organised ground crew guided all the visiting aircraft into the parking area, with the 6 Chipmunks and 4 Tigers and a Miles Messenger mostly together, making a pretty sight.

Although the weather elsewhere prevented some from coming, 29 aircraft in all showed up for the day.

Continuing on with the fine British engineering theme, a few vintage

The old hangar was a great venue for the socialising & BBQ



cars and motorcycles attended, one of which, a Vincent Rapide motor cycle looked right at home amongst Chipmunks and Tiger Moths!

Cups of tea all round followed as everyone enjoyed a bit of De Havilland people company for the rest of the morning.

By Midday the Chipmunk formation team were airborne for the planned display but the arrival of low clouds and drizzle forced a postponement and with all the planes back on the ground it was decided to wait out the weather till after lunch.



Many thanks to the local Aerodrome team for catering the lunch for all attending pilots and crew. Held in one of the hangars that is set up as a social gathering area for local Aerodrome users, the cracking Kiwi style BBQ was a great success and the atmosphere inside the classic half round hangar, was perfect for the occasion. Vaughn Davis' new documentary following his Chipmunk restoration played for the relaxed visitors during lunch.

Vaughn Davis presents his Chipmunk rebuild documentary "Poor Man's Spitfire"

During the afternoon the weather improved and Vaughn's Chipmunk team put on a well-received formation display followed by some Chipmunk solo aerobatics. The 80th Anniversary day was well marked and the weather remained clear for the rest of the day allowing planes and people to head for home having enjoyed a great day at a great location. Thanks to Peter McVinnie for getting the day going and to Dan Readman and his many local helpers for hosting us for the occasion at Te Kowhai Air Park.

And of course, thanks to the Chipmunk owners for showcasing these wonderful aircraft and giving us reason to celebrate.

Congratulations to the DHC-1 Chipmunk on reaching this impressive milestone.

Darren Luff.



Upcoming event:

Warbirds Aerobatic Ground Course

NZ Warbirds Aerobatic Ground Courses:

- Sunday 14 June and Sunday 21 June
- Hangar 2 "Seagrove Room" (upstairs briefing room)
- Prompt CFI start at 12:00pm
- Cost is \$200, participants must be a Full NZ Warbirds member or apply for Full NZ Warbirds membership.
- Interested parties please confirm to cfi@nzwarbirds.org.nz

Tiger Rag Contributions

Janic is always on the lookout for members contributions to produce our club newsletter. We all know what a great job he makes of it. Keep in mind to capture some great photos and stories whenever there is club activity.

For those new to the club, this email contact is what we call a Cyber Moth Bulletin. It is sent out whenever required to keep you up to date with upcoming events and messages. This one is to specially showcase the Chipmunk's 80th birthday.

The winter has been very kind to us in the south so far but unfortunately it has not been so flash throughout the country. It is a quiet time of year but I'm sure some of you will be sneaking in the odd flight on a nice day.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the Chipmunk Celebration but am delighted that it all went off so well. A huge thank you to the Te Kowhai Airpark and all their helpers and to our committee man Pete McVinnie for organising. Also well done to all the members and supporters who attended.

All the Best,

John Baynes.