

Issue 3 April 2012

SOCIETY NEWS

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Welcome to the third issue of the new Squeaky Wheel.

Since the last issue it has been a productive time for the Society.

We have had a very successful Society outing to Devonport to visit the little known Fort Takapuna complex at Narrow Neck and the newly opened Navy Museum at Torpedo Bay in Devonport.

Issue 2 of the Driving Wheel magazine is now out with new improved format and a much higher quality finish. We must express our thanks to Jude Woodside at the SHED magazine for assisting us with the distribution of this new issue of The Driving Wheel to the Shed magazine subscribers with whom we share a common interest.

We would like to welcome Tessa Phillips our new secretarial assistant aboard who is taking on many duties from updating our membership records to improving the website, liaising with new and affiliate organizations, managing advertising, sponsorship and many other things.

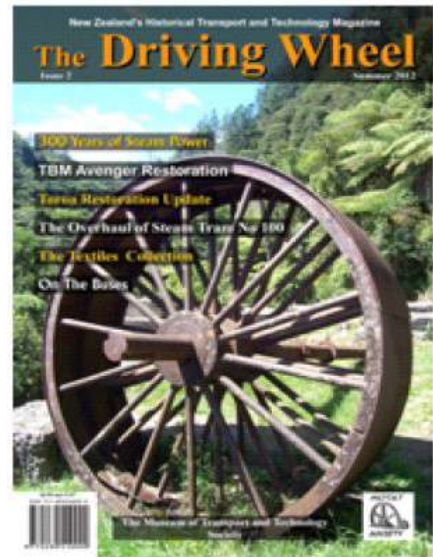
Tessa can be contacted at admin@motatsociety.org.nz

Many new members have joined the Society in the last few months, we wish to welcome you all and look forward to meeting you at our future events.

The committee is always looking for input from our members, this can be in the form of articles and images for the publications, suggestions for venues or places of heritage interest to visit, or contacts with other kindred groups and organizations to affiliate with.

If you can help with any of these please get in touch.

Andre Pointon, Chairman



We are actively seeking contributors or ideas for articles, photos, interesting stories or experiences for publication in the Driving Wheel & Squeaky Wheel.

The deadline for sending in material for the next issue is June 18th 2012

Material can be sent to Andre Pointon.
Email: colonial.energy@actrix.co.nz

Thanks again from your Society Committee Members!

Chairman: Andre Pointon (Steam section)

Vice Chair: Leyton Chan (Tramways)

Secretary: Bill Rayner

Peter Cairncross (Rail), Bob Jessopp, Ken Pointon, Henry Swan (Aviation), Nicholas Taylor, Lyndsay Whittle (Road Transport) & John Wolf

Richard Pearse Flies Again – Almost!

By Bill Rayner

Richard Pearse is an early New Zealand aviation icon whose story of building and flying an aircraft before the Wright Brothers is the stuff legends are made of.

MOTAT and the Society has played a major part in highlighting his achievements, and the Pearse "multi-purpose aircraft" in the Pioneers of Aviation display at the Museum is one of New Zealand's most precious aviation artefacts.

Pearse, a farmer at Waitohi in the South Island, was reputed to have taken off and

landed a heavier than air machine in March 1903, some nine months before the Wright Brothers flew their aircraft in America. The evidence in support is open to interpretation and Pearse did not develop his aircraft to the same degree as the Wright Brothers who achieved sustained controlled flight.

With the approach of the Centenary of Flight in 2003, MOTAT joined with Geoff Rodliffe, a retired aviation engineer who had fully researched Pearse's activities and written several books on the subject, to build a flying replica aircraft and engine to mark the occasion, and to celebrate Pearse's achievement.

The focus of the project was to have the aircraft complete to take part in centenary celebrations in Timaru, and at the Pearse farm, still in family hands, at Waitohi, on March 31st, the actual date of the flight.

A special Pearse Project team assisting Geoff Rodliffe, of Don Fleming, Phillip Heath, and Rose Benns were the core of the project who took the aircraft to Waitohi along with John Syme and Bill Rayner for the festivities and the critical flight attempt. The pilot was local Jack Mehlhopt, an experienced microlight pilot and Pearse enthusiast associated with the South Canterbury Aero Club. The aircraft and engine were displayed at a special air pageant held at Timaru, but after a week of very hot fine weather, the key day on March 31st was washed out with rain and wind, and only a gentle taxiing run was possible.

So the question remains, would the aircraft fly.

A celebratory civic dinner was hosted by the Mayor of Timaru, the guest of honour being Prime Minister Helen Clark, together with many of the aviation industry's leaders and characters including Sir Tim Wallis, and Geoff Rodliffe was honoured with a special presentation from the Prime Minister.

The aircraft was returned to Auckland and displayed at MOTAT, and then the Royal Aeronautical Society requested that the aircraft and associated display be sent to the UK as part of their Centenary of Flight celebrations. Through the good offices of Board member John Mounce, then a senior Air New Zealand engineering executive, Air New Zealand agreed to take the aircraft and Don Fleming and Geoff Rodliffe to



The original Pearse Project Team (From left) Geoff Rodliffe, Rose Benns, Don Fleming, Phillip Heath.

London. It was agreed that it was important to take a member of the support team, Rose Benns, to assist with the rigging and building of the aircraft.

The MOTAT Society stepped in and arranged funding for the extra costs involved with the expedition. After the Royal Aeronautical Society event, the machine was sent down to a heritage museum, Flambards, in Cornwall, close to where Pearse's family originally came from, where they had a Pearse permanent display.

MOTAT received major national and international recognition and publicity through being involved with the project.

After the return to Auckland MOTAT decided not to continue with the project, but the Society maintained an interest, and the project continued outside MOTAT lead by Geoff Rodliffe and Don Fleming.

John Syme later joined the project, concerned that the Rodliffe research material, archives etc might be lost, and the story die, and the Project has since been formally re-activated under Society support and initial sponsorship. A further replica has been built and a group formed to continue the research and story promotion and to connect with other people interested in the Pearse story.

The replica was built and test run at an air strip at Mercer with John Syme, Ian Hambly, Andre Pointon, and Clive Lye being the core of the team assisting Geoff Rodliffe. Russell Ward, aviator and engineer extra-ordinaire, was very generous in providing the use of his workshop and airstrip for the project.

Geoff Rodliffe has unfortunately recently died but his dreams, and the Pearse story live on.

Food for thought is the way John Syme, Andre Pointon, and Ian Hambly worked so patiently with, and supported Geoff, who was extremely frail and in his late 80's and 90's at this second phase of the project, and living alone with his only interest being the Pearse project. His direct physical contribution was minimal in the latter stages, but John, Ian and Andre picked him up from Glendowie and traveled all the way to Mercer virtually weekly over two years His family thanked his MOTAT mates at the funeral for the support and affection they had shown Geoff over the later stages of his life.

It is important to remember that MOTAT is more than just a museum to most of the volunteers – it is a way of life, and an important social part of their lives.

Long may it be so.

A Great Day Out For Our Members



Above: Fort Takapuna [All photos by Bill Rayner]

A full complement of over sixty members and their families enjoyed a tour of Fort Takapuna followed by a visit to the Torpedo Bay Naval Museum on the long-awaited Society outing on 22 January 2012.



Left: Inside one of the gun emplacements.

Members were taken through the tunnel complex located within Devonport's North Head, including the remains of the two six-inch disappearing gun batteries.

Below: Ken lives up to his name inside one of the tunnels.

The Society wishes to extend its gratitude to our host Mike Pritchard of the Tamaki Land Preservation Trust who acted as our tour guide for the day.





Above & left: The faces of the present tell the stories of those who have gone before them in the RNZN.



A self guided tour of the Torpedo Bay Naval Museum was an eye opener to those who hadn't yet visited the recently opened building. The museum is located at the foot of North Head in the refurbished mine-laying station and is flanked by a busy cafe and enjoys stunning views across the harbour to the city. The displays are immaculately presented illustrating the rich heritage of the Royal New Zealand Navy from its formation to its present day roles.

Below: Finishing touches to a successful day – Ken Pointon and John Wolf tend the barbeque in Bill Rayner's back yard. Thank you to Bob Jessop and Bill for organising the event.





The MOTAT Society

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Who we are and what we do

www.motatsociety.org.nz

The recently established web site is attracting much interest and many additional items have been suggested for inclusion. At present the web site hosting is on a very basic deal which limits the number of web pages to 10. New assistant secretary Tessa Phillips has taken over updates on the website and is looking at options for extending the scope of the site.

Some suggested items for inclusion are: past driving wheel articles, a greater range of information and news items, members only area, minutes, links to relevant online forums, online membership processing and subscription payments, and possibly even an online shop for things like books members have written, links to affiliate and kindred organisations, a volunteers hall of fame and announcements of upcoming Society events. Submissions from keen photographers past and present on events or artefacts and restorations are always welcome.



The recent assembly of the Skyhawk in MOTAT's new aviation hanger. Photo courtesy of Leyton Chen.

However this is a work in progress and will require a more comprehensive web hosting arrangement, as well as some other considerations. If you have links in the telecommunications industry and know a good web hosting or online payments company - preferably one which might sponsor the site - please contact Tessa at admin@motatsociety.org.nz or MOTAT Society, PO Box 44 430, Pt Chevalier, Auckland 1246.

Similarly, you can contact her if you have any further suggestions of what you would like to see on the site or would like to be involved in the web site design, so we can look to expand the site in the future. The idea is that the website will be a major component of the networking function of the society.

Introducing Tessa Phillips



My name is Tessa Phillips and I have just joined the MOTAT Society to act as assistant secretary, with the aim of helping out with various administrative roles. In recent years I have been a stay at home mum with two boys, now 5 and 7, who love to visit MOTAT, much as I have always done. Prior to this my background was one of science study (primarily Physics, with research in Acoustics), followed by work in IT and as an IT Trainer.

Having been a regular and keen MOTAT visitor for as long as I can remember, I have always felt I would like to be involved with MOTAT in some way. By taking on this role I feel I can help a little, while still being primarily an at home mum.

I am also currently studying towards a diploma in information and library studies. This brings together various of my interests, especially in looking at the ways information and knowledge can be shared and saved within organisations. Hopefully I will be able to apply some of my new skills by helping provide tools to share and preserve some of the extensive knowledge base available within the Society's membership, thereby helping support the valuable work MOTAT does.

Contact: admin@motatsociety.org.nz

Membership

We are currently upgrading our membership records, if you have changed your address recently, know of any other members who haven't received any correspondence from the Society, or people who would like to join, can you please let Tessa Phillips know so we can up date our records.

Tessa can be contacted at
admin@motatsociety.org.nz

MOTAT SOCIETY - COMMISSIONING A REPORT

The MOTAT Society is commissioning a research article to be written in regards to the structure and purpose of the MOTAT Society. This will be written by Dr Caroline Anderson BA, MA, LLb, PhD. A leading legal researcher and academic. This will then be Peer reviewed by Dr Tanya Allport.

It will examine the history of the MOTAT Act 2000, the parliamentary debates in regards to the passing of the MOTAT Act 2000, and interviews with founding individuals in regards to the MOTAT Act, such as Grant Kirby and Judith Tizard.

The terms of reference will be - What was parliament's intention in passing the MOTAT Act 2000? In regards to:

- 1) the role and function of the MOTAT Society;
- 2) the role and function of the MOTAT Board;
- 3) the role and function of the Director of MOTAT; and
- 4) the relationship between the above entities.
- 5) The meaning of the word "support" in the Act.

This has never been examined before and, once complete, will form an authoritative and definitive answer. The interpretation will also provide clarification of these questions to enable the three influential and/or governing bodies of MOTAT (being The Society as founders and volunteer workers, the Board as policy makers and the Director as the manager) to work co-operatively in the present and future to ensure the good governance and development of the museum in perpetuity.

The Society will make the research and resulting report publicly available for transparency purposes.

The Society hopes that it will clarify and assist MOTAT as a whole to understand its functions and roles as defined by parliament and put to rest any confusion and misinterpretation of the Act that has occurred in the past.

The major problem with the MOTAT Act 2000 is that it is a Private Act and therefore is unlikely to generate much in the way of case law.

Case law is generated when cases come before courts on a regular basis and judges have to examine the wording of the legislation and interpret the words used, to try to establish parliament's intention when enacting that piece of legislation.

Over time most Public Acts have case law that relates to them, which can be used to assist in their interpretation. However, the MOTAT Act 2000 is coming up to 12 years old and has not had a single piece of case law to assist in the interpretation of it.

Over time various entities have begun to interpret sections of the MOTAT Act incorrectly or not at all; this is therefore unlawful. The reason why the Society is commissioning this research and subsequent report is to assist all of MOTAT to work better together for a more stable future.