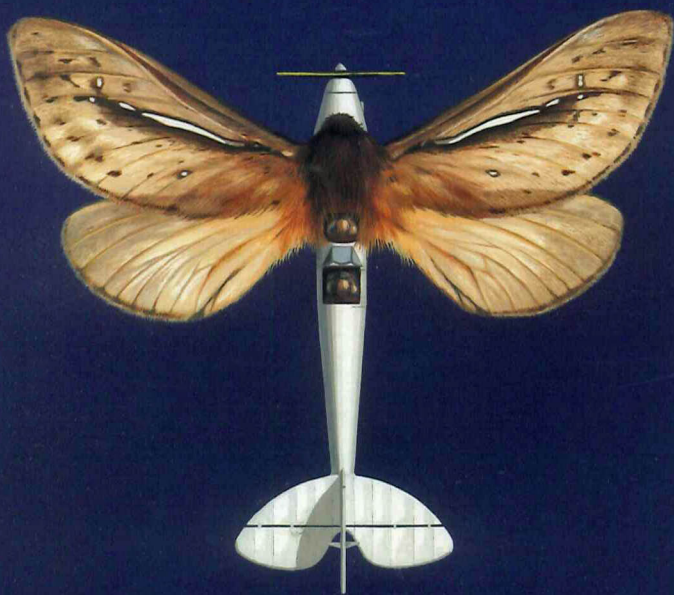


OH, FOR
THE WINGS
OF A MOTH



HELENE MOORE
GEOFF RODLIFFE

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PREFACE

Geoff Rodliffe, in researching the work of Richard Pearse, over many years, demonstrates some of his own very remarkable talents. Not only is he a very experienced 'hands-on' engineer but he has been blessed with the health, vitality and energy that people many years his junior find amazing. He is not only well-read, but is continually surfing the Internet and soaking up masses of other published information in order to stay on the leading edge of aviation developments. He lends his weight to improvements in flight safety enhancement. Always in support of the 'under-dog', he seems to be continually involved during his 48 hour days in some worthwhile research project.

What most of us, who know this softly spoken benevolent gentleman did not know, is that not only is he a master of research and technical prose as demonstrated by his previous books and scripts, but when called upon by the film crew to research and write about the human side of Pearse and the culture of that time, another of his hidden talents emerged. He is a superbly romantic writer who easily transports us back through the intervening time warp and based on fact, helps us to live life with Pearse and his influences. We share with Pearse his frustration of having to survive in an environment that was hostile to his ideas while he was remote from any useful assistance. We see a young engineer, inventor, a genius, subordinate his natural ardour to get on with being the first person in the world to design, build and fly a heavier than air machine. That he was able to achieve this in 1902-03, over a series of witnessed flights using his own patented technology, was incredible (see 'Wings Over Waitohi'). Unfortunately he was later overtaken by the Wright brothers who were working in a more nurtured culture achieving the first controlled flight in a heavier than air machine (December 1903).

The bitter resentment of this effectively terminated the further inputs of his genius. His only real rewards coming on the few

occasions, when his indiscretions may have got the better of him are aptly and subtly described by Geoff. The boundary between genius and madness is a very thin line and Geoff certainly helps us understand why that was so in this case.

We thank you Geoff for another superb contribution to aviation literature.

Dr A. Gordon Vette MBA, D.Eng, FRAeS, J

Helene Moore has woven an historical novel of her arrival in New Zealand with her surprising discovery of a fellow countryman who is romantically linked to her own legendary ancestry.

She illustrates scenes of life in a remote village as it was at the beginning of the millennium and the trials and tribulations confronting the would-be aviator Richard Pearse.

Historical note: Richard Pearse is recorded as being the first man to lift off the ground in his home built powered aircraft. There is no similarity whatever between the well documented flights which took place in the U.S.A. on 17 December 1903 and the flights made by Pearse during the same year at remote Waitohi in New Zealand.

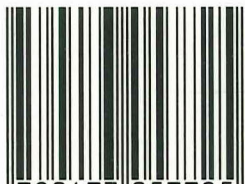
Pearse must be the first and only man who had at that time designed and built his own unique internal combustion engine and aircraft (predating the microlight by about seventy years). He built both the engine and aircraft in his elementary workshop with minimal assistance. His inventions enabled him to make a number of flights.

Front cover: New Zealand Porina moth, *Wiseana Umbraculata*, imposed with de Havilland Tiger Moth fuselage. Cover design and illustration by Philip Heath.

'Every inventor is a crackpot until his ideas succeed.' MARK TWAIN



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