

## SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM

### SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

---

#### HARRY SCHNEIDER



Harry Schneider in a K-13 Sailplane c1965

Harry was born in Grunau, Silesia on 26th. October 1924 and was the son of Edmund Schneider, probably the most successful glider manufacturer before World War Two. Edmund's story is integral with that of his son so it is also necessary to briefly give his history.

Edmund Schneider was born on 28th. July 1901 and was one of the early pioneers of German Gliding. In 1928 he founded his business at Grunau in Germany and amongst other designs was famous for his 1930 design of the Grunau Baby of which over 5,000 were produced. It was also built in many other countries by private builders and became the foundation icon aircraft for the world gliding movement.

In addition to Schneider's manufacturing activities, Grunau was the site of a major gliding centre equal to the famed Wasserkruppe site. It was there that Harry learned to fly gliders at the age of fifteen.

Immediately prior to WW11, the Olympic Games were to include gliding as a sport. The standardised aircraft for all participants to fly was the Hans Jacobs designed 'Olympia', at that time an advanced design. The Schneider Company built 30 of these aircraft in anticipation of the Games which unfortunately were

cancelled due to the onset of the war.

In 1945, the Schneider family left Grunau just ahead of the Russian advance into that area which subsequently became part of Poland. After many vicissitudes in the immediate post war tumultuous period the family located to Lake Constance on the German / Swiss border and for some years built small boats for a living.

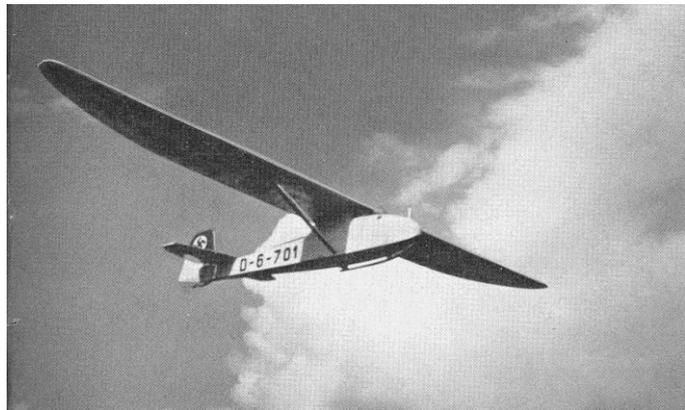
In 1949, the Australian Gliding Association (later the Gliding Federation of Australia) at the suggestion of Bill and Jack Iggulden invited the Schneiders to migrate to Australia. This was in recognition that the Gliding Movement in Australia could not progress without someone with their skills in this country.



The Hilltop at Grunau, August 1939  
From *Mount up with Wings*, Mary de Bunsen, Hutchinson & Co  
(Publishers) Ltd 1960

Their immigration to Australia was aided by Lord Casey (a Minister in the Menzies Government and himself a pilot). The family landed in Australia with only some hand tools and few possessions having to completely re-establish themselves.

Initially, the father and son worked for the Royal Aero Club of Victoria but some months later shifted to South Australia at the invitation of John Wotherspoon, then a member of the Adelaide Soaring Club who provided some factory space and an order to build an E.S 49b Kangaroo. This aircraft was a very advanced two seater. In fact, two of these aircraft were built and were of really high performance for the time, each aircraft manned by Harry Schneider and Wotherspoon making several distance flights, the longest of which was 208 miles Gawler to Mildura.



Grunau Baby in flight  
From *Mount up with Wings*, Mary de Bunsen, Hutchinson & Co

In June 1957, the factory was transferred to Parafield Aerodrome for a number of years and then relocated adjacent to Gawler aerodrome (home of the Adelaide Soaring Club established in 1944) where the business remained for the rest of its life.

Whilst there, the company built its own premises. During the life of the company, it manufactured twelve of its own designs comprising 103 of its own types and also 12 ES Ka6 under licence from Kaiser.



Launching ZÖgling primary glider  
From *Mount up with Wings*, Mary de Bunsen, Hutchinson & Co  
(Publishers) Ltd 1960

Post War Harry and his father worked as a partnership team in the design and manufacture of their aircraft but Edmund became ill and died on 5/ 7/ 1968. For some time before his father's passing, Harry become solely responsible for design and production.

The Schneider philosophy was to design and build practical aircraft for Australian conditions and the Australian clubs. Factors to consider were hangarage, transport, maintenance and cost. In this they were successful and it helped the many Clubs in the country. It also enabled private owners to build their designs under licence. They also built successful

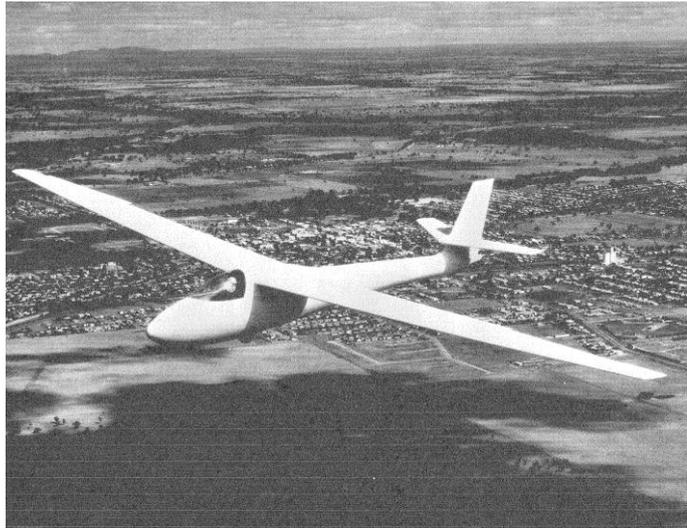
high performance aircraft for competition flying. At all times they worked with the Gliding Federation of Australia to meet the requirements of the gliding movement in Australia.

The Company largely solved the early problems of the Clubs by the creation of the E.S.52 Kookaburra trainer in both short wing and long wing versions. This aircraft was almost unique in its side by side seating that facilitated instruction. It was a sturdy aircraft with good controllability and reasonable performance and was an instant success. It was sold to the United States and also built under licence in Brazil. It would not be an overstatement to say that this is the aircraft that put Australian gliding on its feet.

The E.S. 60 Boomerang single seater high performance aircraft did a similar job for the advanced pilot and the competition area.

The final design was the ES 65 Platypus side by side high performance two seater suitable both for training and competition work. Only the prototype was built as notwithstanding strenuous efforts (including by the Gliding Federation), finance for production could not be obtained at a time when the economy was not good.

This was an ideal high performance aircraft to be built in Glass Reinforced Plastic and was of viceless controllability, maintenance and crew comfort. It would have solved the problem for Australian gliding that the E.S. 52 did in an earlier era. The prototype is still flying very successfully some 40 years later.



E.S. 60 Boomerang over Gawler  
From an Edmund Schneider Pty Ltd advertisement  
*"Stressed for speed....the high performance standard class sailplane"*



Edmund (right) and Harry (left) Schneider working on a Kookaburra with a Nymph in the background - 1965  
[www.glidingcaboolture.org.au](http://www.glidingcaboolture.org.au)

In retrospect, it is evident that it was a great loss and would have been a very successful aircraft as it was decades later before a competitive or superior aircraft became available from overseas. Even contemporary German companies could not believe that the aircraft was not being put into production.

The Edmund Schneider Company was a small operation of considerable engineering capacity. In addition to developing state of the art designs and structures, it did everything in design, drafting and construction. It even blew its own canopies, something almost unknown in the aircraft industry in its day. It was a pioneer in Australia for glass reinforced plastic construction. The only aspect it contracted out was the stress analysis calculations to satisfy the Government airworthiness requirements.

Harry Schneider also did the test and development flying for all of the Australian built aircraft and was a joint holder of the Australian two seater record in 1968, flying

an ASK-i3 aircraft for which he was agent, a distance of 395 miles.

The company also acted as agent for some European manufacturers importing and selling a considerable number of sailplanes (and some motor gliders) complementing its own designs. It also built under licence from Schleicher (Germany) a number of then high performance Ka 6 sailplanes. A further agency was for the Stark Turbulent light aircraft manufactured in Germany.

For most of its life, the company was virtually the only major repair facility in Australia for badly damaged sailplanes, a most useful service to the Clubs.

Throughout the entire career of his company Harry Schneider worked in close collaboration with the Gliding Federation of Australia in helping give effect to its vision and policies, resulting in a significant contribution to the high regard in which that organisation is held. This was recognised as early as 1966 in which year Harry was awarded the prestigious Oswald Watt medal for his contribution to Australian aviation.

Harry Schneider married an Australian and in 1956 became a naturalised Australian citizen. At date of nomination he is aged 88.

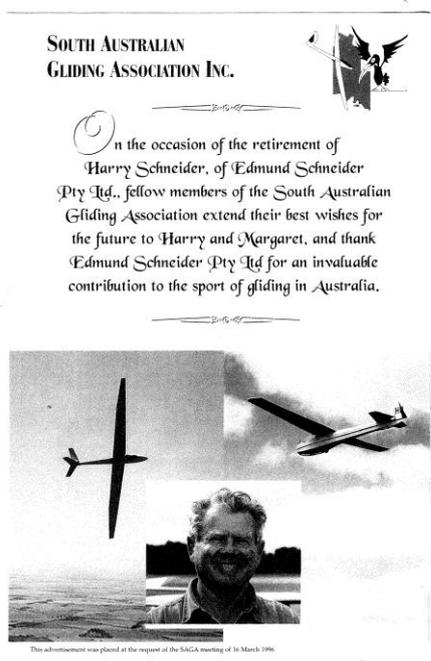
**Alan Killmier**  
**History Group Member**  
**South Australian Aviation Museum Inc**  
**January 2013**

**Honours**

- In September 2001 Harry Schneider was awarded Life Membership by the Gliding Federation of Australia (depicted at right).
- On 14/12/1967 Edmund Schneider Pty. Ltd. was awarded a 'Good Design Certificate for the ES 60 Boomerang.
- In 1966 Harry Schneider was awarded the prestigious Oswald Watt medal for his notable contribution to Australian aviation.
- Harry Schneider is an early holder of a Gold Certificate with two diamonds in evidence of his outstanding ability as a soaring pilot.
- Harry Schneider is holder of the Australian two seater distance record of 395 miles achieved on 30th. January 1968 in an ASK-13 sailplane.
- The South Australian Gliding Association placed a testimonial in the journal 'Australian Gliding' thanking Harry Schneider and Edmund Schneider Pty.ltd. for 'their invaluable contribution to the sport of gliding in Australia' (depicted at left below).



The Schneider history is fully recognised on a world basis in the three beautiful publications of Martin Simon of Adelaide, copies of which are in the S.A. Aviation Museum's library, viz:  
 Sailplanes 1920 - 1945  
 Sailplanes 1945 - 1965  
 Sailplanes 1965 - 2000



**Sailplanes built by E. Schneider Pty Ld in Australia at Rosewater, Parafield and Gawler**

ES	Grunau II	1
ES 49	Wallaby (only partly built)	2
ES49B	Kangaroo	2
ES 50	Club Two Seater (Prototype only)	1
ES 51	Club Single Seater (Project only)	-
ES 52	Kookaburra (Mk 1-4, II-11, III-9, IV-12, B-5)	41
ES 53	Grunau IV	3
ES 54	Gnome (Prototype only)	1
ES 55	Project Single Seater	-
ES 56	Nymph	4
ES 57	Kingfisher (Mk 1-1, II,3, III-5 + 2 kits)	9
ES 58	Project partly built (fuselage for BG12)	-
ES 59	Arrow	9
ES 60	Boomerang (Mk 1-8, II-15)	23
ES 60B	Super Arrow (Sparrow)	8
ES 61	Project Kookaburra replacement	-
ES 62	Project Kookaburra replacement	-
ES 63	Project Kookaburra replacement (partly Glasfibre [later ES65])	-
ES64	Project Kookaburra replacement	-
ES 65	Platypus Two Seater Prototype	1
ES KA6	Single seater under Licence from Schleicher Germany	12
2 ES 52 Kookaburras were built under Licence in Brazil		

### Comments on sailplane types produced in Australia by Edmund Schneider Pty Ltd<sup>1</sup>

**GRUNAU BABY 2** – Only one built by the company in its early days. Adelaide Soaring Club built one from maintenance plans supplied by the Gliding Club of Victoria.

**ES 49 WALLABY** – Adelaide Soaring Club built two of these from plans provided by the company. They gave excellent service for many years, being later sold to other gliding clubs. They were superior to any other training two seater at the time. Eight examples of the aircraft were built under licence by Alexander Schleicher at Poppenhausen in Germany.

**ES 49B KANGAROO** – Two of these were built by the company and the first completed major flights for the era. It was a larger and more elegant version of the ES 49 with a 15 metre wingspan and having a superior performance in excess of any two seater then available in Australia. Harry Schneider and Wotherspoon began the aerial delivery of the second aircraft with a 327 kilometre goal flight from Parafield Aerodrome in Adelaide to Mildura in Victoria, establishing a new national record for two seaters. The rest of the delivery was made in stages by aero tow.

**ES 52 & ES 52B KOOKABURRA** – Build numbers were 36 for the short wing in three marks and 5 for the long wing. Two were built under licence in Brazil. The first flight was in June 1954. Over the next few years the aircraft with various minor improvements became the standard Club training two seater in Australia and was probably unique in its side by side seating. The major difference between the two types was that the long wing version wing was built in halves to facilitate trailering. The last Kookaburra was built in 1961. The aircraft was the backbone of the earlier post-war gliding club development in Australia.

**ES 53 GRUBAU IV** – To make the distinction clearer from the former marks it was named the Grunau 4 and was a completely new type with thinner and less cambered airfoils than the earlier marks of the Grunau Baby. It performed better at high speeds yet lost nothing in the climb. Three were built by the factory and others by individuals from plans supplied by the company.

**ES 56 NYMPH** – Was designed for the smaller clubs in Australia where cost was a major consideration and the demand for large span, high performance sailplanes was very limited. The span was 11.9 metres, it had a laminar flow wing profile and a one-piece wing. Harry Schneider on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1956 flew the prototype on a 310 kilometre flight into Victoria gaining his Gold C distance badge in the process.

**ES 57 KINGFISHER** – This aircraft was designed to be an early solo and cross-country sailplane to follow on directly from the Kookaburra. The prototype flew in 1956 and was very favourably received by the clubs. Harry Schneider made a cross-country flight of 217 kilometres to demonstrate the aircraft's capabilities and later did a 300 kilometre flight. A factory total of nine were built up to 1957. Amateurs built a further three under licence. The Kingfisher proved popular and successful. It performed credibly against imported sailplanes of greater span and cost. Harry Schneider, by then leading the company, had plans for something better still.

**ESKa 6** – This high performance single seat aircraft was Kaiser's most famous design and built in the hundreds by Schleicher. It was sold worldwide after earlier versions had great success. Production continued until 1965 by which time well over 700 had been sold. The KA6br carried

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: The three books in the series "Sailplanes" by Martin Simons: *Sailplanes 1920-1945*, *Sailplanes 1945-1985* and *Sailplanes 1965-2000*, and from the personal knowledge of Alan Killmier

off the OSTIV design prize and broke many records. The Schneider company produced 12 of these aircraft under licence.

**ES 54 GNOME** – This prototype was built in 1965 to meet a campaign within the gliding movement for a small, cheap glider. It had a 7.62 metre wing, a laminar flow airfoil and a pod and boom fuselage. There was no demand for it. It proved quite safe in flight, handled well and the performance was very much as expected: poor.

**ES 59 ARROW** – Designed by Harry Schneider, the first flight was early in 1962. The performance was considered very good for the small span of 13.24 metres. Designed as a follow-on from the Nymph for the smaller Australian clubs not very well off financially, the aircraft had to be inexpensive but with as good a performance as possible. In this, the design was successful and the company built nine with various minor improvements while contemporaneously building the Ka6.

**ES 60 BOOMERANG** – This aircraft, designed by Harry Schneider, was one of the first to employ F.X. Wortmann's new wing profiles. The prototype was test flown by Harry on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1964. The Boomerang had many innovative design and construction details and was a very strong, high performance aircraft, ranking then with the world's best. It was entered for the OSTIV design competition and was refused entry when inspected because it was unexpectedly over the stipulated 15 metre wingspan, which was fixed by the use of a coarse file, but still not accepted. The Boomerang did exceptionally well during the national championships in 1966 and 1967, beating imported 15 metre sailplanes. Many national records were broken with the aircraft, which was a very successful design for Australian conditions and sold well with 23 delivered.

**ES 60B SUPER ARROW** – In 1969, Harry Schneider recognised the need for an early sailplane with performance good enough for the club and local competitions and introduced the ES 670B, a slightly downgraded version of the Boomerang and with some modifications. Some eight were sold.

**ES 65 PLATYPUS** – This was a glass reinforced plastic high performance side by side two seater suitable for training and competition flying. Only one prototype was built, and despite strenuous efforts and with full acceptance by the Gliding Federation of Australia, the necessary finance to put it into production could not be obtained. Some 47 years later, the prototype is still flying. In retrospect, it would have been a winner, with no comparable side by side two seater in production anywhere in the world and with a performance far in excess of the tandem two seat training aircraft available at the time. The inability to raise the required funding meant that the company ceased to design and build further aircraft. It continued in business for some time, relying on sales of imported sailplanes and undertaking maintenance and repair work, until Harry Schneider reached the age at which he chose to retire and the company was wound up.