

THE SCHNEIDER KOOKABURRA

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When the prototype Kookaburra sailplane was test-flown in Adelaide in June last year, it marked a decisive step forward both for the Australian gliding movement and for the Australian firm of Edmund Schneider Ltd.

The Kookaburra answered the urgent need in Australia for a training two-seater that would combine quality, performance and low cost. For Edmund Schneider Ltd. it marked the end of a period of establishment which began in Australia in 1950.

Schneiders had been building gliders and sailplanes since 1928 in their factory at Grunau, in Eastern Germany, and had produced the Grunau Baby training sailplane in which many thousands of pilots had their first taste of soaring. The Schneider factory built more than 1000 Grunau Babies and many thousands more were built all over the world by other manufacturers and private builders.

When Russian forces moved into East Germany at the end of the war, Schneider and his family fled to West Germany. From there they migrated to Australia in 1950 and planned to establish a glider factory in this country. For a year they searched for a suitable site until eventually a small workshop was obtained in Adelaide, South Australia.

An order was obtained from John Wotherspoon, of the Adelaide Soaring Club, for an 18 metre span version of the standard Schneider ES-49 training two seater. This was called the ES-49B, and was named Kangaroo. Later, a second Kangaroo was built for the Toowoomba Soaring Club, in Queensland but the machine was priced beyond the pockets of the Australian clubs.

Schneiders also built a modified version of the Grunau Baby 3, which was called the Grunau Baby 4, and two of these were built for Australian clubs. These orders and a little maintenance and repair work for South Australian clubs kept the Schneider factory going for four years.

By this time, however, a study had been made of the exact needs of the Australian gliding movement and

work was started on the design of a machine which would fulfill the specific needs of Australian clubs. With the current expansion of the movement the main need was for a two-seater trainer. It was essential, however, that the machine be priced within the reach of the clubs. The result was the ES-52 Kookaburra.

The flight tests during June, 1954, showed that the machine had the performance and handling qualities needed for a successful trainer and the price, less than £1,000 (2,800 dollars) was only a little more than the single-seater Grunau Baby.



The Schneider "Kookaburra" semi-tandem training sailplane which is now in much demand among Australian Gliding Clubs.

At the time of writing (early May) orders for 10 machines have been received and new orders come in as fast as machines are delivered. Four Kookaburras are now flying in Australia and two more are nearly ready to fly. A limited workshop space restricts production temporarily but a new workshop is being built to help increase the rate of delivery.

The design of the Kookaburra follows conventional lines with a wooden framework, plywood fuselage and fabric covered wings and tail unit. In order to reduce costs, both of material and labour, the Kookaburra was planned with the smallest practical wingspan, 39 feet. This enabled the wing to be built in one piece. As a training aircraft is seldom de-rigged and transported from place to place the advantages of the one-piece wing far outweigh the disadvantages.

One-piece construction also permitted a cantilever wing which was lighter than could be obtained with a two or three piece wing. In an effort to obtain the advantages of both tandem and side-by-side seating the Kookaburra has staggered seats, with the right-hand seat set slightly behind the left-hand one.

When used solo the Kookaburra must be flown from the left (front) seat and a compartment in the nose has been provided for 22 lbs. of ballast for light pilots. The large one-piece canopy is hinged on the right-hand side of the cockpit and affords easy entry and exit. A small landing wheel is set in the bottom of the fuselage.

Spoilers on the top wing surface can be fitted but several machines have been built with dive brakes instead. In the same way, the standard fitting of shoulder releases can be changed to releases below the fuselage if desired.

Although designed for training the performance of the Kookaburra is quite impressive. A gliding angle of 1 in 21 is obtained at 53 miles an hour and the minimum sinking speed is 2.9 feet a second solo and 3.2 feet a second dual at 45 m.p.h. Stalling speed is about 32 miles per hour and the machine has been dived at 140 m.p.h. during tests with no ill effects. Several cross country flights of 40 to 60 miles have already been carried out in the machines now flying.

In the air the Kookaburra is extremely manoeuvrable with a rate of roll exceeding any other sailplane in Australia. Its nimbleness and small turning circle make it an excellent machine for small thermals. It is stressed for the sem-aerobatic category, both solo and dual. For hot

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