

***Australian Gliding***

# MUSEUM

***Newsletter***

Number 44: May 2022



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*The Australian Gliding Museum exists to preserve Australia's gliding history, to recognise the contribution made to sporting aviation by the founders and participants of the Australian gliding community, to retain the glider design and construction skills and stimulate interest and participation in the 'Adventure of Flight'*



## Museum Patron

Bruce Brockhoff

## Committee

President:

Peter Champness

Vice President:

David Goldsmith

Secretary:

Ian Grant

Treasurer:

Alan Hopkins

Committee Members:

Jim Barton AM

Hal Hopkins

## Other Museum Roles

Skills Training Workshops:

Hal Hopkins

Workshop Manager:

Allan Bradshaw

Airworthiness:

Leigh Snell

Archives and Newsletter:

Bernard Duckworth

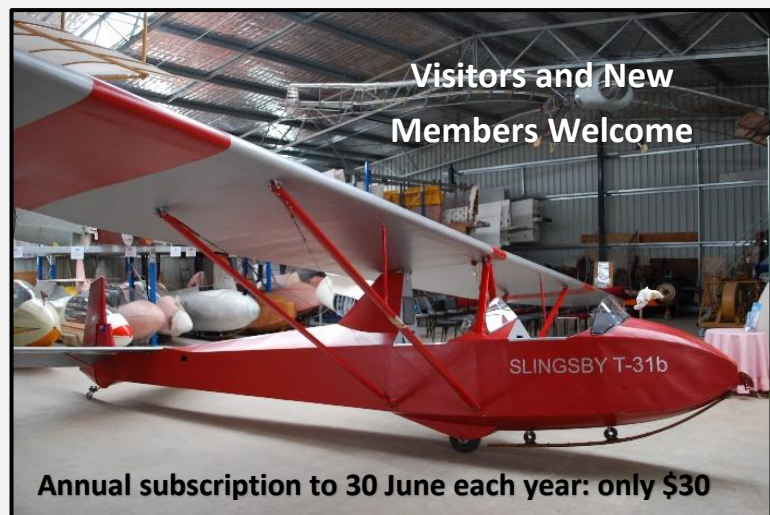
Special Archival Projects:

Tim Barton

Front Cover: The Museum's newly restored Schleicher K8B VH-GMA at Bacchus Marsh Airfield -15 March 2022

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## Museum Contact Details

**Address:** Australian Gliding Museum,  
PO Box 150, Bacchus Marsh, 3340

**Website:** [www.australianglidingmuseum.org.au](http://www.australianglidingmuseum.org.au)

**Secretary:** Ian Grant: 0418 271 767

[secretary@australianglidingmuseum.org.au](mailto:secretary@australianglidingmuseum.org.au)

**Newsletter:** Bernard Duckworth: 0434 816 937

[bernard\\_duckworth@hotmail.com](mailto:bernard_duckworth@hotmail.com)

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## Museum News



Gliders on display at the Bruce Brockhoff hangar, March 2022

The Annual General Meeting for the year ended 30 June 2021, deferred from November 2021 due to Covid restrictions, was held at the Museum on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Significant changes to the committee were approved by the membership in attendance. David Goldsmith who has been president of the Museum for the past 12 years handed over the reins to Peter Champness, who has a long association with the Beaufort Gliding Club, The Australian Homebuilt Sailplane and Vintage Gliders Australia. David is staying on as Vice President. Alan Hopkins, who has

been acting Treasurer for about a year, was confirmed in that position. Ian Grant retains the secretarial role. Hal Hopkins and Jim Barton who stepped down as Vice President, continue as committee members.

David Goldsmith in delivering his final President's report reflected on the achievements over a period that presented many difficulties for normal operations thanking the many volunteers who contributed. He also paid tribute to Honorary Vice President Alan Patching who sadly passed away the day before the meeting, just short of his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday. Following the formalities and tributes, a BBQ lunch was enjoyed by members and visitors in attendance.

As has been the case in past years, the Museum's Annual General Meeting and Open Day was held in conjunction with a vintage glider rally at the Bacchus Marsh airfield. Weather over the long weekend was excellent for flying. The Museum's Slingsby T31 was given a good airing. In addition, the recently restored Schleicher K8B was on display in the Geelong Gliding Club's Buchanan hangar.

On Open Day, members and visitors were also able to inspect the workshop and paint shop. The fuselages of the Schweizer 2.22 and Chilton Olympia are the focus of restoration works in the workshop. The aim is to return both aircraft to flying condition. As well, re-covering, painting and detailing work on the Schleicher K4 is progressing and repairs to the trailer to accommodate the Schleicher K8B are well advanced.

The Museum continues to attract donations of aircraft and other items. An ES60 Boomerang donated by Catherine Conway is still to be collected from South Australia and the JG-1 from John Gross awaits transportation from Queensland.

It is expected that the next Annual General Meeting and Open Day will be held on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022 together with a vintage glider rally from Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October until Melbourne Cup Day on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022. Wood repair and fabric workshops are planned to commence on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 respectively. This is a return to normal scheduling.



Newly appointed Museum President Peter Champness



## President's Report



Jim Barton, Peter Champness, Dave Goldsmith,  
Ian Grant, Hal Hopkins at the committee table

### **President's Report to Members at the Twenty First Annual General Meeting on 13th March, 2022, for the Financial Year 2020-21, and beyond.**

Once again, we have a delay to our meeting thanks to Covid Restrictions, normally holding this Annual General Meeting over the Melbourne Cup Weekend last November, 2021.

This was a challenging year for the Australian Gliding Museum. Covid restrictions in Victoria continued on and off with very little warning. Operations during lockdown were effectively shut down, and long periods continued when further lockdowns were added with little notice, which made planning very difficult. Also, in December

2020 we saw the passing of Graeme Barton, who made such a huge contribution to the formation and management of the Museum.

Bacchus Marsh Workshop Facilities and Refurbishment Program update: Once again we continued with a reduced number of volunteers, however the machine shop behind the paint shop is now functioning and providing versatility in the repair and fabrication of metal components. The K8 fuselage continued through the paint shop and now the remaining components are completed and assembled and the results are here for all to see. Thanks to Peter Raphael and his assistants who have done a magnificent job, we very much look forward to seeing this colourful aircraft flying soon! The Schleicher K4 fuselage is in the paint shop awaiting its final coats, the wings are ready for painting, and the Olympia fuselage is ready for painting. Sincere thanks are due to Terry McCarthy for keeping our restorations moving through the paint shop. Terry also gets a special mention for spending much time onsite doing a wide variety of tasks including security, cleaning and yard maintenance. Thanks Terry!

Wood repair and fabric courses: Unfortunately, Covid disrupted our scheduled courses, we are now planning these courses to take place from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

Other Activities: An assortment of trailers have been accumulating over the years, and Hal Hopkins has produced a comprehensive review of our trailers and their condition. One Ka6 trailer is in the process of extensive renovation by David Slater and Alan Hopkins to be ready for the resplendent K8, sure to impress and publicise the Museum when visiting Vintage Rallies and other gliding sites. Archiving and production of our excellent Newsletter has continued under the expertise of Bernie Duckworth. Garden maintenance has been taken care of by Jenne, such a shame the brilliant showing was not to be seen during the lockdowns!

I have named a few, and our team has been smaller than normal, but the Museum has resolutely stuck to its task of saving and protecting Australia's gliding history for future generations. As President, I am deeply indebted to the entire committee, including founding member and VP Jim Barton, Secretary Ian Grant, Acting Treasurer Ian Burston who handed over to Alan Hopkins – Alan's financial management and knowledge of compliance is invaluable - Workshop Manager Allan Bradshaw, and Hal Hopkins. However, many more contribute in a variety of ways, and the Museum is what it is because a diverse group of people have a passion to save our history of gliding. Thanks to you all.

Finally, I must acknowledge the outstanding contribution by our founding President, Alan Patching, who sadly passed away on Saturday 12 March 2022. Our thoughts are with the Patching family at this time. I will not be standing for another term as President, after almost 12 years it is time for me to hand over to an enthusiast with new ideas and talents.

The Australian Gliding Museum will long be a standout in the gliding world as to what can be achieved when a dedicated group of pilots and supporters put their hearts to it.

Thank you,  
Dave Goldsmith

## Alan Patching (6 June 1924 – 12 March 2022)



A memorial service was held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at Ringwood celebrating the life of Alan Patching who passed away on the 12 March 2022. Alan's health had deteriorated in recent times. He was nearly 98 years of age. Australian Gliding Museum secretary Ian Grant joined Alan's family and many friends in paying tribute. He made the following remarks focusing on Alan's contribution to gliding:

"Alan Patching's contribution to the sport of gliding spanned close on 80 years and ranged across a broad range of activities.

He saw our sport evolve from simple wood and fabric gliders only capable of brief flights through to sophisticated aircraft with long wingspans and high performance as a result of advanced manufacturing technology including fibreglass and carbon fibre construction.

As his chosen sport, Alan gave it his all putting his efforts into club matters, then at the State level and through to National and International levels.

As a professional aeronautical engineer, Alan specialised in researching aircraft fatigue in his work for the Australian Government and this expertise he passed on by investigations into the safety of gliders and pioneering work on aircraft fatigue in modern gliders. He was the Australian representative to OSTIV, the international body concerned with scientific and technical matters in gliding.

Of particular note was his consulting role to a full-scale fatigue test on the wings of a high-performance glider at RMIT in Melbourne which demonstrated a far longer aircraft life than had previously been appreciated. A famous German glider design engineer, Gerhard Waibel, would always address Alan as 'Herr Professor', a friendly acknowledgement of Alan's technical skills. It was this work in particular which contributed to Alan being awarded the Lilienthal Medal from the FAI.

Over many years in gliding Alan flew 140 different glider types and 35 powered aircraft and was a wonderful source of knowledge for others to tap into. Alan became a director of the first National Gliding School for training of flight instructors. Yet another example of Alan assisting our sport well beyond the confines of his local club.

In the year 2000, Alan and the Barton brothers, Jim and Graham, founded the Australian Gliding Museum in order to preserve the many vintage gliders which were being abandoned.

The Museum is established at Bacchus Marsh airfield and has rescued 60 gliders and restored 20 of them to display condition. This is the largest gliding museum in Australia and internationally. Importantly the Museum provides regular training courses for the repair of wood & fabric aircraft – skills which are in scarce supply.

I should mention my experience of joining Alan at an International Airshow at Avalon airfield in Victoria. It was quite a frustrating but enlightening experience. Why, because of the numerous times Alan would meet up with an acquaintance to chat with – it proved very slow going to reach the Air Show but a was very clear illustration of Alan's wide circle of contacts.

Very importantly Alan was blessed with a family who supported his passions for gliding. His wife, Lorna accompanied Alan on many a trip to gliding airfields. Places which are often hot, dry, dusty and windy with little shelter.

Alan's boys Geoff and Ian took up their father's passion and became very active glider pilots as did Alan's grandson, Tighe. Three generations of gliding pilots with Ian and Tighe both following Alan as Presidents of the Melbourne Gliding Club. From all of us in the gliding movement we will remember Alan with great fondness and respect and for giving so much of himself to our sport of gliding."

#### **Alan Patching accomplishments, awards and roles**

##### International

- Lilienthal Medal recipient 2006 (the highest international award in gliding)
- OSTIV (International Scientific and Technical Soaring Organisation): Australian Representative; Chairman of the Sub-committee for crash worthiness; Member International Sailplane Development Panel; Member of the Board and later, an Honorary Member
- World Gliding Championships: Technical Services Director, 1987, Benalla; Technical Assistant, 1974, Waikerie.
- Consultant to the Janus glider fatigue test, RMIT

##### Australian

- Member of the Order of Australia, AM, for services to gliding
- Life Member of the Gliding Federation of Australia (GFA)
- W.P. Iggulden Award recipient, 1981 (GFA's highest award)
- Founding member, President and Life Member of Australian Vintage Glider Association
- Director of the National Gliding School (for standardisation of gliding across Australia).
- Throughout the 1980's and 90's a scrutineer, organiser, tow pilot or task setter at National Championships.
- GFA Technical Liaison Officer 1962-70 & 1973-82.
- Instructor at wooden glider repair workshops

##### State and Local

- GFA Councillor for Victoria 1985/86, 1978-81 & 1960-63.
- President of the Victorian Soaring Association.
- Chairman of Western Region Sporting Aviation Group.
- Founding member, President in 1973, 72, 69 & 68 and Life Member of VMFG (now Melbourne Gliding Club).
- Chairman of VMFG Operations Panel 1978-88.
- Test Pilot for the Zephyrus.
- Instructor and Tug pilot for many years.
- Over 140 glider types and over 35 powered aircraft types flown.

If you would like to hear Alan speak about his life in an interview by Geoffrey Robinson for the National Archives, go to <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219756190/listen>

## Schleicher K8B Restoration

We last reported on the K8B restoration in Museum Newsletter Issue No.41 of April 2020. Notwithstanding the disruptions to museum operations, we can happily report that substantial progress has been made under the leadership of Peter Raphael and the project is nearing completion. The restoration involved the stripping of all fabric, airframe inspection and repairs, refitting of cockpit and canopy, re-covering with fabric and painting. In the course of work on the fuselage an elevator control mechanism problem was discovered and rectified. The attractive bright, shiny red and yellow colour scheme will be a standout on the airfield surrounded by white sailplanes

### Historical information

The K8 was designed by Rudolf Kaiser in 1957 and built by Alexander Schleicher. It has been described as the single seat version of the K7 Rhonadler. The K8B, the second variant of the design, is distinguishable by a larger blown Plexiglas canopy and improved ailerons. Over 1100 were produced.

The K8 proved popular with clubs in its role as a sailplane for early solo flying. Its pleasant flying characteristics and ability to stay airborne in weak conditions endeared it to many glider pilots.

The Museum's example was built by the RAAF Williamtown Gliding Club from kit supplied by Edmund Schneider Ltd of South Australia as agent for Alexander Schleicher. It was test flown on 8 July 1967. For a period from August 1994, it was owned by a syndicate at the Bendigo Gliding Club. The last entry in the log book is dated January 1995 at which time the glider had accumulated 1148 hours from 2303 flights.

From 1967 to 1994, the glider was flown at numerous places including Williamtown, Bellata, Warkworth, Dubbo, Waikerie, Quirindi, Tamworth, Redding, Narromine, Leeton and Lake Keepit. During 1994 and 1995 it was flown a small number of times at Bendigo. A notable flight recorded in the logbook is dated 31 October 1971 when W. Kenny reached 11,000 feet in height during a flight of 5 hours 10 minutes.

The last owner prior to the transfer of the glider to the Australian Gliding Museum in 2015 was John Ashford of the Geelong Gliding Club. The glider carries Serial Number 8478-SH and appears to have been registered firstly as VH-GPA and secondly as VH-GMA. The last registration (VH-GMA) was cancelled in 2011 but is currently being reinstated.

### Schleicher K8 gliders registered in Australia

#### Built in Australia

**VH-GPA / VH-GMA:** Constructor number 8479/SH/GFA HB 57. First registered as VH-GPA on 22 November 1965 and reregistered as VH-GMA on 17 December 1975. Currently at Australian Gliding Museum Bacchus Marsh, Victoria.

**VH-GPD:** Constructor number 8516/SH/GFA HB 58. First registered on 18 January 1966. Currently privately held and in storage at Bendick Murrell in New South Wales.

#### Imported:

**VH-ZAS:** Constructor number 8710. Previously registered D-5050 and reregistered in Australia on 26 November 1998. Currently privately held at Boonah, Queensland.

**VH-GQU:** Constructor number 8771/AB. Previously registered D-0286 and reregistered in Australia on 19 December 2013. Currently at Adelaide University Gliding Club in South Australia. See photo at <https://www.facebook.com/BalaklavaGlidingClub/photos/>

**VH-GAQ:** Constructor number 8644/A. Previously registered D-9211 and reregistered in Australia on 19 December 2013. Currently at Adelaide University Gliding Club in South Australia. See video at <https://www.facebook.com/AdelaideUniGliding/videos/vh-gaq-is-airborne-all-the-hard-work-is-done-now-come-and-enjoy-it/1004250806320010/> See also <https://www.augc.org.au/Fleet.php>



## Schleicher K8B - VH-GMA - March 2022



Peter Raphael completing the fit-out of the cockpit





## Fisher's Hut



John Fisher with his Kingfisher glider on Mt Elliot, c 1964

The clearing atop Mt Elliot near Corryong is regularly used by hang glider pilots. It is accessible by via Fishers Track from the Toowong Valley. Not well known by the wider gliding fraternity is that the site was originally cleared by John Fisher in the 1960s for the purpose of bungee launching his ES 57 Kingfisher out over the valley, a feat that he was able to perform without assistance. John Fisher became known within the local community as the "Flying Swagman".

Richard Hubbard who is closely involved with the Victorian High Country Huts Association has drawn attention to a hut built by John Fisher to store his glider and stay on Mt Elliot which has been listed for restoration and preservation. The structure resembled a Nissen hut with extensions on each side to shelter the glider wings and a caravan was located at the rear. Only part of the original structure remains.

The Victorian High Country Huts Association which was formed after major bushfires in 2003 is dedicated to the conservation of bush huts in the high country of Victoria. Built by hand by various groups including cattlemen, fishermen, miners, loggers forest rangers, and more recently skiers and bushwalkers, many surviving high country huts have significant heritage value. The Association have commenced restoring Fisher's Hut and intend to erect an information board on the site so that visitors can appreciate the John Fisher story and how Mt Elliot became to be used as a glider launching place.

In consultation with the Australian Gliding Museum, Richard Hubbard has prepared the following information for display on Mt Elliot:

### **Fisher's Hut (Hangar)**

The re-construction of this hut occurred in 2021, based on sketches made in the 90s.

It was decided that locally sourced logs, as was the original, would not be used due to the ant problems in the area. Hence eco pine logs were used as a replacement. The method of construction is as close to original as possible, only modern fixings have been used. Some of the dimensions may be different to the original as there was not a lot left to work from.

#### **Who was Fisher?**

Arthur John Fisher, known as John Fisher, at the age of 27, in 1957, started building his own glider. The design was a Schneider ES-57 Kingfisher sailplane. At that stage he was employed by the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Company in Cooma NSW, as a draftsman. The construction of the sailplane took 7 years.

He was very much an individualist and loner, full of unusual ideas, and was dubbed the "Swagman" because he never settled, and later when he started flying the nick-name progressed to the "Flying Swagman".

In 1963, he took out a lease on the land on top of Mount Elliot, which he named the "Weekend Lease". The aim of the lease was to run sheep to fund his flying passion. Apart from fencing the lease, he had a bulldozer come and clear the top of the mountain to make a landing strip and a launch pad.

His first flight was at Camden NSW, in 1964, and later that year, he self-launched himself off the top of Mount Elliot, flew for an hour and a half, then landed back on top of Mount Elliot.

The method used for the self-launch, was to anchor the sailplane via a short rope attached to a quick release mechanism at the rear of the fuselage. He then attached an 80-foot bungy rope to the nose-release and stretched it with the aid of his Land Rover. He then returned to the sailplane and installed himself in the cockpit. When he released the rear rope, the sailplane skimmed forward and out into the lift from the hill. After landing, he would de-rig the sailplane and pack up for the day. If he was unable to land at the top, he would land in the valley below, then walk up to the top collect his Land Rover and trailer, drive down, take the wings off, load it on the trailer, drive back up to the top, re-assemble and put it in the hangar. The track that he used was a fairly significant 4WD track.

He sent several articles about his exploits to the Australian Gliding magazine. In one he said "Once I owned my own sheep station-cum-gliding centre, but a tree fell on it"

Unfortunately, while John was not in attendance at the hangar, kids vandalised things and his bungy rope was burnt. It was shortly after this time he took the sailplane to Big Talbingo Mountain, 3 miles south of Talbingo NSW. In place of the bungy rope, he used car tyre tubes. Unfortunately, the tow vehicle did not achieve a high enough speed to sustain the acceleration of the glider, after release. The glider rolled over the edge of the clearing. The sailplane was beyond repair and John received severe injuries to his legs.

John, got over his injuries, and built another hut of a similar Nissan hut design not far from his lease, on private land and eventually left the area. He died age 69 in Adelaide.

#### **Bibliography.**

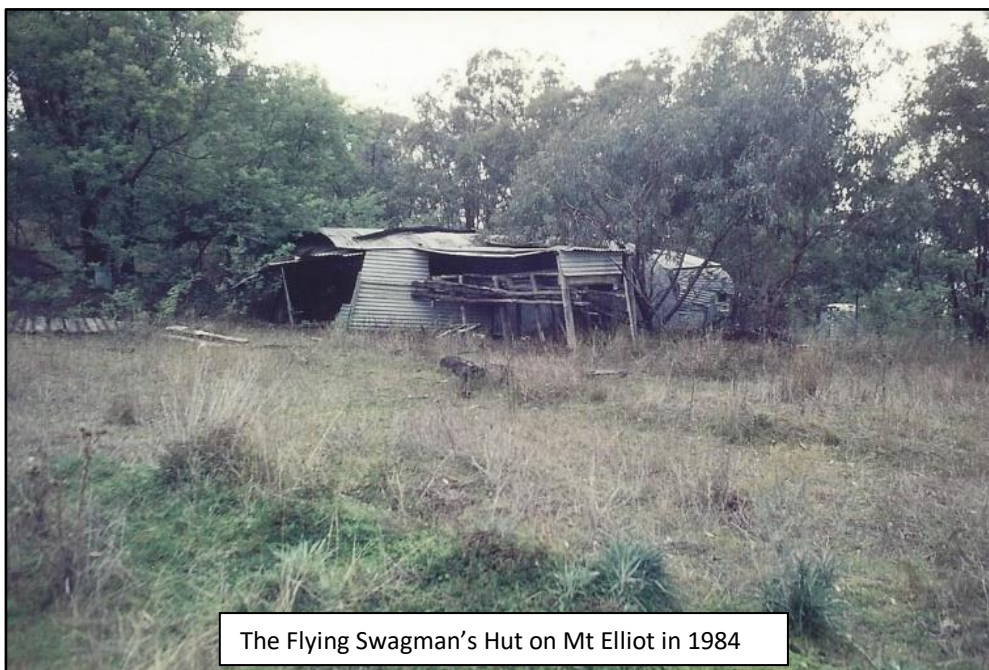
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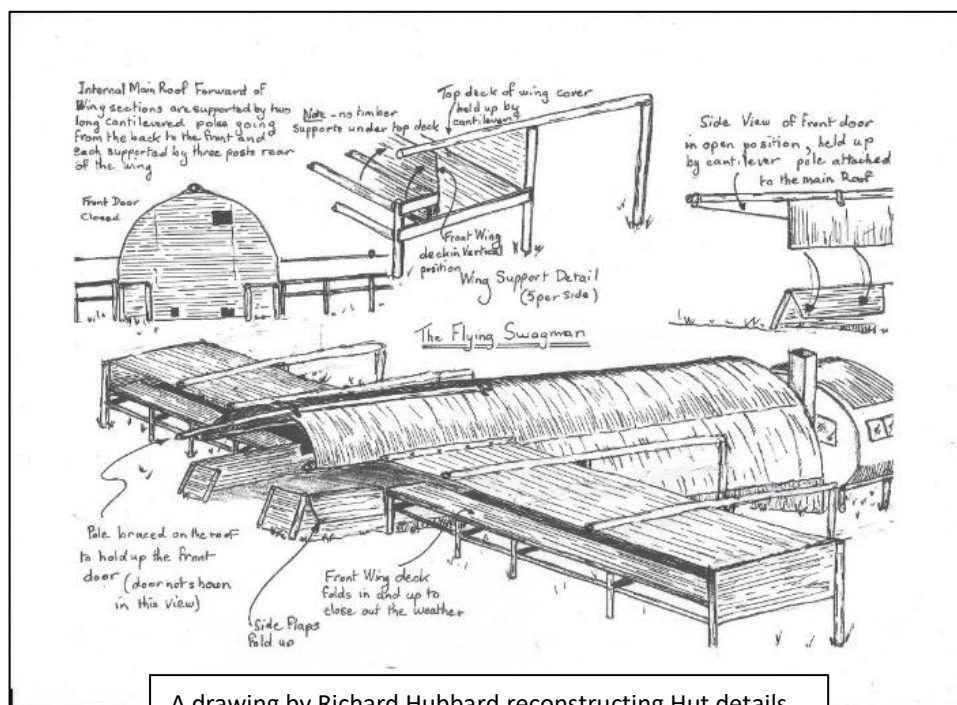
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The Butler Report, Victorian Alpine Huts Heritage Survey 2004-2005, P 393 to 398





The Flying Swagman's Hut on Mt Elliot in 1984



A drawing by Richard Hubbard reconstructing Hut details

### Image Credits

Front cover: K8b at Bacchus Marsh 2022 - B.Duckworth

Inside front cover: T31b in hangar – B. Duckworth

Page 1: Gliders on display at the Bruce Brockhoff hangar, March 2022 B. Duckworth; Peter Champness – D. Goldsmith

Page 2: Committee members at AGM – B. Duckworth

Page 3: Alan Patching at Museum – Trevor Odering

Page 6: K8b photos – B. Duckworth

Page 7: John Fisher on Mt Elliot – previously Australian Gliding, October 1964, page 11 – photo by Klaus Lenffer.

Page 9: Fisher's Hut c and drawing reconstructing Fishers Hut – Richard Hubbard

Page 10: Vintage Rally photos – D. Goldsmith



## Vintage Gliders Australia Bacchus Marsh Rally, 12th to 14th March, 2022

From Dave Goldsmith

The rally this year saw some good flights in very pleasant autumn temperatures that provided a number of soaring flights up to 4,000 feet agl. The longest was by Bob Hickman in his blue and white Boomerang GQY for 2 hours 17 minutes. The Museum's Slingsby T31b made twelve flights over the weekend, the longest being 29 minutes. As pilots must be Museum members, a number joined the museum (\$30) before their flights, and got to fly open cockpit for \$10 plus launch. Great fun, and at very low cost! James Stevenson did his first T31b solo. Other pilots to fly the T31b were Leigh Bunting, who came from South Australia, Chris Adda, CFI, Geelong Gliding Club, Terry McCarthy, Alex and Adrian Turner, and Jenne and Dave Goldsmith. On Sunday the Beaufort Gliding Club flew the unique Zephyrus two-seater for two flights, including a soaring flight by new Museum President Peter Champness. All round the weekend was enjoyed by many, and we are hoping we can all do it again in November 2022 – COVID PERMITTING!



Peter Champness and Chris Thorpe



Jenne Goldsmith and Chris Adda with the T31b



Peter Champness and Gordon Pope preparing Zephyrus

**Interested in doing the Wood and Fabric Workshops in November? Contact Hal Hopkins on 0438 655 820**