

Alan Patching Awarded FAI Lilienthal Gliding Medal

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A VMFG member, Alan Patching AM has been awarded the FAI Lilienthal Gliding Medal.

Regarded as the highest gliding award in the world, the Medal is to reward a particularly remarkable performance in gliding, or eminent services to the sport of gliding over a long period of time. It may be awarded annually to a glider pilot who has: established an international record during the past year; or made a pioneer flight (defined as a flight which has opened new possibilities for gliding and/or gliding techniques), or rendered eminent service to the sport of gliding over a significant time, and is still an active glider pilot.

Alan Patching is the third Australian to received this medal after Ingo Renner in 1988 and C.E. Wallington in 1984.

The award was established by the FAI in 1938 in honor of Otto Lilienthal, pioneer glider experimenter and pilot. Lilienthal's gliding experiments in Germany during the years 1890-1896 demonstrated that human flight was achievable and furnished inspiration and encouragement to Wilbur and Orville Wright.

Otto Lilienthal died in a gliding accident in 1896. The Lilienthal Medal is made of silver and is 7.5 cm in diameter. The obverse shows in bas-relief two birds in flight being captured by a man; the reverse bears a wreath and the words "Federation Aeronautique Internationale" surrounding a black space on which the year and name of the recipient is engraved. A Lilienthal Medal is struck each year and becomes the permanent property of the winner.

The first recipient of the medal in 1938, Polish pilot Taduesz Gora was awarded it for a goal flight of 557 km.

The full list of all medals awarded to date can be found on the FAI website.