

**A Short History of the School of Aerospace,  
Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering,  
The University of Sydney**

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*“A historian has many duties. Allow me to remind you of two which  
are important. The first is not to slander; the second is not to bore.”  
Voltaire*

## Apology

This work is not an exhaustive history, rather a collection of memoirs. There will inevitably be omissions of events and people who have played a role in our history. Apologies are offered to anybody who feels that they have been overlooked. Further contributions to the Head of School are welcome.

## Foreword

This document is the story, or history, of the School of Aerospace, Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering at the University of Sydney. It aims to inform present and past students and staff of the School's work, beginning in 1883 and continuing. We focus mainly on the personalities involved, with less emphasis on teaching details, research achievements and administration.

The plan of the work is as follows. Chapter One is the backbone beginning in 1883 and continuing to the present day. It contains short biographies of Professor Warren, Sir Peter Nicol Russell and the five P. N. Russell Professors of Mechanical Engineering. Chapter Two similarly deals with the Aeronautical/Aerospace activities-this branch began in 1939 with the appointment of Professor A.V. Stephens and so will be seventy-five years old in 2014. Other Chapters are essentially branches describing the personalities and work of the separate research groups.

The story does not discuss activities external to the School extensively. There is an excellent two-volume history of the University of Sydney which sets Engineering in the wider context of the University. These volumes also discuss the University in the context of state and national politics. The main changes over the last fifty years or so involve increasing numbers of undergraduates in Engineering, the intensification of research and postgraduate activities, and the increasing fraction of overseas students in the classes. The increase in academic staff has not kept pace either with the increase in student numbers or with the increase in University administrators, so that academic life is no sinecure. Hence it is pleasing to see that members and ex-members of the School have devoted time to writing this report, and they are to be thanked.

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