SYDNEY TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 100 YEARS
1911-2011

By
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(High School Section)
Introduction

This entry follows an assignment I completed in 2010 on the history of my school, Sydney Technical High School. I decided to enter mainly because I thought it would be a great honour if the judges liked my work. I hope it is good enough and will be available for future generations to read. I was also encouraged to enter by our Head of History, Mr. Heath and would like to thank him for doing so.

About The author

I was born at Hurstville in 1998 and have always lived in Bexley. My parents were also born in Australia and we have a proud Greek heritage. I previously attended Jack and Jill Pre-School which is located in the old Bexley Council building on Queen Victoria St and then went to Carlton South Public. Currently I am in Year 8 at Sydney Technical High School which is located on Forest Rd, Bexley.

When I was in my final year of primary school, my parents and I were faced with the decision of selecting a high school. We soon narrowed the list but at the top was Sydney Technical High School. ‘Tech’ as it is also known, has a long tradition of public education with a great record and was close to home so the decision seemed simple. Of course, as is with most things in life, it wasn’t that easy because Sydney Technical High is now one of the N.S.W. academically selective schools. Thankfully, I gained a place and have not regretted a single minute.

Another reason we selected Sydney Technical was knowing that in April of 2011, the school was going to celebrate it’s centenary. We thought it would be very exciting to be part of these celebrations and I was looking forward to playing an active role.

School History 1911-1955

In 1909, John William Turner, the Superintendent of Technical Education decided that the Sydney Technical Day School should become a high school to meet the needs of students. The vacancy for the first headmaster was advertised on 7th February 1911 and offered a salary of between £400 to £450. The position was given to John Alfred Williams who had previously been Deputy Headmaster at Sydney Boys High School. He was appointed on the 3rd March 1911 and had to report for duty three days later! Mr. Williams’ wife had died only two years before and he was left with seven young children to raise. Through my research, I have gained a great respect for this man and appreciate the difficult task he was given. The school was originally situated in the historic Ultimo House within Sydney Technical College. The school started with 113 boys and 15 girls, although it became a boys only school a few years later.
The school then adopted the motto of Winchester College in England, ‘Manners Makyth Man’. This was very unusual for the time as it was not in Latin. The word ‘manners’ in the motto does not refer only to good behaviour as we use it today. Originally, it described a person's all-round character which included knowledge, high morals, respect for others, behaviour, logic and other good qualities. Sydney Technical High School students are proud of their heritage and motto.

The school moved to Albion St, Paddington in 1925 due to increased numbers and overcrowding at Ultimo. An old public school was renovated for Sydney Tech but it outgrew even this location soon after.

On the 30th March 1940, The Sydney Morning Herald reported:

“...the enrolment is 767 - there are only 13 classrooms for 21 classes and no class has a room of its own. Assembly takes up half the playground. Seating in the playground is not sufficient and many eat their lunch in their classrooms. Most of the boys sit on their cases in whatever shade they find. The school has no assembly hall. The boys assemble in the playground and speeches are made from some steps.”

In fact, many classes were forced into hallways while students were made to share three to a desk. The students felt a little disadvantaged under these conditions especially when compared to Sydney Boys High School. This is one reason why there has been a running ‘friendly rivalry’ between the schools. The State Government agreed not long after that a new site had to be found and land was purchased in 1928 at Bexley. Unfortunately though, it would not be built until 1955/1956.

**Bexley**

The property now lies within Forest Rd, Anderson St, Ethel St and Botany St. It was owned by John and Mary McConochie who bought it in 1892 from Sidney Alfred Fullford. The house, ‘Norwood’ was near the corner of Botany St and Forest Rd opposite Croydon Rd. In 1919 one of their daughters, Eva, was found dead at the bottom of a well on the property.
As previously mentioned, it wasn’t until 1955 that building started and ended up costing £273,000. At the time, it cost more to build than any state school in Australia. Plans provided for 16 general classrooms, an auditorium and a gymnasium. The school moved from Paddington to Bexley by the third term of 1956.

On the 2nd of August 1958, the new school was officially opened by the Minister for Education, the Hon. R. J. Heffron. In 1961 the school celebrated its silver jubilee. A few years later, the P&C raised $34,000 and a 25 metre outdoor pool was built within the grounds. The ‘Jubilee Swimming Pool’ was opened on 30 April 1966 by Lady Cutler, the wife of the Governor. John Konrads, Olympian and ex-school captain had the honour of the first official swim.

Unfortunately for Techies, the pool fell into disrepair over the years and the cost to fix it was considered too high.

On the 8th June 1969 a magnificent ceremony was held to commemorate the achievements of the most famous ex-student, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. The Premier unveiled a special plaque in honour of the great aviator. There were marching bands along Forest Rd and other activities throughout the day that involved both the school and local community. In 1977 a new library was opened also in honour of Kingsford Smith and in 2006 the school celebrated 50 years at Bexley.

Although this was an important occasion, the school soon began planning for an even bigger party - the centenary celebrations.
Centenary Celebrations 2011

2011 will definitely be remembered for a long time by past and present students, teachers and families. Many activities were held including special sports and speech days, open days and other presentations. Invitations went out to hundreds of ex-students or ‘old-boys’ and they all looked forward to visiting their school once more. The main open day on 2nd April saw many visitors pass through the gates. They enjoyed concerts, faculty displays and an exhibition of artefacts from the Sydney Tech archives. The archive displays included old blazers, photographs, books and items relating to Charles Kingsford Smith.

The school song was played during the formal proceedings and the old-boys joined in with the words. Guests were able to buy souvenir memorabilia and pavers to be used in the Centenary Garden which will be finished by the end of the year. A popular souvenir was the book written by ex-student Dr. John Morrison titled *The Story and Times of Sydney Technical High School*. There were guided tours of the school by the senior students while a delicious BBQ was run by the P & C.

Many visitors expressed how they enjoyed the celebrations and that it was all run very well. It was pleasing to see the ex-students, some with their families, admiring the displays and talking about good days gone by.

Although the organising was led by Ms. J. Lyons (Principal), Mr. G. McNaught and Mr. S. Dando (Deputy Principals), they were greatly assisted by many teachers, other staff, students and the P & C. It was a real team effort and it felt like we were all part of a big happy family.
**To the next 100 years**

The school can claim many famous old-boys including Charles Kingsford Smith, John Konrads, Reg Gasnier, Len Smith, Clive James and Leo McKern to name a few. However, there are thousands of others that may not be well known but have gone on to be leaders in medicine, industry, sport, science, education, politics and the arts. Sydney Tech continues to produce fine students that achieve fantastic results with most gaining places at universities. The school often wins science, maths, debating and other contests as well as regularly being champions at athletics, swimming and cross-country carnivals.

The school website states;

*“Although the name "Sydney Technical High School" has remained as a historical connection to the foundation of the school in Sydney Technical College, it by no means reflects the nature of the school today. The technical focus was long ago replaced by the pursuit of excellence in all fields of endeavour, academic being foremost.”*

It is very hard to summarise 100 years of history in a few pages. Dr Morrison’s great book contains 624 pages! This school quickly became one of Sydney’s finest a century ago and continues to be one now. Although it has occupied three different sites, the traditions remain mostly unchanged. The Rockdale district is fortunate that the school was relocated to Bexley and it has been part of the local community for a long time.

I am proud to be a ‘Techie’ and I know I will leave with many great memories. I strongly recommend that parents consider Sydney Technical High School for their sons because it is still true that ‘Manners Makyth Man’.

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*Gathering of all staff and students  
Photo: Sydney Technical H.S*
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Dr. John Alfred Williams

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