

Interviewee: Alf Philip (Alfred Philip)
UoS Dates: 1971 – 2000
Role(s): Porter-in-charge, then Domestic Manager



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:11 – Alf Philip was employed by Stirling University for 29 years, 1971 – 2000 and was a Domestic Manager for 18 of those years.

00:30 – Life before Stirling University – Royal Service in New Zealand: 1962 – 1970 as Head Butler to Governor General Lord Ballantrae. Residence in New Zealand was equivalent to Buckingham Palace and hosted investitures, garden parties, white tie receptions for ambassadors and state dinners for the likes of the President of the United States, Mrs Gandhi, Kings and Queens. Most VIPs called for lunch or dinner if in New Zealand and the house was big enough to accommodate large numbers of overnight guests like the English Cricket Team. The Governor General stood in for the Queen in Wellington and Oakland. Garden parties could be for up to 7500 guests.

02:49 – AP was attracted to job at Stirling University to give his children a better quality of life. AP had sons (aged 11 and 13) who were not allowed to have friends to play on the private estates of Lord Ballantrae. AP also hoped education would rub off on his sons

03:20 – AP applied for 2 jobs: Head Butler at Brechin Castle – was offered the job, but received a letter the following morning from Stirling University offering him the post of Porter-in-charge, which he accepted.

04:04 – Stirling University was still new and supervisors had little experience and were still finding their feet.

04:38 – Flooding of Murray Hall – 3000 gallons flooded the hall 48 hours before students were due to arrive.

05:27 – Buildings: Pathfoot was the first main building completed. Andrew Stewart Halls (ASH), the first halls of residence, opened in 1970. The ASH building was for first year students and was supervised by wardens, porters and cleaners on a daily basis. Fraser and Donnelly flats opened around the same time for second and third year students.

06:48 – Limited social facilities – In the early 1970s, pubs closed at 9pm. There was noise in the halls till 10:30pm but after that it was generally quiet. Students used the MacRobert, Robbins and Gannochy centres for leisure time and the Allangrange, which could accommodate around 1000 students, for Friday night dances.

07:57 – Discipline in Halls of Residence – Two Wardens in 3 bedroom house, four Sub-Wardens in 1 bed flat within each hall. Always one on duty every night for emergencies.

09:03 – Student welfare – Cleaners weren't recognised for contribution to student welfare in halls. Students treated them as mothers and shared problems with them. They were almost Social Workers but did not get credited/paid as such. Cleaners - ladies, average age of 35 years old. The university never employed any cleaners in their early 20s. Porters – male, average age of 40 years old, viewed as father figures by students and were warned at interviews not to get involved with students.

11:01 – Amusing incident involving Lord Ballantrae – Around Easter, two years after coming to Stirling University, Lord Ballantrae, now Lord High Commissioner for Church of Scotland at Holyrood, contacted the Principal to request that he

release AP for 10 days in order to look after his uniform while he attended events with dignitaries including Ted Heath and Princess Margaret. The leave was granted.
14:14 – AP appointed Domestic Manager – 1982. In this role he wanted to improve student welfare and to ensure that cleaners and porters kept him informed of serious student issues. Domestic staff were not responsible for drug related issues, these were left to the Wardens.
15:52 – Staff roster – Porters were very reliable with only 1% sickness rate while cleaners had a 10% sickness rate and were employed part-time which led to difficulties with the staff roster.
16:44 – 12 October 1972 – Queen’s visit to Stirling University. AP had met the Queen in New Zealand. AP’s wife was pregnant at the time. The Queen asked, ‘What was your Kiwi, a male or female?’
18:52 – Negative effect of Queen’s visit to the university – Taxi drivers reluctant to collect students from grounds, bus drivers drove past without stopping, parents reluctant to send children to the university, delayed opening of Geddes Court.
20:57 – Summer trade and vacation letting – guests included the Bishop of Liverpool, Lord Hague and the British Legion and 1500 Welsh Rugby supporters. Facilities were considered good due to heating and single rooms, although bathrooms were shared.
21:56 – Death of young student from Nethybridge. Part of AP’s duties included attending staff and student funerals as university representative.
23:30 – Summer school clientele – impromptu ceilidhs, good atmosphere. Staff received invites to hall parties, Burn suppers and discos which were popular in those days.
24:30 – Wages and Working conditions – AP received £20 per week from the Duke of Hamilton and then £18.90 per week working at the University of Stirling. AP had more quality time with family at the university.
26:40 – Honours in 2002 – MA for services to the university.
27:40 – University of Stirling’s unsung heroes – AP thought of two people that should be honoured for their services to the university: Sandy Craig who worked in the print room, for his charity work and music services, and Margery Stirling who looked after the welfare of overseas students in the summer school and was secretary to Mrs Brookfield, the first accommodation officer. Margery worked at the university for about 30 years.
30:32 – AP would have liked to continue on at the university but was not allowed to work beyond pension age. AP recalled that in his day he worked on a shoestring budget and was one man with a part time secretary, Isabel?, in charge of porters, cleaners, stores, wages, rotas and timesheets. He handled large amounts of cash, half a million pounds in phone cards which were sold daily by porters and regularly carried £3-4000 cash on the bus to deposit at the bank. AP worked alongside porters when required to ensure a good service.
[Ends 35:15]

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