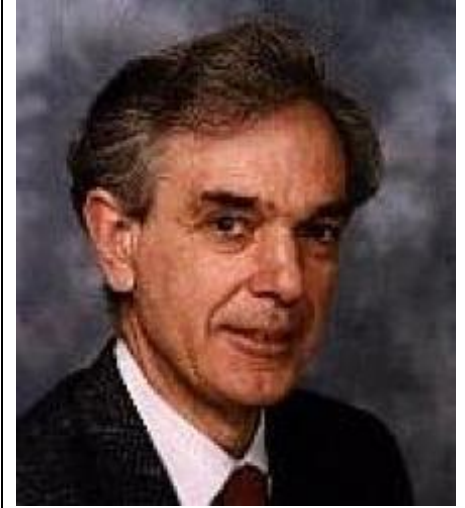
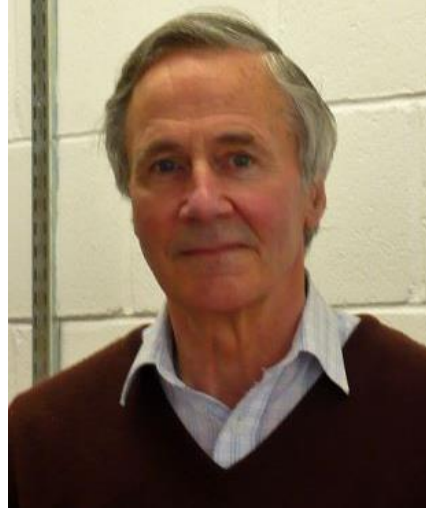


Interviewees: Alan Hamilton (Dr A G Hamilton [left] and Peter Rowlinson [right] (Professor)

UoS Dates: AG: 1968 - 2005; PR 1969 - 2006

Role(s): AG: Assistant Lecturer in Mathematics and latterly Lecturer in Computing Science
PR: Assistant Lecturer in Mathematics and latterly Professor of Mathematics.
Professor Emeritus.



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:03 – AH and PR both applied for posts at UoS whilst doctoral students in Oxford. AH arrived in 1968, and PR in 1969. AH had applied for several lecturing posts but chose Stirling, as it was new, Scottish and appeared different. On arrival, he was favourably impressed. His interview panel included the two members of the department, Professor Douglas Munn (WDM) and Snr Lecturer John Howie (JH), as well as Mike Makower (from Technological Economics). Francis Bell (FKB) and Jane Speakman (later Mitchell, JM) also joined in 1968.

03:40 – AH felt well treated. He was allocated an office to himself and given a reduced teaching load since he was writing up his thesis. Teaching had to be prepared from scratch: there was no body of established material. Allowances were made for the fact that AH and FKB were new to teaching.

05:15 – PR's interview panel included the same staff as that of AH. He chose an academic post at Stirling over one at GCHQ, and arrived in October, having been permitted to go to a conference in Oxford first. JH gave him his own notes which helped him prepare for a third semester course. Both felt that WDM was an excellent HoD. They both felt trusted and learned on the job.

06:20 – There was a team spirit not only in the department, but throughout the University, for the first 10 – 15 years. In the earliest days when Pathfoot was the only building, they would meet staff from all departments.

07: 40 – *Approaches and Methods* was a Stirling innovation, intended to give all students a basic grounding in 'the way to think'. It was compulsory for all students, and not popular. Nor was it liked by some staff who did not feel qualified to teach it. The course was dropped.

08:35 – There were 300 students in the University when AH arrived. Six students were studying Mathematics: two for single and two for joint honours, and two for general degrees. AH had a class of two. There were very good staff-student relations. PR recalls two of the first Honours students, Sandy Wood and Winnie Munro. One tutorial was strained as they had had an argument and would only speak to PR and not to each other. They eventually married.

10:59 – Lectures were every hour from 8.30 until 12.30, then 1-6. This was another Stirling idea to give everyone free time together at lunch-time. It was later deemed impractical.

11:17 – There was only one postgraduate in the early days: Pat McLean, the first Mathematics student to graduate. Research was not directed, but up to individual members of staff. They were recruited to cover a broad range of

Mathematics for teaching, which meant that research areas were for the most part diverse. This caused a problem both for the developing department and individuals as staff could not interact with others over research.

13:40 – AH and PR were trusted to develop specialist courses of their choice. AH taught logic, a course which survived for many years, and PR graph theory. PR recalls lecture rooms with 9 -12 blackboards. Cleaners would await the end of lectures ready to clean the boards. This practice did not last, and blackboards were eventually replaced by whiteboards.

15:00 – The nature of the business changed as numbers grew. There were more personalities, and occasional clashes. John Leech is recalled, appointed at the beginning probably as Senior Lecturer In Computing Science. Computing Science gradually started to impinge on Mathematics, but a separate department did not come until much later. Staff mostly got on well and social life included outings around the area.

17:00 – Small student numbers were not initially a worry for the department as it was assumed that the University was still building up. However in the '80s, doubts began to set in over whether the whole institution would be viable in the long term. The School Mathematics Competition started in the '70s, with the aims of persuading school pupils and teachers to visit Stirling and of increasing recruitment. AH visited the Bank of Scotland to negotiate funding. At the peak of the competition, some 1300 pupils from throughout Scotland took part. Eventually it was abandoned, primarily because there was no evidence of increasing recruitment. There seemed to be conservatism among school teachers regarding the new University.

23:30 – AH enjoyed his time on the Admissions Committee, as it was a 'working' committee. Each member was paired with another from a different department and they actually made the admissions. Admission was to the University, and not to a faculty or department. Eventually the system fell apart as different levels of attainment were required by departments to keep numbers in check. It was common for students to change their degree subject. They had the opportunity to try out different subjects in part one of their degrees.

28:26 – PR chaired the Timetable Committee for several years and FKB originally compiled the University timetable. Eventually, a Computing Science student wrote a program which was used many years. After a sabbatical in the US, PR was appointed to the North American Sub Committee which promoted student exchanges and ensured that the study programmes taken at each end were reasonably matched.

31:00 – One significant event was the Queen's visit in 1972 at which PR was chosen to meet the Queen in the MacRobert foyer. On being asked if she would permit a theorem to be dedicated to her, she stipulated that it should be a 'good one'. The reception was chaotic, with students on the upper level looking down through the glass, some giving clenched fist salutes. The lift was not secured, and students entered the foyer, but then the protest appeared to fizzle out. An enquiry ensued with the University represented by Gavin Thomson, and the students engaged a lawyer. Four students were suspended, but eventually reinstated.

34:30 – AH had been working part-time in Computing Science for about 18 months before the financial cuts in 1981. He then formally transferred full-time to that department and enjoyed a retraining year, commuting to Heriot-Watt University to take an MSc.

36:20 – In 1981, when Sir Kenneth Alexander was Principal, a staff swap was arranged with Strathclyde University. Four Mathematics staff, including PR were nominated for exchange with three geographers. PR is glad he refused, and Professor David Wallace went in his place. There was a net loss of staff to Mathematics and with only four left (FKB, PR, Michael Moss and Mike Roberts who had transferred from Physics), single honours Mathematics was abandoned for a few years. Salvation came with a new Principal (John Forty) , who was keen to build up Mathematics and its Applications. However the staff best qualified for this had been exported to Strathclyde, and those remaining were mostly pure Mathematicians. The Principal was persuaded that Stirling should contribute to the International Centre for Mathematical Sciences in Edinburgh, and afterwards a new Professor, Jon Greenman, a statistician Karen Chan, and Kate Howie were appointed, with Rachel Norman and Douglas Maclean following later.

40:50 – Computing Science and Mathematics were separate for a number of years, and the two departments were not always friendly. Computing Science suffered from a high turnover of staff, although there was a net increase in the late '80s –'90s. The two departments were eventually combined. There was increasing pressure on Computing Science over student numbers, which were low. It seemed that school pupils expected the subject would be too hard, even although they enjoyed using the technology.

42:50 – AH and PR felt that the University became institutionalised as it grew larger, with a different atmosphere and ways of working. AH felt he was becoming an administrative functionary and opted for early retirement.

44:30 – Early on, AH, FKB and PR shared an office in Pathfoot. AH was interested to watch much of the development of the campus and buildings from there. AH found T70 (the first part of Cottrell building) attractive, but the ethos of working together changed with the move from Pathfoot as departments were more spread out. Mathematics shared a common room with Economics, Environmental Science and History at different times. The MacRobert restaurant and official coffee lounge were some distance away. AH and PR made expeditions at lunch time to Friarscroft {Editor's note: actually, Fairview, Staff Club} which was small enough for staff to meet others from different departments. Allangrange was an early staff/ student club with a livelier atmosphere. Facilities included a bar and tennis. WDM and JM

were musicians who took part in recitals there. Initially all social space was shared by all. However, some staff wanted some social space away from students, and there were running arguments over many years between 'separatists' and 'communists'. Then Friarscroft {Fairview} on Airthrey Road was converted into a Staff Club: it was not well patronised, and did not last. A room in 2B corridor was then provided: it was unattractive and it too disappeared

51:10 – AH established the hockey club, which included some staff as well as students. He was Treasurer, and later Treasurer of the Sports Union, which oversaw all student sport, with assistance from the Department of Physical Recreation. He resigned in 1983, having found it a satisfying but time-consuming responsibility.

54:40 – The croquet club (later Airthrey Croquet Club) started about 1970, with up to 20 mostly staff members. Pitches included one outside Airthrey Castle and then one full size pitch at the Gannochy Pavilion. This was maintained for at least 10 years, even after players had dwindled to two (AH and PR). The club played Scottish national interclub matches.

58:20 – AH felt privileged to be a departmental Library representative in the early years, given the task of building up the Library by recommending books relevant to the department's interests. There was no shortage of money for books or journals.

59:40 – After the financial cuts, Mathematics staff taught BASIC programming in the evenings to members of the public as a fund-raising exercise.

[Ends 1:00:57]

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| Interview No: | SURSA OH 027b | <p style="text-align: center;">SURSA University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">info@sursa.org.uk www.sursa.org.uk</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">SURSA</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Oral History</p> |
| Interviewed by: | Carolyn Rowlinson | | |
| Date of interview: | 10/05/2017 | | |
| Summary completed by: | CR | | |
| Date: | 16/05/2017 | | |