

Interviewee: Colin Sinclair (Rev C A M Sinclair)
UoS Dates: 1970 - 1974
Role(s): Undergraduate, Hons Economics

In October 2018, Colin was nominated as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland beginning in May 2019, the first time a Stirling graduate has held that role.



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:33 – Had grown up in Glasgow and there was an assumption at CS's secondary school that you would go on to an established university but CS wanted to make his own way. Father was a lecturer at Strathclyde and knew Andrew Bain, Professor of Economics at Stirling. Advised CS that Stirling was a good choice if you were looking for something different. Started at Stirling in 1970.

02:18 – Economics was the right course. Later did a second degree at the University of Edinburgh but is glad went to Stirling first.

02:31 – Was the youngest student in the year, would have only been 16 when started but the University term was postponed a week due to the residences being unfinished. For the first semester students were boarded out to Callander and Doune.

03:08 – Good to come in 1970 as the university was still small enough to know most of the other students. Students who were bussed in from Callander got to know each other very well. When CS arrived the university had 600 students and then a further 600 students joined in his year. Only Pathfoot was built, there were no residences or MacRobert Centre.

04:54 – Lived in Kinclavine House in Callander with eight other students. Passed driving test in Callander six weeks after turning 17.

06:50 – First impressions. Liked the campus but it was unfinished. Pathfoot was nice. Everyone went to the Allangrange. Stayed in halls every year - Andrew Stewart Hall and Murray Hall. Porters and cleaners were like proxy parents. Had to make an effort to get off campus or you would go stir crazy.

08:59 – Had a lot of interaction with the local area due to involvement with Stirling Baptist Church. Jim Taylor was the Minister and also a University Chaplain. Would have students for lunch and introduce them to members of the community. Maths Professor John Duncan invited CS to assist with a Christian Boys' Club. In third year volunteered with adults with special needs. Lots of things to get off campus for.


11:41 – Enjoyed four years at Stirling immensely. Almost entirely positive memories.

12:04 – Wanted to be involved with his residence and subject. President of the Christian Union for two years and played for the first 15 in rugby. Bill Gammell was also on the team. Didn't really drink and so would often be in charge of getting a drunk rugby team home.

16:14 – Didn't have any expectations regarding resources so postgraduates and staff would be more aware of any shortages. Doesn't remember it being difficult to find resources. Roy Campbell taught Economic History course and would take students on bus tours.

18:54 – Got a 2:1 in Economics. Saw himself going on to work in business, probably management.

<p>19:31 – Remembers doing a Law module early on. Continued with Maths beyond first year, John Duncan’s lectures were at 8.30 on a Monday morning.</p>
<p>20:26 – Wasn’t considered very academic at school so it was a shock to do well and get the Economics prize in first year. Helped CS to realise he was capable and gave him more confidence, especially being so young. Enjoyed the academic side much more from then.</p>
<p>21:40 – First year Economics lecturer would give the same lectures every year but was good at bringing the subject to life. Andrew Bain was joined by Professor Chuck Brown. Chuck Brown was CS’s Director of Studies. He was very helpful and would have students out to his house. Grateful to have done a degree in Economics. Dissertation was on the economic theory of charity.</p>
<p>24:42 – Stirling had continuous assessment whereas at Edinburgh everything came down to six finals. This wasn’t a problem as CS likes exams. Was older and had worked abroad when CS came to his second degree so approached it quite differently.</p>
<p>26:16 – In third year a group of students were invited to take services in local churches during Holy Week. This was the first time people told him he should consider becoming a minister. Asked his minister from Glasgow if that could be God’s plan and was told to ask again in a year. After a year had passed CS knew that he should pursue it. During his final year at Stirling CS put his name forward to be considered as a candidate for the Church of Scotland. Was also approached by Scripture Union and offered a job in Zambia as a training officer. After returning CS went to Edinburgh’s New College as he was accepted as a candidate for the Church of Scotland. Has been a minister since.</p>
<p>31:45 – Ian Paterson came to the University as Chaplain, taking over from Andrew [Editor’s note: Alasdair] Marr. He and CS formed a great friendship. Introduced him to Lorna Begg who would become Ian’s wife. Due to this friendship CS would often support the Chaplaincy Service. Ian was the first person to let CS speak at a pulpit. Ian introduced CS to David Murray who was a doctor at Airthrey Castle. They knew each other from working in Africa. CS later married one of David’s daughters.</p>
<p>37:38 – Friendships at Stirling. A number of students went on to become ministers and so still in touch with them professionally. Calum McLeod is one of those students. Still crosses paths with Christian Union friends. In terms of staff remained in touch with Ian Paterson, Lorna Begg, John Duncan, John Drane and his wife Olive. Also remained in touch with the local minister in Bridge of Allan, William C MacDonald.</p>
<p>41:47 – There were a lot of Northern Irish students and a good number of English students and mature students. It was a small group so everyone mixed. You couldn’t be sure if someone was staff or a student. They were all in it together.</p>
<p>43:51 – Hard to say who was an influence as CS had lots of influences outside of University. The President of the Christian Union in CS’s first year was an influence as was Chuck Brown in Economics. Rumour was Andrew Bain was concerned that Stirling would give out cheap degrees and so was reluctant to give people First Class degrees. It was years before someone got a first in Economics.</p>
<p>45:23 – Was in third year when the Queen visited. The photograph that the papers used of the student on the bridge was a student that CS knew and he suspects that he would have been on the bridge with a bottle of wine regardless and was probably clueless as to the visit. There was poor communication. Students thought that money was taken from the Library to build a toilet for the Queen. University failed to communicate to students what a great opportunity it was. The press did not accurately report what had happened. Everyone was tarred with the same brush. It broke Tom Cottrell’s heart and CS felt very sorry for him. Was embarrassed for his student body and annoyed at the press for exaggerating. It was a wasted opportunity. Most of those involved were first years who hadn’t been at university long and were easily influenced by the organisers.</p>
<p>49:38 – Had a chance to do things he might not have had at a bigger university. Was easier to become President of the Christian Union or get on the rugby team as there were fewer students to compete with. Glad that Stirling gave him the opportunity to find his own identity.</p>
<p>51:00 –Elton John performed in Pathfoot just before he became famous. Remembers Vladimir Ashkenazy playing piano in the MacRobert. Enjoyed the MacRobert theatre. Was an extra in <i>Monty Python and the Holy Grail</i>. It was filmed at Doune Castle and students were invited to be extras.</p>
<p>52:37 – The semester system worked well and CS liked the big break in winter. After first year worked in Switzerland on a commune run by Francis Schaefer (?) and attended Oz Guinness’s wedding. Also worked at Scripture Union summer camps. Could live off the student grant. Worked briefly on a building site.</p>
<p>[Ends 55:11]</p>

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