

Interviewee: Alec MacDonald  
UoS Dates: 1967 – 1970. BA (Economics and Sociology)  
Role(s): Undergraduate; President of the Students' Association,  
1968 - 1969



## Interview summary:

### *Summary of content; with time (min:secs)*

**Start 0:00** – wanted to go to university, but didn't know which; Professor Tommy Dunn was doing a tour of schools and Alec loved what he described about Stirling.

**00:50** – he was from Edinburgh but didn't want to stay at home – so Stirling was the choice for both lifestyle and academic reasons and Stirling University lived up to his expectations. There were many changes and uncertainties but people mixed well. It was a snag that there were no earlier students to guide them, and they had to work everything out by themselves. They made it up as they went along.

**02:02** – finding accommodation was difficult, but he found a room in the home of a nurse where he stayed for his whole study time, because he enjoyed being taken care of.

**02:35** – he studied economics and sociology, although he applied for economics and politics, but there weren't enough students for a politics course.

**03:03** – Stirling was described to him in the beginning as a university which would offer the opportunity to create something new; interaction of people; a certain richness, not just academic experience; fluidity of subject mix: students were admitted to the university, not to a faculty – still likes this today.

**04:20** – he remembers many people; the professor of economics, Andrew Bain was pleasant and competent, but had a particular way of dealing with people: in first year he addressed persons by surname, in second by "Mr. So-and-so", in third year by first name and in fourth year you were allowed to address him by his first name.

**05:00** – in his further career he did IT, "coincidentally" an emerging subject. He had a chat with Walter Abbott (Careers Adviser at this time), who suggested IT, and Alec spent his career in IT and project management. The last 15 years were the most fulfilling for him because he was allocated to a project where the client was a university and he realized the relationship between technology and education and worked with universities all over Europe and also Africa. Turning technology to educational benefit.

**06:23** – Stirling prepared him for this: he worked with many universities, one of them for example was a newly founded university just as Stirling had been in his student days.

**07:33** – Tom Cottrell made an effort to get to know the students: informal social evenings, saw university as community. Alec was President of the Students' Association for one year, where he had a lot to do with him. For him, Tom Cottrell was the right person to set up a university: he combined energy and academic ability and a spark of imagination.

**08:33** – Cottrell was a scientist, but appreciated the arts.

**09:07** – Pathfoot was finished, but there was nothing else but Allangrange (student staff club) and the “Barracuda” (indoor sports building). Residences and everything else were still under construction, and so everything happened in Pathfoot, which is still in excellent condition, although slightly modified.

**10:22** – on his first day, as he was walking up the steps to Pathfoot, he met Colin Hunter who stood out because he had a car; both were excited and that spark is still there today.

**Ends 11:25**

<b>Interview No:</b>	SURSA OH / 086	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b> University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:info@sursa.org.uk">info@sursa.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sursa.org.uk">www.sursa.org.uk</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Oral History</p>
<b>Interviewed by:</b>	Angela Smith		
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<b>Summary completed by:</b>	Julia Schoenthaler		
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