

Interviewee: Janet M Draper, Dr (nee Grant); (Ruth) Margaret Ainsworth, Dr (previously Banks, nee Mather); (K) A Strang (nee Savage)

UoS Dates: JD: 1967 - 1971; MA: 1967 – 1975; AS: 1967 - 1971

Role(s): JD: undergraduate, BA Hons (Psychology)
MA: undergraduate, BA Hons (Chemistry), postgraduate, Dept of Chemistry, PhD.
AS: undergraduate, BA Hons (Biology and Education), Dip Ed



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start: Janet Grant chose Stirling University as it seemed more enterprising and different from Edinburgh, her original likely path. Called for interview as head teacher had given a fairly critical reference. Interviewed at Garden Cottage, which was so alive, interesting, people working together on a new enterprise, building taking place. So, much more interesting than an old, established place where everyone knew how things had been done before. Idea of coming somewhere where much more open very attractive. Once started, surprised how few students there were. Small class sizes suited her, easy to settle in. Studied Psychology and later did one year of a PhD which did not complete. Later taught Psychology in a college, then at Moray House where taught Psychological Development to teachers for many years. Did part-time MBA. Stayed as academic for rest of career, and had various promotions. Very involved in research on teachers. Moved to Exeter with husband's job. Did not settle in very well there and spent last few years of academic working life in Hong Kong as Head of Department, had been Head of Department in Edinburgh. Fascinating to do this job in Chinese culture, very different. Although retired, JG still has links with Hong Kong.

03.25 Ann Savage was at school with Margaret and Janet. Saw prospectus and liked the combination of courses. Came to study Psychology, which she did for one year. Also was studying Biology and was offered the opportunity to take the Education course, so moved to Biology and Education. Once qualified, went into teaching in Secondary schools. In her school found one of her Education Department tutors who had gone back into teaching. Later Mary and Lorn McIntyre, also students from Stirling, joined the school staff. Taught there until she had children and moved to another part of Scotland due to husband's job. Thereafter got involved in pre-school education in voluntary sector. Worked in learning support as classroom assistant. Later went back to at Moray House as post-graduate, where Janet was one of her lecturers. Obtained qualification for Primary teaching. Taught nursery but also Primary classes.

05.15 Margaret Mather chose Stirling as her aunt and uncle were friends with Harry Donnelly (University Secretary) and her aunt told her all about the new university and recommended it. She was interviewed by Tom Cottrell and shown round the site. She was the first student to be accepted to the university and was invited with a few others to film an interview by STV to talk about her reasons for choosing Stirling. Came to study Chemistry and also took Physics and Maths. Finally, First Class Honours in Chemistry. Often only two students in Honours Chemistry class. Stayed on and did PhD and had 7 years at Stirling. Then had 3 small children and took 12-year break. Later moved back here from London and Oxfordshire. MM contacted her former PhD supervisor to say she would like to return to work and use her degree. He suggested she apply for a Returner's Fellowship, which had the aim of getting women back into science after a career break. At coffee, they met by chance another former lecturer who had just won a contract and was looking for a

Chemist. So, MM walked straight into this job which she did for two years. Then she moved to ICI Grangemouth, working in their Process Technology Department, where the job was to take laboratory type processes and scale them up. Enjoyed using her degree to make something people were going to use. Involved in dye stuffs and pharmaceuticals, for example. When MM retired she became a consultant to a company in Taiwan. Still travels to Taiwan twice a year to advise on better processes for making their products, and health and safety. Loved her career and very grateful to Stirling for setting her on this path. AS and JG also very grateful to Stirling for the good start in careers. JG adds that she too went on to do a PhD at Edinburgh and have a family.

08.40 Accommodation at first was in digs, two in Princes St and the other in Allan Park. After first semester, they shared a flat in upper part of a house in Bridge of Allan with very strict landlady who did not allow any men in the flat. A next-door neighbour was very suspicious and watched them with binoculars. Certainly, students well supervised by neighbours in Bridge of Allan. Some locals very unsure of students and worried about impact on area. However, Stirling then was a very small town, no big stores or supermarkets. University brought prosperity to the area. An incident where someone threw a tomato at one of the group was reported in the weekly column: student, and local, Graham Woolaston wrote about the university for the local paper. This caused some upset for not reflecting well on 'Town and Gown' relations.

11.30 They agree studying at Stirling was a fascinating experience, all the more so when compared with other more established institutions. It was very egalitarian and a very close community, where staff and students mixed. Later staff decided they wanted their own social area which was to be at Friarscroft on the campus. Some students were very upset about this change as they felt it undermined the original good intentions for the community.

12.15 They recall being invited to Tom Cottrell's house in groups for lunch, which was unlikely to happen elsewhere. They formed impression first intake had been chosen to ensure a good mix, undergraduates, post-graduates and some mature students, and also from a range of backgrounds. Recall one female student who had been born in Airthrey Castle Maternity Home but had lived in America. She returned to study in the first year at Stirling.

13.00 As a result of the setting, people lived in all sorts of places. One young woman used to ride in on a horse from a farm and made arrangements for her horse while at lectures. There was a lot of commuting, since if you lived within a certain travelling distance you were expected to commute in the first year. Edinburgh probably just outside limit, so they JG, MM and AS lived locally. Lectures started at 8.30 am and finished 12.30 pm. AS recalls in third year, she needed to pre-order lunch so that she had time to eat as rushing between labs. Science students had labs in the afternoon, often finishing at 6 pm.

16.00 In the '60s it was very common to study at your local university, going away to university was less usual. Especially the case for students whose home was in Glasgow and Edinburgh. One of the attractions of Stirling for JG, MM and AS was the chance to study away from home, but go home at weekends. Taking the last bus on Sunday night from Edinburgh is a memory for the group. Later, once more established, they spent more weekends in Stirling. Social life focussed on Allangrange. Many students clubbed together to buy a guitar so someone could sing to the group. Barman had a book with a picture of each student and kept a note. Well looked after in Allangrange by George and Annie Donaldson and in the Pathfoot coffee lounge by Gladys. They also recall Mrs McGrogan in the Office who, although slightly intimidating, had the students' best interests at heart, as she kept track of student documents.

17.20 AS very pleased the Stirling system allowed her to change from her registered subject of Psychology to Biology which led to the professional life she enjoyed. However, the 15-week terms meant she had to do the teaching practice required for Education during the holidays, in January and June. Did her practice at Stirling High School where landlady's son and friends were in her classes, a bit of a challenge. Taught Biology in Secondary schools at first, and enjoyed it, but later qualified for Primary. Although the Education students at Stirling did teaching practice in a Primary school, they were qualified to teach only Secondary level. AS subsequently did a further qualification for Primary education. However, AS recalls that only after starting teaching in schools did she understand that her Stirling teaching qualification was, in fact, a Dip Ed (Diploma in Education) a further qualification which many other Secondary teachers did not have.

19.00 All appreciated the flexibility of Stirling. It was easier to change direction of study. AS recalls intensive study, as courses were assessment driven, with essays to write, labs to complete and, since she was taking the Education qualification, she had to cover school Biology. She believes the Education qualification is now a Joint degree. AS also recalls the need to explain to employers why a science degree was a BA and why Education was a separate qualification. In fact, the original concept for Stirling degrees was that everyone would get a BA. Later there was discussion about giving scientists the option of converting this to a BSc for the purposes of the wider world, employers, for example. However, the qualifications in Scottish universities at that time were that Arts students got an MA which looked like a Masters qualification, which could be considered misleading, whereas Science students got a BSc. It could be argued that, in some ways, the Stirling BA was less confusing.

22.40 Another novel feature of Stirling was the Approaches and Methods course which was compulsory for every student, and which they had to pass or be expected to leave. That was an added challenge. It was abandoned after a few years, but the idea of a course that everyone did was one of the original principles of the university. Keele University had something similar. They recall that small classes meant students needed to be well prepared. Usually the small classes meant a comfortable atmosphere, although occasionally being in a class of two could also be a little intimidating. AS recalls that Sociology was demanding for her as she had limited world experience at that point, a lack of knowledge of politics, for example. Students today do Modern Studies, so possibly better informed. They had discussed earlier how very like children they were in final year at school so coming to university was quite an event for them compared to youngsters today. This was particularly so in their case as they had come from a fairly protective female educational environment at school.

[Ends 27:00]

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