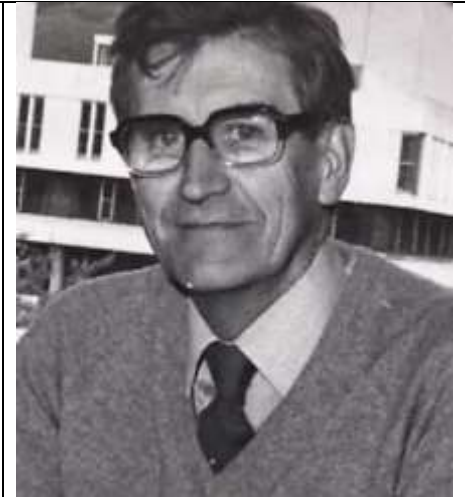


Interviewee: Peter McEwen, Professor
UoS Dates: 1966 (appointed) – 1984. Died 2015
Role(s): Founding Professor of Psychology. Gave the first lecture at the University of Stirling. Professor Emeritus.



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:12 – First Professor of Psychology at Stirling University

00:42 – Was appointed in 1966. Other appointees at that time were: Tommy Dunn in English, Andrew Bain in economics, Frank Bradbury in Technological Economics, Glanville Price in French and Modern Languages and Graham Bird in philosophy.

02:43 – Asked by Tom Cottrell to go through applications and interview candidates for Biology. Appointed Fred Holiday.

03:32 – PM came from Queen’s University Belfast. Moved to Stirling as he was friends with Tom Cottrell in university and liked him very much, thought he had good ideas.

05:40 – Switched to job in Stirling in January 1967 but was still travelling between Stirling and Belfast.

06:36 – Early appointees were involved in anything Tom Cottrell was doing. PM helped to solve a problem in the Physics Department where Mike Harrison was leaving due to a disagreement surrounding the building of a Physics building. A Physics building was to be built on to Cottrell but funding issues prevented this and Mike Harrison was unhappy about it. Tom Cottrell wanted to keep him and so offered a second chair for his Department. PM recommended a colleague from Queen’s University named Dalgarno. Ian Percival was offered the chair but Mike Harrison never did come to Stirling University in the end.

10:40 – First meeting of senior staff took place on 15th September 1966. After that the professorial population was divided into two. One half became the Academic Council and the other half became the Estates and Buildings or Development Committee. PM was on Estates and Buildings Committee.

11:46 - Also appointed at that time were the Buildings Officer Norman Walker, Ian Ainsworth and Harry Donnelly.

14:51 – Tom Cottrell was critical of some aspects of Scottish university education and wanted Stirling to be different. The informality of Stirling came from this. Inspired by CP Snow’s writings on the division of science and art, Tom Cottrell wanted students to be able to study both but the term system was not conducive to this and so the semester system came about. Stirling was more flexible.

18:01 – Feels that at Stirling staff and students are closer than at other universities.

19:00 – Remembers the closeness of the secretaries. Recalls meeting Matilda Mitchell for the first time.

21:28 – Aware that at the initial meeting of senior staff on 15th September 1966 six people were present representing the Scottish Union of Students. They were concerned about flexibility and continuous assessment.

23:09 – There was some discussion regarding the use of BA for an arts degree rather than MA as used at traditional universities but there were no great concerns. The semester system was originally to begin in October as the first term would normally but PM was concerned that this structure did not give staff enough time for preparation. Tom Cottrell thought this was necessary so as to give education students a month in school in September. PM spoke with Michael Moore who had been a teacher and thought January would be more suitable for Education placements. PM passed this on to Tom Cottrell and so the semester system was changed resulting in students having a month off at Christmas.
28:13 – At the beginning of the University each department got three or four members of staff, dependent on how many students they expected to have. From then on. Staffing reflected the intake. There were rumours that the 14 departments set up at Stirling reflected the 14 subjects that had the most unmet demand in Scotland. Despite this Physics and Chemistry never took off at Stirling
31:17 – Some departments were recommended to have a specific focus by the Academic Planning Committee but Psychology was not.
32:54 – Stirling was to have a focus on residences but UGC funding for residential accommodation stopped the year that Stirling was to build. It was suggested that the local authority borrow money and then lend it cheaply to the University but this was blocked due to media attention. Harry Donnelly knew John Riddy and appointed him to deal with the residences. Residences were used during the summer to generate income.
36:53 – Pathfoot was a nice building. Tom Cottrell wanted a building that could be accessed easily while the others were constructed. This was Pathfoot.
40:48 – Local people involved in the early development: Provost Robert McIntyre, Macfarlane Gray and Michael Kelly.
43:58 – UGC would have provided money for a staff club building but the students went on strike as they didn't want a separate staff club. They felt this would divide the staff and the students. PM spoke to students Keenan Smart and Monica Clough. PM took this to the Academic Council and thought they should discuss this with students. Frank Bradbury agreed and the Council accepted it. PM realised that as the University grew the closeness of students and staff would be impossible to maintain and students compromised so that they were agreed on the necessity of separate and shared facilities.
53:20 – All committees and boards were products of the original Planning Board. The Academic Board was an excellent idea and should not have been abandoned.
56:10 – PM thought the Queen's visit was a great shame but disagreed with the way it was dealt with afterwards. The morning after the visit a group of students were gathering names for an apology. PM went to the Principal's office but Tom Cottrell was away. Tommy Dunn, Andrew Bain, Frank Bradbury and Bob Bomont were gathered there on the phone to Tom Cottrell. PM told Tom Cottrell to support the students hoping to make an apology. This didn't happen and instead they sought to persecute those involved but this didn't work.
1:00:41 – PM especially proud of when psychology got its second chair. Bill Phillips convinced Alan Baddeley to join Stirling from Sussex. This made Psychology popular at Stirling. Alan Baddeley then went on to be Director of Applied Psychology at Cambridge.
Ends [1.05.11]

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