

Interviewee: Douglas Wood
UoS Dates: 1971 - 2007
Role(s): Administrative Assistant, latterly Academic Registrar.



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 0.06 Background on move from industry to University Administration, seeking a change of career.

1.31 - Interview in Airthrey Castle where some of the academic admin. offices then were. Started work soon after and was housed in the attic of the castle next to a huge bathroom – useful for a soak after his running exploits. Shared telephone system then.

02.37- Internal mail service with deliveries from the central mailroom twice a day. Communications were slow but a huge advantage was fewer interruptions, which meant highly productive working conditions – more thinking and writing time (pre computers). Main communications were by internal memos and phone.

04.05 - Lots of committees and only four people servicing them. Interesting learning experience about academic subjects.

05.00 - Attracted by four weeks annual leave and office hours from 9.a.m – 5.15.p.m. with an hour and half for lunch, which allowed him to pursue his running/orienteering skills rather than take a three-course lunch.

06.45 - Committees and minute writing, recording the nature of the discussion and the key issues as well as the outcomes. Some participants felt views not well recorded. Was servicing 17 committees at that time.

08.05 - Move to Cottrell Building (T71 in architect's brief) and admin. housed in A corridor.

08.55 - Involved in student records. Describes student records systems.


10.20 - Recalls Queen's visit in October 1972; taken aback by the global reaction. Effect on university which suffered badly and unfairly; affected it for decades, especially in ability to attract students.

Earlier, the university had had more applications than Oxbridge, but after October 1972, applications fell away significantly. Also, government funding cuts had a drastic effect.

13.50 - General student unrest in various places; in Stirling student sit-ins in academic admin. offices.

Recalls two in particular and describes them; humiliating for senior staff.

20.30 - Describes the Supervisory Board for Part I of the degree (chaired by the Principal) which was part of his remit and, the degree structure for Parts I and II. This Board considered student progress and its meetings lasted all day. Describes the involvement of Directors of Studies in the progress reports; interesting and enjoyable.
26.22 - Bartering and compensation of grades and split grades often gave rise to interesting debate. Computerisation of records introduced.
28.08 - Semester system described; always under review; it hindered collaboration with other institutions but ultimately vindicated.
30.09 - Good relations with students – describes; these varied from year to year depending on individuals. Some tensions (not only in Stirling) but more involvement of students led to more fruitful relationships and their better understanding of why things were as they were. Some student leaders were difficult but generally relationships with the student body were good as they developed common purpose with academic staff. Tensions arose because of competition for resources or having to comply with external requirements like Health & Safety etc.
35.00 - Drop in student applications; need for recruitment. Schools Liaison Officer post created and academic staff became involved in this work also.
37.00 - Fair to describe admin. as amateurs at the beginning? Yes. Admin. was traditionally done by academic staff, but later on needed professional people. Describes how admin. developed into a professional service from regular meetings of admin. staff which over time became more specialised; very little structure initially; Stirling had no constraining traditions.
40.04 – How was Stirling viewed by other universities? Initially it was the smallest and viewed as a junior partner; later seen as one of the post Robbins Report universities with shared purpose and interests.
41.28 – Relations with the local community? Very difficult after October 1972, but before then very positive.
42.15 - His friends tended to be from outwith the University.
43.12 - His career continued in academic admin. until retirement. As the university developed had particular involvement in its campuses in Inverness and the Western Isles; felt he grew with the institution and that there were always fresh challenges like the ‘highly successful’ merger with the Forth Valley College of Nursing and Midwifery and others; describes these.
Ends 47:28

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Summary completed by:	Lorna Paterson		
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