

Interviewee: - Lorn McIntyre
UoS Dates: -1967-1971
Role(s): -Undergraduate



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 0:24 Lorn was at school in Oban before he moved with his family to the Isle of Mull. His schoolteacher was the poet Iain Crichton Smith; they became friends. Lorn left school at 16 because his elder brother, a creative mathematician who became a professor at Yale, Oxford and Edinburgh, was so academically distinguished that he couldn't compete with him.

He wrote for the *Oban Times* and trained as a hotel manager, and was the youngest treasurer of a town council in Scotland while all the time writing poetry that was read by and discussed with the poets Iain Crichton Smith and Edwin Morgan. His father, a bank manager, encouraged him to apply to Stirling, where he was accepted at the age of 25 without formal qualifications but with letters of recommendation from the poets.

3:15 He had done four years of intensive reading and could recite some of Yeats's poetry; he had come to University with a body of knowledge but he couldn't have in-depth discussions of the poems with Alasdair Macrae because the other students would have been excluded. Because of his family's second sight he wanted to consider that element in Yeats's work. As a teenager he bought *Waiting for Godot* when it was published but at Stirling he was 25 mixing with 18-year-olds. He had the same problem of not being able to discuss Faulkner's work in depth with Alastair Wood because it would intimidate the other students.

6:45 He was able to help other students. He wrote his dissertation, supervised by the flamboyant Professor Tommy Dunn, on the work of Iain Crichton Smith because he could use his knowledge of Gaelic as well as English. There was no student accommodation on campus as the buildings weren't finished. In his view that led to the development of cliques not a cohesive student body. Student backgrounds were varied, including such good mature students as Monica Clough.

10:16 He had one to one conversations with Tommy Dunn and Alastair Wood. The poet Norman McCaig was communicative but he was dismissive and wouldn't change his opinion, for instance he was scathing about the work of John Crowe Ransom. He didn't want to hear a defence of Ransom. Lorn applied Iain Crichton Smith's phrase 'classic sanity' to McCaig; Lorn was surprised that McCaig admired the work of Sorley MacLean in spite of its mysticism. The evolving courses involved experimentation and lacked the traditional structure of degrees in English at St Andrews and Glasgow, though lecturers there might be dismissive of students' opinions unlike

at Stirling.

13:52 Lorn became Head of English at Merchiston Castle School, putting pupils in for scholarships. He wrote a PhD on the work of Sir Walter Scott at Glasgow University. He then became a higher education specialist in the media, and particularly enjoyed writing BBC TV scripts. He did a programme on Dr John Lorne Campbell, a Gaelic scholar. Lorn wrote the commentary for the BBC for Pope Benedict's visit to Edinburgh, and has continued to publish poetry and other books. He was also a committed dancer.

18:22 He had a particular memory of Robin Mayhead, a senior lecturer in English Studies whom Lorn found difficult and so he avoided Mayhead's course on Keats. Mayhead was a good teacher and was a disciple of F R Leavis but he could be acerbic and negative. He remembered the beauty of the landscape but found Pathfoot a goldfish bowl and thought that the principle of continuous assessment made it difficult to structure a coherent course.

21:10 He was very fond of Michael Alexander who was a good Anglo-Saxonist; he shared the tenancy of Kilbryde Castle with him, and he had a Rover chauffeured for him by another student. He had acquired a taste for cigars and whisky in Tobermory and maintained it in the castle.

Ends

Interview No:	SURSA OH / 097	SURSA University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA info@sursa.org.uk www.sursa.org.uk	 SURSA Oral History
Interviewed by:	Angela Smith		
Date of interview:	2 September 2017		
Summary completed by:	Angela Smith		
Date:	4 April 2018		