

Interviewee: Roddy Cowie
Dates: 1968-1972
Role(s): Student



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

00.25 Roddy Cowie was interviewed on occasion of a reunion in 2018 for students who joined the university in 1968. RC explains that in the spirit of the 60s anything that wasn't new was rubbish so he didn't want to go to an old university like Edinburgh or St Andrews, or an English university. So, Stirling selected itself. Part 1 offered a range of subjects, so RC took English, Biology, Philosophy and Psychology. He also took the foundation course studied by all students (Approaches and Methods) which was the most interesting for him. His tutor was Tom Cottrell, who had the idea for this course. Tom Cottrell tried to teach them Predicate Logic, of which he himself had little understanding, and it was great fun. He taught them that any conclusion follows from a contradiction, a very interesting principle. He was unable to demonstrate quite why it was so, and several students including RC had a go at explaining why. TC was grateful for the illumination! The students had no idea that vice chancellors were important people. RC recalls other staff, like Fee Riddy teaching him Philosophy, not her area, whereas RC was studying Philosophy. However, RC thinks that those classes where staff sometimes worked with subjects where they were not experts, and where students could contribute, broke the ice. RC doesn't recall staff sitting in on other staff members' lectures, as happened in English Studies, but did experience this later when he started lecturing.

04.07 RC knew the area, having lived in Tullibody as a child, then in Rosyth. He lived in digs in Bridge of Allan above Mrs McAllister's flower shop. Also lodging there was Sammy Abiye who went on to be director of an institute of education in Nigeria, and two other boys. It was quite pleasant, but RC recalls one attic room with skylight where in winter it was necessary to take care not to impale yourself on the icicle which had formed!

05.07 RC enjoyed the pub in Alangrange which was pleasant and sociable and used by staff and students who mixed freely there. RC started a folk club where Billy Connolly, Archie Fisher, and Gerry Rafferty performed. Staff also attended, such as Cliff Henty from the Psychology Department who was a very good unaccompanied folksinger. As well as the pub in Alangrange, RC has memories of John Riddy in Airthrey Castle from those days.

08.30 RC takes pleasure in the fact he played basketball for his university and enjoys giving the teasing impression that he played for UCLA, which he also attended. This was the time when big names in basketball

<p>like Abdul Kareem and Henry Bibby played for UCLA. RC then explains he was at UCLA but the university he played basketball for was Stirling, probably the worst basketball team he had ever come across. He sustained a joint injury while playing, with effects still visible today, drove and which resulted in a metal splint in his hand.</p>
<p>11.00 Asked about his first impressions of Stirling, RC recalls that a Psychology post-graduate from Stirling collected him by car from his school in Dollar and drove him to the campus for an interview and to show him round. RC was attracted by the excitement of being at a new university. He had grown up locally and already knew about the beauty of the area. He loved Dumyat and loved the idea that you could go out the back gate of the university and enjoy wonderful walks he had known as a child.</p>
<p>12.40 After completing an Honours degree, RC went to Sussex, another new university, to do a PhD. Sussex had a department doing unconventional work which combined computing and psychology which appealed to RC. After completing his PhD, RC got a lectureship at Queen's University Belfast in 1975. He went through the ranks there, teaching Psychology and doing research in what is now called AI. RC retired in 2014</p>
<p>13.50 Asked if he recalls other staff from the Psychology Department, RC mentions Cliff Henty again and Professor Peter McEwan. RC recalls that in his first year he discovered he had an eye problem and was sent to Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He was treated with light coagulation, a precursor of laser surgery. Peter McEwan visited with some music tapes and asked him to keep a record of visual experiences as he recovered from surgery. PMcE gave lectures on neuroscience which was just emerging then and had a huge influence on RC's thinking.</p>
<p>13.20 RC also recalls Helen Ross who had an experiment done in the space station and was involved in underwater diving. She got a grant to dive in the Bahamas as the waters were particularly clear and taught them a lot about perception. She taught Social Psychology. RC kept in touch and attended her retirement event on top of a mountain in Sutherland. RC recalls Robin Campbell, who suggested to him that he went to Sussex, for his intellectual prowess and intellectual gymnastics which provided good intellectual training. RC also remembers Bill Barnes-Gutteridge, who came later, although RC didn't take his courses. Interestingly, the PhD student who brought RC to Stirling for his interview, Ranald Macdonald, became a very significant mathematical psychologist who invented the Omega coefficient which is probably the most reliable way to measure the validity of a test. RC reckons Ranald Macdonald has not received the credit due for this achievement. Finally, RC recalls a PhD student called Jim Chewitt who was doing a study on how people ingratiate themselves with authority.</p>
<p>18.03 RC's final memory is of his graduation where he had long hair and wore a kilt.</p>
<p>Ends</p>

Interview No:	SURSA OH / -	<p style="text-align: center;"> SURSA University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> info@sursa.org.uk www.sursa.org.uk </p>	
Interviewed by:	Angela Smith-		
Date of interview:	1 September 2018		
Summary completed by:	Moira Ball		
Date:	2 August 2023		