

## **A Tribute**

### **Jim Struthers**



#### **From Karen Plouviez:**

Jim joined the University in its early years as a gardener/foreman under Henry Milne (whom some may remember) and became just the second person to hold the post of Superintendent when he was appointed to it in the 1980s. He thereby took on responsibility for what had been a substantial country estate of around 350 acres, and was now a modern campus with a wide variety of types of landscape: large areas of grassland and planting, sports pitches needing specialised maintenance, woodland, Airthrey Loch and its surrounds, along with the grounds associated with buildings in and around Stirling and Bridge of Allan. Jim led the team who managed all of this season by season and year in, year out. The complexity of maintaining the grounds was increased by the fact that the Airthrey campus has two formal designations - it is a Garden and Designed Landscape and sits within an Area of Great Landscape Value.

It is no surprise that the campus was one of the jewels in the University's crown and is often said to be one of the most beautiful in Europe. The campus's beauty and safety were no doubt a major attraction for students and visitors and this was in no small part due to Jim's efforts. Under his leadership, too, the team would take a special role in making the campus literally bloom all over during Graduation. In his 30 odd years in this role Jim was totally dedicated to his work and loyal to the institution, his work hours probably being to the detriment of his own health at times. Outside work, he found time to get involved in local horticultural matters and was well known and respected for his specialist knowledge, and for his charity work.

I also know Jim was well known by many across the campus and was well liked. Apart from his work-related skills, he was a very kind and caring man and that is what will stick with me. I knew him well in the years between 2002, when I joined the University as Director of Estates & Campus Services, and his retirement, and the news of his death truly shocked me and I

know that this will be the case for many others. I can see his smiling face now. He will be sadly missed.

**From Peter Meech:**

I got to know Jim during the years I was secretary of the Airthrey Gardens Group. While not a committee member, he was regularly 'in attendance' at our monthly meetings chaired by Mrs Joyce Dunn. Here we discussed how the funds raised by the Group might best support the University's gardens and grounds. Jim's thoughts were always listened to with respect and invariably acted upon, his sage advice deriving from his many years of professional service on campus. He also played an active part in the annual plant sales that helped to raise tens of thousands of pounds over the 30 years of the Group's existence (1970-2000).

As Superintendent of Gardens and Grounds, Jim made a major contribution to maintaining and enhancing the superb appearance of the campus. From a personal point of view, I remember him for his courteousness and modest but firm manner - and for his bright eyes and ready grin. The University community - past, present and future - owes him a significant debt. Wren's epitaph, '*si monumentum requiris, circumspice*', ['if you would seek my monument, look around you'] applies equally to Jim.



For those who don't recognise him, Jim is at the back, between the bearded man and the very tall man. Joyce Dunn, the chair of the group, is third from the right in the front row, next to Blanche Forty. Peter Meech is fourth from the left, at the back, behind the short lady.

## **From Bill Kidd:**

Eileen and I were saddened to learn of Jim's death. As a coda to the previous tributes, I'd like to add a brief personal acknowledgement of his many qualities that we came to appreciate during my wardenship in Murray Hall from 1971 to 1977. In those early days, when residences were still being built and landscaping was taking place around us, the everyday presence of the university groundsman, with or without mechanical equipment, was an object of considerable fascination for the large number of small children, some of pre-school age, growing up on the campus. Though they must often have been a distraction from the work in hand, Jim was unfailingly patient and good-humoured with them, and his easy natural authority helped make those formative experiences memorable. Our family acquaintance continued after our move off campus when, unstintingly generous with his time and expertise he helped us install a larch-lap garden fence and advised on the condition of a very venerable fruit tree. Latterly, prior to his retirement, he oversaw a seasonal log-selling operation from the nursery which generated a welcome Christmas bonus for the grounds staff. Others, I am sure, will have similarly appreciative memories. That we were direct contemporaries makes his passing all the more poignant.