

Interviewee: Walter Abbott
UoS Dates: 1969 -
Role(s): Appointments Officer.
Latterly Chief Careers Adviser



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

- Start 00.10** – Walter Abbott (WA) set up first Student Careers Advisory Service at Stirling University (SU). Applied to work at SU when in his early 40s for a job in the Appointments Office. Bob Bomont, Finance Officer, agreed to change name to Careers and Appointments Service, subsequently changed to Careers Advisory Service (CAS).
- 05.00** – The panel at WA's interview consisted of Prof. Frank Bradbury, Alastair Wood, Harry Donnelly (first University Secretary), an external assessor and a student. For every departmental appointment there were two committees - Policy Committee and Advisory Committee.
- 08.45** – Starting up CAS. Had to work on a budget. Good information sources required. Local companies and businesses were contacted and library base created. No time to prepare. CAS first thought about in second year of University and initially Glasgow Univ. was asked to help out.
- 09.30** – WA appointed in Sept. 1969 and started on 1st October 1969. First student graduated in 1970.
- 10.50** – Advisory Service at SU was different from other Universities - there to help students make up their minds. Previously Universities' Appointments Services only helped students to prepare for interviews for jobs.
- 12.20** – Harry Donnelly died one month after WA's interview and Bob Bomont was appointed as acting University Secretary as well as Finance Officer. Also Frank Bradbury and Tom Cottrell always available to advise. Early University staff very close socially and met at Principal's house at Airthrey Castle Yard.
- 14.36** – First Careers Advisory Service Office was in a Terrapin building behind walled garden. Then to attic at Airthrey Castle when Students' Liaison Department was included. Universities in Scotland were very parochial at that time and students were mainly local. WA wrote to all Scottish schools and gave talks about Universities, including Stirling. Warned off by Aberdeen University about contacting their local schools.
- 17.09** – Staff were encouraged to meet up in Pathfoot, the only academic University building available then, to talk about their jobs. WA took his reference library to Pathfoot from Airthrey Castle so that he had contact with students there.
- 19.50** – As University grew in size, it became more compartmentalised regarding dining and socialising. Social space in MacRobert area and so Cottrell staff did not go to Pathfoot. Biology and Chemistry moved from Pathfoot to Cottrell. Economics and Accountancy were developing
- 22.05** – First students graduated in 1970, about 30 undergraduates and 20 to 30 post graduates
- 23.00** – Advisory service was open to all. Sharp rise in number of students requiring advice. All students were contacted at the end of Part One (after 18 months of their courses). The Milk Round bulletins with lists of all companies coming to the University were given to all final year students. The Careers Advisory Service was

established very quickly.


24.40 – Queen’s Visit. WA’s first reaction - a minority of students’ bad behaviour had spoilt everything. Some employers no longer interested in Stirling. Difficult time for students as a whole in UK. Media encouraged student hecklers and headlines exaggerated the incident. Student funding had been cut. Money spent on Queen’s visit. Students’ reaction understandable but not forgivable.

University’s finances and general reputation suffered most.

30.00 – Tom Cottrell wanted mature person as new University Secretary and appointed the retiring General Sir Derek Lang who in turn appointed Tommy Dunn as his PR man. As a new service in the University, mobility was required of CAS - 4/5 moves in 5 years.

34.56 – WA feels satisfied with work. CAS had good reputation . 75% of students used service

[Ends – 36.0]

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Interviewed by:	Bill Inglis		
Date of interview:	06/09/2011		
Summary completed by:	Maureen Mitchell		
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