

Interviewee: Jane Mitchell Dr (nee Speakman); Mike Mitchell (M R Mitchell)	
UoS Dates: 1968 – 1986; 1968 – 1995	
Role(s): Lecturer in Mathematics; Lecturer in German	

## Interview summary:

<b>Start 00:00</b> – Jane came for interview around March 1968
<b>00:44</b> - Mike took the overnight train to Stirling and walked out to the University along the Causewayhead Road and was offered a lift from a milkman; after the interview he walked around Stirling in the afternoon: he found a silver coin near the Castle rock and interpreted it as a lucky sign: “I’m gonna get the job” – as a lecturer in the German department. This was 1968.
<b>02:14</b> – Jane started in the Maths department: the people who founded the Maths department (Professor Douglas Munn and John Howie) taught her in Glasgow when she was an undergraduate.
<b>02:44</b> – Douglas and John had been there since 1967, and Alan Hamilton and Francis Bell were appointed in the same year as her; Douglas was very encouraging.
<b>03:24</b> – The German department was led by Jim Trainer (senior lecturer at that time, later professor). There were also a German “Lektor” and Lou Jillings, apart from Mike. The great thing for Mike was to develop new courses; in his former job at Reading, he had to do standard courses.
<b>04:15</b> – They agreed what they wanted to teach and in which courses. In the first year they were sent a Kafka exhibition and there was a technical phrase about erecting the stands that got to be a catchphrase for the department: “Querstange von oben einschieben” [“insert the upper cross piece from above”] – all of them worked together in everything to do with German, and not only teaching.
<b>05:35</b> – Size of the classes in the early days wasn’t particularly small; about 6 in tutorials.
<b>06:20</b> – Language labs were there at the beginning in Pathfoot. Language labs in general were fairly new, but he managed alright. He was rather in awe: listening to students, and buzzing them. The switches weren’t a problem, but there was a big red button right in the middle that he couldn’t resist pressing one time. Everything stopped and he had to get a technician. But he can’t remember having difficulties getting used to language labs – “you had to think about what you wanted to tell the students”
<b>08:15</b> – The effectiveness of the language labs depended on the use by the students. Later on, management wanted more use of technical facilities. You could do more teaching in the language labs, but there was a limit to what you could do in them.
<b>09:35</b> – There was a language component in every year, but also specialist components like history or literature. Language formed the basis of the programme.
<b>10:22</b> - Jane taught “pure Maths”. She had done her postgraduate study in Cambridge in statistics, and so she was offered the chance to teach some statistics, but she turned it down. So, she taught algebra and calculus to first and

<p>second year students. She noticed that her colleague John Howie taught without appreciation of the statistical side; his successor was a specialist in statistics, but left after a couple of years. Jane then took it on, and from then on taught mainly statistics.</p>
<p><b>11:50</b> – There was also a small number of postgraduates in Maths, including Arthur McDivitt, a talented musician.</p>
<p><b>12:15</b> – Dalnair, the temporary residence of the first Principal (before his house was built on campus), became accommodation for single members of staff, and increased their social life; Jane and Mike were there at the same time. The inhabitants played games together, watched the moon landing, went to football matches, reading, and doing crosswords. Once they planned a party in an empty room, but a fire broke out and they had to evacuate the house in the middle of the night. There was only smoke damage.</p>
<p><b>15:30</b> – At the end of the year most of them moved out and lived in flats or shared houses; Mike and Jane married, and moved in together the year after that.</p>
<p><b>16:30</b> – Students and staff were much closer in the earlier years because the university was so small; the captain of the student football team asked Mike to join – so outside the serious matches the university football team consisted of lots of students and a couple from academic, administrative and technical staff; the same with the cricket team – “so you basically knew almost everyone”.</p>
<p><b>18:20</b> – Music was important: Douglas Munn was a superb pianist and John Howie took the university choir enthusiastically – it also included both staff and students. There was a Christmas concert in the first year, where they performed a Bach cantata with Ian Ainsworth and Mrs. Glanville Price as soprano. Jane played the oboe.</p>
<p><b>19:38</b> – Pathfoot didn’t seem to be a great building architecturally and the heating system wasn’t good, but the grounds of the university made up for it. Mike even collected raspberries and mushrooms in the woods.</p>
<p><b>21:05</b> – The only problem with the Cottrell building was that the buses revved outside the front. Jane and Mike had to move from Pathfoot to Cottrell. Jane was in the Cottrell building at the time of the Queen’s visit in autumn 1972, but her office overlooked an internal courtyard, so she didn’t have the bus problem; Mike moved back to Pathfoot and his department was happy about it, because Pathfoot was cosier.</p>
<p><b>22:05</b> – A staff club was opened [Editor’s note: Fairview]: until then all shared the facilities (dining room in Pathfoot, coffee lounge in J-corridor). The closeness of staff and students was a result of the size of the University in the early days. A few of the first students complained about the staff club, seeing it as a kind of betrayal.</p>
<p><b>23:55</b> – Interaction with other departments: everyone together in Pathfoot. Mathematicians used to have coffee in Cottrell with economists. The German and French departments were like “oil and water”, the staff of each having a different approach to life. Eventually, the French department would take over the German department, and German staff didn’t want a modern language department where the French staff would be the most numerous.</p>
<p><b>26:07</b> – They went to the The Burn (a country house in the north-east available to the Scottish universities) with students, and planned events. They started performing German plays once a year: choosing a play in the autumn, rehearsing until spring semester, when the performances took place; also encouraged schools and public to come in on Fridays. Staff and students took part in acting – Mike himself acted. Plays were chosen to appeal to all, so normally they chose modern plays. One year a student wanted to direct and he chose Schiller’s Maria Stuart, and everyone feared that no one would understand the classical German. However, the German Lektor edited and cut it and then he and the director managed to get the students to understand their roles and lines – it finally went very well. The remarkable thing for Mike was, that even on the performance on Friday afternoon with lots of school kids, everyone was listening in complete silence to the climax, the final monologue of the Earl of Leicester, when he described the execution of Mary.</p>
<p><b>31:37</b> – The Maths department had a problem: they never got enough students to justify the number of staff that they hired in the first years, and so in 1986 they traded four mathematicians for three geographers from Strathclyde, so Jane said goodbye to Stirling. She regretted it in some ways, but she also enjoyed working with the younger colleagues in Strathclyde.</p>
<p><b>33:05</b> – Mike had similar problems in the German department, also the Queen’s visit probably made a big difference by deterring new students. They were overstaffed and had to make an effort to increase student numbers. He was involved in a development to broaden the department’s offer: they introduced a beginner’s course from which you could graduate in the normal time. Stirling was the first University in Scotland, maybe in Britain, to introduce a beginner’s course. Initially, they brought in a course from the outside (German Goethe Institute), but then they developed their own beginner’s course: selecting texts and compiling exercises was interesting and fun for Mike.</p>
<p><b>36:05</b> – He was also involved in the early ‘80s in developing courses for Management and Economics with a specialist language element.</p>

**39:00**– Mike remembers one student that he had seen at Registration right at the beginning of his time in Stirling, who had no Highers, and who “looked like a rough diamond”. He (John) and a few mature students were much more interesting. John got a First, and came back to do research and even started on a PhD, but he couldn’t finish because of cancer in his family. They helped him get a job as Lektor in East Germany. A couple of years later he came back and talked about what he felt was wrong in this part of Germany. His career made him memorable.

**Ends 42:18**

<b>Interview No:</b>	SURSA OH / 031	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b> University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:info@sursa.org.uk">info@sursa.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sursa.org.uk">www.sursa.org.uk</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Oral History</p>
<b>Interviewed by:</b>	Carolyn Rowlinson		
<b>Date of interview:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2017		
<b>Summary completed by:</b>	Julia Schoenthaler		
<b>Date:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2017		