

Interviewee: Helen Beale (Mrs Frances Bell)
UoS Dates: 1968 - 2005
Role(s): Lecturer, Dept of French



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:06 – Came to Stirling as an Assistant Lecturer in French in September 1968. At the time only Pathfoot was ready. Space was urgently needed. Has a tribute to the first bookshop manager John Farrow written by John Riddy that says he had to sell books out of a broom cupboard.

02:04 – Stirling much more informal than where HB had studied. Surprised that there was no distinction between staff and student space. Principal Tom Cottrell was noticeable despite the informality as he had great energy and presence.

03:32 – Lots of meetings that were new to HB such as academic assemblies. Tom Cottrell wanted it to be an open forum and tried to encourage people to contribute.

04:11 – Remembers receptions in J lounge, Pathfoot where Tom Cottrell would ask opinions on the art.

05:59 – Had a group of around six advisees then and had 30 minutes per student timetabled. HB was worried they wouldn't have enough to talk about but appreciated the time as she got to know students as individuals. Tom Cottrell wanted Advisors to have generous time with their students. Had a copy of the speech Tom Cottrell gave new students and it was warm and full of care.

08:10 – Lots of mature students to balance the student population. There were many fascinating students to meet. Remembers Angus Ogilvy and his role in the theatre group. Students and staff could express their creativity, remembers a volume of prose put together by staff and students.

10:52 – University was a community. Good relationship with Mrs Bolton who looked after Student Records. After she left HB wrote to her and Mrs Bolton thought they were like a family. Lorna Begg would organise services when someone died, organised one for Mr Allardyce who had been Chief Porter. At that time the whole University would come together for these services.

13:33 - Lorna Begg also organised a daily 10 minute service in Pathfoot where any faith was welcome and people would volunteer to talk about their faith. HB spoke about silent worship and when practising it was interrupted by the reverend Alasdair Marr who mistook the silence for the group waiting for him to arrive.

15:23 – Was encouraged to join the AUT but didn't know much about trade unions. Told Mr McIntosh this and he was very patient and explained about the AUT to her

16:34 – Many colleagues had come from a previous post, HB was rare in having come straight from being a research student. Remembers making routes around Pathfoot so as to avoid the Fergusson canvasses.

17:53 – Matilda Mitchell told HB about the Airthrey Gardens Group being organised by Mrs Dunn. Agreed to be on the committee. Was to bring cakes and scones but couldn't bake so got her mother to help. HB's mother met with Mrs Bradbury and other members to prepare before meetings. The group had talks and teas. Remembers in


particular the inauguration of the George Forrest Walk which Tom Cottrell attended. Liked Mr Milne who was in charge of the grounds very much.

21:57 – Early days of the MacRobert Centre. Worried about what to wear when the Scottish Opera came to perform. Felt lucky to have somewhere close with such high calibre performances. Particularly remembers an exhibition of prisoner artwork with a panel afterwards of experts and prison officers talking about the exhibition and the Jimmy Boyle structure. Billy Connolly was in attendance. Also remembers an exhibition of Rowland Penrose. Got big names as Tom Cottrell had connections in the arts and a good reputation. When Mary Martin came regarding her mural, HB saw her talking to Tom Cottrell and it was clear they were good friends. Whenever a visiting lecturer would speak or there was an exhibition, copies of the texts would be circulated. There was a rich vein of artistic life at Stirling. Students would sell programmes in the MacRobert. The MacRobert made art accessible and less SS

30:21 – It had been art from prisoners in the Barlinnie Special Unit that was exhibited in MacRobert. The panel was chaired by Richard Demarco, a good friend of the University.

30:65 – Lived in Dalnair in Bridge of Allan. Had originally been the Principal's residence while his house on campus was being built and was turned into individual study bedrooms for new staff. Encouraging place to live, with a sense of community across various departments. There was a fire from a storage heater one night. Pierre Simon had to teach a class in his slippers. Mr Allardyce rushed in and called the fire brigade. David Wilson of Sociology lived in the basement and took people in while the fire brigade came. Community sprang in to action to help.

[Ends 35:55]

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Date of interview:	19/11/2014		
Summary completed by:	Aime Jaffray		
Date:	27/06/2016		