

Interviewee: Ian Moffatt, Dr
UoS Dates: 1978 – 2010
Role(s): Founding member, Lecturer, and latterly Senior Lecturer,
Dept of Earth and Environmental Science



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:27 – IM started with a background in Geography and Geology. Lecturer in Geology in Further Education for several years, then at Liverpool University, 1977-78. Doctorate involved dynamic simulation modelling, which he used throughout his subsequent career. Found the advertisement for an Economic Geography lecturer at Stirling in a newspaper.

04:10 – IM knew nothing about the University or the campus when he was given the role. Was delighted with the semester instead of term system and saw it as a new approach. He was interviewed by William Cramond the then Principal, Donald McLusky, a Professor of Mathematics [Editor's note: John Duncan] and Professor Duncan Timms. They were hoping to set up something new that was geography but more human based. There was no formal department at the time of IM's joining. There was Professor John Duncan, an ecologist John Proctor and an estuarine specialist Donald McLusky. They developed the idea of an environmental degree. The first person to be appointed in environmental science was Rob Ferguson who was an excellent and accomplished lecturer as well as a good researcher and administrator. Ferguson did work on glaciology and hydrology. John Harrison, a meteorologist, was appointed the same time as IM and the three of them formed the nucleus of the department.

06:53 – They would all three meet in the staff club and in a social atmosphere would work out what they needed to do to make sure the students got the best education possible. It was hard but exciting work. There was support from the departments of Mathematics, Sociology and Biology. Some chemists weren't overly welcoming. The department grew and got much larger over time. The department was based on the one at the university of East Anglia. The first chair for environmental science was Mike Thomas. He wanted to create an emphasis on earth. In IM's personal opinion the subject was wrongfully titled Earth and Environmental Science. There were many earth science departments undergoing cuts in the 80s. Ian Grieve appointed to soil science. Paul Selman, another appointee, was the first PhD student in environmental science. Over the years, the department had continued to increase in size. Being one of the first lecturers, he was faced with having to write mounds of lectures and also having to deal with a great influx of students wanting to take the course.

11:50 – After coming back from a trip to Canada, IM was told by Mike Thomas there had been a deal made to move some Maths and Computing staff to Strathclyde and Strathclyde would send them Keith Smith, Donald Davidson and Valerie Haynes. IM felt at the time that though good for the department this might harm the prospects of its founding members. Rob Ferguson did become senior lecturer. Ian Simpson, Bob McCulloch, Clare Wilson, Patrick Osborne and

Carol Salt joined the department over time. Sandy (Sandra) Winterbottom appointed when there were developments in information technology, and especially in remote sensing.

14:20 – Women were not well represented anywhere in the sciences. However, when they set up the department they had several brilliant women on the non-academic staff. Secretary Ina Mack was the life and soul of the department and a delight; Lyn Napier a laboratory technician; Mary Smith a cartographer. Among departmental heads in IM's time were Keith Smith, Donald Davidson and David Hopkins who had worked in Antarctica, and who appreciated IM's work, for example as chairman of the university's time table committee, where he introduced appropriate software package. Dave Goulson, interested in bees, was head of department at the end of IM's career.

19:00 – IM left Stirling for 3 years, 1990-93, to do research in Australia. He was researching greenhouse gases. In that time he wrote 3 books and had 2 published. He was asked to attend a Northern Territory government meeting to consult on climate change. IM had hoped for senior lectureship but it took a while before he got it. Donald Davidson took over the department and was a breath of fresh air. He had the idea to set up ceilidhs. Donald was keen to develop geography which was eventually set up and established, and in which IM enjoyed participating.


24:57 – IM recalls the first lectures were hard work as he had to write the lecture then present it then repeat it again the next day. There were three students in a lecture theatre in his first course. They would socialise and informally discuss what they had learnt after the meetings. He taught population resources in the third semester with interdisciplinary colleagues Duncan Timms, Mick Common and John Stewart which used to be marvellous. There was one practical, now banned due to health and safety, in which students were asked for a blood sample. He tried to make his classes enjoyable. He never knew how the lectures would work out, as he was giving them for the first time. One early lecture he thought had gone really badly, and the next day when he went back no one was there. It transpired their absence was not to do with his lecture: they had all gone to a protest over Torness nuclear power station. Paul Selman brought in a Master's in Environmental Management; it became popular. IM used to try to put lines from songs into his lectures to see if students would pick up on them.

31:22 – IM was asked by Scottish Office to do a report on sustainability for Scotland. It was included in a 1996 book. He was invited by the universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews to give lectures on his report. Set up an undergraduate course on it and developed it with the Aquaculture department and others; James Muir, Dave Gilvear, Hilary Kirkpatrick, Steve Craig, Donald Davidson, economists Nick Hanley and Dipak Ghosh, Carol Salt, Ian Simpson, Andrew Tyler, Nigel Whitby, and Sandy Winterbottom used to teach. An MSc in sustainable development was started with four or five students taking part. The degree stopped when IM retired. Bill Jamieson and Ken Docherty took over cartography. David Aitchison. John McArthur worked in the GIS laboratory. Andrew Watson from Psychology set up remote sensing.

36:30 – IM did many research projects whilst at Stirling. Dynamic simulation modelling. His first project was awarded £55,000 to work with Nick Hanley in ways to control pollution in the River Forth over three years; the UK Royal Commission on Pollution brought more funding. They had meetings with purification boards and councils. After a visit from South China Education Institute guests in 1986 he was asked to give lectures in China on dynamic simulation modules. There were 700 students in the environmental science department he spoke at. He was also invited to Hawaii, and also to Ecuador to do lectures and practicals on ecological footprint and climate change.

45:35 – IM was working with Nick Hanley and others from various universities as part of the huge SFC-funded MASTS project to investigate impact of environmental change on marine biology and the coast in Scotland, when he reluctantly took early retirement. IM was involved in securing about 900,000 pounds in grants for the university over 32 years. Reflects with pleasure on his time in teaching and research at Stirling.

[Ends 51:02]

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