

Interviewee: John Short
UoS Dates: 1967-1971
Role(s): BA (Hons Economics) 1971
President of Sports Union 1968-1970



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

00:25 JS applied to Stirling and Edinburgh universities, 15 months after leaving high school, having spent the interim in two Catholic seminaries training for the priesthood. He chose Stirling because it was the first to accept him, and feels it was absolutely the right decision. He originally opted for History and Sociology, but in the event majored in Economics; was one of only five doing Economics in his year.

02:17 Was persuaded to stand for election to the CSA/Student Association in his first year, 1967, and took the Sports portfolio. By second year the organisation was more formal; JS became president of the Sports Union in his 2nd and 3rd years. Initially his main sport was as a football goalkeeper, playing not for the University but professionally for Arniston Rangers and Broxburn Athletic. In 4th year JS switched to rugby, at which he represented the University and was chosen for the Scottish Midlands.

05:34 Stirling's sport developed rapidly, and within a few years its teams were able to match other university 1st teams. In his final year the University ran both Wednesday and Saturday rugby teams, which meant that most players were happy to represent only the University. It was normal to play in both Wednesday and Saturday teams; JS remembers that in top-level club rugby when he later played in England, he appeared in several important matches on consecutive days.

07:17 Sports facilities: initially rugby and football were played at Stirling County's old ground in Bridge of Allan, with perhaps a couple of football pitches on the present Gannochy site. The only indoor facility on campus was the inflatable Barracuda building, for basketball, volleyball, badminton and tennis. In those pioneering days the only changing rooms and showers were in Pathfoot.

09:00 The Gannochy Trust provided the new sports building. The Gannochy facility had a management team of students and staff, but as Sports Union President JS was chair of the Gannochy. Recalls staff and students shared social space in Alangrange. Members of staff played for student teams, e.g. Dick Davies of Economics and one of the chaplains played rugby.

10:30 Organisation of finance: a major achievement was securing agreement from the start that the Sports Union would receive a fixed proportion of the capitation fee coming to the Student Association. All sports for which there was a demand were catered for: the union hired out skis as a service and a source of income, and also owned rowboats; such enterprises were made possible by the favourable financial settlement.

13:50 No sabbatical for student sports officers at that time; all activities had to be fitted in with studies. JS's

main contribution to the Sports Union was as a manager: as President he chaired the committee, and liaised with the University and the Student Association. He also forged links with his counterparts in other universities, who were very encouraging towards Stirling; he remembers receiving a cheer on introducing himself at one of the first such committees he attended. Believes they rather envied the potential for sport of the Stirling campus.

17:17 The Sports Union interviewed and appointed the first Director of Physical Recreation, Ian Thomson. JS had gone to the University along with Charlie Bissett and Arthur McCullough, who had PE degrees, to propose the appointment of professional managers; in this instance the students had a better grasp than the staff of the way forward.

19:20 JS describes how early introduction to taking responsibility in sports administration led to his captaining major rugby teams such as Aberdeen GSFP and Gosforth, as well as playing overseas. He was inducted in 2017 into Gosforth's Hall of Fame alongside famous internationalists Matt Burke and Jonny Wilkinson.

22:50 Most notable event JS remembers at Stirling was the Elton John concert at Pathfoot in JS's 4th year; JS acted as a bouncer. By that time the student population was approaching 1,000. Recalls Paul Martin, Jim Moran (a founder of *Brig* student newspaper), Mick Connarty.

25:00 The CSA/Student Association was formed and constituted by group including Neil Waldon, Paul Lewis, Paul Martin, doubtless with encouragement from University authorities, e.g. Tom Cottrell, Bob Bomont, Harry Donnelly.

27:00 Heartening to return after 50 years and see the University prospering from its small beginnings.

[Ends **27:40**]

Interview No:	SURSA OH / -	<p style="text-align: center;"> SURSA University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA info@sursa.org.uk www.sursa.org.uk </p>	
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Date of interview:	23/06/2017		
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Date:	29/01/2018		