

Interviewee: Martin Davies (H M P Davies)
UoS Dates: 1971 - 1996
Role(s): Lecturer in Education and English, 1971 -1976?
Lecturer in English Studies, 1976? - 1996



Interview summary:

Start 00:07 – MD began his time in Stirling teaching in the Education Department for 6 or 7 years and then moved to the English Department, working twenty five years in total at Stirling. He applied to Stirling because he believed it was the only way he could conduct research into reading. MD hoped that because Stirling was new and that the English Department was original in design he would get some illumination from the Department however the reverse of this occurred. Was meant to be teaching linguistics but didn't understand it well enough to do so.

02:00 – It is recalled that in the mid-1960s before the University of Stirling was established, a confidential report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland gave a damning report on Scottish education which was so bad it wasn't published. This was believed to be one element which fed into the founding of the new university at Stirling. The Scottish education initiative wanted to get one person into the then 7 institutions of teacher training in Scotland that had some training in linguistics. MD was appointed and says he failed. No success at all largely due to education inertia. He felt he wouldn't have been able to tell someone what to do if they had asked. MD recalls being warned not to go to Scotland, where the education was dreadful, by three of his colleagues in Leicester who were Scottish.

06:36 – MD found that it was a disaster when he got to Scotland as there was no scope. He found the microteaching simplistic and idiotic and he ultimately hated it. It was stated that the only positive of microteaching was you can see yourself as others see you. Microteaching was meant to be used by those who were already in service training - not for initial training at all, but it wrongfully was. The university found that microteaching wasn't working after ten years, but still however carried on doing it.

08:00 – At first Stirling was not an invigorating place to be. However MD found the English Department to be wonderful. He was not completely disappointed with the Education Department: the people were friendly and he recalls sitting in on lectures when possible. It was felt that the strain of teaching in the Education Department was too much. MD tried very hard to leave. Arnold Morrison had become new Head of Department when MD tried to leave. When he wanted to go full time in the English department, Morrison wouldn't let him go. So instead he went to talk to the English Department where the Head of Department was known as Mr Fix It. Within a week MD was working full time in the English

Department. Doesn't think he would have survived if he had stayed full time in Education Department.

09:24 – Originally MD had started with a joint appointment in English and Education. He made the change at the very last minute - either 1976 or '77. Recalls that he found the Education Department traumatic as there was no scope for doing what he thought he'd been appointed to do.

10:41 – English was a new attractive Department mainly due to literature. His literary training in Oxford was bad in many ways but was excellent historically. He was taught on the method that a piece of literature is good if it has survived and people are still reading it. English Department at Stirling was different in that they said they would teach students how to write differently when writing about prose, drama and poetry. In each course they would teach students how to write specifically on these genres; thought it was an excellent system although it had its flaws. It did not place the texts in any chronological order. Stirling's English Department was unique in this. Tommy Dunn was a major figure in the University and the English Department.

14:04 – MD felt that he was in foreign territory within the English Department and he loved it. His own training on literature only went as far as 1830 and he found himself having to teach about literature that went beyond that date. Students read more about the literature than the actual literature when it came to classical pieces. There was a desire for modern texts. He had to learn to write about and teach them especially at Stirling. In the first semester he had not read contemporary Scottish literature. One text he can recall having to read was Sunset Song, which he found interesting and very good.

17:00 – He felt he was ignorant of what his colleagues took for granted which was the academic planning document which was established before the university opened. The one for English said that the university would teach literature of all periods but mainly 19th and 20th century. Whereas MD had read very few contemporary texts he had colleagues who were specialists in these eras. He went to their lectures to learn what he had to teach.

18:07 – Staff student relationships were better at Stirling than experienced elsewhere. They had to muck in together. MD recalls arriving on Hogmanay 1971, and making instant enemies by parading at the porters lodge at 4:30 with 36 chests full of books. They stuffed the books under the seats in Pathfoot lecture theatre and told him to go away. Academic planning document made it impossible for him to catch up with all the modern literature.

20:14 – MD recalls a staff student club, they drank together in the evenings. Spoke of fondly - even admin staff involved. The staff in the early 70s used to have coffee in the corridors. They would have a trolley that came round with cakes and coffee, everyone came out of their rooms and socialising occurred. Staff club never worked with Stirling. People went home and ate meals with their partners.

22:30 – Relationships faltered between students and staff after Queen's visit. Ian Ainsworth deeply resented the way in which academic colleges and students blamed the administration for the ill feeling before the Queen's visit. This caused a restriction on the universities funding. Schools withdrew their applicants and it was hard to get skilled applicants. All the fundraising that was meant to happen never happened. There was evidence before the Queen's visit that Stirling was being discriminated against. Heads of departments, deputy headmasters in schools in Scotland saying don't apply for Stirling. Old universities had their own patches.

25:35 – Still in touch with some students, who speak warmly of their time in Stirling. Recruited from comprehensive schools. MD recalls one student, John Fitzpatrick, wore a tail coat which was worn by Navy officers. Tommy Dunn saw it as a mocking the Queen's uniform. John went to lodge with MD and he was a first generation student. When he got his letter of admission, he went round to tell grandfather, very congratulatory.

31:55 – Always counts himself fortunate to have been working in the English Department at Stirling. Felt there was no pressure from the Heads or University until towards the end when they asked you to state your goals and objectives. MD retired in 1996. He reiterates how very unhappy he was in Education and the relief he felt when he left.

36:30 – From his time at Stirling MD learnt that unless children read for meaning they can't read correctly. He gave seminars in which he gave new dimensions to the nature of reading. He really wanted to do a course of reading for teachers. Had a student who was dyslexic but neither knew this. MD recalls that Stirling was revolutionary in admitting a lot of mature students. Stirling had a practice whereby students never got the same lecturer two semesters in a row because they had electives. Did a course on cohesion in which the student did well and subsequently asked MD to supervise him on his final year project. He became a teacher specialising in teaching difficulties and is now head of learning difficulties at a well-known Scottish independent school.

47:00 – Found cohesion helped children with dyslexia and can improve their reading and writing.

[Ends 48:49]

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