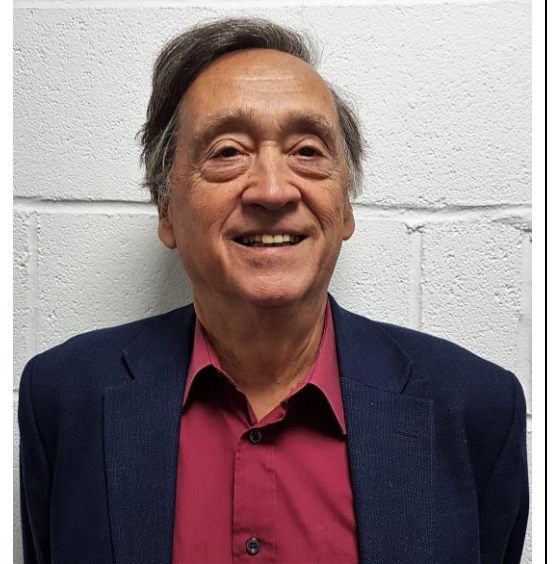


Interviewee: Gavin Thomson
UoS Dates: 1969 - 1985
Role(s): Assistant Secretary and Clerk to the Court



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:14 – Worked for ICI after graduation, returned to Scotland and worked at the University of Strathclyde managing the Business School and then the School of Mechanical Engineering. Worked there for two and a half years. Job came up at Stirling and thought it would be nice to be involved with a new university.

01:39 – Started at Stirling in August 1969 as Assistant Secretary and Clerk to the Court. Lord Wheatley was the Chairman of the Court, he was very good.

02:12 – Was interviewed by Bob Bomont, Ian Lockerbie and one other. Harry Donnelly had died and there was some confusion in the Administration. Degree was in History, Economic history and Economics. Roy Campbell had been one of GT's tutors at Glasgow and was now a Professor at Stirling. Had considered doing a PhD under Roy Campbell while at Glasgow but decided against academic life. GT's dad was a professor.

07:44 – Only Pathfoot and Airthrey Castle on campus when GT arrived. Airthrey Castle housed the Administration. 800 or 900 students, GT arrived at the same time as the third intake. Pathfoot was a nice, modern building. Fairly chaotic campus, lots going on and behind schedule, particularly student residences. There were arguments with the contractors.

08:57 – Stirling was less formal than Strathclyde and was smaller than either of the faculties GT had managed. It was more intimate and there was more contact with people.

09:40 – Administration was chaotic, Harry Donnelly had died and Derek Lang was appointed as new University Secretary. Bob Bomont was Deputy Secretary.

10:55 – Lots of academic staff had chosen Stirling as it was new, innovative and they could develop their own courses. Remembers Education professor Elizabeth Perrott.

12:08 – Staff/student relations were reasonably good but deteriorated over the next couple of years, largely due to problems with the residences. There were regular meetings between Tom Cottrell, Bob Bomont and the Student Association. Atmosphere was good in 1969/1970 but began to deteriorate when the residences weren't ready on time. The new intake were bussed in from off-campus accommodation, like Dollarbeg. A lot of the students were angry at being put in digs rather than on campus. University lost out buying accommodation and renting it to students. 300-400 students were living in Dollarbeg in 1971. It was a major disruption that wasn't well handled. The Estates Office weren't aware of how behind the residences were.

17:30 – A lot of arguments at Court about the contractors and architects. GT would write up the Court minutes on the night of the meeting, they were typed and then sent by post to Lord Wheatley who looked at them carefully. He wasn't

on campus, he was serving at the High Court in Edinburgh. Lord Wheatley did the Wheatley report on local authorities and was very involved in the NSPCC.

19:56 – Harry Donnelly was a civil servant who had been involved in the study for a new university in Scotland. Stirling came out of the Robbins report and was the only Robbins university in Scotland. Traditionally in Scotland students went to university nearby, apart from St Andrews and Edinburgh. Lord Wheatley and Harry Donnelly were fans of the semester system. It allowed the course to be more flexible. Remembers part one/part two, majors and minors.

23:49 – Relationships between the Administration and staff were relaxed. Would have lunch with different people on the academic staff. There were no staff -only facilities at Stirling, only completely open eating facilities. This was to encourage staff and student relations but meant there was less discussion between staff in different departments. A lot of students didn't want to talk to staff at lunch times.

27:10 – Stirling didn't have long enough to make the impact it could have before the Queen's visit in 1972. It was a knock that cost the university 10 years in economic terms. Occurred at a very formative time. Had a bad effect on admissions and a demoralising effect across the board. Lots of time was spent trying to overcome the visit. There should have been a second appeal for funding which had to be delayed and government funding was cut. Tom Cottrell died in June 1973 as a result. Fred Holliday took over as Acting Principal.

30:02 – Left Stirling in 1985. Had been working with the people who helped Stirling with European funding and they offered GT a job. Had had enough of university administration so accepted it. Eventually set up a new company advising universities on getting research funding from the EU which GT still does now.

[Ends 35:49]

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