

Interviewee: Maureen McKerracher
UoS Dates: 1966 - 2005
Role(s): Shorthand Typist, Careers Assistant and various administrative roles. Worked in Supplies, Education, Fairview and Careers and Appointments.



Interview summary:

Start 00:00 – Was at University long before the other “early staff”, already working in 1966

00:40 – After College she worked 9 months before applying to Stirling University – even before they were advertising for jobs. There were only the cottages, not university buildings - “I just applied”, interview by Matilda Mitchell in the car park at Scottish Amicable, in Matilda’s car.

02:00 – Her first salary was £6 a week. There was just one other clerical person, who started two weeks before her: Lynn McLaren, junior telephonist. All in all, there were just Tom Cottrell, Harry Donnelly, Lynn McLaren, Marjorie Calder & herself.

02:46 – They were based in Garden Cottage at the beginning, her first job on her first day was to sweep the doorsteps.

03:20 – She worked for Harry Donnelly, Matilda and Marjorie– “we all helped each other”. Harry Donnelly and Tom Cottrell recalled as “lovely gentlemen”, very informal and friendly; more like working at a cottage than in an office: shorthand, typing, cleaning the kitchen, sweeping the floors; Cottrell and Donnelly very busy.

04:40 – Moved to work for Alastair Cairns, Supplies Officer; huge age gap for her (18 to 38); she worked in Ivy Cottage (down the road from Garden Cottage); not even Pathfoot built then, just the cottages.

05:50 – When Pathfoot was handed over, it was Alastair’s job to furnish it and Maureen’s to help; it was also his job to furnish the Principals house and they did it together.

07:00 – Numbers of secretarial staff rose quickly over the time she worked in Pathfoot building and Cottrell building. She also worked in Fairview, the Staff Club. She moved after years of being secretary to Alastair to the Education Department (Pathfoot building). Afterwards she went to the Career Development Centre in Cottrell building, working with Walter Abbott and Graham Nicholson. This was her last position, and she enjoyed it most.

08:10 – When she worked in Fairview for Alastair, he asked if she wanted an electric typewriter and she thought “well I made it”.

08:36 – Most of the secretarial staff were local, although a few persons brought their secretaries with them; University was a major employer and the students brought a lot of business in general.
09:20 – Chain of command: responsible to the particular person they were working for; secretarial staff had its own union, NALGO. Unions (but not the University) would insist on people joining; later on, everybody was in the union.
10:50 – She was there at the time of the Queen’s visit and thought that the way the students treated the Queen (throwing eggs) was very sad, but “we got over that”.
11:30 – She mainly dealt with students at the Career Development Centre, not so much with the public and nearly no links with academic staff; much was very informal. When she left 12 years ago things were changing, with the advent of computers and no need for shorthand anymore. Less need for secretaries. She thought shorthand very worthwhile.
14:00 – She moved from Garden Cottage to Ivy Cottage and Fairview and the Nurses’ home, and worked later on in Pathfoot (Education department) and latterly in Cottrell building (Career Development). A greater concentration of administrative staff in Cottrell. The staff of the Supplies Dept. built up, and included George Lawrie (Deputy), Margaret Davidson, Sarah McKenzie and Morag Reekie (clerkesses) and Hugh Gibson (Stores).
15:45 – She enjoyed going to the Staff club at Fairview. She met students at the Career Development Centre, although not so many elsewhere; she used the swimming pool and played squash.
16:40 – In the early years she travelled to University from Witches Craig, where her family kept ponies and sheep. Before the Innovation Park came to the University (at the back entrance) there were just fields, which they rented and had ponies in the fields. Every morning she would stop there, blow the horn to get the ponies to the fence and feed the ponies on her way to work. It was one of her tasks to catch escaped ponies – “quite different today”
Ends 18:57

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Interviewed by:	Dr. John Stewart		
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Summary completed by:	Julia Schoenthaler/CR		
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