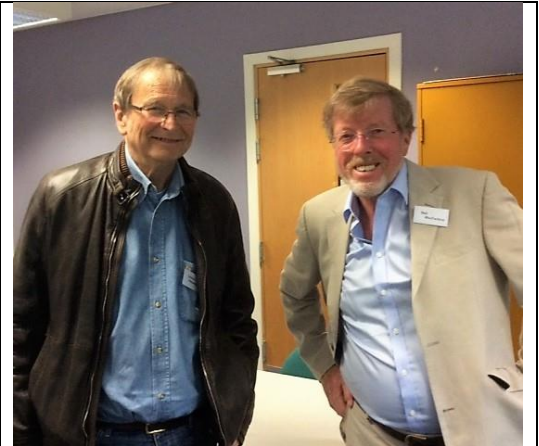


Interviewees: - Neil Macfarlane and Graham Maybank
UoS Dates: 1967 - 1970
Role(s): - PhD students Biology Department



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start : Neil Macfarlane comes from North London but father came from fishing village on west coast of in Scotland, so spent childhood holidays in Scotland. First in family to go to university and decided to study in Scotland. Accepted for Aberdeen University for Biochemistry. Started there in 1963 and liked Scottish degree where first year offered broad range of science subjects, then specialisation. Switched to Zoology in second year, where especially enjoyed Physiology and in final year decided to do project on fish physiology, a topic related to field work he'd done. Fred Holliday, then a lecturer in Aberdeen, agreed to be his supervisor. Half way through this year, 1966, Fred said he was leaving to become first Professor of Biology at the new University of Stirling. Later he suggested NM come to Stirling to do a PhD which NM accepted with enthusiasm. The Zoology Department in Aberdeen was highly regarded in the 1960s with the eminent Regius Professor Wynne-Edwards and many excellent young staff such as Fred. Fred became one of the youngest Professors of Biology in the country, possibly the youngest. NM came to Stirling on a Science Research Council grant of £500 per year in September 1967. The topic of his PhD was fish physiology, an extension of his earlier project. His study concerned the pituitary gland in flounders and was an endocrine study of osmoregulation in the flounder.

04.35 Graham Maybank also a Londoner, with an early interest and experience in farming, was looking to study agriculture. There were few degree programmes offering Agriculture at that time. GM decided to study Agricultural Zoology at Aberdeen. While he was at Aberdeen, Fred Holliday suggested to GM that he undertake a research project connected with anaemia in rats requiring specialised measuring equipment, which was sometimes a problem at Aberdeen. Prof Holliday suggested he move to Stirling and offered to supply the equipment needed, as he would be equipping the Biology Department. GM was attracted by the idea of getting the equipment needed for his research. Once here, GM set up the Animal House at Stirling, and NM established the aquarium. There were similarities in their projects, using similar analytical techniques and requiring the same instrumentation. The key difference for them, coming from Aberdeen, was that there was money to acquire instruments. They became experts in the analytical equipment available at the time. They met with representatives from many supply companies and were able to test equipment before recommending items to the technical and finance departments for purchase. They also had an excellent team at Shared Technical Services who were very skilled and built some of the key equipment. In Shared Technical

Services there were people expert in metalwork, electronics and a glassblower, for example.

10.45 First year at Stirling was wonderful as everyone mixed and it was very friendly. Excellent for research students as brand new labs and money to spend on equipment. But it took time to get the equipment built and some things were not available, such as an animal house for example. There was no established research team and at times they felt a bit isolated. However, there was an advantage for both of them in that they shared techniques and equipment. Also, the library staff helped significantly in obtaining articles for them from many sources especially the National Science Library at Boston Spa. There was a huge mainframe computer, but they also recall the excitement of the first desktop calculating machines arriving and the days of terminals and punch cards. They had much freedom, but Professor Holliday, an enthusiastic supervisor under normal circumstances, was very busy setting up a new department and helping set up a new university. Consequently, they didn't have the usual input from him as he didn't have as much time to get the research going in his department. They realized after the first year that they would need to knuckle down. They were given funding to visit other institutions for assistance, such as NM visiting the Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen.

15.30 In order to set up the animal house, GM sought help from other institutions. GM went with a lab technician to Aberdeen for several days to their Physiology Lab to get some ideas. There were Home Office inspectors, such as Group Captain Sellers, who visited unannounced to check out techniques. In those days the inspectors were mainly medics, whereas today they are vets. The first animal house was near the Pathfoot boiler house, a small building with two rooms for the animals and an office. The aquarium was inside Pathfoot, at the end of H corridor. NM would go to Aberdeen to fish for flounders and transport them back in his Morris Minor in a dustbin, with an oxygen cylinder. Later Prof Holliday put him in touch with commercial fishermen on the Forth near Kincardine Bridge who fished the tide and caught flounders as a by-product of their main catch and would provide them for the research. In the early days GM looked after the rats himself, but later an animal house technician took over. Some technicians just school leavers but did well.

19.40 NM left before finishing his PhD to get experience with new techniques and to work with a French academic, Jean Metz, who he had been keen to meet as their research interests were related. He eventually met him at a conference and was promptly invited to work in a French Atomic Energy Commission experimental laboratory in the south of France at Villefranche-sur-Mer. So, in final year NM spent 3 months in France with wonderful facilities and about half of PhD was done in those 3 months. He left Stirling with all his data and wrote up bulk of thesis during first year working in a post-doctoral position.

21.50 GM was not able to finish his PhD at Stirling, due to problems with funding. He wrote up his PhD while working in a forensic laboratory in Nottingham, working at night on his thesis. Forensic work was rather boring most of the time, very different from how depicted on TV. He gave it up once the thesis was completed. He then looked for a teaching job and worked in a technical college in Walsall, Birmingham. He enjoyed working with his students who were very good for the first 10 years, very bright. Then science was taught less in schools and things changed. At that point, he left teaching to become a photographer, the printing side being his main interest, and now maintains an interest in restoration of old photographs.

27.20 NM got job in Cambridge in Department of Investigative Medicine as a post-doc. It was Physiology, but renal physiology, linked to what he had been doing but in mammals, resulting in a paper in Nature. Once that programme finished after 3 years, NM got lectureship at Trent Polytechnic. Much teaching involved, but they were keen to do research, so NM set up research group on fish, with support from local water authorities, for example. He got married, had a family and remained in the Poly which became a university. Stayed there for 33 years and became a Professor of Biology and eventually Associate Dean of Science and Technology. Retired at 63.

25.50 Both had other memories of their time at Stirling. They had digs together at Gargunnoch and remember it being very cold, needing the coal fire lit, electric blankets on. Social life was very good at Stirling with 170 undergraduates, about 30 post-grads and a large number of young staff. Very different from Aberdeen where there was a Senior Common Room for staff. Students there might be invited for a sherry in their final year whereas at Stirling, everyone mixed in Alangrange. GM was active in the Film Circle, and enjoyed the many French films ordered by Ian Lockerbie from the French Department. GM married after the first year and he and his wife Mary worked sometimes in the Gannochy bar. At that point NM shared with Volkmar Delingat from the German Department till he returned to Germany. Later he moved to other flats and both recall many

good parties, including one in their cottage in Gargunnock. The three years went very quickly and were good fun.

Ends

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Date of interview:	- 2 September 2017		
Summary completed by:	- Moira Ball		
Date:	- 18 January 2018		