

Interviewee: James Dunbar  
UoS Dates: 1969-1973  
Role(s): Student of History and Education



## Interview summary:

### *Summary of content; with time (min:secs)*

**00.00** James Dunbar recalls filling out his UCAS form in 1968 with a view to studying history and becoming a history teacher. Stirling University responded quickly with an unconditional offer which he promptly accepted. When attending an Open Day in February 1969 he realised that Stirling offered a degree combining Education with History and he could qualify without a year at Jordanhill teacher training college. He finished in December 1972 and graduated in February 1973. He then took up a post in Paisley where he remained till retirement 38 years later. He is very grateful to Stirling for the opportunity it gave him.

**02.23** 1969 and 1970 travelled in from Cumbernauld where parents owned farm, where he helped with milking before university. In 1971 took up place in flat in Riverside when friend Stuart Miller went to California as exchange student. From that point much greater involvement in university activities, especially the History Society, noted for visiting speakers such as historian Hugh Thomas. JD also part of film-making society with two friends and produced films, and recalls a symbolic film set in a flat in Stirling and in the woods near Cambusbarron. JD recalls the making of this film, entitled 'Ex tenebris – 'Out of the Shadows'. Film no longer exists. JD had an interest in film since taking part in amateur dramatics at school.

**05.28** JD really enjoyed studying history at Stirling, which was modern history. Since graduating, also developed interest in earlier periods. Retains great interest in Russian history for which he thanks Dr Bob McKean of the History Department with whom he is still in contact. JD also interested in French history, remit of Dr Alan Forrest who went from Stirling to Manchester and ultimately York. JD has bought his books, such as his biography of Napoleon and another on Waterloo.

**06.29** History department was a close-knit group and they socialised a lot. Some real characters in both students and staff. JD also recalls Dr Malcolm Thomas, a leading authority on the Luddites. Also, Professor Roy Campbell whose interest was economic history, and Dr John McCracken who taught African history. JD recalled meeting someone from Yoruba in Paisley a few years ago who was very impressed by JD's knowledge of Nigerian history. JD also recalls that, late in his time at Stirling, Dr Richard Evans, now Professor Sir Richard Evans, joined the staff. He is an expert in the history of the Third Reich and was an expert witness in the libel trial about the Holocaust. He later became a Regius Professor at Cambridge.

**08.54** On moving on from Riverside, JD stayed on campus in Andrew Stewart Hall and Murray Hall. He had a bedsit in the residences and recalls that it was not noisy, not intrusive and there was privacy.

**10.54** One downside was catering on campus. The restaurant in the Macrobert was good during the day but

closed at night and the cafeteria for the evening was very restricted. Important social spaces for students were mainly on campus. On Wednesday afternoons there were no classes and much sport. JD did not participate in sports and recalls leisurely afternoons in the Macrobert coffee bar as it was then, with banquettes and coffee tables. The coffee bar was also used by artists performing at the Macrobert Theatre and JD recalls seeing Bill McCue, people from Scottish Opera and Scottish ballet, and Rupert Davies after he had been in Maigret for many years. JD also saw James Bolam, an actor known for playing down-to-earth Northerners, as in 'The Likely Lads' and 'When the Boat Comes In'. JD also saw Tom Stoppard plays and films at the Macrobert. He enjoyed Alangrange, with its discotheque and public bar, and the Barracuda. Students then mainly socialised on campus as there were few cars. Not being in town did not strike JD as a disadvantage.

**15.43** There were few distractions. Occasionally students did go to the Allan Park cinema in Stirling and JD recalls vividly seeing the film 'A Clockwork Orange' by Stanley Kubrick which caused some controversy at the time.


**16.41** JD credits the friend he stayed with in the Riverside with introducing him to cinema, culture, wine and a liking for dining out. This started with the Reo Stakis steakhouse of the time and later there were dinner parties on campus. His group felt very civilised and developed urbane tastes, which is at odds with Stirling's reputation for being radical.

**18.50** JD recalls 'milk round' when employers came to recruit at the university. JD did not participate as he was doing the Dip Ed at Stirling, so qualified in December, registered with the GTC and was fit to start work in January 1974. He went for an interview with Renfrewshire Council, desperate for staff, where many of the schools were 'special' in that, if you taught there, you received an extra £200 per year. They also offered a junior/ senior high school set up. One of the jobs on offer was at Paisley Grammar School, a senior high school, but a vacancy at another school came up first. JD turned that down. He later got the job at Paisley Grammar School, a school with a good academic record and reputation. He stayed there for the rest of his career.

**20.59** JD is asked if he felt the combined degree at Stirling was an advantage. He felt it was as he found many people who had qualified at Jordanhill, for example, were a bit cynical. JD feels that Stirling gave him an interest in education and in the pupils. He studied two and a half years of education, in some depth, and did a primary school placement and two secondary school placements. There was also micro-teaching where about 8 students came in to the university and you concentrated on one skill, such as questioning for feedback, for example.

**22.21** JD recalls staff in the Education Department. there were several lecturers called Davis, and he remembers particularly Terry Davis, a former paratrooper, who explained theories of psychology and phrenology.

Ends

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