

SURSA ORAL HISTORY

Press Release

SURSA



Stirling University Retired Staff Association

**For release on or just before 27th October 2017,
to coincide with UNESCO Audio-Visual World
Heritage Day**

by Angela Smith

**Oral History of the University of Stirling
launched on UNESCO Audio-Visual World
Heritage Day**

Can we recapture the past?

For ten years Stirling University Retired Staff Association (SURSA) has been recording audio and video interviews with those who were there from the beginning. This is a long-term activity which will continue into the future. New university staff, students and their parents probably don't spend much time imagining what the Stirling campus was like when the first building, Pathfoot, was a huge hole in the ground but Grahame Stewart, the well-known Dunblane silversmith, cycled out as a boy with his friends at night to walk the plank placed over it. For Graham and his friends, it was exciting and challenging, like the academic and architectural plans which were developed for this, the only new university in Scotland.

Sir Tam Dalyell's tale of the choice of Stirling rather than three other competing places as the site of the new university is characteristically witty. The first deputy principal, Fred Holliday, tells us how Stirling broke the mould by admitting students not to a faculty but to the university

enabling students to cross academic boundaries. Matilda Mitchell, the first Principal's PA and first fulltime employee, describes her unorthodox interview and appointment. Peter McEwen, the founding professor of psychology, remembers how he gave the very first lecture, which was in Pathfoot.

There are interviews with staff who made this fledgling community work – with administrators, librarians, technicians, cleaners, porters, the first director of the MacRobert Arts Centre and the instructors in the Gannochy Sports Centre. There are also interviews with students old and new, including the initial intake of 1967 and student presidents like Lord Jack McConnell. Many were attracted to come to an untried institution by the beauty of the campus, some by the innovative academic structure, and some by the fact that the university was new and that they would be pioneers. The interviews record self-discovery and academic engagement, as well as some frustrations and disappointments.

There are lots of interviews about more recent life in the university too – they are all accessible on the SURSA Oral History website which is now launched to the public to coincide with UNESCO Audio-Visual World Heritage Day, Friday 27 October. The website's address is:

<http://www.oralhistory.stir.ac.uk> On visiting the site you will find photographs of the speakers, summaries of what their interviews cover and, amongst other things, video clips of staff and

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students as well as memorabilia. You can search for particular names or events. The launch is a new beginning at the end of the University's 50th anniversary, taking the past into the future.

Further information for editors:

Stirling University Retired Staff Association, SURSA, provides a way of keeping in touch with former colleagues and making new friends. The association can be contacted at <http://www.sursa.org.uk> The SURSA Oral History Group has created a collection of recordings from retired and former staff and alumni providing an informal history of the University in all its aspects: academic, social and environmental. In this Oral History, developed and managed by SURSA, we hope to capture the recollections and reflections of a wide range of staff and students across the years since the University opened in 1967. Our oral history web pages provide further information and are accessible at:

<http://www.oralhistory.stir.ac.uk>



Oral history interview in progress



Aerial view of the beautiful University of Stirling campus

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Main contact: Professor Angela Smith
English Studies, University of Stirling

Tel: 07531003792

Email: a.m.smith@dsl.pipex.com