

New Windows of Opportunity: University of Dundee

by Roger Illsley

This September the University of Dundee was named Scottish University of the Year for a second consecutive year in the Times and Sunday Times. Also shortlisted for the title of UK University of the Year, the strength of the university's research and its economic, social and cultural impact on the wider community were specifically noted.

Today it is largely contained within a well-defined campus, consisting in the main of buildings that are specifically designed and equipped for purpose, be it social, cultural or educational.

It was not always like this.

The University that we see today owes a great deal to physical expansion in the post-war period, a period characterized by changes in the way that higher education was delivered and in the academic and residential accommodation available to staff and students.

University College, Dundee

In the late 1940s, as Dundee emerged from the aftermath of the Second World War, a more parochial conflict was starting to gather momentum in the academic world, as higher education in Dundee was increasingly perceived as being held back in its ambition and growth by the negative influence of St. Andrews University

Until 1964 there were four universities in Scotland: St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. The students of Scotland's fourth city, despite attending University College Dundee, were being awarded degrees by St. Andrews University and thus Dundee's highest educational establishment had only the status of a junior partner.

This influence of St. Andrews included a degree of control over the finances available for the development of facilities in Dundee. In February 1944 Principal Fulton stressed the urgent need to improve the physical conditions of university buildings in the town, and noted that there had been no new buildings in UCD for thirty years; he also specifically stressed the necessity of dedicated hostel accommodation for students.

The Nethergate frontage,
University College Dundee,
early 20th Century



