

Origins of Lancaster University

In November 1961 the Government announced that the new university of the North-West was to be at Lancaster after fierce competition from all parts of the county.

New universities had been announced at Sussex, Essex, East Anglia, Kent, Warwick and York. The siting of the university at Lancaster solved the problem of the large area of the country between the Mersey and the Clyde left without a university.

The Lancaster City Council and local people were delighted by the news that a major institution of higher education was to be created in their midst.

Mr Don Waddell, the Town Clerk said, "This is the most heartening news for Lancaster generally. Everyone has been hopeful of this result and now I think there will be real jubilation. The establishment of a university here is bound to have the deepest and the most fundamental repercussions on the whole of city life. Educationally and culturally, it will have a most marked effect."

The first batch of 330 students were admitted in October 1964. They travelled each day from digs and flats in Morecambe to the University's temporary base at St Leonard's House, a converted Waring and Gillow warehouse in the centre of the city.

The first students travelled to the rapidly developing 250 acre Bailrigg site in October 1966 when teaching and administrative buildings opened. The next generation of students, however, really made Bailrigg their home when the first residences were occupied in October 1968. In the same year the new University buildings designed by Architects, Hunter, Shepherd and Epstein won a Civic Trust Award for "making an outstanding contribution to the appearance of the local scene".

1964 also saw the installation of HRH Princess Alexandra as the University's Chancellor who has served the University ever since and been a popular figure both on the campus and in the city during her many visits.

Today 2,500 students, half the current student population live in residencies situated in the eight colleges. One of these, The County College at the north end of the campus, was the result of a £500,000 gift from Lancashire County Council in 1965. It was a 'concrete' expression of the County's desire and commitment to found the seventh new university in the historic city of Lancaster.

By 1969 more than £2,300,000 had been raised, enabling the building programme to advance more quickly and an imaginative range of facilities to be provided.

Neighbouring local authorities, industrial and commercial organisations, trusts and associations as well as individuals also generously responded by supporting an appeal launched in 1964 to assist with the development of the new University.