

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: Martin Snoddon
Interviewed by: Pat Jess
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Important

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Martin Snoddon Clip

Clip title: That whole sense of achieving something

Duration: 00:02:25

Clip start point in full interview: 00:03:57

Clip end point in full interview: 00:07:18

Interview identifier: 022_S_ 01

Description: Martin Snoddon was imprisoned in the Ulster Volunteer Compound 21 of Long Kesh Prison Camp (the Compounds of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) in 1975. He studied for an Open University degree in Mathematics from 1991 and gained his honours degree in 1989. In this clip he recalls how, despite leaving school with no qualifications, his love of problem solving found a vehicle in his OU study of Maths, what study success did for his confidence and self-esteem and his happy memories of his graduation ceremony in prison attended by his family and shared with four other Loyalists prisoners who graduated that day.

Transcript:

So at the age of sixteen you know, I was introduced to the violence in relation with the conflict and for the next three years I engaged in it as much as I could and, at the age of nineteen, I was sentenced to life imprisonment, in Long Kesh Prison Camp [the Compounds of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison].

It was all a frightening experience. Going into Long Kesh was frightening as well but it presented opportunities for me in relation to education and in the UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force] Cages where I was we were encouraged to participate in education. And as someone who basically hadn't got a certificate to his name but who had come first in his class in Mathematics in school and enjoyed problem solving I thought I would give it a shot at Mathematics, O level Mathematics.

I also had the options of considering The Open University and I chose to give the OU a go and my first course was M101. It was an absolutely fantastic experience in many, many ways, but that whole sense of achieving something, the whole escapism from the environment, whenever you were going inside to be outside and problem solving and with each success, successful course the increase in self-esteem and confidence. And as the courses progressed, starting to think more in terms of outside, what way might this benefit me in the outside, right up to the point then of getting the degree. I think it was 1986, and we had a ceremony in Long Kesh Prison Camp, and my parents were allowed to come in and a brother of mine and it was a fantastic experience. I was the first one from my family at that point in time who had graduated with an Open University, a University degree, and there were five of us who actually graduated that day and they were all Loyalists prisoners strangely enough but it was a tremendous experience.