

## 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: **Ronnie McCullough**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **17/01/2013**

#### **Important**

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

In some cases, interviewees may have made changes to the transcript.

Personal/sensitive information regarding individuals who may be living has been removed from transcripts where necessary.

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**Clip title:** Long Kesh in 1974

**Duration:** 00:02:03

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:14:15

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:16:22

**Interview identifier:** 034\_S\_02

**Description:**

Ronnie McCullough was in the first group of Loyalists to be transferred in 1972 to the newly opened Ulster Volunteer Force/Red Hand Commando Compounds in Long Kesh (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison). Ronnie was Education Officer for the UVF/RHC in Long Kesh and in 1974 he was in the first group of Special Category prisoners to study with The Open University. In this clip Ronnie describes what conditions were like in Long Kesh in 1974, the year Open University study began.

**Transcript:**

It was 1974, and I think this is important. In 1974 in Long Kesh, it was the year in which prison food was thrown over the wire on a daily basis from the Compounds in protest against the quality of food among other issues. Bed sheets and pillow cases were ceremoniously thrown onto the razor wire that surrounded our Compounds and they fluttered in the wind for weeks. There were attempted escapes frequently, culminating on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 1974. Following a serious dispute between Republican prisoners in Cage 13 and the Camp Governor, the Camp was set ablaze. The fire. Out of twenty two compounds, twenty were raised literally to the ground. There was serious rioting in the aftermath. The British Army riot troops came in supported by helicopters dropping CS and CR gas. Rubber bullets were fired, batons were used. I believe 192 Republicans were injured in that location. In the days after the fire, Republicans slept under makeshift shelters of sheets and corrugated fences. I'm just trying to get the flavour, 1974 was a time whenever The Open University began and it began amidst horrific events occurring in the prison, including the death of a young man from Coalisland on the 6<sup>th</sup> November.