

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: **Eleanor Mulligan**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **18/06/2012**

Important

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Eleanor Mulligan Clip

Clip title: A Probation Officer shares her Open University books
Duration: 00:01:38
Clip start point in full interview: 00:04:07
Clip end point in full interview: 00:05:45
Interview identifier: 090_O_01

Description:

Eleanor Mulligan was a Probation Officer working in the H Blocks (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) in the late 1970s. An Open University student herself, she describes how she shared her Open University books with a prisoner and how this involved a brush with the censor.

Transcript:

I think, you were telling me that you were particularly interested in Education or you noticed the importance of education?

I did indeed. I had one person in particular but he wasn't the only person who wanted to do an OU course and I had done an OU course similar to one that he had wanted to do and had some books which I thought might be useful for him, some text books, so I approached the Governor and told him that I had books which would be useful to this person and it took from that point, he had no problem with the books coming in, but from that point it took about three months and by the time the person got the books they had to go through, not searches, what's the word?

Censors?

Censors, so they had to go through the Censor and ratified by them before the prisoner would get them, eventually.

So did you notice a lot of students doing education?

Absolutely, yes. It was very important actually to a lot of people to have that contact with the outside again through their teacher and to actually be doing something positive in the prison, you know I think a lot of them felt that it gave them a bit of power and a bit of self-esteem, very important to them.