

## 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: **John Friel**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **18/06/2014**

#### **Important**

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## John Friel Clip

**Clip title:** We had something in common

**Duration:** 00:01:41

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:13:24

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:15:03

**Interview identifier:** 093\_O\_01

### **Description:**

John Friel, Catholic Chaplain in the H Blocks (the Maze Long Kesh Prison), describes talking to students there after his own Open University graduation.

### **Transcript:**

*Was that in the H Blocks?*

That was in the H Blocks, yes. And as well as my Chaplaincy work, at that stage I would have been involved in some therapeutic work as well with the men and it was while I was in the prison that I graduated, in the Whitla Hall, was it?

*I think it might have been, yes.*

It was a big crowd anyway that year, and it was a great moment. It was a great sense of achievement. Although I knew I was heading to Boston College to do further studies at that point, it was a peak experience. It was a definite celebration of five years of a bit of hard slog, but also much enjoyment I have to say. So that was great and the family came, and I felt young again graduating with all these people. I would have been in my forties then, early forties.

*Right, and did you tell the students in the jail, did you—*

No. For some reason, I didn't but when I came in one day I think the Irish News had all the lists of graduates- and I remember coming in one day and some of the lads being quite excited, "Was that you? Are you that same John Friel?" I think I was in as John Francis Friel, and so yeah that was me. And so we had something in common because as you know, The Open University was a huge feature of life among prisoners in Long Kesh at the time, yeah.