

PhD Pioneers: The Living Experiences of The Open University's First PhD Graduates

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Dr Alfred Vella** and **Professor Neil Wynn**

Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**

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Dr Alfred Vella and Professor Neil Wynn's Interview Clips

Dr Alfred Vella
phd_010_001

I went off to the OU and I had an interview presumably in 1972 I think at the muddy Walton Hall. And Oliver said don't worry, when you come here all the building will be over. Well, I don't think the building work is over yet but it was quite quaint and I think all members of staff, again, I'll know this later but I'll say it now, they were given, the academics at least were given a pair of slippers each so that when they came in from outside they could change their shoes and not put mud all over the building. And the OU was a very friendly place as I'll get, there was something about the OU that wasn't sort of run of the mill. All I knew about the OU when I was given a place there was that you need transport because Milton Keynes doesn't have transport. And I learnt early on, my wife to be, she wasn't my wife then, she was my girlfriend, visited every now and again and on Sunday I'd have to walk her to the railway station from Woburn Sands and I think, I don't know whether it's a four or five mile walk, because there wasn't public transport on a Sunday.

Professor Neil Wynn
phd_012_001

The Open University itself was just, you know, to be there at the beginning is an exciting thing to do. Even though it was extremely odd in many ways to find the university in the middle of the Buckinghamshire countryside and in a way a university which existed in the ether, because at the time, The Open University was literally in its infancy, in its planning stages. It had buildings and location in Milton Keynes, in Buckinghamshire, not far from Bletchley. The new town of Milton Keynes didn't exist then. When I say Milton Keynes I'm thinking of the village, which was basically a pub and a church and a few houses, and then this university in a field down the road. I lived first of all in Newport Pagnell and if I'd wanted to get to the university by public transport, there was one bus which went there on a Monday and I'd be able to come back on a Wednesday. There wasn't a proper bus service, but fortunately I had a motor scooter.