

## 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: **Sheelagh Wilson**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **30/08/2012**

#### **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.

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**Clip title:** Education was a valuable asset to the prisoners

**Duration:** 00:01:45

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:03:29

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:05:15

**Interview identifier:** 102\_O\_01

**Description:** Sheelagh Wilson, a part-time teacher of Basic Education in the H Blocks of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison from 1980-1991, reflects on the importance of education to prisoners and the support given to Open University students by teachers employed by the Prison Service in terms of carrying and delivery bulky teaching materials and photocopying students essays so they wouldn't get lost.

**Transcript:**

but I was also very much aware that education was a valuable asset to the prisoners. It wasn't always regarded so by the prison authorities but we, the teachers in the Education Department, felt that there was something, there was a very useful tool that we could give to prisoners so that then they would be able to make use of any education that they got.

*And you would have carried, I mean there was a lot of physical carrying and delivering and that sort of thing?*

Everything was written down. There was nothing on discs or small formats and a lot of the work that prisoners did was lengthy and heavy, and there was a lot of carrying of materials to and from, between the Blocks and the Education Department where teachers dealt with it or tutors dealt with it, and then it had to be redirected back to the Blocks. Yes, and teachers were teachers but they were also delivery people as well.

*Because you used to collect Open University essays from people in the different H Blocks, didn't you?*

And collect maybe videos and send them around for different people to watch. We had to collect the essays, bring them back and then when the tutor had finished with it and it had to be delivered back again. It was another, another few days to get it delivered back to the Blocks. It was always, the teachers were always dependable in that they always got the materials to or from the prisoners. If it was left to Prison Officers, often the material went astray.

*So they would rely on you?*

Yes, we always kept photocopies of any work that the prisoner did, so that if it did go astray then all wasn't lost.