

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:	Tommy
Interviewed by:	Pat Jess
Date of interview:	25/05/2018

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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Tommy Clip

Clip title: The OU was always ours

Duration: 00:01:44

Clip start point in full interview: 00:17:44

Clip end point in full interview: 00:19:54

Interview identifier: 108_S_01

Description: Tommy studied with The Open University in the UVF Compounds of Long Kesh Prison Camp (the Maze and Long Kesh prison) in the late 1970s. He describes study huts in the Compounds, the restrictions on using these, the lack of physical space for dedicated study, the sense of ownership by students of the OU and this being seen as separate from the Prison Education System.

Transcript:

Did you have a study hut? Where did you study?

Again, when the Compounds started to close, what they did was they brought all what would have been the UVF prisoners, and in time the Official IRA prisoners, to a dedicated Study Compound. It was a hut within a secure Compound, and that's where we would have studied. Now there wasn't a lot of time - from 9.30am to 12.30pm. But within our own Compound we had one study hut that was used for everything.

There was nowhere else to study really. Because you were in a cubicle as it were, and there were maybe two or three people in that cubicle at a particular time, so other than sit on your bed and read a book or, if it was a sunny day, sit outside and read a book, you didn't have the physical space to actually do dedicated study. So if you had a set book to read that's where you read it, sitting on your bed at night, and used the study hut for reading the main parts of the course during the day. I suppose, as an assessment overall of the course, The Open University succeeded in Long Kesh precisely because it wasn't sponsored or organised by the prison authorities. As far as we were concerned, the OU was ours and we guarded it jealously. It was independent from the Prison Education system that, I suppose, we had to accept reluctantly, it was either that or nothing. The only way we were going to get books was to accept the education system. But the OU was always above it, it was always ours.