

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

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Dr Ken Richardson**

Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**

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Clip 1

[00:01:33-00:04:08]

Well I was born in Newcastle on Tyne, where my father was a riveter in the shipyards. Like most riveters, many riveters almost, he was partially deaf, so bang, bang, bang and he failed the medical in the call up. But by that time, by the time I was born, '42, they were short of labour in the mines and the shipyards owned a lot of the mines in County Durham, so he got shifted out to a pit village. So we ended up in a pit village in County Durham about a year after I was born, in a very primitive colliery house, one up, one down, no gas, no electricity. Your only water supply was a standpipe by the front door and one light upstairs, one light downstairs, that was all. Five of us in one bedroom, my parents in one bed, three brothers in the other bed. Quite cosy in winter. The toilet outside, the old midden toilet, which the netty known locally, which the farmer shovelled out once every week or two.

But we were there for 12 years I think until we, the houses had been condemned for decades when we moved in, so we eventually got a council house in Bishop Auckland, some miles away in Bishop Auckland, where they were building huge council housing estates. To us the house was a palace of course, all mod cons. Nobody passed the eleven-plus, or very few people passed the eleven-plus in the Durham pit villages, so the time I was in primary school, about six years in primary school, only two or three people ever passed the eleven-plus. So like my two brothers, one older, one younger, I failed as well, so I was kicked out of school at 15 and went to work in a factory, in the local factory. So I actually started work about a few days after my 15th birthday, because my birthday is in July, which coincided with the last week of school. I think I finished school on Friday and started work on the Monday.