

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: **Jane Nelson**
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**
Date of interview: **19/06/2012**

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.

In some cases, interviewees may have made changes to the transcript.

Personal/sensitive information regarding individuals who may be living has been removed from transcripts where necessary.

Copyright and Permissions

Rights owned or controlled by The Open University.

All use of this transcript in part or in full requires prior permission from The Open University Archive.

Please contact university-archive@open.ac.uk to discuss possible use of the content.

Clip title: They have to have an outlet and The Open University can give them one.

Duration: 00:02:54

Clip start point in full interview: 00_02_10

Clip end point in full interview: 00_05_04

Interview identifier: 063_T_01

Description: Jane Nelson recalls, just after her appointment to the newly founded Open University in 1971, finding out about the Long Kesh Internment Camp being built. She describes the invitation from a prison social worker, Miss Kennedy, for The Open University to come into the Internment Camp.

Transcript:

But early on in this experience, things began to develop in Northern Ireland and, for example, in 1971 – that was during my first year – internment was brought in by the Stormont parliament. I'd been so busy with organising the OU and finding out what was really about, that I wasn't up-to-date with what was happening at Stormont, but I had a very good friend who helped me with minding my children from time to time and she kept a donkey in the field behind the Maze. And she came to me one day, one day when I was collecting the kids, and she said, 'Do you know there's a prison camp being built beside my donkey?' And I was amazed, but very soon after that, it was clear that it was true. Nissen huts were redeveloped- they had been there since the Americans inhabited that site during the war. Other structures came up; a wire fence came up, towers, security towers and lighting came up and shortly after that, I think, internment was real and a lot of people were transferred from their homes, in a sweep, into the Maze. These, what they called compounds, which were really Nissen huts left behind by the air force, the Americans, when they were there. And shortly after that happened, a social worker attached to the prison rang me, and her name was Miss Kennedy, and I had her Whiteabbey telephone number. She said she'd heard about the OU. She said, 'People interned in Long Kesh are in a terrible state. They don't know anything. They don't know why they're there, they don't know how long they're going to be there, and they have no facilities. They are being kept away, taken away from their homes and being kept in very poor conditions with a lot of people, strangers, they don't know. The strangers are in equally adverse conditions and unhappy' She said 'People are finding it very hard, psychologically and emotionally, to cope with their situation. They have to have an outlet and the Open University can give them one'.