

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

## Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Professor Oliver Boyd-Barrett**

Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**

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Clip 1

[00:27:52-00:30:52]

So I would have regular meetings with these gentlemen either in London or at Walton Hall and ultimately just began to, I think I had quite positive feelings about a lot of this experience and as I think back very impressed by the quality of the minds that I was able to interact with at Walton Hall, these guys would have been top anywhere. And on the other hand, the downside was they hadn't been through the, they could help me to some extent, but ultimately I did feel I was on my own and I'm not saying this was a bad thing, but ultimately I did feel I was on my own in trying to make sense of what it was I was doing, of the information I was gathering, largely interview material, but also a lot of documentary material as well as published histories of these four organisations. But how to make sense of it for the first time, at a time where there weren't, you could count on your fingers really the number of people who were doing anything remotely comparable anywhere, how to make sense of it.

And that I struggled with and it was frightening, but I did it. I came up with something, I came up with a framework which I think it wasn't bad, that was the basis of a very, what turned out to be a very long dissertation, two volumes, I don't remember how many, I don't remember how many thousands of words, but I think it was probably twice as long as The Open University guidelines recommended. But ultimately out of that came my first publication, my book which was a great deal shorter mercifully for reader, not short enough for most people. But would I have gotten better advice would I have been, who knows, it's all a matter of if. So we're talking about an institution which is only beginning to emerge, no one really understands what it's about and where it can go, namely The Open University, these guys sort of inventing sociology as they went along and in a way inventing it through the courses that they produced for The Open University which kind of define the field now.

[00:36:45-00:37:17]

But other than that, no it's just that word, that lonely, that very intimate relationship that one has with a supervisor or supervisors, that lonely feeling of heavy burden of responsibility to actually make meaning out of something that other people didn't know what the meaning was either and they assumed that you would find it, that I would find a way of framing it. And ultimately I did.