

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

## Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Professor Stephen Potter**  
Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**  
Date of interview: **25/03/2021**

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Towards the end of this interview, there were several instances of complete audio cut-out due to a technical issue on the day. These are marked with [Silence].

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Clip 2

[00:35:59-00:38:37]

It's not so much people; it's still about the experiences or the way in which the research developed within the university. The New Town Study Unit was quite critical of Milton Keynes Development Corporation, and there was an energy crisis, 1975 energy crisis review that the Development Corporation undertook and they wanted academic input. But they didn't go to the New Town Study Unit because they wanted somebody who was more complacent I think. So they went to the energy research group and Peter Chapman. And Steve Cousins who was a researcher at the time there, later went on to be a professor at Cranfield University, and Steve and I ended up putting together an input for the Development Corporation's review. So that was quite fascinating. I used some of the techniques I did from school for circumventing the headmaster. I used that on the Development Corporation, got in on the review, even though the Development Corporation were trying to exclude the New Town Study Unit. So it was quite fascinating stuff that.

We also had a period when not only the Open University was fascinating for international visitors, but we had an awful lot of international visitors who came to us at the Open University because they wanted an independent view of the development of Milton Keynes, rather than the standard PR presentation that they got from the Development Corporation. And so there were loads of people, groups of students and researchers from United States, Chile, India, Australia, Hong Kong, all around that, but there was even a Dutch, Belgian TV crew who came along at one point. Actually Betty was incredibly useful in that, our secretary, she spoke six languages and Flemish happened to be one of them and it was a Flemish TV crew, so she acted as our interpreter. Good grief at the time it was, some people can stumble along with appalling French and there you had a secretary, typist who spoke six languages. So anyway, so that happened.