

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

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Professor Neil Wynn**
Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**
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Clip 1

[00:10:22-00:12:48]

If you went to study for a PhD in history now at a traditional university, you join a history department, and there will be several other PhD students there and a large number of, not a large number, but a number of anything from half a dozen to a hundred colleagues in history. Open University is very different. I was the first history PhD student, postgraduate student. I was the first postgraduate student I think in the faculty of arts altogether and then I was joined by a handful of other postgraduate students but they were in, there was one in philosophy, there was one in English literature, there was one I think in music who was just completing his PhD and then I met other people of my age group who worked on site, admin staff, other staff. My wife, who I married very early, got a job working in the science department at the Open University. And they did have labs there and she worked in labs there with the person she was attached to in London, in labs in London.

So I met kind of, there wasn't an academic community in the sense of traditional universities. It was an academic community which would come together as the faculty of arts and probably once a week or once a fortnight for faculty meetings or for other meetings, but at other times it was pretty dispersed. Most people lived outside and they lived in London or near Bedford. You didn't have to be there. And so my social life involved young colleagues across the institution. Which in itself was kind of interesting because I met lots of different people from different backgrounds, but I missed perhaps being part of the community of historians.