

TITLE: One hundred and one

I made this montage in 2004 just before retiring from the Open University. It consists of 101 photos, illustrations, maps and graphics taken from many publications directly linked to the Social Sciences Faculty. Why is this 'montage' here? The Open University came to Milton Keynes in 1969 and I followed a year later, just after the first Foundation courses were going out to students across the UK. At its peak over 30 tonnes of print left MK for distribution across the nation.

I had recently returned from Canada and I needed to start a new life and career and applied for the job as Cartographer at the OU. A new University in a new CITY (yes, we called it a City back then, as now). Little did I realise that I was to stay an OU 'staffer' for 34 years and 247 days!

As an institution the OU really appealed to me as I had only achieved a few 'O' Levels from school. I did, however, complete an 'apprenticeship' at the Ordnance Survey, the UK's National mapmakers. In Canada I undertook a number of University courses as a mature student as I also did at the OU. The OU was quite a different place when I joined. It only had about 400 staff whereas when I left it had well over 4000. People often asked me how I knew so many other staff. One reason was that, on joining, when there were few places to rent in the Bletchley area, over 100 of us were housed in student quarters at Cranfield College. At breakfast you were likely to be sitting next to a Professor of Economics on one side and a computer analyst on the other. There was a lot of camaraderie, you had to be flexible and join in if extra help was needed across departments – the classic case was when the University encountered a postal strike and course and exams had to be kept to schedule. Many staff were stuffing and delivering envelopes.

When I began work on the Walton Hall campus I had an almost empty office except for a desk, chair and some HB pencils! Over time I was able to design my own cartographic office with photo darkroom and map storage. I worked at first for Geography and soon for all six of the Disciplines in Social Sciences. The main projects consisted of maps and illustrations for Lecturers and Research staff including Post Graduates (PhDs). These were used in both teaching and research publications. Later, I contributed sections for course 'modules' that had a cartographic component, including one on computer mapping.

As technologies changed so did the way I made maps. Eventually digital map and computer-generated artwork became the de facto standard – not without pain! I grew to love the digital approach that eventually meant I could do so much more with the data, make changes effortlessly and bring about innovation both in design and production.

So, back to the 101 montage. Firstly, it has an image of every Social Sciences Dean I served under. It was Peggotty Graham, my final Dean, who asked me to leave a momento behind so to speak. Only three versions were made, one for her, now in Oxford, the other for the Faculty and the third for myself. The originals were printed onto canvas and have faded a bit so what you are looking at is a photo print made a short while ago and gently attached to the original. Many of the images were designed by staff in the OU's famed Design Studio and are acknowledged, others are my maps and photo images. You may catch a glimpse of a young Prince Charles, you will see many aspects of Social Sciences made up of **Geography, Economics, Applied, Sociology, Psychology and Government**. Key words are linked to each of those disciplines. Highlighted is the

haunting photo of children on a bus leaving Kosovo – **Place, Power and Politics**. Look carefully and there is a photo taken from an upper window of about 60 Social Sciences staff and the dancers at bottom right were in a book about communication. Finally, that's me in the bottom right-hand corner!

After marriage and buying a new house in MK, twins came along. They both remember red balloon days, the birth of the concrete cows and taking advantage of the Wavendon Allmusic Plan holiday courses. Educated within MK, both children made it to University which was more than their parents ever did! More recently, post retirement and during Lockdown, I have written an autobiography, *Life's Journey with cartographic meanderings*, built a new deck area and have used personal photographs to make and sell bespoke Greeting Cards (mapperou.com/birds or [/flowers](http://mapperou.com/flowers) or [/stained glass](http://mapperou.com/stained-glass)).

Having produced hundreds of maps of all parts the world for the Open University and more recently, Covid maps of Milton Keynes, I feel I have helped, creatively, to put Milton Keynes 'on the map'.

John