

Maureen Vicary – Interview transcript (Speechnotes Test)

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Interviewer: Sonya Teale

Location:

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Process – Speechnotes Voice to text app followed by manual correction and editing

{ 0:00 } Six the peak Rowlands castle and made on 14th of February, 2006.

{ 0:15 } Before I married my surname was Neil, spelled n-e-a-l-e, rather like Vicary is spelt v – l – c – a – r – y, I go in for names with difficult spellings of my last name

{ 0:21 } I was born on the 10th of July 1923 My name is Maureen Vicary.

{ 0:41 } Neale

{ 0:42 } I was born in Southsea on the 10th of July 1923 but only lived there until I was about eighteen months old, when I went with my mother, to join my father, in Brazil, and came back to England about a year before the war and carried on living in Southsea with my grandmother to start with and then because of the war we lived in Liss for a while, then came back to Southsea. I was quite associated with St Jude's church and that was where I was married to Keith in 1950.

We had two children, a son and a daughter and mostly we lived in Southsea area despite the fact that Keith was in the Navy and was away quite a lot of the time

{ 2:00 } That was really my base. And we carried on living there until we moved to Rowlands Castle. My son went to the junior Grammar school and my daughter to the high school and then later on, they both went away to boarding school because we had quite an unsettled life with traveling. We moved to Rowlands Castle on 12th of December 1966 and it was the first phase of building quite a few houses in Rowlands Castle.

{ 2:50 } We live a house that was just called "three off Greatfield Way" in a great big field that was owned by the Powell family which is well-known family in Rowlands Castle. It was about three years before most of the plots had been completed, and they started putting in the road proper and giving us lights. I remember the day of moving because it poured with rain, which was the worst thing you could imagine. On top of that, the soil is very clayey and they tramped in absolutely almost as much into the house as they had in the garden, the new carpets never recovered. We were actually the second people to move in, Percy guy and his wife Sybil were first and that was at number nine, on the other side of the road. A lot of the houses were built by different Builders. Ours was one of three built by some Builder called Moore who I don't think is around any more and most of the others by other builders who bought a plot and build on it. We chose the third plot that our builder had because it was slightly bigger at the back. Running across the back was what the locals called the nuttery because they were nearly all nut trees. We have an enormous walnut tree in our garden and some hazelnut. Speaking to people they often said how they used to walk through the nuttery in the autumn and gather up their nuts.

{ 4:48 } Gradually over the three years people came in

{ 4:53 } As I said we were the second to move in, the Guys, I'm afraid had died. And then after that, there was a Maurice Eley who has also passed on, and there was someone in his house, and in fact the only people left in the original Houses now are a Roger & Lena Walker in no 13. Otherwise all the houses have changed hands two or three times. In fact the house next door to us was the last to be built and occupied. Three builders went broke while building it and it was interesting to note how they had odd windows as the building progressed. The other interesting thing about that house is that it's probably had the most turnovers and each time people have made quite dramatic

changes to the interior and exterior of the house. And not only that, the garden, each time, they have had designers come in and completely revamped the garden.

{ 5:59 } The other interesting thing about our part of the Peak is that there is a hedge right across the end. And that was the end line of the Powell's property and they insisted that it was kept as communal use for the rest of the people living resident in the Peak as they didn't want it to join up to all the allotments to the South side which later became The Fairway. This was kept like that as a hedge completely and we did poke a little hole through so that we could walk down into the village through the allotments and that's the way it's always remained until the allotments were all built on. The Council decided to call the main part of it The Fairway and the little bit leading up to us, The Peak and to carry on the numbers. And they thought they could join the road up. We were not resident in our part of the Peak at the time, we were serving abroad. So we had all the correspondence about this sent to us. We did all support our solicitor, to fight our case which they discovered we had no case to fight because that strip of land virtually belongs to all our houses and they could not put the road through. If you do look on the ground, you will see how we were made into a cul-de-sac road but the lower part stops abruptly. We've always maintained a hole in the Hedge to walk through to go into the main village. The whole purpose of the Powells having the foresight to think of this was because if it had been open, no one in their right mind, would have driven down those Hills to land themselves by the station area to get out. They would have cut through the Peak as the main way into the village.

I'm not fully aware about all the happenings as we were in the States for nearly five years and when we came back we found some were complete and some building work was still going on so it was a different picture to come back to.

{ 9:13 } As I said before, my children were in boarding school, but by the time we went to the States, one was about to go to the university and the other one, the college. We left the house for them to live in, not thinking we would be away for so many years as we were so when we came back, they were both working. And they had undertaken between them that one of them would come home every other weekend and keep the front garden looking tidy so as not to annoy the neighbours. So when we came back, we had quite a new start on the back garden and the house needed decorating. It was nice for them to have a base that was home to them as we're all rather short of members of the family anywhere around for them.

{ 10:12 } It was after coming back that from the states that I looked round and everyone said how nice to see you back. And that was it and I thought, now, I ought to do something about this, they know who I am. And they were used to seeing me around before I went away, but they lost contact with me and they all have gone on in their own lives, while I was away, so it was up to me to make a fresh start. So that is really when I started to get myself into the things that we're going on in the village. So in 1976, when we did get back, I started getting interested in things in the village, which I really had always had a great interest in but not the time to do much about.

{ 11:22 } The first thing I joined was the WI, in which I immediately found friendship as well as masses of interest and I was able to take up several interests that I had always thought maybe one day I would do.

{ 11:38 } I did though, at the same time, decide that as my husband was away a lot and I have no children, that would not fulfil me entirely so I decided to take the civil service exam and joined the tax office in Havant. I was a bit insistent that I would only work in Havant because I didn't want to have a lot of travelling to do but I did enjoy the time, I think it was about five years, I spent there and I did enjoy that as well as being involved in things in the village.

{ 12:25 } As soon as I retired from that, I did as I had promised and went on the committee for the WI and I thought, that's fine, I will be let into this quietly, but no, they were short of a Treasurer, so my initiation into serving on the committee was that of treasurer. But in some ways, it was a good thing because I had to learn and learn quickly what it was all about. It is something I have never regretted and I've enjoyed the serving on the committee at other times and in other jobs.

I also was able to take embroidery, needlework and things that I had always said I would when I had time for it. So I did take some dress making courses which were not in the WI. But they reaped good rewards because when the WI had Craft shows, I would usually exhibit something I had made and nearly always with ended up with a gold star.

The embroidery is within the WI the same as the book club which I enjoy.

{ 13:42 } My name after this got known around that I was interested in what was going on in the village and I did serve on the Rowlands Castle Association committee for three years, which I feel is about the limit of time one should serve on any committee for new ideas after that.

{ 14:03 } And then the Historical Society was mooted to be started and I can remember I was busy with the Rowlands Castle Amateur Dramatic society, which was another society that I had helped found. We had a meeting early on after my return and there were enough like-minded people thinking we should have the dramatic Society in the village. So I was in at the initiation of that one. It was while we were rehearsing one night that the Historical Society was holding an exploratory meeting in the small hall. Or rather people who thought we should have a Historical Society had a meeting in the smaller hall and someone came through and said, would I be willing to come through and listen to what was being said, and when I had a break, I did.

{ 15:00 } Someone had heard about the Scrapbook I have more or less been keeping on the village since my return from the states and I think that's what made them think that I would be a good person to serve on the initial committee. So I served my three years on the Historical Society committee then my husband took over and did his stint which has gone on a bit longer.

{ 15:34 } One of the other activities I've been involved with has been the Conservative Association. When I first came to the Village, I cannot remember the name of the MP for East Hants, but I do know it was a woman and then at the very next election we had Michael Mates and it's been Michael Mates as MP ever since I have lived here. I have always helped with the drives and whatever they are doing in the Conservative Association. And my husband now is on the committee for the local one. So we get involved with the jumble sales for that, for the WI and for the Parish Hall and with the other things.

{ 16:24 } Going back to drama. We first met in the hut on the recreation ground, and I say hut because that's all it was before it had the posh building. Because one of the local councillors Elsie Dennis was also interested and amateur Dramatics and after she got on the local council She thought it would be an idea to see if there were like-minded people. And I know that I gathered, there with Deborah Trollop, Elsie Dennis and her husband and a few other people who, I think I are no longer with us. And we decided Rowlands Castle should have a dramatic Society.

So we started off from then. Ah, yes, I remember, one of the others being at the original meeting was Barbara Openshaw so I think that is about the lot.

So from there we decided that we'd do something that was well-known. So we did a JB Priestley play. And various members were chosen for parts. When we were feeling our way around a lot, we did finally put on this production in the Parish Hall and we thought that we had better only do it for three nights to see how it went. Fortunately the village seemed to be interested to see what on earth we could do. I didn't actually have a part in the play but everyone pounced on me and said we need someone to look after wardrobe. Again an experience I have never undergone before and had no idea how to go about it. We managed somehow and gathered up costumes and that seemed to be my title so that became my title, after that I was always known as "the wardrobe" after that production and as long as I stayed with them. I did get chances to play parts sometimes.

We originally used to meet for rehearsals in the room up above the Castle pub and that was before the Castle pub was done over as well but they made us welcome until such time as there was a change of landlords there and they wanted to use that room that we used as part of their own living accommodation so we hurriedly had to find somewhere else so we just moved to the Parish hall and it cost us a bit more to do that. It was probably better because we had to do some of the rehearsals on the stage anyway. In time as the parish hall was improved we got

the extra rooms built on, we did get our own rooms to put costumes in a lot and a lot of the props and that. It started off in a very nice tidy way, but it didn't last like that for long and no matter how often we had a good tidy up it continued to be a complete and utter shambles.

{ 19:45 } *(Subject – WI?)* When I joined the committee as Treasurer, Barbara Smith was our president. And then over the years, you will find the presidents have come back and served on committee. And there's a good nucleus of people who really run the main think part of it and not only do they have a monthly meeting which people are probably aware of, there are a lot of little off-shoots which are the mainstay. They have a book club, they have an embroidery group. They have a French-speaking group and they all meet separately and it's a great time for smaller numbers of people to get together and get to know one another. But not only that, they help in a lot of the village events. The WI turn up for most of the fundraising jumble sales for everything in the village as well and help. Then of course the Village Fair would never be complete without a stall from the WI. It would usually include some of their cake making and jam making as well as plants and other produce and things.

{ 21:10 } When other events happen in the village like the Queens Jubilee. I mean there was another time. What was the anniversary the end of the war, because we had the tea party then, what was that called?

{ 21:48 } The Rowlands Castle Association was formed by a neighbour of mine at no 5 The Peak. He later became one of our best known councillors and led the Parish Council for many years too and that was Norman Honey. Soon After we got settled in, there was quite a furore going on because they thought all the fields behind Wellsworth were going to be developed into a amount of housing. I don't remember all the details fully because I was really living down in Portland and just coming to Rowlands Castle at weekends at that time. A lot of people were incensed with the way they were going to take over fields and they were going to put in cheek by jowl housing in was the original plan I believe. Norman Honey got together a lot of people and they discussed this and they went into it very fully; and they felt at the time that the village should have its own Association to look at things like that when anything happened suddenly. It has since become a very thriving society and has had a lot to do with all the reconstruction or any developments that happened in the village from that time on.

I served on the committee for a while and so did my husband and I think, you know, most people really interested in the village did do that to help.

The development never really happened, there was building there, but it didn't happen as the original ideas were, because of that.

23:43 We worshipped at St Johns and we had a canon Force there at the time and he was delightful man. And we enjoyed taking our religion as part of living in in the village. When we came back from the spell in the United States in the sixties it had all changed at the church because Cannon Force has died. And then we found it very difficult to settle it and whether it was because we've been to Episcopalian churches in the states or not, we weren't quite certain, but anyway, we started to go to some of the churches around. The first one we went to was Holy Trinity at Blendworth because we happen to have friends in that part of The Village. So we went there first, but we did go around quite a large area of churches, but we did find ourselves keep going back to Holy Trinity. And it was in the days when canon Ockwell was there. After a while decided that the services they offered at St John's were not quite as we felt, the way we wanted our religion to go. So we've settled with Holy Trinity, Blendworth and have remained there ever since. And we were joined by some other people from Rowlands castle both there and at Idsworth, which is one of the three churches in that Parish.

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