

Transcripts of Sonya Teale's interview with Mrs Vera Cooper, 19th August 2004.

Words in *italics* are those of the interviewer.

Recorded on the 19th of August 2004

My name is Vera Edith Kitty Cooper. *Yeah and your name when you before you married.* That was my name before I was married. *I see, yes, yes, what when were you born?* 28th of October 1910. *Right and you were where were you born?* Rowlands Castle. *yeah where next to the pub?* Next to the Castle Inn. *Yeah.* That's just under the arch. *I know. What, what did your parents do what was...?* My father was the carrier from here to Portsmouth. *Yes.* He had two horses first. *Yes.* I was with him for a 12 month but after that I went into McElroy's(?) in Commercial Road first hand in the gents department. *Before did you have any brothers and sisters.* No. *No, you were the only child.* I was the only child. *Did you go to school in Rowlands Castle?* Yes, *Where?* Redhill, *Redhill,* and then I went to Idsworth because the doctor said he thought the walk to Idsworth would do me good in the morning. *How far was that?* Oh it was quite a way out there. *So after you left school you went to McElroy's(?)* That's right. *In Portsmouth.* That's right. *Yes and how did you travel there?* Train. *You went on the train?* Yeah, I caught the 8 o'clock in the morning and back on the 6 o'clock at night. *Did you work Saturday, did you work on Saturday.* Oh yes, it was their busy day. *And what time, till 6 o'clock on a Saturday?* 9 till 6 we opened at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, closed at 6 at night. *Did you enjoy the work?* Yes.

Tell me about your father did he go once a day to Portsmouth. Yes. *And where did he pick up the parcels?* All around peoples' houses because there was no delivery from a shop in Portsmouth in those days at all. Nobody delivered anything so the people used to go down the shop and then my father went down and pick their goods up. *Oh, I see and where did he stable the horses?* Well first of all we lived next to the Castle Inn, that little cottage there and the yard along there then to the next house is where we kept the horses, well we kept them in the Castle Inn. *No I see yes and how many years did he do that for do you know?* About five I think. *Did your mother work?* No. *No and after you, how long did you work in McElroy's(?) in Portsmouth?* Ooh a good many years, I served my apprenticeship there and then I became first hand. *In the gents department, in the gents department?* Yes, that's right. *Did you ever meet Mr McElroy?* Yes. *Can you tell me anything about the family?* Oh no I can't really I can't remember much, but they lived at Havant, was it Havant? That's right, yes. *And when did you stop working at McElroy's?.* No no you've asked me something I can tell you. I think I worked there for five years. *Yes and then?* I went to the Landport Drapers Bazaar. *And what was your job there?* The same. *And you enjoyed it, did you like it?* Oh yes. very much so, what I always wanted to do. *Really yes.* I always wanted to a shop assistant. *When did you stop doing that?* Oh, Gordon I think I was there for five years, I think it was five years, and um I used to catch the train up here in the morning. *Yes.* Get off in Commercial Road station and walk up to the McElroy's(?). They were at the top of the road then they weren't where they were latterly, it was a lovely shop.

When did you marry? 19 hundred oh Gordon, it's in there I think dear, in that book but what used to happen he went to the same school as Jack Barratt, Barratt's garage on Redhill. Jack Barrett went to

the same school and they got friends so Eddie came up here every weekend and stay with Jack up at the garage and Mrs Barrett was the organist over the church and Mr Barrett was the choirmaster and I was in the choir and we were all over there. It was lovely really. *You were married on the 20th of June 1937 in the middle of the summer.* Yes. Yes. *Can you remember anything about your wedding?* Well I had a lovely wedding. *Good, yes.*

And what was your husband job? He was, oh builder. *Builder, who for?* Well, they had their own business. *Did they?* Yes, Cooper's in Portsmouth. *And where did you live after you married.* Here Rowlands. *Yes, which house.* That's me dad and me mum and that's Eddie. *Can you say that again yes?* There was no shop delivered in Portsmouth at all anywhere and my father started up a business and delivering to the people. They went down there shopping and he went and collected the things for Durrants and Finchdean and all around. We had two horses first.

And your husband got the OBE what did he get the OBE for? But my husband. *Yes.* Well, he didn't do manual work, but he did them, um, um, if they wanted something built. *Yes.* Then he prepared for it you know *yes.* *Yes.* *And which house did you live in Rowlands Castle after you are married?* Over there. *Those cottages.* *Yes.* No the big one, well it's a big one now because they got the, we had the rooms upstairs but we didn't have any windows when we lived there. *Oh, I see.* They've been put there since the people. *The white house?* The big one over there next to the policeman, that was their yard. Where there's two cottages are over there was our yard, cos they've been built since.

And what was it like going to Buckingham Palace? Gosh marvellous, really lovely. *Do you remember anything?* Yes the firm took us up there and we yes stayed the night in a hotel and they sent us to a theatre. I can't really, well I've gotta all down somewhere, it's in there I expect. They sent us to a theatre in London.

And did you have any children? No. *What took you up to Scotland?* My husband worked up there. *In the building trade?* Yes, he didn't actually ever do any manual work, he did um, arranging all the um, programmes for the building but he never worked manually. *And it looks like you have some lovely holiday?* Yes

Did you go to Africa? No, no. My husband was there.

Tell me about anything in the village that you remember can you tell me anything about the village fair? Well it hasn't altered all that much, really, not really, you know. I lived in the little cottage next to the Castle Inn. *Yes.* Under the arch, and um then we came up and lived up over there but it wasn't like it is now of course, we had rooms up the top but no windows then and the policeman was next door.

Can you tell me anything about the shops in the village. Well, Whittington's (?) and Hern's was the grocers down at the corner, down the bottom, and the post office was in their first until they moved. But um, there's not much else to tell you really about the village because, you know, just stayed the little shop down the bottom. *And what did you belong to any clubs or organisations?* Well we had a tennis club up in the playing field which I belong to, I belonged to the tennis club, and over the church I worked over there, thank you very much dear, I worked over then church, first of all I taught the children, I played the piano for the hymns for them, for the Sunday school. Then I played the

organ after that in the church for a little while and then that was that. Eddie came out from Portsmouth because he lived in Portsmouth because he was friends.....

Interviewer's note. The house referred to as over there by Mrs Cooper I believe to be Eagle House on the green and the church she refers to is the United Reformed Church also on the green in Rowlands Castle. The interview was terminated because Mrs Cooper became very repetitive.