

Reference: XXX
Accession Ref: XXXX
Name: Debbie Brock
Address: [Not given]
Date of Birth: [Not given]
Place of Birth: [Not given]
Date of Interview: [Not recorded]
Interviewed by: Roger Kitchen
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Debbie Brock became involved with the Cenotaph Trust during her tenure as Mayor of Milton Keynes in 2010/11, chairing the steering group for the project. The initiative began with the goal of creating a civic space for remembrance, which evolved through consultations with local communities and faith groups into a broader vision for a space for both reflection and celebration. A key design influence was the Eric Morecambe memorial, which led to the selection of artist Gordon Young, known for his inclusive public art, such as the Comedy Carpet. His design emphasized accessibility and connection for all community groups.

The site for the memorial was chosen in collaboration with the Parks Trust, which aimed to revitalize a tired pond area. The design incorporated water features, though safety concerns later required modifications. Funding for the project came from a mix of donations, private contributions, and existing budgets, with no support from the Arts Council. The final space was celebrated as an exceptional architectural achievement, designed to invite communal remembrance and personal reflection.

Gordon Young's design process, starting in 2010, involved thorough research and input from the public and experts, with a calendar of meaningful dates to be engraved on the pillars of the Rose. These dates, including local, national, and international events, were selected by a Pillar Panel consisting of community leaders and experts. By 2013, sixty pillars had been inscribed, with plans for more, ensuring the Rose would remain relevant for future generations.

The Rose's ground-breaking ceremony took place in April 2013, with a poem by Mark Niel and a time capsule containing a poem and a newspaper to mark the occasion. Despite the chilly and rainy weather, the opening ceremony in November 2013 was a major event, like a giant fete, there were lots and lots of different groups coming together to animate the pillars.

Since its opening, the Rose has become a significant community space, particularly during times of grief. It has hosted tributes for the Queen, memorials for tragic events, and performances like the Bicycle Bolero and dance events by MOTUS Dance. It is also a regular feature of the International Festival.

The Rose has become an iconic symbol of Milton Keynes, cherished by locals and photographers. Looking to the future, it is hoped the Rose will continue to serve as a space for reflection, performance, and community engagement, evolving with the stories of the people it represents.