

Reference: XXX
Accession Ref: XXXX
Name: John Moffoot
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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John Moffoot explains that the idea for a cenotaph in Central Milton Keynes began on Remembrance Day in 2007, during a conversation with then Mayor Mike Barry. They recognised that, unlike older towns, Milton Keynes had no dedicated space for collective remembrance, as existing war memorials dated from the 1920s, before the city centre existed. Over the next few years, discussions with local stakeholders—including the Royal British Legion and Council of Faiths—led to broader support. The project gained real momentum when Debbie Brock became mayor in 2010, and the Cenotaph Trust was formally established in 2011. The site, later opened in 2013 as the Milton Keynes Rose, evolved beyond a traditional war memorial.

Artist Gordon Young, already known locally, was appointed with guidance from the council's arts team. Through extensive public consultation, it became clear that the community wanted more than a single-use war memorial. Instead, they envisioned a year-round civic space for commemoration, celebration, protest and gathering. The circular design—symbolically resonant across faiths and cultures—was developed over 12 to 18 months. A “pillar panel,” representing multiple organisations and chaired by the Lord Lieutenant, selected inscriptions from over 100 public nominations, ensuring a broad range of themes beyond conflict and remembrance.

Funding came from three main sources: council planning-gain (Section 136) funds linked to development in Campbell Park, investment from the Parks Trust (which had planned to redevelop the existing pond), and private donations secured by trustees. Of the 106 pillars, only some were inscribed initially to “future-proof” the Rose, allowing space to mark future events and milestones.

John recalls the rain-soaked opening ceremony and acknowledges ongoing challenges, particularly encouraging community groups to adopt and actively use pillars. However, the Rose has become Milton Keynes' “go-to” place for spontaneous gatherings and vigils, notably following terrorist attacks and especially after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, when large crowds gathered and laid flowers.

Reflecting on the project, John describes it as hard work but justified. He is most proud that the Rose exists as a dedicated civic space in a young city—a place where people can meet, commemorate, celebrate, protest and connect.