

Reference: XXX
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Name: Julie Dawes
Address: [Not given]
Date of Birth: [Not given]
Place of Birth: [Not given]
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Interviewed by: Roger Kitchen
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Julie Dawes has worked for the Parks Trust for many years and has been involved with the MK Rose since its early development. Although not part of the initial consultations or artist Gordon Young's research, her involvement deepened in 2013 as construction began and plans were made for the November 9 opening. She helped coordinate community groups who had contributed to the project, ensuring strong representation at the launch and animating as many pillars as possible.

The first pillar, marking Armistice Day (11.11.11), was created in 2011 and symbolically launched with then-Mayor Alan Richards before full construction began in 2013. The build was complex, involving removal of the old fountain and installation of granite pillars. While colleague Bryony oversaw construction, Julie managed park operations to ensure safety and coordination during events.

Initially struck by the scale of the public artwork, Julie came to appreciate how the Rose brought together Milton Keynes' heritage, highlighting significant national and local dates chosen through community engagement. Over time, although it was sometimes difficult to maintain contact with participating groups, the space gained a strong reputation. It is now widely recognized as the city's place for celebration, remembrance, vigils, and civic gatherings—even for groups without a dedicated pillar.

The Rose has become especially important during moments of collective grief. Julie recalls the death of Queen Elizabeth II as a defining moment, with hundreds gathering daily to lay flowers. Even as Milton Keynes Pride took place nearby, organizers incorporated respectful tributes, demonstrating the site's inclusivity and unity. The space has also hosted vigils related to global tragedies and community events such as Windrush commemorations and Black Lives Matter recognition.

Julie reflects on the Rose's evolution as a journey from tentative early gatherings to a vibrant, well-used civic landmark. Blank pillars were deliberately left for future generations,

allowing the memorial to grow with the city. She is most proud of how diverse communities have embraced the space, making it a true reflection of Milton Keynes.

Special memories include Covid-era engravings conducted in near-empty lockdown conditions, a royal visit by Prince William during the city's 50th anniversary, and the 2015 Rugby World Cup Fanzone, where visitors entered through the Rose and discovered its significance. Julie hopes it will continue to mature, strengthen community bonds, and remain a central gathering place for generations to come.