



Milton Keynes Rose Audiowalk Read Along.

Experience the Milton Keynes Rose through sound and story. Below, you will find a read-along version of the audiowalk, combining interviews, writing and research material. Designed for accessibility and deeper engagement, this feature allows you to explore the Rose's evolving significance - whether you are on site or reading from home.

This is not a tour guide. It is a meditation.

The Milton Keynes Rose Audiowalk blends voices, field recordings, compositions and text to trace a path through nearly two decades of imagination, community organising, design, and civic care.

Walk with it on site. Sit on a bench. Or listen remotely, eyes closed. The following read-along combines the full transcript of the audiowalk with lightly interwoven passages from the Rose's 10th Anniversary Publication and original artist notes by Gordon Young.

Milton Keynes Rose Audiowalk – Read-Along Edition

Assembled and composed by Jakub Rokita, featuring voice work by Ralph Keats and excerpts of interviews conducted by Roger Kitchen of the Living Archive.

Conception

"Milton Keynes was never meant to be ordinary. Planned in the late 1960s, it was a city built for the future."

"It is a city that asks you to look again – to see not just roads and buildings, but a canvas of ideas."

Located right next to the bustling city centre, Campbell Park is an enclave of peace amidst the rhythm of urban life. Forward-thinking minds envisioned a monument that would not merely adorn the park, but actively invite reflection, celebration, and unity.

"As you walk, the structured lines of the city often reveal spaces where people gather, reflect, and create – spaces like the Milton Keynes Rose."

Standing here, one can sense the quiet persistence of change: a glimpse of the old, and a promise of the new. Where the past gently meets the present, this city's willingness to adapt has turned a modest feature into a shared place of meaning.

"The people wanted somewhere not just to serve one day a year. They wanted something that served them all year round – where they could meet, protest, celebrate, commemorate."

At the heart of every great city lies a shared space – a place where people come together, bound by their collective hopes, memories, and aspirations.

A Circle in the Park

Gordon Young, the artist behind the Rose, set out to create more than just a public artwork. His early sketches reveal a vision grounded in structure and symbolism – an intricate circle representing unity and oneness.

"Although individual parishes had spaces for remembrance, Milton Keynes as a city had none. The Armistice Day pillar became a turning point – a new focal point for civic gathering."

Even in early designs, the artist brought it closer to the human scale by adding a figure to show how people might interact with the space. A dome, a centre, a ring – the elements in those early sketches hinted at creating a sense of community bigger than any one individual.

"Joy and grief. Protest and play. This needed to be more than a memorial."

The design channels timeless principles found in ancient stone circles, sacred geometries, and natural cycles – and hints at hidden flows connecting us to a wider cosmos.

Calendar and Community

Used during the early design phase, the pianola roll allowed the artist and his team to map the year – and the possible pillar dates – onto one long, perforated strip. It became a visual aid and poetic gesture, capturing suggested dates that represented local highlights and global commemorations.

"Gordon brought a pianola roll – a long scroll with perforated dates – mapping local and international moments gathered from the community."

The pillars are inscribed with dates and short texts representing moments significant to Milton Keynes, British and global heritage. Solemn dates such as Armistice Day, playful traditions like the Olney Pancake Race, and significant civic dates like Windrush Day sit alongside cultural festivals and personal tributes.

"Some people stop. Some pass through. Some walk with purpose and suddenly pause. That's the dance of engagement."

More than a third remain blank, making room for future stories – so that generations yet to come can mark their own milestones.

The Rose Takes Shape

"April to November 2013 – the stones arrived. The ground was prepared. Each pillar hand-shaped and carefully aligned."

Through rain and sun, the construction team worked tirelessly to bring the vision to life. Every design concept – from gently domed to minimal – was tested against the human scale, considering how people might stand, gather, or pass through.

"By the time the final stone settled, the Rose had already taken root – not just in the ground, but in the city's story."

On 9 November 2013, the Rose was unveiled – its structure complete, ready to serve as a lasting public space.

At the Centre

Carved from a single, massive block of stone, the centrepiece gives the Milton Keynes Rose its heart – a calm anchor amid the encircling pillars.

"It is low by design – to be touched, approached, or stood upon. A quiet invitation to belong."

Inspired by floral geometries, it reveals gentle, petal-like curves in its final form, echoing the energies that guided the Rose's conception. This dome suggests stillness and unity – grounding all who visit.

"Some call it a belly button – a navel of the earth."

Use and Meaning

"In the early days, there were small gatherings. Modest ceremonies. Over time, the space found its rhythm – a steady beat of activity and meaning."

Each year, gatherings form around the pillars to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. Candles flicker at their base, while people stand together in silence, reflection, and remembrance. And on other days, laughter and colour fill the circle – skipping ropes, conversations, small celebrations.

"Some trace every inscription. Others linger without reason. And sometimes, someone pauses, says nothing, and keeps walking – but they've been changed."

The Rose adapts to every aspect of community life – from profound sorrow to the simplest, most joyful play.

"Nobody owns it – and that is its strength. It has become part of the city's cultural fabric."

Living Legacy

To mark ten years of the Rose, new stories, poems, interviews, and flags were gathered. MK Mandalas brought hand-painted silk banners to the space – fluttering colour into the circle. The Central Library hosted an extended exhibition. People kept coming. And the circle kept growing.

"We may name the columns – but it is future generations who will own them."

The Milton Keynes Rose is not a finished monument. It is a living space, evolving with its city – a place where stories are shared, history is honoured, and life in all its forms is celebrated.

Final Words

"My measure of time? I love things that are very old. I am interested in deep time – in artefacts made on these islands 18,000 years ago."

This place, once imagined on paper, now stands open to all. A calendar in stone. A sanctuary in the city. A Rose – still unfolding.



Final Note

This piece does not end. It continues with each visitor. Each moment held between the stones.

To explore more:

- [View and download the 10th Anniversary Publication](#)
- [Browse the original design archive](#)
- [View materials from the pop-up exhibition](#)