

The History of the Morongo Rose



Nineteen Ninety Five would have been the 75th Anniversary of the Morongo Girls' College, there were plans afoot to celebrate this special event with a beautiful rose to be designed with the name "Morongo". Morongo closed in the November of 1994, however, the 'Morongo' rose lived on. Since the school closure and the closure of the Old Collegians Association in 2015, a number of Morongo Old Collegians have worked toward finding a suitable long lasting outcome for the 'Morongo' rose. Two 'Morongo' roses were sourced and planted in 2019 at The Geelong College, Mossgiel Boarding House portico, directly in front of the Morongo Room.



Jan Buchholz, former President of Parents and Friends Association of Morongo (PFA) and Marlene Peden were able to contribute to the history and background of the 'Morongo' rose; their input was greatly appreciated. The PFA President Jan Buchholz and the PFA committee decided in 1990, after a suggestion by Jan that a rose would be an appropriate and lasting memento for Old Collegians and Friends of Morongo for the 75th year celebrations. The Association approached Bob and Marlene Peden of Otway Roses near Winchelsea and they were happy to propagate a special rose for the PFA with the name 'Morongo'.

Bob Peden kept in mind the enthusiastic young women of Morongo with their strength of purpose reflected in the development and design of the rose. The youth within Morongo Girls' College portrayed in the soft red colour of the rose. He commenced breeding the 'Morongo' rose in 1990, it is a rose in the famous David Austin tradition. The 'Morongo' rose inherits its health and robustness from the Alexander rose and its cupped petals from Angel Darling rose. The perfumed 'Morongo' rose has 25-30 wavy soft red petals, long stems and a deep green foliage. Its growing height is one to 1.2 metres, is easy to grow and the cut flowers can be enjoyed for a long period of time.

In 2016-2017 several Morongo Old Collegians (MOC) volunteered their time to assist the Archivist at The Geelong College to sort through the many boxes of Morongo memorabilia. At a meeting chaired by Naomi Miller, wife of the Headmaster Dr Peter Miller, it was indicated by MOC Amanda Moody (1980) (Schoonemann) that The Geelong College did not have a 'Morongo' rose. This set in motion the need to source the history of the rose and to find a Morongo Old Collegian who had a mature rose, who would happily donate the rose to The Geelong College. MOC Sandra Oriander (1957) (Stevens) remembered St David's Uniting Church, in Newtown had a 'Morongo' Rose. MOC Alison Lawson (1959) (Laird), also a Church Councillor and Halls' Manager at St David's Church, agreed their rose could be removed and replanted at The Geelong College. Prior to this the authenticity of the 'Morongo' rose needed to be confirmed. MOC Joy Rau (1952) (Strong) was able to confirm it was a 'Morongo' rose; MOC Alison Lawson, Andrew Lawson, MOC Jeanette Joseph (1958) (Dehnert) and Eden Joseph undertook the task of removing the rose from St David's church to start the process for the rose to be re-homed at The Geelong College.



MOC Di Jackman (1961 & 1962) (Ekstedt) offered her 'Morongo' rose, hence, two 'Morongo' roses were available to rehome at The Geelong College outside the Morongo Room at Mossgiel Boarding House. An Interpretive Panel was designed and installed adjacent to the 'Morongo' roses funded by The Geelong College Foundation, thus supporting those Morongo Old Collegians who worked hard to keep the 'Morongo' rose and its story alive for future youth to enjoy.

Special thanks to all involved in the history of the 'Morongo' rose and in keeping the rose alive; also Caroline Stok, Archivist and Sally Sadler, Advancement Coordinator who have supported the project since its inception.

MOC Jeanette Joseph (1958) (Dehnert) - former President of Morongo Collegians.

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