

## **The Heritage Rose Gardens, Stirling Square, Guildford WA**

*Val Shiell, Barbara Dundas, Billy West and Jan Eastman – Perth HRIA Region.*

Guildford, 12 km northeast of the Perth CBD, lies above the rich alluvial flood plains of the Swan and Helena Rivers. Dating back to 1829, it is one of the earliest towns established in Western Australia following European settlement.

Stirling Square is believed to be the oldest park in Australia, being on the original town site plan drawn up in 1829. The Guildford town plan was based on an English village with the site of Stirling Square designated as the Church Square and village green. 100 years later the Square became a formal landscaped park – site of the town War Memorial and other commemorative and memorial features, reflecting Guildford’s significant colonial and military history.

The landscaped park included beds of roses, wisteria-covered walks and a lily pond. The roses for these gardens were donated by local rose growers and members of the community. Rose beds were created in geometric shapes, each planted with roses of one colour. The mass planting of roses in Stirling Square and the popularity of the rose in local gardens resulted in Guildford being named ‘The Town of Roses’.

Prior to WWII there were 1,100 roses, of over 400 varieties, planted in Stirling Square. This was a time when rose growing was hugely popular in Western Australia. Nurserymen had unlocked the secret to growing healthy roses in Perth’s soil and climatic conditions through the use of **Fortuniana** rootstock and the National Rose Society of WA had a large and dynamic membership.

By 2006 almost nothing remained of those once-glorious rose gardens in the Square and the community of Guildford was asked to assist with the selection of roses for a formal rose bed planned by Wendy Seymour, then Landscape Architect of the City of Swan. The Guildford Association Inc. and the Perth Region of Heritage Roses in Australia Inc. worked with the local authority to source and plant the roses.

The importance of appropriate historic plantings had been identified as a requirement in the Conservation Plan for Stirling Square, prepared by the eminent garden historian Oline Richards in 1989. Her report stated that ‘new plant materials are to be historically consistent with the period of the 1830s up to and including the 1930s.’<sup>1</sup> (Oline was a member of HRIA). Perth Region has worked to maintain this requirement and support the conservation work with best practice.

Our partnership continued when, in 2013, Perth Region members approached the City of Swan with a proposal to create another rose garden in Stirling Square to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac.

This has resulted in two beautiful gardens of heritage roses: the 2006 Garden,

showcasing roses grown in the Guildford area up until the mid-1900s and the Anzac Commemorative Garden, a living memorial of roses growing in Guildford at the time of WWI. The Anzac Commemorative Garden complements the War Memorials within Stirling Square, as well as the only Garrison Church (St Matthew's Anglican) in WA, located within the Square. Together, the two gardens make a repository of healthy, hardy, long-lived roses with strong connections to the area.

Stirling Square is a National Trust classified park and is an integral part of Guildford, the only National Trust classified town in Perth's Metropolitan area. The name recognises Captain\* James Stirling, first Governor of Western Australia.



Photo: Billy West

*St Matthew's Church and Hall and the Anzac Bed in February 2018,  
three years after the first roses were planted there*

### **The 2006 Rose Garden**

The 2006 rose bed is situated in the southeastern corner of Stirling Square. This is a rectangular garden intersected by paved paths that divide it into quadrants with a circular central bed. The formality of the beds has been continued in the planting, through repetition and symmetry in the placements. Each of the four beds has a large standard **Crépuscule** and these have been marvelous. Generous and compact decorative varieties **Mlle Cécile Brunner**, **Perle d'Or**, **Gruss an Aachen** and Alister Clark's **Borderer** were selected to be repeated as border roses and other Teas, Hybrid Teas, Polyanthas and Floribundas were placed according to size and colour. The central bed was planted with three **Tea roses: Lady Hillingdon, Marie Van Houtte and Général Gallieni.**

\* In 1862, many years after his Governorship of WA (1829 – 1838), Stirling was promoted to Admiral. *Editor.*

The roses we chose were strong and healthy varieties still thriving in older Guildford gardens or known to have been growing there in the past. In selecting these varieties, we felt confident that they were well suited to local conditions and could be expected to go from strength to strength for many years.

After planting, the City of Swan assumed the care of this garden.

A decade on, there was a need to review the plantings. Several roses had grown too large for their positions and there had been losses, due to failures in the watering system. This has given Perth Region the opportunity to add varieties that were unavailable when the garden was first planted.

### **Roses planted in the 2006 Garden in 2006 and 2020**

*The columns don't delineate the 2006 and 2020 plantings.*

- |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Crépuscule</b> – apricot blend Noisette, 1904                                     | <b>Mrs Herbert Stevens</b> – white Hybrid Tea, 1910                                                                                             |
| <b>Anna Olivier</b> – apricot-pink blend Tea, 1872                                   | <b>Mrs Oakley Fisher</b> – apricot-yellow blend Hybrid Tea, 1921                                                                                |
| <b>Comtesse de Labarthe</b> (aka <b>Duchesse de Brabant</b> ) – light pink Tea, 1857 | <b>“Old Cream”</b> – pre-1920 cream Hybrid Tea found widely in Guildford                                                                        |
| <b>Étoile de Lyon</b> – med. yellow Tea, 1881                                        | <b>Peace</b> – yellow blend Hybrid Tea, 1945                                                                                                    |
| <b>Général Galliéni</b> – red blend Tea, 1899                                        | <b>Shot Silk</b> – pink blend Hybrid Tea, 1924                                                                                                  |
| <b>Hugo Roller</b> – yellow blend Tea, 1907                                          | <b>Signora</b> – orange blend Hybrid Tea, 1936                                                                                                  |
| <b>Lady Hillingdon</b> – yellow blend Tea, 1910                                      | <b>Sunlit</b> – apricot blend Hybrid Tea, 1937                                                                                                  |
| <b>Marie Van Houtte</b> – pink blend Tea, 1871                                       | <b>Borderer</b> – pink blend Polyantha, 1918                                                                                                    |
| <b>Betty</b> – pink blend Hybrid Tea, 1905                                           | <b>Mlle Cécile Brünner</b> – light pink Polyantha, 1880                                                                                         |
| <b>Crimson Glory</b> – dark red Hybrid Tea, 1935                                     | <b>Perle d’Or</b> – apricot-pink Polyantha, 1875                                                                                                |
| <b>Golden Ophelia</b> – med. yellow Hybrid Tea, 1918                                 | <b>Gruss an Aachen</b> – light pink-apricot Floribunda, 1909                                                                                    |
| <b>Hector Deane</b> – red blend Hybrid Tea, 1938                                     | <b>Permanent Wave</b> – med. red Floribunda, 1932                                                                                               |
| <b>Hugo Roller</b> – yellow blend Tea, 1907                                          |                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Lord Charlemont</b> – dark red Hybrid Tea, 1922                                   | “Francis Dubreuil – in commerce as” – dark red rose ( <i>originated from the Europa-Rosarium, Sangerhausen in the late 1970s, early 1980s</i> ) |
| <b>Michèle Meilland</b> – light pink Hybrid Tea, 1945                                |                                                                                                                                                 |



*City of Swan gardeners planting the 2006 bed on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2006  
The roses sourced were known to be growing in Guildford gardens.*

*Photos: Barbara Dundas*



*The 2006 bed in glorious bloom on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2020  
Weeping Standard *Crépuscule* and the Polyanthas *Perle d'Or*, *Mlle Cécile*  
*Brünner* and other roses in front. In centre, the Teas – *Lady Hillingdon*,  
*Général Gallieni* and *Marie Van Houtte*, surrounded by the Polyantha *Borderer*.*

## **The Anzac Rose Beds**

In 2013, with the Centenary of Anzac approaching, we met City of Swan officials with a proposal that four badly degraded rose beds in Stirling Square be restored, to become a living memorial to honour the men and women who had left Guildford to serve in WW1. We successfully applied for a grant through the Anzac Centenary Grants Program to research, source, and propagate 100 Heritage Roses. Our objective was a garden of 100 healthy, garden-worthy roses bred prior to 1920: 100 roses to symbolise the 100 years that had passed since the war.

The City of Swan took responsibility for the preparation of the beds – removing old footings, replacing old soil, constructing borders, installing reticulation and strengthening the pergolas. We began the search for plants or propagating material of roses fitting our criteria. A few were still available from nurseries or members but most had not been seen on nursery catalogues for 60 years or more.

It was an heroic quest, aided by many rose lovers near and far, but we succeeded! At a ceremony just before Anzac Day in 2015, representatives of the Australian Federal Government, the City of Swan and the RSL planted the first roses in the Anzac Garden beds.

A year after the first roses had been planted, the second batch of shrub roses were added, bringing the total to almost 100 and as the last few roses came to light we were able to reach our goal, with roses in hand in case of losses.

The Anzac Rose Garden is located in the northeastern section of Stirling Square and consists of four long, rectangular beds in two pairs, separated by pergolas and a walkway. The pergolas have been planted with generous Climbing Teas and Noisettes, while the shrub roses – a selection of China and Tea roses, Polyanthas and early Hybrid Teas – create a tapestry of colour and form in the beds.

Some of the loveliest of these are varieties that are found in numerous old gardens in Guildford and are yet to be positively identified. Among these are “Old Cream”, a magnificent Hybrid Tea that tantalises us with its similarities to **Mrs Harold Brocklebank**, “Red Ethel”, a deep crimson, divinely fragrant Hybrid Tea collected from a pre-1920 garden in Ethel Street Guildford, and the rose with a myriad of study names including “Barbara Dundas’ Rose”, “BP Bridgetown” and “Kew Cemetery Pink”, thought to be **Lady Ursula**.

Sharp-eyed readers may be puzzled to see Victorian and NSW founding roses like “Camnethan Cherry Red” and the Bishop’s Lodge roses “Linton Boy” and “Precious Porcelain” on the Anzac Bed plan. These varieties have been included as substitutes for semi-double and single roses like the original **Princesse de Sagan** and ‘Irish Single’ roses popular during the early 1900s but unobtainable today.

**The handing over of the Anzac Centenary Grant cheque and the turning of the first sod on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

Photo: Constance Paul



**L. to R. Back row:**  
Senator Michael Ronaldson Minister for Veteran Affairs;  
Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP;  
Councillor Charlie Zannino Mayor City of Swan;  
Michael Foley CEO City of Swan

**Front row:**  
Perth HRIA members – Val Shiehl, Barbara Dundas and Billy West



**Two of the roses in the Anzac beds**

**L.:** “Old Cream” a magnificent Hybrid Tea seen in many Guildford gardens

**R.:** Mrs Bryce Allan

Photos: Billy West



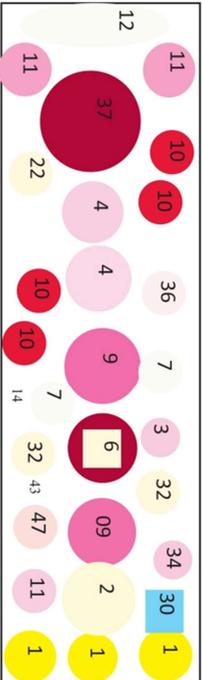
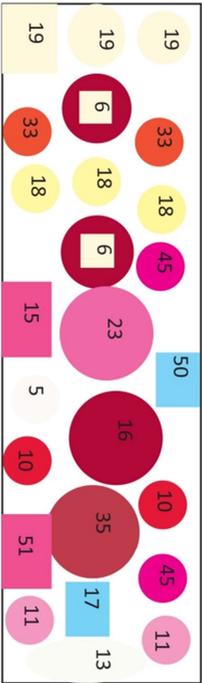
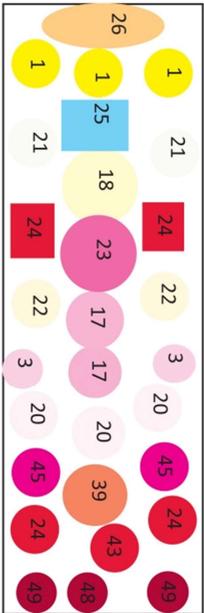
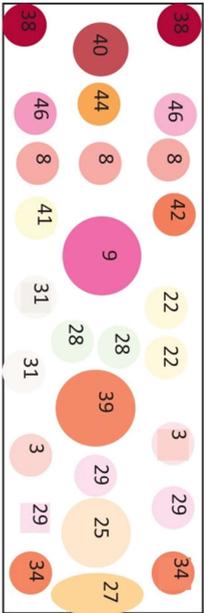
**Planting the First Anzac Roses on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2015**

**L. to R.:**  
Councillor Charlie Zannino Mayor City of Swan;  
Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP;  
Fred Ordynski Sec. Eastern Region RSL;  
Ashley Vince President Eastern Region RSL;  
Councillor Mick Wainwright Deputy Mayor, and Eastern Region RSL



Photo: Billy West

ANZAC Beds, Stirling Square June 2019



- |                                         |                            |                                         |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Golden Ophelia                       | 18. Lady Hillingdon        | 35. General Schablikline                |
| 2. Peace [1902]                         | 19. Mrs Harold Brocklebank | 36. Maman Cochet                        |
| 3. Mlle Cecile Brunner                  | 20. Gruss an Aachen        | 37. Professeur Ganiviat                 |
| 4. Comtesse de Labarthe                 | 21. Marie Lambert          | 38. Cramoisi Supérieur                  |
| 5. Ophelia                              | 22. "Old Cream"            | 39. Leonie Lamesch                      |
| 6. Hugo Roller                          | 23. Mrs B.R. Cant          | 40. Archduke Charles                    |
| 7. Mrs Herbert Stevens (shrub form)     | 24. Gruss an Teplitz       | 41. "Bishop's Lodge Precious Porcelain" |
| 8. Mme Jules Thibaud                    | 25. Anna Olivier           | 42. Irish Fireflame                     |
| 9. Mrs Bryce Allen                      | 26. Reve d'Or              | 43. "Bishop's Lodge Linton Boy"         |
| 10. "Red Ethel"                         | 27. Crepuscule             | 44. Constance                           |
| 11. Old Blush                           | 28. Molly Sharmam Crawford | 45. Red Radiance                        |
| 12. Lamarque                            | 29. Lady Ursula            | 46. Mrs Henry Morse                     |
| 13. Mrs Herbert Stevens (climbing form) | 30. Catherine Mermet       | 47. Madame Butterfly                    |
| 14. G. Nabonnand                        | 31. Antoine Rivoire        | 48. "Prospect Hill China"               |
| 15. Radance                             | 32. Mrs H.R. Darlington    | 49. Slater's Crimson China              |
| 16. "Carmethan Cherry Red"              | 33. Comtesse du Cayla      | 50. Mrs A.R. Waddell                    |
| 17. Mme Abel Chatenay                   | 34. Mme Berkeley           | 51. Etolie de Lyon                      |

*Photo: Billy West*



*A working bee in April 2016, showing the City of Swan gardeners and Perth Region members working together in the Anzac garden.*

*Photo: Barbara Dundas*



*The Anzac bed in April 2022: On the arbour – Lamarque (Noisette, 1830). Roses in garden bed include **Old Blush**, **Professeur Ganiviat** and “Red Ethel”.*

The City of Swan provided labour, soil, and materials for both the 2006 Garden and the Anzac Garden and is responsible for the cost of on-going care.

Finance for the sourcing of roses is comprised of funds from the grant we received from the Centenary of Anzac Local Grants through the electorate of Hasluck WA, and a David Ruston OAM Heritage Rose Conservation Grant from HRIA. The City of Swan has provided in-kind support and paid for some replacement of roses, as has the Perth Region and its members.

The Perth Region has maintained a small Stirling Square working party to meet regularly with City of Swan gardeners to work on the beds. This year we have had workshops with staff, talking about the value of the heritage roses in Stirling Square and also giving demonstrations on pruning and taking cuttings.

The most essential requirement for roses during their early years, as they establish a good root system, is reliable watering during the hot months. This has proven to be the most challenging aspect of garden management. In 2021 we noticed problems with some of the bushes and Dr Peter Keating from **Bioscience WA** examined the roses affected and concluded that there was no evidence of herbicide damage or chilli thrips but that the issues impacting on the health of the roses were poor soil nutrition and lack of water.

Perth Region members and the City of Swan Horticulture Team worked together to rake out the mulch from around the roses bushes and apply **Lupin Mulch** and **Seasol** to assist recovery. It has taken some time to know the extent of the losses. To date we have had to remove 10 of the roses in the northeast Anzac Bed.

With the appointment of a new reticulation contractor the watering programme has improved and, with hand watering by staff during extremely hot weather, the roses are responding well. We have replaced some of those lost, using roses from members, and will bud others in the New Year.

Further discussions have ensued about the City of Swan employing or contracting a gardener with knowledge of heritage roses to work two days a week in Stirling Square. Perth Region will be participants in that selection process with the Parks Supervisor.

The Perth Region HRIA members will continue to be present in the Square to assist the Horticultural Team and monitor the progress of this important and valuable heritage rose garden.

1. Oline Richards, *Conservation Study, Stirling Square, Guildford, Western Australia: Prepared for the Shire of Swan and the State Planning Commission, March 1989* (Como, WA: O Richards, 1989), p. 38.

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Stirling Square was also the subject of an article in a previous edition of this journal: Lea Newing and Val Shiell, 'One Hundred Roses for One Hundred Years', (2016 38(3) Spring) *The Journal of Heritage Roses in Australia*, pp. 44-51. *Editor*.