

DELMA MATTHEWS

The establishment of the Morwell Centenary Rose Garden has provided some notable and dedicated personalities to the Rose fraternity.

Among these is Delma Matthews who, from the beginning of her association with the garden and the Society has given outstanding commitment, willingly volunteering her time to the operation of the garden and promotion of the Rose. In so doing, she has taken the time to study many aspects of Genus Rosa its propagation and management, particularly for presentation in public venues, this is evidenced by the on going display and her meticulous attention to the accurate identification cataloguing and labelling of all species and cultivars within the Morwell garden. This knowledge has earned her a well deserved reputation throughout the district where her advice is often sought on such matters and freely given. Accordingly, she has become a worthy ambassador for the Society within Gippsland.

Prior to her association with the Morwell garden she, along with husband John were well known in the Latrobe area for their delightful gardens at their home in Morwell and beach house at Inverloch. They had also developed expertise in the propagation and cultivation of cymbidium orchids and begonias grown and proudly displayed in their garden hot house.

Delma was the appointed Secretary of the Rose Garden Steering Committee at the inaugural meeting in 1991 and has remained a member of the Committee of Management continuously since that time. Over that twenty year period she has served in every administrative capacity including that of current Chairperson, often assuming the duties and responsibility for multiple portfolios at one time.

The position of Secretary of a newly formed community based voluntary organisation, determined to establish a rose garden in a hitherto little known district was hardly an enviable one. Whilst Delma joined others out on site with shovel and rake to establish the Morwell garden, she also assumed the gardens administrative responsibilities establishing, formalising and maintaining follow up relationships with supporters, canvassing donations of materials and contributions from individuals, companies, rose nurseries, service clubs and all of those organizations whose generous support has enabled the creation of a garden which was then only a dream of a community, into a reality.

Throughout the formative years of the Morwell Centenary Rose Garden Friends Group and with encouragement from the then Rose Society of Victoria President Barry Johnson and long serving member Max Marriner, Delma maintained a close liaison role with the Society. This association fostered the recruitment of many members from the Latrobe district, who perhaps now can now be considered as the Gippsland chapter. Here those district members not only enjoy the benefits of the society but also attend functions and events and regularly exhibit at the annual Society Rose Shows. She is also actively involved in the organization and staging of the annual Latrobe and Garden Show and upon request speaks to district organizations, clubs etc, promoting the garden and encouraging the use of the Rose in garden landscaping. On behalf of the Morwell Friends Group she has assumed a leading role in forging friendly and cooperative links with The Heritage Rose Society, the State Rose Garden at Werribee and Mornington Botanical Rose Garden.

Delma has achieved much in promoting the Society throughout the Gippsland region. However her association has now broadened toward further horizons with attendance at the Adelaide and China conventions at which no doubt she has become a worthy representative of our fraternity.

Bernard Tuohy

Former Chairman

Morwell Centenary Rose Garden