# Devon community’s handmade flower meadow honours 1,840 young lives lost to suicide in 2023



A vibrant meadow composed of over 1,800 handmade flowers was recently unveiled at the Devon County Show, captivating attendees with its poignant message and stunning visuals. This installation, crafted by residents of Dowland near Winkleigh, serves not only as a remarkable artistic display but also as a somber tribute to the lives lost to suicide among young people in England and Wales in 2023. Each flower—made from paper, fabric, and wool—symbolises one of the 1,840 young individuals who tragically took their own life this year.

The meadow’s journey began as a local initiative in Dowland, which soon attracted media attention and led to an invitation for display at the high-profile Devon County Show held at Westpoint, Exeter. While the artistic prowess of the community shines through in this installation, its deeper intent is to promote awareness for the suicide prevention charity PAPYRUS, dedicated to supporting young individuals facing mental health struggles.

Claire Devany, one of the event's organisers, passionately shared, “The mental health of young people has never been more important. As a rural community, we felt strongly that we could encourage people to talk about their mental health and create awareness of the charity.” The initiative brought together around a dozen core volunteers, with four dedicated participants attending the show daily, but its expansive reach was made possible through the collective efforts of the local community in creating the flowers.

Beyond the immediate display, the event fostered significant dialogue around mental health. Visitors included representatives from young farmers clubs, NHS staff, and general practitioners, many of whom opened up about their own experiences, emphasising the critical importance of the work done by PAPYRUS. Sue Dunn, another organiser, highlighted the pride the community felt in coming together for this essential cause, saying, “We are incredibly lucky to have a great team in the village of Dowland and this is just one of many projects we have achieved. We will continue to support various charities in the future by having new ideas and working as a team.”

Interestingly, the themes of community involvement and mental health awareness resonate with previous initiatives in the region. In July 2024, St Peter’s Church in Dowland featured a similar installation titled 'Meadowland', showcasing over 7,000 handmade flowers created with materials including wool, paper, wood, fabric, and metal. This event specifically aimed to promote awareness for mental health while supporting charities like MIND and PAPYRUS. Inside the church, a willow sculpture of a child surrounded by flowers paid tribute to young lives lost in 2022. The exhibition not only aimed to educate but also offered free activities for children, reinforcing the community’s commitment to nurturing its youngest members’ mental wellbeing.

The interplay between art and community action highlights a growing movement towards addressing mental health issues within rural settings. There is a notable emphasis on the therapeutic benefits of engaging with nature, often depicted through art in the form of flower displays. Critics have pointed out that as mental health issues soar, particularly among youth, initiatives like these are critical in combating stigma and creating environments conducive to open discussion.

In the context of ongoing efforts to support mental health, the upcoming Devon County Show is set to feature Pete's Dragons, a charity devoted to supporting those affected by suicide, as the charity of the year for 2025. This partnership aims to foster a sense of community among attendees, particularly within the farming sector, known for its unique mental health challenges.

As organisations and communities continue to come together through creative and impactful initiatives, the hope remains that awareness and support for mental health can change lives, underscoring the adage that every flower, like every life, carries its own significant story.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/devon-meadow-handmade-flowers-carries-10222725)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/devon-meadow-handmade-flowers-carries-10222725), [[2]](https://exeter.anglican.org/handmade-wildflower-meadow-at-devon-church-highlights-mental-health-and-wellbeing/), [[3]](https://www.tavistock-today.co.uk/news/churchs-handmade-wildflower-meadow-flags-up-childrens-mental-health-704266)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://exeter.anglican.org/handmade-wildflower-meadow-at-devon-church-highlights-mental-health-and-wellbeing/), [[3]](https://www.tavistock-today.co.uk/news/churchs-handmade-wildflower-meadow-flags-up-childrens-mental-health-704266), [[6]](https://www.southhams-today.co.uk/news/mental-health-charity-named-as-devon-county-show-beneficiary-785747)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/devon-meadow-handmade-flowers-carries-10222725> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://exeter.anglican.org/handmade-wildflower-meadow-at-devon-church-highlights-mental-health-and-wellbeing/> - In July 2024, St Peter’s Church in Dowland, Devon, showcased a vibrant display of over 7,000 handmade flowers crafted by community members using materials like wool, paper, wood, fabric, and metal. This installation, titled 'Meadowland', aimed to raise awareness for mental health and support charities MIND and PAPYRUS. Inside the church, a willow sculpture of a child was surrounded by 197 flowers, each representing a young person aged 10-19 who took their own life in 2022 in England and Wales. The exhibition was open every Saturday and Sunday throughout July, offering free entry and homemade refreshments. Donations were welcomed to support the mental health charities and the church's 'Peter’s Patch' children's group, which provides free activities for children, including cooking, crafting, and environmental education. The organisers hoped that 'Meadowland' would help remove the stigma surrounding mental health issues and encourage people to seek help when faced with various challenges. The natural world, known to have a positive effect on mental wellbeing, inspired the wildflower-like display. The organisers believed that protection, guidance, and kindness shown to the younger generation in an ever-changing and challenging world are vital. For those seeking help and support, contact details for MIND, the Samaritans, and PAPYRUS Hopeline were provided.
3. <https://www.tavistock-today.co.uk/news/churchs-handmade-wildflower-meadow-flags-up-childrens-mental-health-704266> - In July 2024, St Peter’s Church in Dowland, near Winkleigh, Devon, unveiled a colourful display of over 7,000 handmade flowers crafted by community members using materials such as wool, paper, wood, fabric, and metal. The 'Meadowland' installation aimed to raise awareness for mental health and support charities MIND and PAPYRUS. Inside the church, a willow sculpture of a child was surrounded by 197 flowers, each representing a young person aged 10-19 who took their own life in 2022 in England and Wales. The exhibition was open every Saturday and Sunday throughout July, offering free entry and homemade refreshments. Donations were welcomed to support the mental health charities and the church's 'Peter’s Patch' children's group, which provides free activities for children, including cooking, crafting, and environmental education. The organisers hoped that 'Meadowland' would help remove the stigma surrounding mental health issues and encourage people to seek help when faced with various challenges. The natural world, known to have a positive effect on mental wellbeing, inspired the wildflower-like display. The organisers believed that protection, guidance, and kindness shown to the younger generation in an ever-changing and challenging world are vital. For those seeking help and support, contact details for MIND, the Samaritans, and PAPYRUS Hopeline were provided.
4. <https://devoncountyshow.co.uk/traders-list/> - The Devon County Show's Crafts & Horticulture section features a variety of traders, including CDS Plants, which offers wild orchid displays and Japanese-themed gardens. Other participants include Coach House Cacti, Cornish Beachhutcrafts, Devon Federation of Women’s Institutes, Handmade by Holly, Hannah Wisdom Textiles, Hip & Waisted, Katie House Portrait Artist, and Kyms Crafty Hut. Each trader provides unique products and experiences, contributing to the diverse offerings of the show.
5. <https://www.theexeterdaily.co.uk/news/local-news/devon-county-show-2017-remembers-help-needed> - In 2017, the Devon County Show's Craft and Garden Marquee planned to create a carpet of handmade poppies as a tribute to the 11,000 Devon men and women who lost their lives in the First World War. The public was invited to contribute handcrafted poppies made from various materials, excluding paper. Contributions were to be sent to Hayne House, Silverton, Exeter EX5 4HE, where they would be stored prior to being displayed at the show in May 2017. The initiative aimed to honour the fallen and engage the community in remembrance.
6. <https://www.southhams-today.co.uk/news/mental-health-charity-named-as-devon-county-show-beneficiary-785747> - In April 2025, Pete's Dragons, a mental health charity dedicated to providing support to those affected by suicide, was named as the Devon County Show's charity of the year for 2025. Founded a decade ago by Alison Jordan following the suicide of her younger brother Pete, the charity has grown significantly and now boasts a team of fully trained suicide bereavement specialists across Devon. The Devon County Show, taking place from 15th to 17th May 2025, planned to feature a pop-up boutique showcasing a mobile version of Pete's Dragons' Exmouth retail space, along with a fundraising raffle with an electric bike as the top prize. The collaboration aimed to support the farming community, which faces unique mental health challenges, by fostering a welcoming and social environment at the show.
7. <https://www.tavistock-today.co.uk/news/you-can-make-a-poppy-for-special-devon-county-show-tribute-to-the-fallen-of-first-world-war-416127> - In November 2016, an appeal was made to the public to 'Make a Poppy' and contribute to a First World War memorial at the Devon County Show. The tribute aimed to honour the 11,000 Devon men and women who lost their lives in the Great War by creating a carpet of red handcrafted poppies. The public was invited to make poppies using various materials, excluding paper, and send them to Hayne House, Silverton, Exeter EX5 4HE, where they would be stored prior to being displayed at the show in May 2017. The initiative sought to engage the community in remembrance and pay tribute to the fallen.