HospiceMatters

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 NEWS AND STORIES FROM ROWCROFT HOSPICE



INSIDE

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

ROWCROFT IN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Care that means everything

rowcrofthospice.org.uk

rowcroft hospice

Registered Charity No: 282723

Welcome

Welcome to the autumn/winter edition of *Hospice Matters* magazine, proudly sharing news and stories from Rowcroft Hospice.



At Rowcroft, everything we do is rooted in love, compassion and the deep belief that everyone deserves the very best care. We're proud to be at the forefront of innovation – embracing new technologies to find ever better ways to support our patients and families through the most difficult of times.

For example, we're currently trialling AI to help with clinical documentation – so that our nurses and care teams are freed up to spend more precious time with the patients who need them. We're also using technology to develop more inclusive ways of gathering feedback – ensuring that people with learning disabilities or dementia can share their experiences and help shape our care.

> *"None of our pioneering work would be possible without you. It's your kindness, generosity and belief in our teams that enable us to keep caring in innovative ways."*

From the bottom of my heart – thank you. You're helping to make a difference, every single day.

With deepest thanks,

Vicky Bartlett
Director of Patient Care

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Keep in touch

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Care that means *everything*

Jill Cross from Newton Abbot has experienced Rowcroft's care not once, but twice – first for her beloved dad, and later for her mum. In both cases, Rowcroft was there with specialist care and kindness that meant the world.

"When I brought Dad into the hospice, the staff gently asked if there were any family issues they should know about," says Jill. "I explained that my sister hadn't spoken to Mum or Dad in over two decades." Despite Jill's efforts over the years, her sister had remained estranged.

With time ticking away and with gentle encouragement from the Rowcroft team, Jill asked her father if he'd like to see his daughter one last time. He said yes – and miraculously, she came.

> *"They talked, reconciled, and made peace... it was perfect. If he'd passed without that moment, it would have haunted me forever."*

▼ Jill's mum and dad, Brian and Barbara



A few years later, the team cared for Jill's mum, too, in her own home. The support was professional and deeply compassionate, with little gestures that meant so much.

"My mum was shutting down, but in the gentlest way." Jill recalls. "I'd spent weeks doing her hair, keeping her looking lovely. And when I hadn't done it in those final days, one of the nurses said, 'Don't worry, Jill, I'll do it.' That meant everything to me.

"I don't think I could have coped without them."

You can support families like Jill's by sponsoring a nurse. Your monthly donation will enable the hospice to continue delivering vital care for patients and their loved ones across South Devon. Visit: rowcrofthospice.org.uk/nurse

How you can help:

give · support · shop · volunteer · pledge · get involved

Hospice news

News in brief from around Rowcroft

Torbay Business Awards

We're over the moon to have won three awards at the Torbay Weekly Naturally Inspiring Business Awards 2025:



- Innovation Award – for our sponsored student nurse bursary programme with Plymouth and Exeter Universities
- James Wright Award for Inspirational Leadership – celebrating our CEO, Mark Hawkins, for his exceptional leadership and dedication
- Overall Business of the Year – picked from all category winners on the night.

Honouring Rosemary – our award-winning volunteer

Rosemary Minshall, one of our longest-serving volunteers, has been awarded the prestigious 'Order of Mercy' Award from the League of Mercy Foundation. This national honour recognises people who have demonstrated exceptional voluntary service in the field of care. Rosemary has supported Rowcroft for an incredible 30 years – as a long-standing member of the Dartmouth Friends of Rowcroft fundraising group and her heartfelt work as a Bereavement Support Volunteer.
Her compassion and commitment are simply inspirational, and we're so grateful for her support.



Businesses with heart

We're excited to announce a new fundraising initiative to help local businesses support hospice care:

Dine & Donate – inviting restaurants, cafés and pubs to offer customers the chance to add a small, optional donation to their bill. A small act of kindness with a big impact. If you know a business that might like to get involved with Dine & Donate or other fundraising challenges, we'd love to hear from them.



Strictly Rowcroft success

Strictly Rowcroft 2025 lit up the Princess Theatre in May with an unforgettable evening of sparkle, community spirit and generosity – raising a dazzling £180,000 for the hospice. Huge congratulations to Barry Young, Managing Director of Brixham Trawler Agents, and his experienced dance partner Alexandra Jay, who danced their way to victory as Strictly Rowcroft Champions, and to dancer Robbie Savage for raising an unbelievable £88,000 for the hospice and winning a special fundraising award. Thank you to everyone who danced, voted, donated, sponsored, supported or cheered!

Rowcroft in the national spotlight

As the country debated the Assisted Dying Bill earlier this summer, Rowcroft was proud to fly the flag for UK hospices in a series of high-profile features – including on BBC News, BBC Radio 4, and the BBC website. These reports showcased the extraordinary impact of hospice care and the dedication of our teams.

Rowcroft does not take a position either for or against assisted dying – recognising the diverse views held by our patients, families, staff, volunteers, and supporters. Whatever Parliament decides, it's vital that people are not forced to consider assisted dying due to a lack of adequate care provision. We continue to campaign for fairer funding for hospices to ensure that everyone has access to high quality palliative and end-of-life care.





Jim's story

Living life to the full

For Jim Lewis-Clarke from Kingsteignton, life was all about his family, his dogs, his home, and the wild beauty of Dartmoor and the sea. A retired police officer, Jim continued to live fully even after being diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer in 2017.

Between rounds of chemotherapy, Jim walked the South West Coast Path, played golf, went kayaking and spent quality time with his wife Michelle, daughter Emily, son Josh, and their wider circle of friends and loved ones. But in spring 2024, as his condition worsened, he was referred to Rowcroft.

"We had the most incredible support from Rowcroft's Community Team," said Michelle. "Our palliative care nurse, Tracey, was our saviour."

When Jim's pain became too much to manage at home, Rowcroft welcomed him into the Inpatient Unit.

"From the moment we walked through the doors, Jim said, 'I'm in the right place,'" said Michelle. "Jim was in the hospice for five weeks, and throughout that time I didn't leave his side. Initially, I slept in a chair, but then they wheeled in a bed for me."

Eventually, Jim expressed a wish to go back home.

"We didn't think it would be possible – but Rowcroft made it happen," said Emily. "They arranged everything so quickly: the bed, the care team, the equipment."

Being at home gave Jim a new lease of life. He was eating again, laughing, even enjoying a glass of wine. In that time, the family made the most of every moment – trips to the beach, fish and chips, walks on the moor, and for Jim and Michelle even a ceremony to renew their wedding vows.

In January 2025, Jim experienced a major stroke and Rowcroft's Hospice at Home Team stepped in with round-the-clock care.

> *"He was at home, surrounded by love, and we had four more wonderful months together"*

"We called them the 'whispering angels'," said Michelle. "They treated him with such dignity and kindness."

Although it could have felt uncomfortable having strangers in their home at such a vulnerable time, Emily said: "They gave us a real sense of peace, as every single nurse was just so experienced... All Dad's friends were able to come and say their goodbyes. It was very special and enabled everyone to have a moment with Dad in their own way."

Jim passed away peacefully at home, holding the hands of the people he loved.

"We were all there," said Michelle. "It was exactly what he wanted, and Rowcroft made it possible. As a service to the local community, Rowcroft is a godsend."





Leave a legacy for the future

Leaving a gift to Rowcroft Hospice in your Will helps to support more people like Jim in the future. Through Rowcroft's Free Wills Service, you can now create a Will for free. Find out more at: www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/legacy or call 01803 217405.

News from Rowcroft's shops

Our two new shops in Torquay



We're excited to announce the opening of two more Rowcroft shops in Torquay, taking our total number of shops across South Devon to 17. While the Teignmouth Road furniture and lifestyle shop is relaunched, having taken a short break from trading to be used as a Rowcroft warehouse, the Torquay Harbour boutique is a brand new addition. It's packed with stylish preloved and new clothing, eye-catching accessories and gorgeous homeware treasures – all raising vital funds to support hospice care in our community.

Rowcroft's house clearance service

We're proud to launch our house clearance service, offering a professional, affordable and sensitive solution for those needing support with clearing a home in South Devon.

Whether you're dealing with a bereavement, downsizing, or just looking to declutter, our experienced and compassionate team is here to help. From your first enquiry to the final clearance, we'll be with you every step of the way – and every item that we sell in our shops helps to raise crucial funds for Rowcroft's care.

> "Robert and his team cleared my late mum's house in Dawlish. Very efficient, friendly and courteous and I would thoroughly recommend them. A totally brilliant and exemplary service."
>
> Customer from Bovey Tracey



To book your free home assessment or find out more, visit rowcrofthospice.org.uk/house-clearance or call us on 01803 557507 or 01803 416335.

Celebrating our volunteer stars: meet Sally

Since joining us in 2017, Sally Levy has been one of the friendly faces behind the counter at Rowcroft's Ella's Café Lounge and shop in Chelston, offering her time, warmth and a listening ear to customers. Encouraged by her friend to join Rowcroft's volunteer team, Sally saw it as a wonderful opportunity to give back to her community.



Sally's volunteer days are spent serving delicious treats in the café, keeping the shop tidy, welcoming customers and building meaningful connections with them. For Sally, the heart of volunteering lies in the people – hearing customers' moving stories and forming lasting friendships with fellow volunteers.

Reflecting on her experience, Sally shares:

> "Volunteering has given me so much. It's a really supportive environment – I genuinely feel appreciated as a volunteer. I've made some wonderful friends, and we often meet up for a cup of tea and a chat. It's a lovely feeling, knowing that you're giving something back to your community."

Want to join our team of volunteers?

Why not join Sally as part of Rowcroft's volunteer team? Find out more and explore current opportunities at: rowcrofthospice.org.uk/volunteers or call our Volunteering Coordinator, Clare Tanner on: 01803 210852.

Sarah shines a light for her dad

Each winter, Rowcroft's Light up a Life celebration offers a heartfelt way to remember and honour our loved ones who are no longer with us.



Sarah Barlow and her mum attended the service the Christmas after Sarah's dad, David Brindley, passed away in 2023.

"Everyone lit candles in remembrance; it was just beautiful," remembers Sarah. "We were able to chat to other people who had experienced something similar and who understood what we were going through; it made us feel less alone. It brought a feeling of real comfort and it helped us get through that first Christmas without Dad."



▲ Sarah (centre) with her son Jacob, husband Darren, and parents David and Carole.

Sarah's dad, who had been living with lymphoma, was cared for by Rowcroft's Community and Hospice at Home teams at his home in Dawlish.

"It meant so much to all of us that Dad was able to stay at home and be looked after," says Sarah. "I visited often, and we'd laugh, joke and spend meaningful time together. I don't think we could have had that same relaxed atmosphere anywhere else.

"Rowcroft were amazing when Dad passed away. At a time when everything felt surreal and overwhelming, they were so caring and helped us feel grounded."

"The Rowcroft team understood how vulnerable it can feel to be cared for, and I think that eased some of the anxiety for both Mum and Dad."

To dedicate a light on our 'Tree of Light' in memory of someone you love, visit: rowcrofthospice.org.uk/light – and join our Light up a Life celebration in the hospice grounds at 4pm on Sunday 30 November.



A dementia-friendly hospice

At Rowcroft, we're committed to giving the very best care to everyone we support – including people living with dementia, who often face a wide range of symptoms such as confusion, memory loss, sensory challenges, and difficulty expressing pain or emotions.

To enhance our support to people with dementia, Debby Hill, our Occupational Therapist, has taken on the new role of Clinical Lead for Dementia Care. She's beginning by reviewing our dementia care, exploring ways to improve the environment in our Inpatient Unit and meeting with patients and families to better understand their experiences. She'll also draw on best practice from other hospices, and in time, roll out in-depth dementia care training to staff across Rowcroft.

"As with all our care, supporting those with dementia is about understanding the individual and helping them feel safe, calm and cared for," says Debby. "Dementia can affect how people see and interpret the world around them. For example, changes in flooring colours between rooms can look like a step or barrier, leading to confusion or even falls. By using brighter, contrasting colours for walls and floors, we can help patients move around more confidently and safely. Signage and lighting are also being reviewed, as are noise levels – because background sounds can be distracting and overwhelming."



As always, we warmly welcome any ideas and feedback from patients and families.



ALL TOGETHER NOW

By Debbi Shotton, Rowcroft's Community Fundraiser

They say that two heads are better than one, so imagine what six, ten or twenty heads could achieve!

A huge part of community fundraising is about like-minded people putting their heads together for a joint purpose. People like these...

Men That Munch

A twist on Ladies who Lunch, this group of gentlemen from Chudleigh hold a coffee morning once a month in their local church. Since October 2023, they have raised **£11,179** – a total not to be scoffed at!



Acoustic Warehouse

It was music to our ears when this open mic group chose to start supporting us in 2012. Meeting once a month at The Passage House Inn in Newton Abbot, they charge £1 per entry and hold raffles in aid of Rowcroft. So far, they have donated **£10,824**.



Two Sisters Dance

This local dance school and their audiences have been supporting us since 2017, holding cake sales, raffles and collections at their shows. In those eight years, they have raised a wonderful **£12,567** – what a brilliant performance!



Theatre Excursions & Social Club Outings

T.E.S.C.O. for short! This group really puts the fun into fundraising! Raffles, crafts, car boot sales and sponsored walks – plus coach trips to London to take in the sights and a show. No opportunity to fundraise is ever missed, which is how, since 2011, they have raised over **£32,000**.





Team Puffin

This crew recently took to the seas for The Eddystone Charity Sailing Pursuit, raising funds for Rowcroft. The 26-mile sail from The Hoe to Plymouth Sound and back saw the team racing against over 40 other yachts in very choppy waters, bringing Puffin over the finish line in first place, raising a total of **£2,057**.

Teignmouth Sings

This wonderful community choir raise funds as well as their voices! They have supported us since 2018 and, including their most recent concert in July, they have raised over **£5,000**.



These groups make a huge difference to us, our patients and those closest to them. Not only through the amazing funds they raise, but through the positive messaging that fundraising is an enjoyable experience, creating connections, laughter, and a collective sense of achievement. How special is that?

Please do get in touch if you have an idea of your own:
01803 210833 or email debbi.shotton@rowcrofthospice.org.uk

GET INVOLVED!

Here's a round-up of exciting events and ways to support Rowcroft – pop these in your calendar and help us continue caring for local people when it matters most.

All year

ROWCROFT'S BIG BAKE
Whip up some treats and raise dough for Rowcroft! Whether it's a coffee morning, cake sale or full-on bake-off, every slice counts.

November

30 NOVEMBER LIGHT UP A LIFE
Dedicate a light on our beautiful Tree of Light in memory of someone special and join us for our moving Light up a Life celebration on Sunday 30 November at 4pm in the hospice grounds. It's a heartfelt way to remember loved ones.

December

RECYCLE YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE FOR ROWCROFT
Our Christmas Tree Collection Service is back! If you live in one of our participating South Devon postcodes, we'll collect and recycle your Christmas tree in return for a small donation to the hospice. Bookings open 1 December.



RUDOLPH RUN
Throughout December, children from primary schools across South Devon will be dashing in their antlers in our festive sponsored Rudolph Run – raising vital funds while having heaps of fun!

March

7 MARCH THE BIG TACKLE
Lace up your walking boots and join us for an epic eight-mile walk around Torquay. Then relax with a pint and a pasty while watching the Six Nations clash: England v Italy.



April

SPRING & SUMMER OPEN GARDENS
Our blooming lovely Open Gardens season returns! Enjoy a stroll through stunning South Devon gardens while supporting your local hospice. Fancy opening your own garden for Rowcroft? We'd love to hear from you!

12 APRIL PARIS MARATHON
Trade Devon hills for Paris thrills – take on this 26-mile run in the beautiful city of love, all for Rowcroft!

June/July

THE SLEEP WALK
Exciting news! Our beloved Sleep Walk event is back, inviting participants to walk five or ten miles through the night to raise crucial funds in support of the hospice. More details coming soon.



5 JULY MEADOW OF MEMORIES
Celebrate the lives of those we love and miss by dedicating a wildflower in our stunning Meadow of Memories. Visit rowcrofthospice.org.uk/meadow from April to make your dedication.

September

TORBAY HALF MARATHON & 10K
Go the extra mile to support your local hospice by taking on the half marathon or 10k for Rowcroft! More details coming soon.

3–13 SEPTEMBER
MOUNT KILIMANJARO TREK
Our amazing supporters are taking on the adventure of a lifetime by trekking up this 5,895-metre Tanzanian giant – Africa's highest peak.

To get involved or to find out more, contact our Fundraising Team today:
Tel: **01803 217450**
Email: **fundraising@rowcrofthospice.org.uk**



FOCUSED ON YOU



We are here for you to put plans in place for you and your next generation. From passing on your wishes and wealth to assisting your loved ones with theirs. Equally we're here for you when life doesn't go according to plan with relationship breakdowns and financial difficulties.

Kitson Boyce
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We are proud to support Rowcroft Hospice in their important end-of-life care on behalf of our community



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