

# Bat Case Study no. 1

## Holy Trinity of Tattershall

### DIOCESE OF LINCOLN



The Collegiate Church of Holy Trinity Tattershall is in active use by its congregation and extended community. The church is also home to almost 600 bats. The bats are used as a visitor attraction, and ways have been found to limit the damage they cause.

#### Location

This church dominates the flat landscape of fenland in east Lincolnshire. The church is in the village of Tattershall, near a medieval castle built by Ralph Cromwell. The castle moat, the surrounding open countryside and near-by lakes support a variety of insect life and good quality foraging habitat for bats.



#### The building and its use

The Holy Trinity of Tattershall is one of the finest examples of Perpendicular architecture in England. This Grade I listed building dates back to c 1500 and contains superb decorative carvings, brasses, delicate window tracery and a magnificent timber ceiling.

The church is used for weddings, funerals, baptisms and normal services. Additionally, the church is also used for flower festivals, harvest suppers, concerts and exhibitions, and there is a kitchen area for making teas and coffees. A visitor centre sells refreshments and gifts five days a week, from Easter to September. Talks are given to visiting groups about the history of the building. Pre-booked parties can order lunches. The church receives around 34,000 visitors a year, this being partly due to the proximity of the castle.



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#### Bats in the church

A large (500-600 bats) colony of Soprano pipistrelles uses the transepts and aisles of the church, up to 120 Daubenton's bats use the north porch in particular, and small number of Brown long-eared bats have been known to use a northwest corner of the nave. Natterer's bats, Common pipistrelles and Nathusius' pipistrelles have also been identified from their calls or droppings at this church. The bats have caused considerable damage in the church over the years, including urine staining on woodwork and grease staining on walls and over doors in places the bats use as entry and exit points.

Most of the female bats seem to use one area of the church as a maternity roost for a period of about six weeks every year. This creates a very large problem for cleaning due to the increased amount of droppings and as these are concentrated in a relatively small area, the resultant odour becomes very noticeable.

At the end of July and beginning of August the bats can be seen flying during the day, especially when the weather is hot, or if violin music is being played in the church. The estimated annual cost of cleaning the bat droppings is £600.

#### What has been done?

Due to the significant number of droppings left behind by the bats, especially during but not restricted to the



months of May to September when bats are more active, the church decided to remove the pews to save in cleaning costs. The Holy Trinity is one of the largest parish churches in the country, and fortunately services can be held in the chancel where bat access is restricted by a plastic screen. The six 15<sup>th</sup> century brasses in the north transept are protected by metal frames that hold in place a polythene covering. All other surfaces are covered by sheets at night to protect them from bat droppings and urine, and frequent cleaning and polishing of wooden surfaces is carried out. All surfaces that are used by the general public have to be cleaned with disinfectant and bleach, daily, from Easter to September. Curtains are laundered regularly.

The local bat group has been actively involved in monitoring the bats in the church and near-by castle since 1985, and has helped the church wardens to come up with solutions to minimise the damage caused by the bats. This close contact has helped the church cope with the bats and both parties benefit as the churchwardens also allow the church to be used by the bat group for training members for their Natural England Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor's (VBRV) licence. This has only been possible through a very close relationship being developed and built up with one or two local bat workers over a period of time.



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In 2007, the church put up two information boards near the entrance to the church to educate visitors about the bats. The *Nature Matters* board gives information about the species of bats present in the church, and leaflets are available to those who wish to learn more. Volunteers talk to visitors about the uninvited residents. Bat evenings have been organised every summer, teaching all ages about bats.

Due to the importance of Holy Trinity to the bats that are using it, in 2009 the church and Natural England considered the possibility of assigning it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Having such a label attached to the church could help the congregation to raise funds towards the cost of looking after the church and maintaining it in a bat friendly way whilst still allowing the church to be used as it currently is.



### What can we learn?

The lessons to be learned from the Holy Trinity of Tattershall are manifold. This church has learned not only to live with, but also make the most of, their resident bats. Having the bats in the church, and openly advertising this fact, has attracted visitors and generated interest among the wider community. Bat evenings have been a good way to educate people, bringing new visitors to the church. Close contact with the local bat group has provided the church with help and support, and together practical solutions have been devised and applied to limit the damage. By creating a 'bat-free zone' in the chancel, services can be held without being disturbed by the bats. Living with the bats has not been easy, but this church is happy to provide a safe haven for these fascinating creatures.



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## Contacts and more information

Church warden: David Mullenger

Incumbent: Revd Margaret Done (Tel: 01526 343 013)

Local bat group: Lincolnshire Bat Group [www.lincsbatgroup.co.uk](http://www.lincsbatgroup.co.uk) (E-mail: [info@lincsbatgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@lincsbatgroup.co.uk))

National Bat Helpline: [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk) (Tel: 0845 1300 228)

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