

Bats in its belfry cause British church to close

by [Al Webb](#) in the [September 6, 2011](#) issue

A beleaguered 11th-century church in England is losing its worshipers and has been forced to suspend services indefinitely because of bats in its belfry.

Bats are a protected species in Britain, and the Anglican St. Hilda's Church in Ellerburn, North Yorkshire, is trying—so far with no luck—to get a license to get rid of its share of them.

Churchwarden

Liz Cowley said the bats have taken up residence in the church's upper regions and are making a mess of the place. "The walls and floors are covered with bat droppings," Cowley told the BBC. "We have tried to keep the church clean, but we have lost the battle."

She added that "services have had to be canceled, and we cannot realistically open the church."

Ashley

Burgess, a member of the local parish church council, said the congregation has raised £10,000 (about U.S. \$16,000) to build new roosts for the bats away from the main building, but they remain stubbornly entrenched in the church's upstairs.

"The financial cost has been huge," Burgess added. "Nobody wants to sit in a bat-stained church, and our congregation has dwindled as a result." —RNS