

# ST MICHAEL'S PEREGRINES

## History of peregrines at St Michael's

*Peregrines were first recorded at the church in 1988, and have bred successfully each year since 1997, rearing 48 young. There have been a few changes of both male and female Peregrines since 1997. The current Peregrines in residence are known to have been present since 2005 (the male) and 2009 (the female).*

*St Michael's was the first church in the UK to be occupied by nesting peregrines following their near extinction and subsequent recovery from pesticides in the late 1950's. St Michael's Peregrines are also the most productive breeders in Devon with an average of 2.8 young reared each year. These birds are Devon's most famous and publicised Peregrine falcons, featuring regularly in the local press, regional TV and BBC Radio Devon.*

*In 1997, a pair of Peregrine falcons appeared in early April and took up residence in a stick nest previously constructed by Ravens on the east ledge of the tower, at the base of the spire. The Raven nest fell apart during essential works the following winter but was replaced with a shallow tray by Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society (DBWPS), now **Devon Birds**, our lead sponsors for the Peregrine Project.*

*The Peregrines took to the nest tray immediately and reared young there from 1998 and every subsequent year until 2008 when the falcons found an alternative nest site on the south face of the spire.*

*This new nest site was an internally mounted nest box, with its entrance through a stone trefoil window, which had been installed in 1990 by **Nick P Williams** for DBWPS, following the first arrival of Peregrines at the church. (This was in 1988, when a single male had been present through the latter stages of the year and was then joined by a female in 1989. Hopes were high that they would use this nest box but it was not found and the falcons left).*

*From 1990, other single Peregrines of different ages were occasionally seen at the Church but didn't stay, until the nesting pair arrived in 1997.*

*With successful nesting on the tray on the east ledge, a nest camera was installed by Luke Sanger of **Eco-Watch** in 2001, allowing world-wide viewing, via the **Eco-Watch** website, of egg laying, incubation and development of the young until they fledged each year.*

*The Eco-Watch camera sadly became redundant in 2008 when the birds left the tray on the east ledge, possibly due to the extensive building development on Mount Dinham. However, the nesting pair finally found the original nest box installed behind the Trefoil window within the Spire on the south side, which has been used from 2008 to date, with young reared each year.*

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*The St. Michael's Peregrines are Devon's most famous and publicised Peregrine falcons, due to the Eco-watch webcam in operation between 2001 and 2007. The RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and Exeter City Council undertook public watches from nearby car parks, and images from the camera were streamed live to the Royal Albert Museum in the city centre during this period.*

