

# Whitby Dracula gathering smashes vampire fancy dress world record

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Image caption: The event was organised to mark 125 years since Bram Stoker's Dracula's was published in 1897

## A new world record has been set for the largest gathering of people dressed as vampires.

A total of 1,369 people attended Whitby Abbey in North Yorkshire dressed as the ghoulish character, breaking the previous record of 1,039 set in 2011.

The event was organised by the English Heritage as part of a year of special events in honour of Bram Stoker's novel Dracula. The event was used to celebrate 125 years since the book was first published in 1897. The first print run consisted of 3,000 copies, an ambitious number for the time, the novel received rather mixed reviews - despite the support and acclaim of Stoker's friend, Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle. But the novel has since been translated into 44 languages and sold millions of copies around the world and is still a favourite of today's avid reader.

The Gothic horror tale was said to have been inspired by Stoker's trip to Whitby in the 1880s. It was here where he heard horrific tales of a schooner which had been driven aground on Tate Hill Beach after a dreadful storm. From his lodgings on West Cliff the author would have had a prime view down to the site of the ghastly wreck and across to the cobbled streets of the older East side, and the imposing ruins of Whitby Abbey and St. Mary's church that sits at the top of the winding 199 steps which rise up the cliffs from the streets below. It was here that Bram Stoker started writing his famous novel about a certain Count Dracula.



In Stoker's novel, after the shipwreck, Dracula runs up the famous 199 steps to the graveyard in St Mary's church in the shape of a black dog. An examination of the ship's log shows that the crew members had been gradually disappearing since it set sail from Russia. But it is the ship's cargo which gives readers a clue about how Dracula managed to travel so far without being noticed – it is full of coffins.

As the legend of Dracula has grown more and more people have flocked to Whitby each year to learn about the character and his creator. To celebrate this Gothic Legend, the town holds a Goth Festival twice yearly. This year, event organisers decided to attempt to beat the previous world record for having the largest gathering of vampires in one place. The previous record stood at 1,039 vampires set at Doswell in Virginia, USA in 2011.

The "vampires" needed to stand together in the same place for five minutes to break the record. And shortly after 21:00 BST on Thursday, confirmation came that the record had been broken.

We've just broken the GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™ for the Largest Gathering of People Dressed as Vampires with 1369 vampires! 🧛‍♂️🏆

We'd like to say a BIG thank you to everyone who has come along to Whitby Abbey to help make this happen - you all looked fang-tastic! 🧛‍♂️🧛‍♂️ @GWR pic.twitter.com/OrjjAFVnUa

## There was a lot at stake for participants in the record attempt

The event had strict rules - including an official costume no matter the age of the participant. Jack Brookbank, official adjudicator for Guinness World Records, said: "We are quite strict about the official costume that is allowed." That is because previous attempts to break the record had failed over silly things like the wrong shoes. This year the rules were simple: *"Costumes must include black shoes, black trousers or dress, waistcoat, shirt, black cape or collared overcoat and fangs on the top set of teeth."*

Ahead of the record attempt, the abbey's manager Mark Williamson said the event had attracted interest from all over the world, including participants who had travelled to the North Yorkshire resort from as far away as California.



American vampire enthusiast Kit Robison, 24, with her siblings Christine, 29, and Nick, 27, travelled to the UK especially for the event. Christine was the driving force behind them going because she loves the [Bram Stoker](#) novel so much. "The prose is just so different to anything written now, it was such a different way at looking at the world." It had so many layers and meanings, she said. For Nick, meanwhile, it was "just a great way to freak people out".

It was a daft event, yes, but one they were taking deadly seriously, said the abbey's site manager, Mark Williamson, who explained. "We have to take it seriously because we have a lot of respect for the people who set the record. We want to honour those people and more importantly Stoker himself.

The aim was to gather at least 1,040 people in the Abbey dressed as vampires, thus breaking a record set in 2011 at an amusement park in Doswell, Virginia. The Whitby effort was timed to mark the precise 125th anniversary of the publication of *Dracula*.

More than 3,000 people registered their interest but registering an interest and turning up are, of course, two different things. There were frayed nerves ahead of the event. Williamson said he genuinely had no idea how many people would come. But turn up they did, including many who hadn't registered but just heard about the event at the last minute. There were entry requirements. "Can I see your fangs, please," said stewards at the entrance. At just after 9pm on Thursday the news came through – efforts had not been in vein, the record had been broken with 1,369 vampires gathered in one place.

Williamson said: "When you look at the legacy of that book, which hasn't been out of print since 1897 and has been adapted hundreds of times ... it means so much to so many different people. So actually, having a mass of people dressed as vampires, it just feels right."