

BATS IN CHURCHES



St Wenappa, Gwennap, Cornwall

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The Grade 1 listed church of St Wenappa shelters a small maternity colony of brown long-eared bats. They have sheltered in the church for around 25 years, roosting in the roof apex but accessing the nave interior and flying in the church.

Pregnant female bats gather in spring to give birth and raise their pups, foraging for their insect prey in the large and biodiverse graveyard.

Maternity roosts are vital for maintaining healthy bat populations, but the bats were flying about in the church, and causing mess and extra cleaning.

The Bats in Churches project funded a bat management plan, produced by Burton Reid Associates, working with the PCC and church architect, Chris Hunter of Scott Conservation. This established exactly how the bats were using the church, and proposed options for separating the bats and the church community

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As a result of the bat management plan, in 2021 the gaps between the nave and roof void were filled, leaving the bats with a large space in the void to roost and fly within, but preventing them from accessing the church nave.

This has resulted in a clean church interior and less cleaning without harming the bats – indeed, their numbers increased from 25 to 55 between 2012 and 2022.

A couple of bats gained access to the church interior in 2023, so additional blocking of holes was carried out.

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