

Wheal Grey
Ecology Ltd



BAT, BARN OWL AND NESTING BIRD SURVEY

on

**THE SCHOOL ROOM, PENRYN METHODIST CHURCH,
THE TERRACE, PENRYN, CORNWALL**

February 2024



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**BAT, BARN OWL AND NESTING BIRD SURVEY ON THE SCHOOL ROOM,
PENRYN METHODIST CHURCH, THE TERRACE, PENRYN, CORNWALL**

O.S. Grid Ref: SW 7841 3437

Survey date: 9th February 2024

Surveyor: Simon Barnard BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol MCIEEM
Class Survey Licence Reg. Nos. 2017-32208-CLS-CLS
(Level 3) & 2015-13541-CLS-CLS (Level 4)
Barn Owl Class Survey Licence CL29/00170

Time spent on site: 1 hour

Taxonomic groups covered: Bats, Barn Owls and Nesting Birds

Report author: Simon Barnard BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol MCIEEM

Filename & issue number: BBONB_The School Room, Penryn Methodist Church_Final 1

Report for: Ms Megan Beck, Grays Wharf

Report No: 23-081/GW/The School Room, Penryn Methodist_BBONB

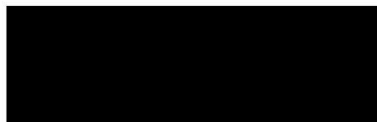
Report completed: 19th February 2024

Report Sign off

**Document checked and
approved for issue by:**

Debra Barnard MBBCh Director

Signature:



Date:

19th February 2024



1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Wheal Grey Ecology Ltd were instructed by Ms Megan Beck of Grays Wharf to carry out a visual inspection on The School Room, Penryn Methodist Church, The Terrace, Penryn, Cornwall looking for evidence of use of the building by Bats, Barn Owls and Nesting Birds. The proposal is to repair the building and convert it into artist studios and exhibition spaces and will include striping and replacing the roof, removing the render and knocking down and rebuilding the toilet block.

The survey was undertaken in the morning on 9th February 2024 and the weather during the survey was clear, sunny and still with 60% cloud cover and the temperature was 9°C.

2. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE

2.1. Description of Building

The building subject to this survey is a large detached two storey stone building, built as a Sunday School, with pitched roof covered with natural slate and gable ends to the east and west, located to the rear of the large Penryn Methodist Chapel. The building has brick chimneys built into the centre of the north and south walls of the building and there is a large patch on the roof comprising plastic sheeting secured in place with timber battens, on the eastern end of the northern slope of the roof where a storm removed a section of slates. There are two rectangular openings in the eastern gable end with timber louvres. The southern and eastern elevations of the building have been rendered with cement and there is a metal external staircase attached to the southern side of the building giving direct access to the 1st floor from outside. The northern and western elevations are bare stone, see Photos 1, 2 and 3.



Photo 1. Showing the School Rooms from the north east with the northern elevation and eastern gable end being in view



Photo 2. Showing the School rooms from the south



Photo 3. Showing the School Rooms
from the south west and the external staircase

Attached to the eastern end of the southern side of the building is a single storey blockwork toilet block and covered courtyard. These are attached to one another and have mono pitched clear plastic sheeting covered roofs which slope towards one another, see Photos 4 and 5.



Photo 4. Showing the toilet block and
covered courtyard from the west



Photo 5. Showing the interior of the toilet block
and covered courtyard

Internally the building is arranged as one large room at the western end of the building on both the ground and 1st floor with smaller rooms and a stairwell at the eastern side of the building, see Photo 6. On the 1st floor the large room has a stage against the western gable and is open from the timber floor to the underside of the roof which is supported by trusses and is lined with timber, see Photo 7. Against the eastern gable end, over the small room and stairwell is a partially vaulted ceiling with a small roof void above, see Photo 8. There is a loft hatch but the roof void could not be accessed due to what is believed to be nesting material on top of the hatch. This is also where the patched hole in the roof is located.



Photo 6. Showing the large room at the western end of the ground floor



Photo 7. Showing the large room at the western end of the 1st floor



Photo 8. Showing the partially vaulted ceiling and small roof void above the room and stairwell at the eastern end of the building on the 1st floor

Externally the roof has been cement washed, the eaves on the gable ends and southern side of the building are well sealed, with cement pointing or render, and the lead flashings appear well sealed. There is a gap between the stone wall and fascia board the length of the northern side of the building (see Photo 1) and there are a small number of gaps below some of the ridge tiles, which have the potential to be used by roosting bats or to access cavities behind. In addition there are the louvred opening in the eastern gable end with the potential to be used by bats or birds to access the small roof void (see Photo 1). There is also a hole in the base of one of the sash windows on the southern side of the building which has the potential to be used by roosting bats, see Photo 9.



Photo 9. Showing the hole in the base of the sash window

2.2. Surrounding landscape

The building subject to this survey is located close to the centre of town of Penryn, immediately behind the Former Methodist Church, which fronts onto the main road running through the centre of the town which is built along a ridge on the top of a hill. It is surrounded by closely packed houses and shops with small poorly vegetated gardens. To the south is a tree lined valley with the Fal Estuary to the east, see Figure 1. The countryside which surrounds Penryn comprises fields laid to pasture bounded by tree lined hedges with large areas of woodland, streams and the Falmouth branch line railway corridor with the wooded fringes of the Fal Estuary to the east and a number of reservoirs to the west.

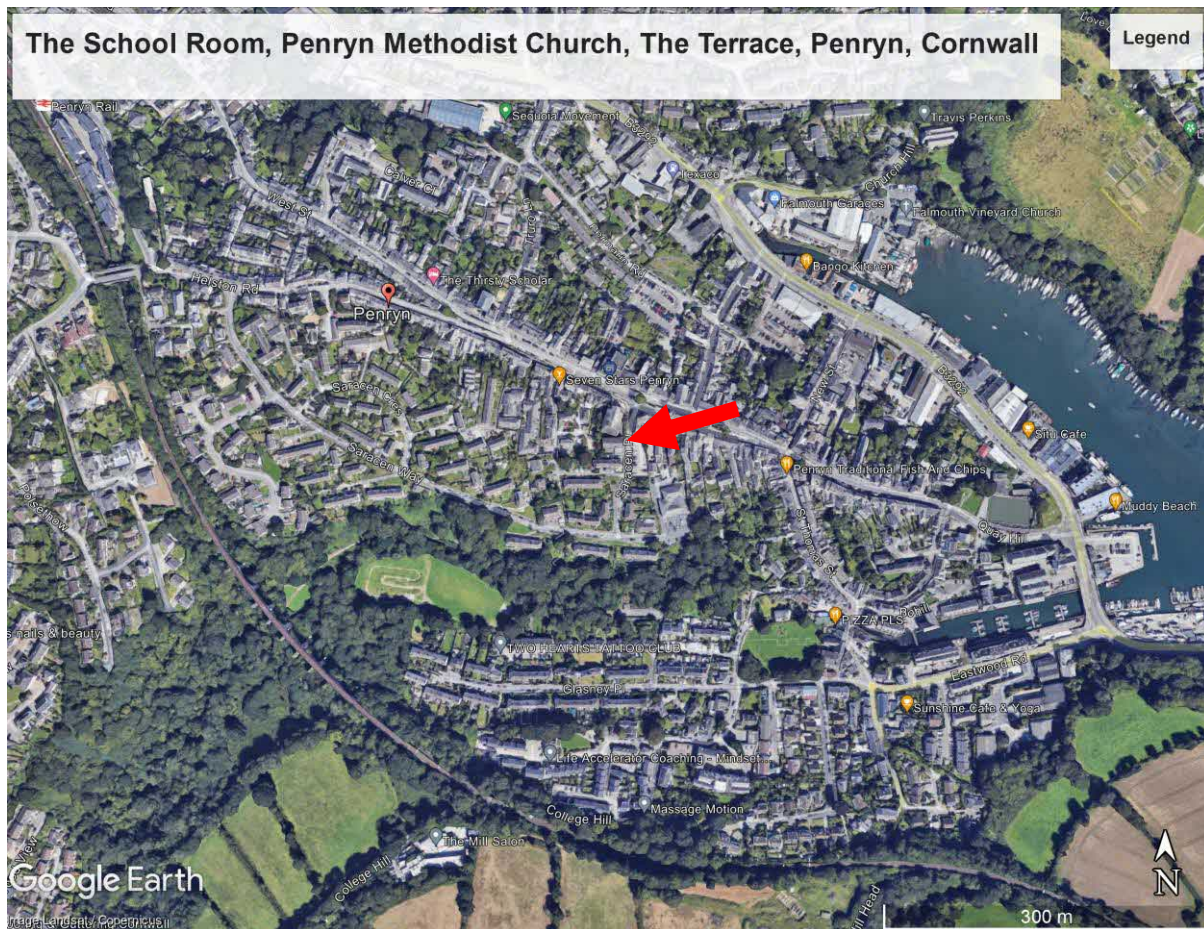


Figure 1. Google Earth image showing the location of the property (red arrow) and surrounding landscape

The habitats surrounding the property represent fairly poor bat foraging habitat with limited feeding habitats nearby and a number of street lights in close proximity. The surrounding area, beyond the town, is known to be used by a number of species of bat including Common, Soprano and Nathusius’ Pipistrelles, Brown Long-eared bats, Whiskered bats, Natterer’s, Barbastelle, Noctules and Lesser and Greater Horseshoes with roosts belonging to these species known to occur nearby but the only Common and Soprano Pipistrelles, Brown Long-eared bats and possibly Lesser Horseshoes are likely to stray this far into the town.

3. METHODS

3.1. Bats

The building was carefully inspected internally and externally, where access allowed, for evidence of the use of the building by roosting bats using a high-power torch, ladders, binoculars and an endoscope (where needed). This included looking for individual or groups of roosting bats and signs that the building is currently, recently or has been historically used for roosting by bats such as droppings or staining around potential access points. It involves searching between any roof timbers, walls and wall tops, any cavities, openings or gaps behind hanging slates or fascia's, window ledges and other protruding features. Additionally, any potential entry points are inspected thoroughly for signs of their use, i.e., staining, polishing or scratching of woodwork (indicating use by bats).

As bats can leave little evidence of their occupation, this survey included an assessment of the potential of the building and features of the building to support roosting bats. This involved identifying potential roosting features including but not limited to cracks, crevices and voids, cavities created by spaced off fascia, hanging slates or split render and any other features capable of providing suitable roosting space for bats.

3.2. Barn Owls

Where suitable access points into the building were present the interior was carefully searched, with the aid of a torch, looking for evidence that the building is used by Barn Owls, for either nesting or roosting. This includes searching for owl pellets, feathers and nest debris, with particular attention being paid to the ground below crossing timbers, below any artificial nest boxes which may have been installed or ledges which could be used by nesting Barn Owls. If any nest boxes or ledges are present and it is safe to do so they will also be inspected for signs of use.

3.3. Swallows and other birds

Suitable ledges, voids and the underside of any floors or timberwork which could provide nesting space for Swallows and other birds were inspected for evidence of previous or current nest building attempts.

3.4. Surveyors' experience and licences held

Simon Barnard is an experienced bat surveyor with 16 years' experience of carrying out all aspects of professional bat survey work including activity surveys, call analysis and emergence surveys. He has held a Natural England survey licence for more than 12 years, currently being registered on the Level 3 (CL19) and level 4 (CL20) Class Survey Licence. He has been involved in designing numerous mitigation schemes and obtaining European Protected Species development licences for the majority of the species of bats found in Devon and Cornwall and is a registered consultant on Annex's B, C and D on the Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence. He also holds a valid Barn Owl Class Survey Licence CL29/00170.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Bats

No evidence of the use of the building by roosting bats was found but the building does support a number of features with the potential to be used for roosting by bats. These include the gap between the stone wall and fascia board the length of the northern side of the building, the hole in the base of one of the sash windows on the southern side of the building, the gaps below some of the ridge tiles and the small roof void which could not be accessed.

4.2. Barn Owls

No evidence of the use of this building by Barn Owls was found.

4.3. Swallows and other bird species

Jackdaws were seen perching on the ends of the battens used to cover the hole in the roof and seen to enter the roof void via the openings in the eastern gable end during this survey. In addition, House Sparrow were heard and seen perching on the roof in the vicinity of the chimneys. This, along with the volume of material noted on the top of the loft hatch, indicates that these two species are likely to nest in the building.

4.4. Limitations

The roof void could not be accessed, the eaves could only be inspected from the ground and due to the time of year it is likely any droppings on the walls or below the eaves would have been washed away.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Bats

As the building support features with the potential to be used by roosting bats which will be impacted by the proposed work, further bat survey work should be undertaken.

The further survey work will aim to establish if the building is being used by roosting bats, confirm the status of any roosts found, identify the species present, the number of individuals and the locations of the access points and roosting sites. This information will then be used to inform the impact assessment and the form of the mitigation needed.

The building is considered to have moderate potential to be used by roosting bats, based on the number of features present and location of the building, and so the further survey work should take the form of a pair of emergence surveys, using two surveyors. This further survey work can only be undertaken during the active bat survey season, May to September, with at least one of the surveys being undertaken during the peak survey period before the end of August. The emergence surveys should be undertaken at least four weeks apart.

If bats are found to be using the building a Bat Mitigation Licence may need to be obtained before the works can commence lawfully.

Bat survey work to accompany planning applications is considered to be valid for 12 months from the date the survey is conducted and usually needs to be updated if it falls outside of this.

5.2. Barn Owls

No recommendations necessary.

5.3. Swallows and other bird species

Care should be taken to ensure birds are not nesting within the building when works commence. Ideally the works should commence outside the nesting bird season, March to the end of August. If this is not possible a careful inspection of the building for the presence of nesting birds and active nests should be carried out immediately prior to the work starting. If nesting birds are found to be present the works in the vicinity of these nests will need to be suspended until after the chicks have left the nest and the nest is no longer considered to be active. This is because birds are protected by law whilst nesting.

6. MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENTS

6.1. Bats

Recommendations on the mitigation measures needed, the form of the mitigation and the type of Licence required can only be made after the further survey work has been completed.

6.2. Barn Owls

No mitigation needed.

6.3. Swallows and other bird species

New nesting opportunities for birds could be incorporated into the building by building in or mounting prefabricated nest boxes onto the northern elevations of the renovated building or retaining access to the wall tops or roof void. This would help to maintain the biodiversity value of the site.

7. LEGISLATION

7.1. Bats

Bats in England have been protected under a number of regulations and amendments but the most up-to-date and relevant are:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Section 9)

The result of Regulations and Acts is that all species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under law. It is an offence to:

Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat
Deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species
Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost whether bats are present or not
Damage or destroy a roost whether bats are present or not
Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

Through the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (this has been updated and consolidated with subsequent amendments by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 mentioned above) bats were designated a European protected species as part of a Europe wide effort to conserve certain plant and animal species.

Any development which is likely to result in the disturbance of a European protected species, or damage to its habitat usually requires a European protected species licence from Natural England. 'Development' is interpreted broadly to include projects involving demolition of buildings, rebuilding, structural alterations and additions to buildings.

7.2. Birds

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence, with certain exceptions, to intentionally:

Kill, injure or take any wild bird.
Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2017 require public bodies to help "*preserve, maintain and re-establish habitat for wild birds.*"

Barn Owls and other birds listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are given a further level of protection against disturbance whilst breeding.

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