

# Bat Case Study no. 2

## St Andrew of Shalford

### DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD



In this small medieval church, bats are found in the chancel, the nave and the belfry. While not everyone is happy about the bats, the church remains in regular and active use. Some improvements to the building have also been made and more work is being planned.

#### Location

The medieval church of St Andrew is located in the village of Shalford in northwest Essex. The village is small, with around 750 inhabitants, and has a primary school, a village hall and a 14<sup>th</sup> century pub. The church is located at the east end of the village, in a rural setting close to a patch of woodland and some ponds.

#### The building and its use

St Andrew is a Grade I listed building, dating mainly from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought that the church was erected on the site of an earlier building, and the west tower is possibly of a 12<sup>th</sup> century origin. The nave and aisles of the church are from 1330, the chancel was built in 1340. The windows in the church have been restored, but date from 1340. Many of them feature beautiful stained glass, some of it dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Monuments in the church include a 15<sup>th</sup> century font made of clunch, and two 14<sup>th</sup> century altar tombs.

The church has modern kitchen and toilet facilities, and a children's corner in the north aisle. Regular services are held in the church on Sundays, and a Remembrance Day service is organised by the Royal



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British Legion every other year (alternating with St Mary Magdalene's in Wethersfield). The church also regularly hosts weddings, funerals, blessings and christenings.

#### Bats in the church

At least three species of bats use this church. Brown long-eared bats are roosting in the void of the chancel roof, soprano pipistrelles roost behind the ceiling timbers of the nave, and Natterer's bats have a maternity colony in the apex of the tower. In addition to these confirmed residents, common pipistrelles have been encountered at the church.

The brown long-eared bats tend to keep themselves to themselves, above the chancel. They do sometimes use the nave however to fly around before leaving to forage, as this species likes to emerge only when it is dark outside. They sometimes even catch and eat insects from inside the church. The Natterer's bats roosting



in the tower also fly in the nave, and where the soprano pipistrelles are entering and exiting the church they leave a scattering of droppings on the walls. Bats flying inside the church leave droppings behind, and their urine has caused some staining of the organ pipes and chandeliers in the chancel.

#### What has been done?

Plastic sheeting is in place to protect the altar and prayer books in the church from the scattering of droppings and urine. As numbers of bats in this church are relatively low, regular weekly cleaning keeps any mess under control. Over the years, much work has been done on the building and this is where the presence of bats in the church has been a consideration.

The brown long-eared bats had gained access to the roof void above the chancel through a plastered soffit that had fallen into disrepair. When the chancel roof needed replacing, works were timed to the months when bats were not present in the roof void. To allow bats back into the void when they returned the following summer, a gap was left in the new soffit that would allow bat access, but also ventilation of the roof void to prevent damp forming.

Many years ago, bats were using a gap above the north door to gain entry to the church. They were also using a gap in the eaves of the north aisle to gain access to a long, tortuous route into their roost in the nave. Local bat workers were told about the proposal to build an extension on the north door for modern kitchen and toilet facilities. They recommended that a new purpose-built bat access point be installed at the eaves of the north aisle. By providing the bats with an easy way in, they stopped using the north door, allowing planning and building works to



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proceed. In order to minimise the amount of droppings deposited inside the church under the new bat access point, a special wooden shelf has been fitted. This is now cleaned once a year, and damage from droppings and urine to the marble plaques underneath the access point is prevented. Another advantage to re-directing the bats has been that they no longer commute past the children's corner, which is uncovered.

The timber grills and plastic meshing to keep birds out of the tower were replaced at the same time. Bats had been accessing the tower through the sound outlet windows. The voluntary bat workers recommended that bat accesses be created in the new grills. Bats have since increased their use of the tower to roost where they cause no inconvenience to the church.

Plans are now under way to install glass screening to the tower arch. As Natterer's bats from the tower are using this route to fly through special gaps will be built into the screen to allow continued bat access. Because of the involvement of experienced local bat workers at this church, the parish did not need to pay for ecological consultants to assess the situation; the bat workers knew how the bats used the church, and what to advise the parish to do to mitigate the effects of the new screen on bat access to their roost.



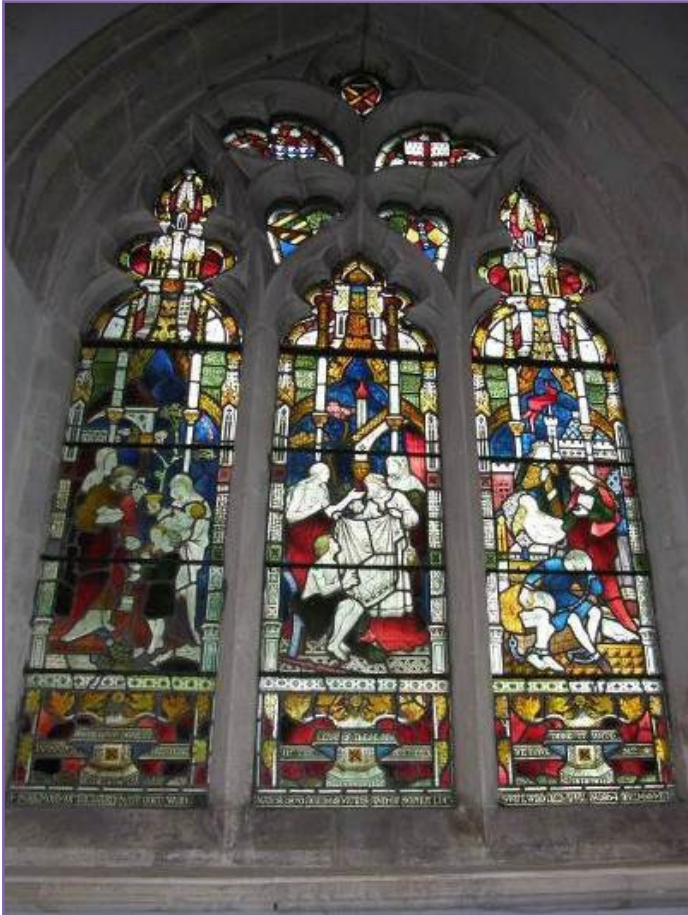
### What can we learn?

The church of St Andrew in Shalford provides a good example of how important maintenance and repair works can be carried out in a church that has roosting bats. It has taken the parish some extra effort to incorporate the bats into the plans for building work, but the cost of taking the bats into account has been minimised by the continued help and support of the local bat workers. Not everyone at the church is happy about the bats of course, but problems have been overcome and the congregation is able to use the church as it was intended. With the habits of the bats well known to the bat workers and the church wardens, new plans such as the screening of the tower can incorporate bats right from the beginning. This avoids costly delays and unpleasant surprises later on in the process.

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## Contacts and more information

Church wardens: Mr John Burrow and Mrs Margaret Smith

Local bat group: Essex Bat Group [www.essexbatgroup.org.uk](http://www.essexbatgroup.org.uk) (E-mail: [secretary@essex-batgroup.org.uk](mailto:secretary@essex-batgroup.org.uk))

National Bat Helpline: [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk) (Tel: 0845 1300 228)

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