

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The survey was requested as part of the Letton Caring for God's Acre project, to look for evidence of bat activity within the church and the churchyard, as part of a programme of wildlife surveys.
- 1.2 Parts of this stone built church date back to the late eleventh / early twelfth century. Stone tiles have been used on the main roofs. The church is adjacent to a number of mature trees on the Letton Court Estate and is not far from a meander of the River Wye.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 A daytime survey was carried out by Rebecca Collins, an English Nature licensed bat worker (licence number 20011903) on the 11th June 2003 to examine the church, both internally and externally, for evidence of use by bats, such as droppings and grease marks.
- 2.2 An evening bat detector survey was carried out around the churchyard on the evening of the 11th July 2003, to assess the level of bat activity around the church and to detect any emerging bats. A Tranquillity II bat detector was used, tuned to 50kHz whilst walking the site, with periodic stops when the detector was tuned through a range of frequencies. If a bat was detected the species was identified, where possible.

3.0 Results

- 3.1 Evidence of bat activity in the form of droppings was found during a careful internal and external search of the church. A few small droppings, probably common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), were found within the porch. A collection of large droppings, probably of a long-eared species (*Plecotus* sp.) was found around the pulpit in the centre of the church. A few large droppings were found elsewhere in the church, indicating bats flying around within the building. Some small collections of butterfly wings were found, indicating feeding activity within the church. Access into the tower was not possible due to the health and safety issues.
- 3.2 For the evening survey the weather conditions were overcast, dry with a slight breeze and an ambient temperature of 14°C; sunset was around 21:25 hours. The first bat detected was a common pipistrelle at 21:35 feeding around the churchyard and associated vegetation. A long-eared bat, most likely a brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), was detected at 22:00 emerging from the eaves of the tower. Fourteen further brown long-eared bats were observed emerging from the tower flying into the tree canopy to the east of the church. At 22:15 a long-eared bat was detected flying around within the church. A soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) was detected feeding around the trees adjacent to the churchyard at 22:35.

4.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 4.1 Droppings within the church indicate that long-eared bats utilise the church before emerging to feed and this was confirmed during the evening survey. The collection of droppings indicates occasional roosting above the pulpit. The emergence count from the tower identifies this part of the church as the main roosting area of this colony. The churchyard and adjacent vegetation is used as foraging habitat by several species. The relatively low temperature will have affected the abundance/distribution of insects so it is likely that bat foraging activity would be greater on a warmer evening.