

June: Bats and other night time visitors

Last weekend, as part of the annual '[Love Your Burial Ground Week](#)' we did some bat watching in the churchyard on Saturday night, and then reviewed the results of that, the camera traps and moth traps on Sunday morning, after the service. Thanks to all those who came, especially on the Saturday evening – and sorry we didn't see many bats. It was a bit wet, windy and noisy, and, at this time of year, light until quite late. Everyone agreed (although maybe they were just being nice) that we should maybe try again in September when it's still warm but we maybe won't have to stay up so late.

We did get to see some bats fluttering around the tower, and one dropping down out of the roof of the church porch before flying off, but that was it. The next morning, the [automatic recorder](#) (it's activated by ultrasound that the bat's use to navigate in the dark), just to rub it in, showed that the bats did come out but only after we'd given up and gone home; in small numbers at half eleven and then with a whoosh at midnight!

We had set up the same recorder for a few nights earlier in the week and managed to record the echolocation calls of lots of common and soprano pipistrelles, some noctules and one recording of a barbastelle bat. Possibly also a alcahoie bat, a relatively newly-discovered species, about which

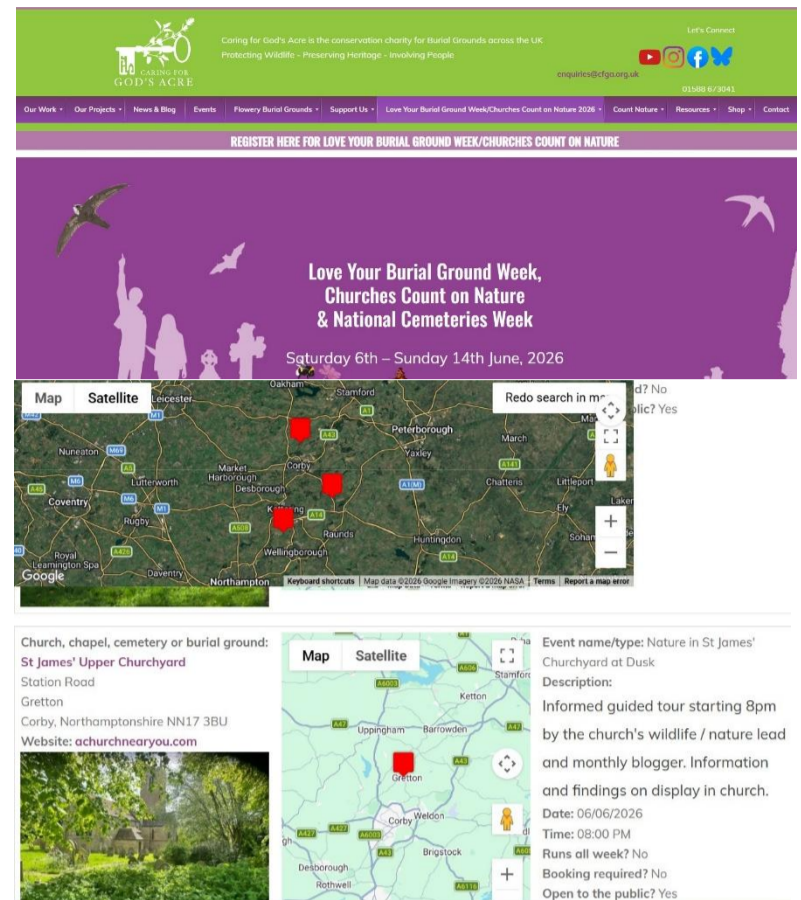
little is known, although the ID probability on that is low. On the Friday, with the bat recorder and a camera trap just inside the porch, we got both the echolocation call of a soprano pipstrelle and some (very) blurry pictures of the bat itself flying off. It's soprano pipistrelles that have a summer, maternity roost, in the roof of church porch, and who leave the

poo on the walls and ground. We'll continue recording and will put together a more detailed account of bat activity later in the month, based on putting all the recordings through the [BTO Acoustic Pipeline](#), an online facility for analysing ultrasound. We've definitely had serotine bats before, and there are brown long-eared bats elsewhere around the village so likely also around (and maybe even inside) the church.



We also had night cameras in various other bits of the churchyard over the week (set to record only when the gates are shut at night), and we showed some of the results of this on Sunday morning after the service, when the Minichoir were about to help out. We had the usual photos and videos of badgers, muntjac deer and wood mice out in the dusk and dark, along with grey squirrels and various birds at dawn.

We also had some live-traps for small rodents set out around the churchyard, and so were able to see (and release back where they came from) some wood mice and bank voles on Sunday morning.



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Despite the blustery night, we also had a reasonable collection of moths in the moth traps – we'll do a bit more moth surveying over coming months as we've not done much with moths for a few years.



Owing to the rain the previous week, our home-made track tunnels only went out on Saturday night, and in the morning were rather wrecked. The badgers had pulled apart those in the churchyard to get at the bait so there weren't any clear mouse and vole tracks to be seen, but a few badger-sized claw marks!. We'll try again away from the badgers and in sunnier weather.



Meanwhile we've left some posters and explainers about churchyard wildlife inside the church itself, and, as always, to find out more about wildlife in St James's, have a look at the blogs and materials on our website @

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16602/page/96449/view/>

