

COUNTY: SUFFOLK SITE NAME: THE GLEN CHALK CAVES, BURY
ST EDMUNDS

DISTRICT: ST EDMUNDSBURY

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: BOROUGH OF ST EDMUNDSBURY

National Grid Reference: TL 864646 Area: 1.58 (ha.) 3.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 155 1:10,000: TL 86 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site consists of a series of tunnels excavated horizontally in chalk, and totalling about 200m in length. The tunnels radiate outwards from a pit which also contains a disused lime-kiln. Five species of bats regularly use the tunnels and the lime-kiln for hibernation between September and April. The bat population has been continuously monitored since 1947 and is the subject of continuing detailed scientific studies.

The caves are used principally by Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentoni* and Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, but Brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus* are frequent with occasional visits by Whiskered *Myotis mystacinus* and Brandt's *Myotis brandti*. The rare Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* was seen once, as was a Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* near the entrance, which was later recovered 63km away 11 years after. A Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros* was resident for 4 months in 1958–1959 and was only the third record for that species for eastern England. A *Myotis daubentoni* recovered in 1983, 22 years after marking, represents one of the greatest longevity records for any species of bat in Britain.

In recent years the number of bats present has increased steadily. Up to 100 may be seen on a visit, and from previous studies, we know at least 150 bats will use the tunnels each winter.

Above the tunnels there is mixed woodland and the pit itself supports Elder scrub. The shelter provided by the trees and other vegetation helps to maintain a suitable micro-climate within the cave, which is crucial for bats. These surrounding areas also provide a source of food and sheltered feeding areas for the bats.