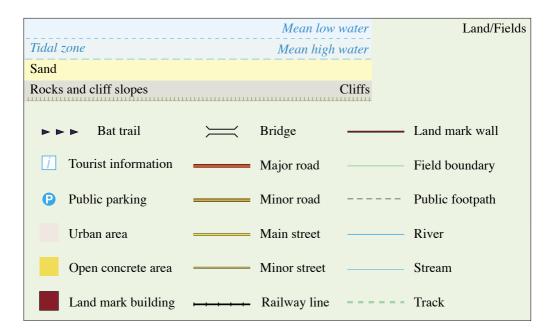


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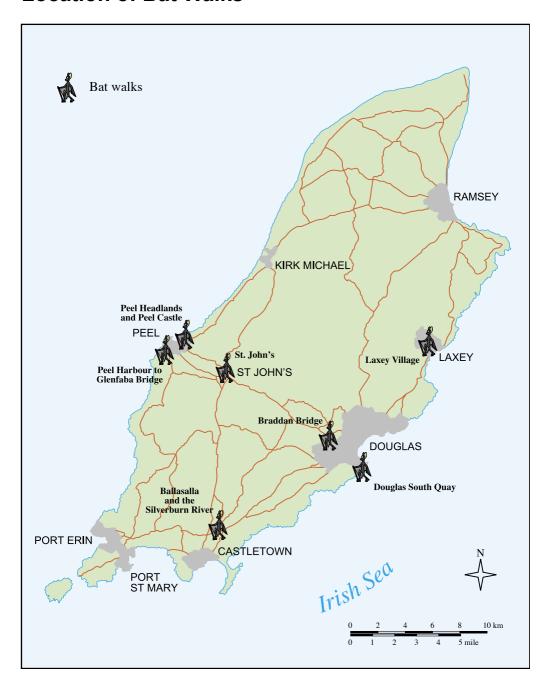


Disclaimer

All walks are undertaken at the participants' own risk. The Manx Bat Group accepts no responsibility for any personal injury or damage to property whilst undertaking the walks. Walks are designed to be undertaken at night or in poor light. The use of a torch is recommended and extra care must be taken. Please adhere to the countryside code. Sensible footwear is highly recommended as paths can be muddy on some walks.



Location of Bat Walks



Bat Information

One quarter of all mammal species on Earth are bats, with nearly 1000 species worldwide. Bats are the only flying mammals with wings, which are a fine web of skin between very long fingers, allowing them to turn very quickly in flight. All the European bats are insectivorous. The UK has sixteen species, Ireland nine, with seven in the Isle of Man. Because the Isle of Man has fewer wild animals than the adjacent islands, bats form one third of our native mammal species. Bats are an important indicator of the overall environmental health of the area in which they live.

Bats are nocturnal animals, leaving their roosts at or after dusk and returning at dawn. They search for their insect prey with their eyes and ears. They also use echolocation, where a bat makes a noise and listens for the echo reflected back from an obstacle or item of prey. Different bat species target different insects. Over the 50 million or so years that bats have existed, the species have evolved into animals of different sizes, wing shapes and flight patterns to suit different ways of life. Although small mammals tend to be short lived, bats may live for up to 30 years.

Insects are in short supply during the winter months so bats hibernate from November to March. They may emerge on warm, still evenings during those months. In spring, the breeding females congregate in maternity roosts where they suckle and raise their single pups. The maternity colonies disperse in the summer once the young bats are able to fly and feed themselves independently. During the summer the males live in smaller communities.



Pipistrelle bat

Bats roost in caves, in trees, in houses, under bridges – in fact anywhere they can squeeze in and find the right conditions. They prefer clean, cobweb-free places, near a good food source. Maternity roosts need to have a warm, constant temperature, while hibernation roosts need to be cold and damp.



Daubenton's bat



Manx Bats

All our bats are protected species. All over the world, bat numbers have fallen in recent years because of loss or disturbance of habitat, food sources and roost sites.

Seven species of bat have been found on the Isle of Man – the brown long-eared bat, Natterer's bat, Daubenton's bat, Leisler's bat, the whiskered bat, and the common and soprano pipistrelles. To identify the species, try to gauge the size (large, medium or small), wing shape (long or short, broad or narrow) and flight pattern of the bats you see. This is difficult but improves with practice. The habitat and time of emergence are also useful for identification. Compare the shapes of the species illustrated and note what you see on your walks.

Brown long-eared bat (Plecotus auritus)

Wingspan: 230–285mm

Weight: 6–12g

Head and body length: 37–48mm

Character: Very long ears. Feeds in woodland, flies slowly to pick insects off leaves and bark, as well as in free flight. Uses the long ears to listen for insects as well as using echolocation. Eats moths, beetles, flies, earwigs, crane flies (daddy-long-legs), and sometimes takes them off the ground. Flight may look fluttery, with steep dives and short glides. Emerges after dusk and returns to the roost before dawn.

Daubenton's bat (Myotis daubentonii)

Wingspan: 240–275mm

Weight: 7–12g

Head and body length: 45-55mm

Character: Feeds on small flies, midges, caddis flies and mayflies, flying very low over calm water. Often turns at a bridge and may be seen with dim torchlight (strong torchlight disturbs them and they will avoid it). Emerges after sunset, and returns to the roost at dawn.

All of the bat outlines are to scale. They are representative of the bats depicted and are half of the actual size. Each of the squares in the background grid represents two square centimetres in true life.

Leisler's bat (Nyctalus leisleri)

Wingspan: 260–320mm

Weight: 12-20g

Head and body length: 50–70mm

Character: The largest of the Manx bats, emerges in the early evening. Flies high over grassland, trees and water. Feeds on moths, flies and other insects.

Natterer's bat (Myotis nattereri)

Wingspan: 245–300mm

Weight: 7–12g

Head and body length: 40–50mm

Character: Feeds on flies, small moths, other small insects in open woodland, parkland, hedgerows, along waterside vegetation. Slow to medium flight speed, from 5 to 15 metres high, usually among trees or along lanes. Much prey is taken from foliage. Emerges about an hour after sunset and returns an hour or two before sunrise.

Pipistrelle bats (P. pipistrellus and P. pygmaeus)

Wingspan: 190-250mm

Weight: 3–9g

Head and body length: 35–45mm

Character: The most common and smallest of the Manx bats. Feed over water, open woodland, gardens, along hedgerows. Feed on midges, caddis flies, mosquitoes (as many as 2000 per night per bat is possible), small insects and moths. Emerge just after sunset and return at dawn; may swarm above the roost. Feeding flight is fast, darting and swooping, often circling and repeating the same 'beat', but when moving from place to place fly in a straight line following hedges or similar features.

Whiskered bat (Myotis mystacinus)

Wingspan: 200–285mm

Weight: 5–9g

Head and body length: 37–48mm

Character: Eats moths, crane flies and other small insects. Emerges within half an hour of sunset. Feeds in woodland, often near water. Flight fast and fluttering, generally level with occasional stoops. Often repeats the same circuit round trees, over a hedge or along the side of a wood. Feeds at about 20 metres above ground.

Observing and Finding Bats

As bats live on insects, the best places to see them are where the combination of trees and water provides a good stock of 'bat food'. The best times for seeing bats are dawn and dusk, on warm, calm summer evenings. A good way to see them is against the light of the evening sky, silhouetted against the light reflected off water, or against the glow of urban streetlights. Many bat species congregate in circling flight outside a roost site at dawn or dusk. This behaviour is known as swarming.

The more torchlight you use, the more you cannot see beyond the beam of light given out by the torch. Your night vision will gradually improve in dim light, with sensitivity reaching a maximum after about 20 minutes. However, bright light will destroy the effect instantly. You will then need time to get used to the dark again.

Bats are easily separable from birds because not only do they have a different shape, but also they appear more 'fluttery' in flight and can make very sudden changes in direction.



Bat boxes



The River Neb, near Tynwald Mills

While bats are at home in low levels of light, humans are not. Take care when walking along footpaths at night, and wear bright clothing when walking on roads after dark. You look for bats at your own risk.

When in the countryside please be aware of the country code. As the trails may be walked in the dark, ensure pets and group members of a young age are safe and supervised.

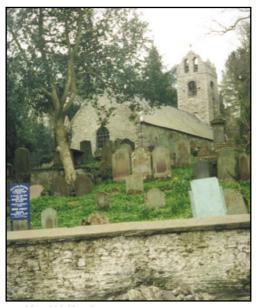
Encouraging bats

You can help bats by giving them places to feed and sites to roost in. Roosts are provided by putting up bat boxes in trees, conserving natural tree holes, and allowing bats access behind the soffit boards of houses or (via a small ventilation hole) to the attic space. Bats are very clean and are often not detected in the houses they use. Manx bats feed on insects, so avoid spraying insecticides in the garden, provide a pond, and grow a variety of native plants.

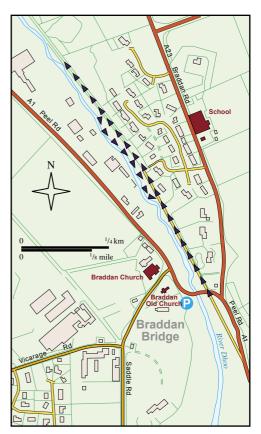


Braddan Bridge

Six of the seven species of Manx bat have been seen here within half an hour of sunset. Only the soprano pipistrelle is so far unrecorded at this location. Sit in the churchyard of either church (the old seventeenth century building on the older foundation was originally the parish church for Douglas, or the 'new' Victorian building across the road) and watch for bats, which should appear from all directions on a clear, calm night. Lean over the river bridge and you should see Daubenton's bats feeding on the downstream side, visible in the light reflected from the water. Bat boxes have been placed in the trees below the new cemetery entrance on the other side of the river to compensate for trees lost in a recent road widening scheme. The path along the disused railway goes along the river and is also good for bat watching up to the bridge at Union Mills but the levels of light along the second half of the path make bat watching difficult.



Braddan Old Church



By bus: Alight at Braddan Church By car: Park in the lay-by at Braddan Old Church Approximate length of walk: 3 km

Please be very careful of the traffic as this is a dangerous corner. No walking is necessary. After staying in the churchyard for a while, you might like to (carefully) cross the road and go down a steep stairway on the north side of the bridge to the disused railway line below. Most of the path to Union Mills is tarmac covered, with an optional excursion along a board walk. Return the same way or by road. Visibility is poor under the trees.



Ballasalla and the Silver Burn

Founded in 1134, Rushen Abbey was a Cistercian house on earlier foundations. Many of the kings of Mann were buried here. Closed at the Reformation, it is now owned by Manx National Heritage. From the footpath along the river bank, Leisler's bats may be seen flying over the Abbey grounds, whilst pipistrelles and brown long-eared bats feed in the area, and Daubenton's bats feed along the river. The ford between the Abbey and the converted corn mill is a favourite place for ducks and Daubenton's. Further upstream, the fourteenth century Monks' Bridge is a favourite place for watching Daubenton's as they turn above and below the bridge, flying so low as to almost skim the water

Upstream, the Monks' Well is of unknown age, and is said to have curative powers for eye ailments, rheumatism and arthritis. On the other side of the river (access by footbridge) is the pool supplying water to power an umber (paint pigment) mill; the origin of the umber is now lost. The tree cover is thinner here, so the many bats which feed through this glen may be seen against the water. At the end of the

footpath is Silverdale Mill. Once a large corn mill, the wheel is still in place. During the day this is a favourite place for families – note the playground complete with its unique water-driven roundabout. During the evening the mill pool (now a boating lake) is a good place to watch bats feeding over the water.

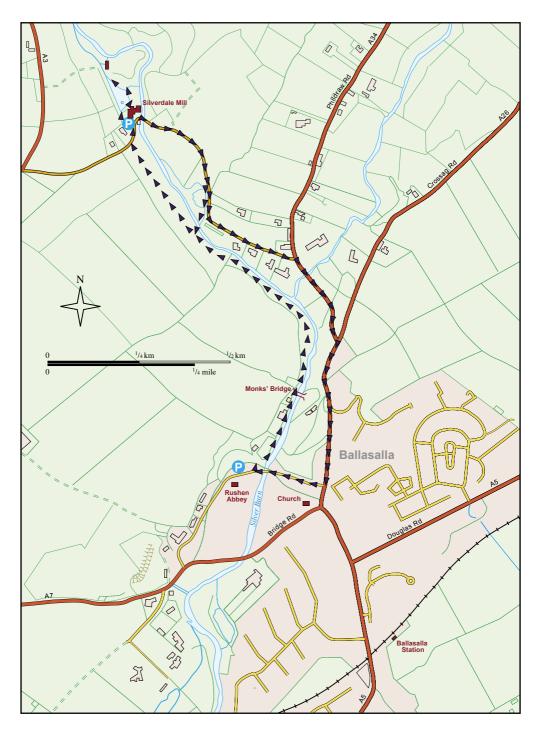
By bus: Alight at Rushen Abbey or the church in Ballasalla By steam train: Alight at Ballasalla By car: Park at the gravel area on the west side of

the ford (some parking also at Silverdale Mill)
Approximate length of walk: 2 km

Walk upstream along the river to Monks' Bridge, approximately a quarter of a kilometre. Optional walk further upstream approximately one kilometre to the mill. The footpath can be muddy in places with poor visibility under trees (with no street lighting). From the intersection with the road at Silverdale Mill, keep to the left of the Mill building and you will find the mill pool. There are seats here. Walk back along the road, being careful at night. Turn right at every T-junction to return to the Abbey.



Monks' Bridge



Laxey Village

The Great Laxey Mine (zinc and lead, now closed) has been a major tourist attraction since the Lady Isabella Wheel was built in 1854. The mine buildings are closed at night. The mine's washing floors are now known as the Jubilee Gardens. A path runs down from Dumbell's Terrace (also known as Ham and Egg Terrace as almost every house used to be some kind of a cafe) through the Jubilee Gardens, and joins Glen Road at St George's Woollen Mill (founded by John Ruskin). All seven species of Manx bat may be seen in the Laxey valley. Watch out for pipistrelles and Daubenton's on the river, Natterer's near the Mines Tavern, and Leisler's flying over the valley. Behind Laxey Flour Mill (still producing Manx flour) are Laxey Glen Gardens and the mill pool. Pipistrelles and Daubenton's feed over this pool and bats may be seen in the Gardens glen.



Laxey River

By bus: Alight at Dumbell's Terrace By electric railway: Alight in Laxey By car: Park at Dumbell's Terrace Approximate length of walk: 4 km

Walk downstream, crossing the main road and the Manx Electric Railway tracks. A steep staircase goes down to the Jubilee Gardens. Walk downstream through the gardens to join Glen Road and continue to the harbour bridge.

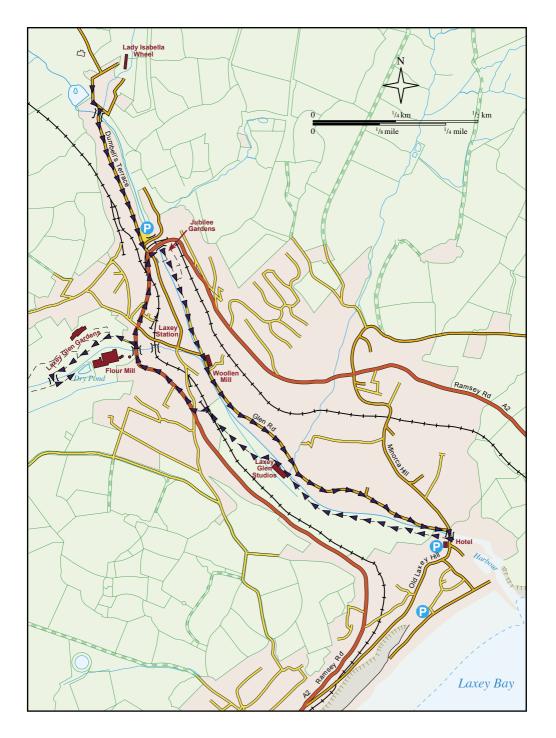


Laxey Glen Gardens

Return by a footpath uphill through the woods, passing Laxey Glen Studios, or by road to the railway station. Here you can turn left to Laxey Glen Gardens, returning along the same route, or simply cross the Snaefell Mountain Railway track and return to Dumbell's Terrace, past the railway station, where the Snaefell Mountain Railway and the Manx Electric Railway meet. You will walk past the Mines Tavern, originally the Mine Captain's home. Early photographs show many mine buildings in this area, nearly all of which have now disappeared. Late in the evening, walk up towards the Great Laxey Mine and look for a small engineering works on the south bank of the river. Behind this is a large mill pool, a favourite feeding place for Daubenton's bats.



Jubilee Gardens



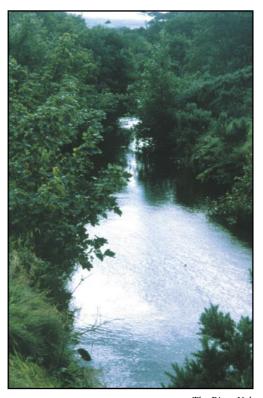
Peel Harbour to Glenfaba Bridge

The Herring Way is the name of the route used to deliver fish caught off Peel and taken overland to Castletown. In Peel, traditional Manx kippers are smoked at Moore's smokehouse by the harbour bridge. A few bats may be seen foraging over the lower part of Peel Hill, usually either pipistrelles or Leisler's. Brown long-eared bats are known in the power station area.

Walking up the river, pipistrelles and Leisler's bats feed in the small wood opposite the power station. They also feed over the flooded quarry, which now forms a reserve water source for the power station. Originally this was excavated for material to build Peel breakwater and associated harbour alterations. Two species of pipistrelle, as well as Daubenton's bats, feed along the length of the Neb River from this point. They are harder to see because of the tree cover. Natterer's bats are also found here. as are brown long-eared bats. At the road bridge which crosses the river at Glenfaba, the old corn mill is still almost intact, although a flood in the 1980s caused damage to the watercourse and to the wheel. The mill pool above the road bridge is a favourite feeding place for all seven species of Manx bat.



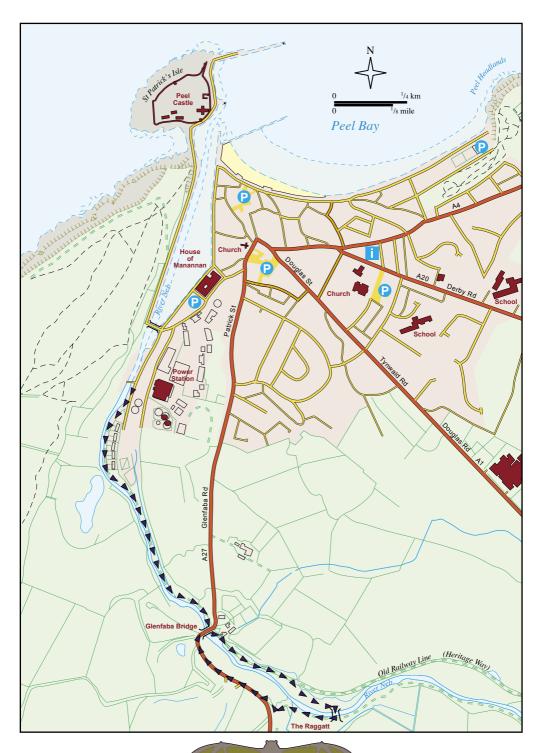
Glenfaba Bridge



The River Neb

By bus: Alight at House of Manannan
By car: Park at House of Manannan or upstream
of the harbour bridge
Approximate length of walk: 2 km

Walk towards the large chimney of the power station and along the footpath to Glenfaba Bridge. Pass under the bridge and continue along the footpath, bearing right to a footbridge over the river at the Raggatt. Return by road to Peel, or return to the river path via a flight of wooden steps on Glenfaba Bridge itself. This path is often muddy. Alternatively, take a car to park at the Raggatt and walk down to the river from there.



Peel Headlands and Peel Castle

There is a grassy green space on the northern edge of Peel, between nineteenth century guesthouses on the Promenade and similarly dated housing on the Ramsey Road. Numerous paths criss-cross the area, mostly dating from the alien internment camp sited here between 1940 and 1945. The footpath goes past the bowling green and on past a children's playground to the top of low sandstone cliffs, and along the coastal footpath towards Kirk Michael. The remains of Peel's first (tidal) swimming pool are in the next bay. Pipistrelle bats are often to be seen at the end of the Promenade, along the coastal footpath, and over the gorse surrounding the playground. Unusually, they fly in the open here, and seem to be undaunted by the lack of cover. Brown long-eared and occasionally Natterer's bats are seen here.

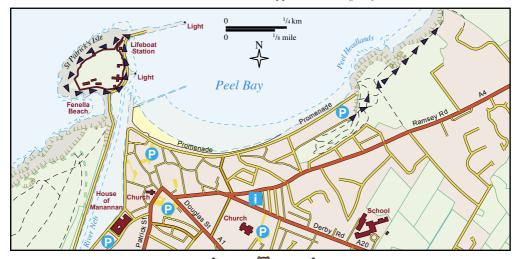
On the opposite side of the bay, pipistrelle bats may be seen on warm evenings feeding over the rocks between the walls of Peel Castle and the sea. Take the surfaced footpath behind the Promenade houses, or walk along the Promenade to the cliff at the end, then up a flight



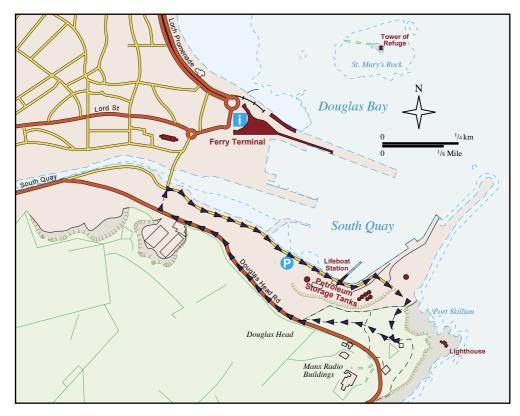
Sunset over Peel Castle

of steps between a five-a-side football pitch and skateboard park to join a path. Continue up a slight rise to the cliff top and along to the kissing gate below the new bungalows at the end of the next bay. Return the same way or along any of the footpaths on the headland. To look for more bats, walk or drive around the harbour to Peel Castle. Take the path up the steps next to Fenella Beach or walk beneath the wall behind the Lifeboat Station.

By bus: Alight at the Creg Malin Hotel By car: Park at Creg Park or the Promenade Approximate length of walk: 1 km



Douglas South Quay



On calm evenings, take a walk along the harbour towards the Douglas Lighthouse, up the hill along the route of a long-vanished inclined plane railway towards Manx Radio's building, and back down Douglas Head Road. The walk might show many of Mann's bat species. Daubenton's bats feed around the harbour. Pipistrelles feed over the seaweed at low tide, and through the trees between Fort Anne and the fuel tanks. Leisler's bats may be seen moving away from the trees below the Manx Radio buildings and flying inland towards the Old Castletown Road. Pipistrelles are also to be seen at Port Skillian (site of the first swimming pool for Douglas – for men only!).

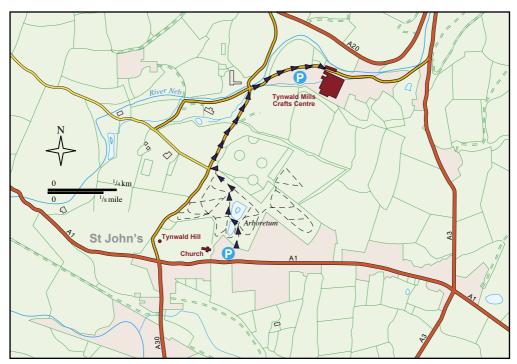
To start, cross the harbour from the centre of Douglas, at the swing bridge, and turn left. Keep to the pavement – this is a surprisingly busy road. This is easy walking, but includes quite a steep (optional) climb up to Douglas Head. Return the same way or down the Douglas Head Road.

By car: Park on South Quay just west of the lifeboat station
Approximate length of walk: 2 km



Douglas, from Douglas Head

St John's



St John's is the site of the ancient Tynwald, the Manx parliament that has existed for over 1000 years. An arboretum was planted here to celebrate the Millennium of Tynwald, and bats often feed over the pond. Below St John's in the valley bottom is Tynwald Mills, an old woollen mill now converted to shops. A short walk along the road beside the river here should provide sightings of pipistrelle, Daubenton's, brown long-eared, whiskered and Natterer's bats.



The Arboretum pond

By bus: Alight at Tynwald Hill, St John's By car: Park in the Arboretum car park Approximate length of walk: 3 km

Walk through the arboretum entrance and round the pond. At the far end of the arboretum, bear left and go through a small gate and turn right, which leads to Tynwald Mills. Walk along the lane to the crossroads. There is no need to cross the bridge, but look for bats on the river here and along the road towards Tynwald Mills up the right-hand lane.

Return to the arboretum the same way, or by following the main road to Tynwald Hill and St John's. This is mainly tarmac apart from in the arboretum grounds, which is a mix of footpath and grass. Alternatively, park at Tynwald Mills. Please do not approach the shop complex too closely at night for security reasons.

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Photographs courtesy of members of the Manx Bat Group, the Bat Conservation Trust/Hugh Clark (front cover bat), A Gadney and A Daniels.

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For further information, please contact the Manx Bat Group at:

www.manxbatgroup.org

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In memory of Penny Gillman



Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry

