

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Wildlife Consultants.**



**THE OLD COACH HOUSE, COLLIERY
FARM, LITTLE HOUGHTON.**

BAT SURVEY.

Ref No:- 120231.

Date: 22nd March 2012.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. A planning application is to be submitted for the demolition of the existing old Coach House building at Colliery Farm Little Houghton and for its replacement with a new building.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to carry out a bat survey of the site in support of that planning application, to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The survey was carried out on 16th March 2012 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provide back ground information with respect to bats and nesting birds and the legal protection afforded to them.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The buildings were thoroughly checked internally and externally for potential bat roosting sites by looking for the following signs:-

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat droppings.
- * Prey remains.
- * Staining on external walls.

2.2. Unless otherwise stated, all lofts were accessed and inspected using a high powered torch and where necessary an endoscope.

2.3. A thorough external inspection was carried out from ground level for any gaps or openings in the roof and ridge tiles, behind soffits and fascias and in the walls of the structure for suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.4. All window cills, walls and the ground around the structure were checked for signs of bat droppings or staining to indicate possible use by bats. Where necessary, ladders were utilised to gain access within the limits of health and safety. Any access constraints encountered are outlined within the following report.

2.5. All survey work was carried out in line with the Bat Conservation Trust, Good Practice Guidelines.

2.6. This was not followed by a dusk emergence survey as bats are in hibernation at this time of year.

2.7. The survey was undertaken by Derek Witcher and Jenny Witcher.

2.8. Derek Witcher has over twenty years experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through IEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of IEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of

IEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

2.9. Since 2001 Jenny Roebuck has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out Ecology Surveys and Phase 1 Habitat surveys. Jenny holds Natural England Survey Licences in respect of bats, great crested newts, crayfish and barn owls. She has also successfully completed a number of courses run by IEEM, BCT and FSC in the relative protected species and in carrying out Phase 1 Habitat surveys.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to Barnsley Biological Records Centre for existing records of bat roosts within 1km of the site. The record centre holds no records of bat roosts within 1km of this site. Their response is shown in Appendix III of this report.

3.1.2. Barnsley Bat Group no longer exists and all of their bat roosts records have been passed to Barnsley Biological Records Centre.

3.2. Site Description.

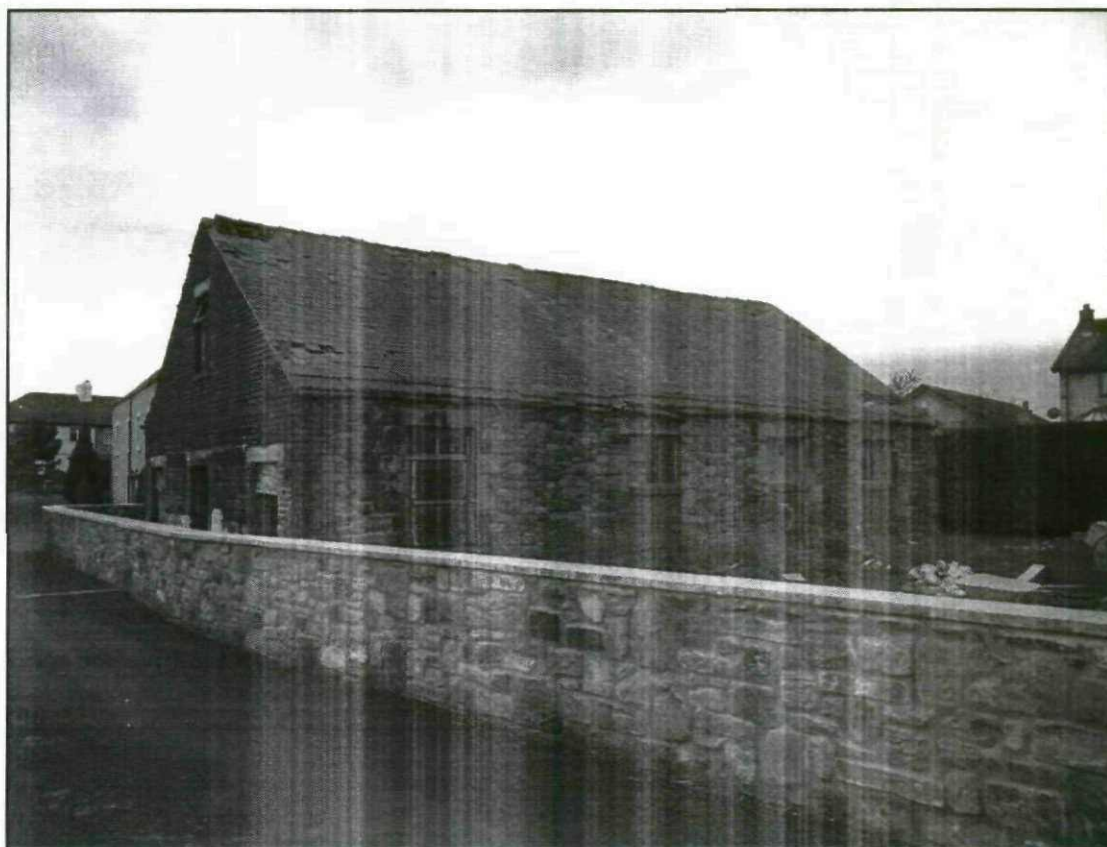
3.2.1. The old Coach House and the immediate surrounding area are shown on the aerial photograph below although the site has been further developed since this photograph was taken.



3.2.2. The building stands in the old Colliery Farm yard, an area that has undergone extensive redevelopment and is now a small hamlet with the Sandhills Golf Course and car park to the north east.

3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. The coach house is a two storey building with a series of rooms on the ground floor and with a loft storage area.



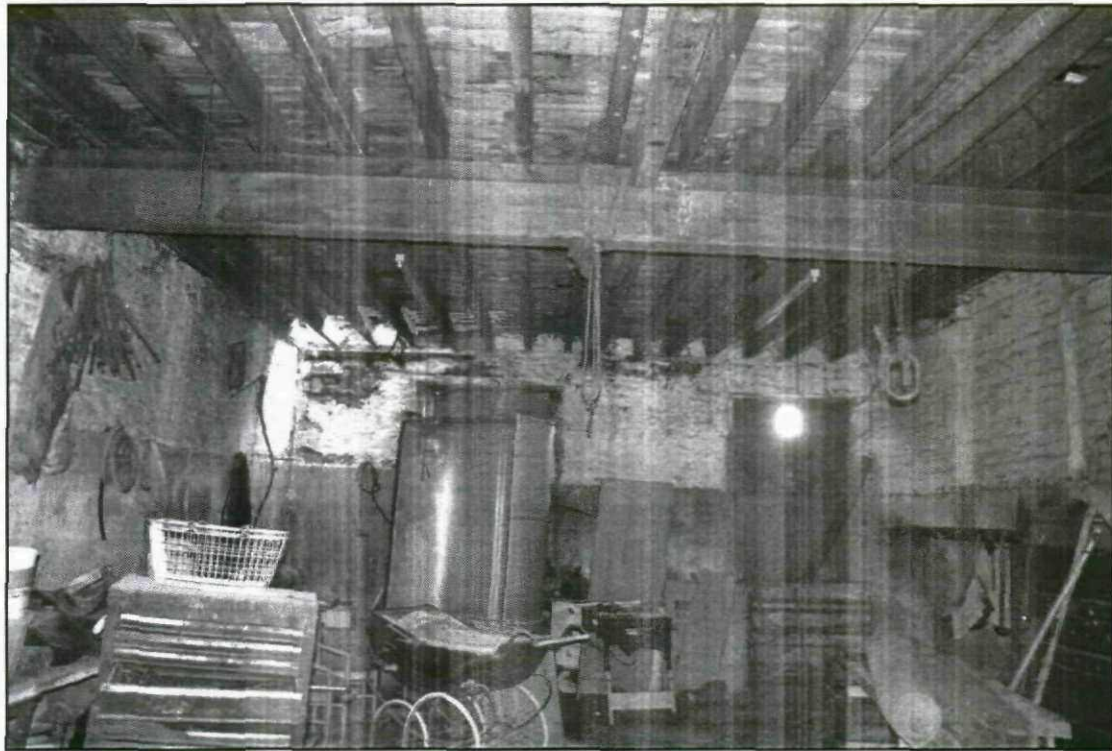
3.3.2. The front wall of the building is constructed with a stone outer skin with a rubble fill and a brick inner skin. The other three walls are all constructed with solid brick walls. The walls are generally sound and well pointed with the exception of a number of rectangular openings in the stone front wall that could all be fully inspected with a bright torch.

3.3.3. There are gaps between the stone lintels above some of the doors and windows but all of these gaps were fairly shallow and were therefore fully inspected with a bright torch.

3.3.4. The roof is a pitched, slate covered roof that is in a poor state of repair with many slates missing or displaced. The ridge tiles are all in place and are generally close fitting and pointed. There are four ridge tiles that have been raised to provide ventilation gaps underneath.

3.3.5. Internally the building is split into two large storage areas with a further three smaller animal stalls on the south eastern end.

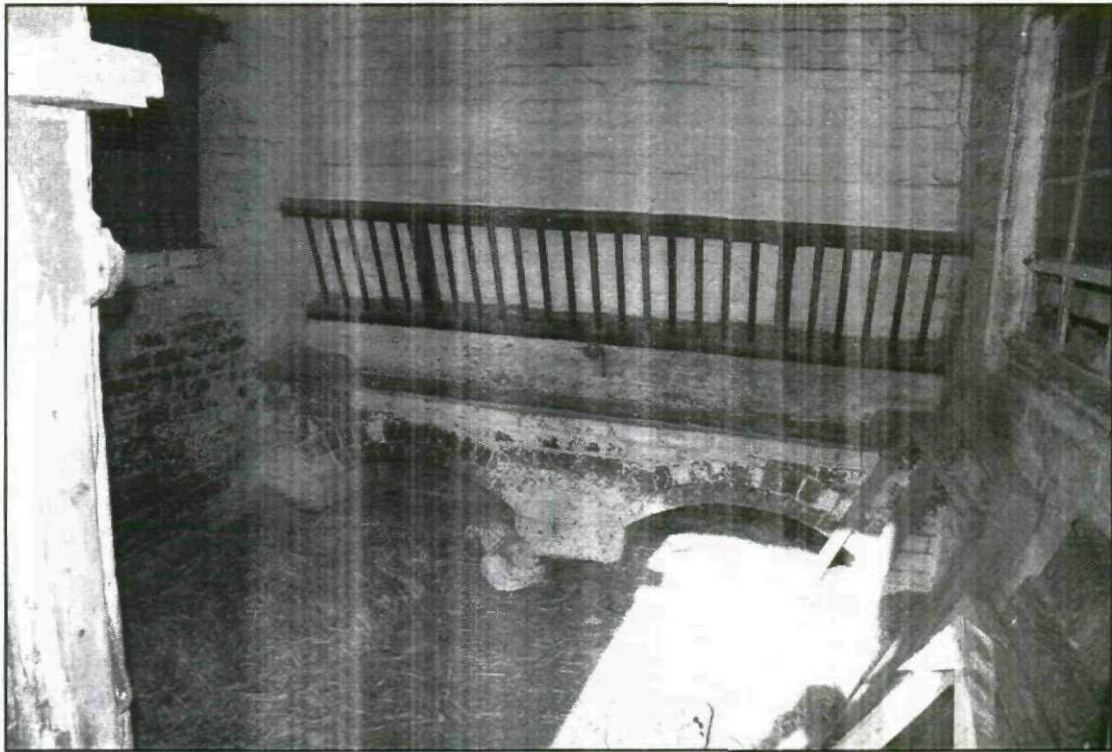
3.3.6. The photograph below shows one of the storage areas with the internal brick walls white washed and with a timber ceiling. This photograph also shows a hole in the ceiling where the deteriorating roof has allowed the ingress of water and subsequent rotting.



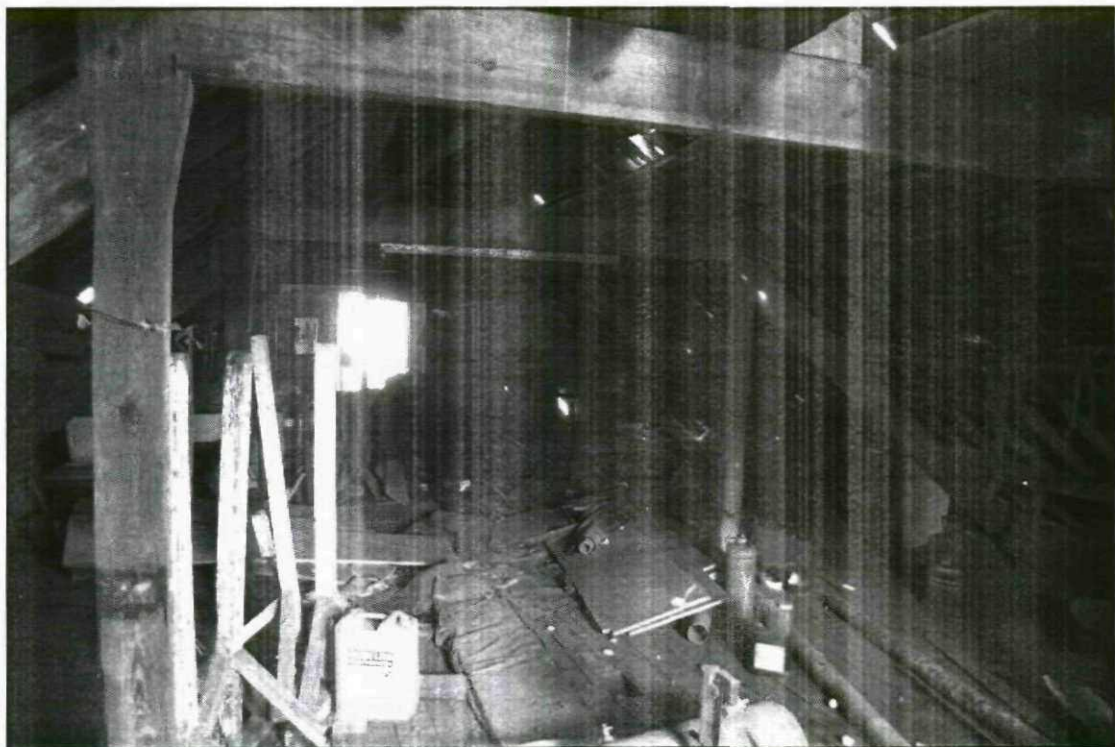
3.3.7. The walls are generally well sealed with no opportunities for roosting bats and there are no roosting opportunities beneath the timber floor.

3.3.8. The photograph below shows one of the here animal stalls in the southeastern end of the buildings. All three are white washed throughout with no gaps or openings in the walls to provide potential roosting opportunities, with feeding mangers and arched openings at floor level.

3.3.9. The ceilings are exposed timber the same as in the two main storage areas with no opportunities for roosting bats.

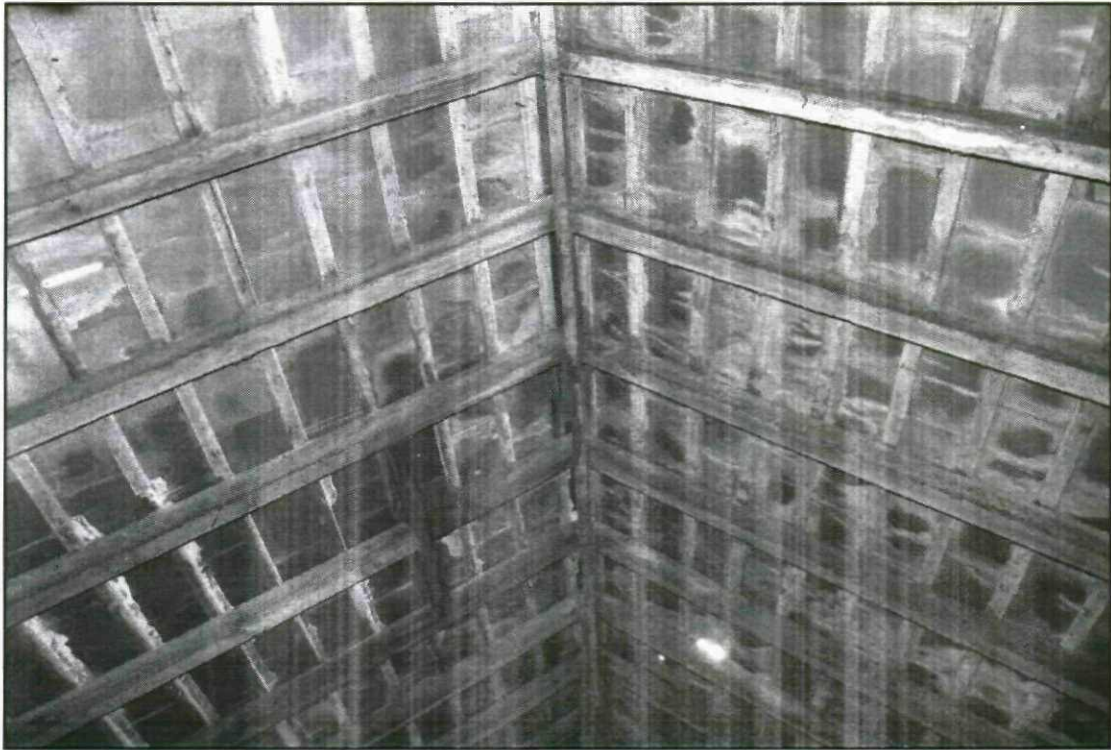


3.3.10. Upstairs there is one large storage area that is accessed through an external door in the north western gable end with a window in the south eastern gable wall with missing panes of glass. A lot of materials are stored in this area.



3.3.11. The roof is supported on a heavy, timber, traditional, queen post structure, as can be seen above.

3.3.12. There is no lining or sarking beneath the roof slates leaving the underside of the slates fully exposed and visible for inspection. The ridge is fairly well sealed with a lot of cobwebs present, except in those areas where water has leaked in due to missing or displaced slates. There are few opportunities for roosting bats.



3.3.13. A full visual inspection of the building inside and out using ladders and bright torches identified a few small and hard mouse droppings on the loft floor and an abundance of bird droppings but no bat droppings.

3.3.14. A number of old bird's nests were identified in all of the rooms of the building. There were an assortment of nests including swallow nests and other nests of larger species, including blackbird.

3.3.15. No barn owl pellets or signs of barn owl occupation were identified anywhere in the building.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The old coach house is located within an open yard area surrounded by a number of new and converted buildings and with little tree and hedge cover and a lack of flight paths to provide connectivity to other bat foraging habitat. The habitat on the site was therefore assessed to be of low potential value for foraging bats.

4.2. The walls of the building were generally in a reasonable state of repair and provide minimal opportunities for roosting bats and where opportunities were found these could be fully inspected with a bright light and ladder.

4.3. The roof was not in such good condition and missing and displaced slates provide access to the inside of the building but also provide openings for rain to enter causing localised rotting of the timbers.

4.4. The roof is supported by a heavy queen post timber frame with close fitting joints. The roof slates are exposed underneath and the ridge tiles generally well sealed, except where there are ventilation ridge tiles. All areas could be fully inspected with relative ease.

4.5. No bats, bat droppings, feeding remains or other bat field signs were identified anywhere around the inside and the outside of the building.

4.6. A number of old nests were identified inside all rooms of the building. Some of these were swallow nests and some were larger birds. There were no signs of owl activity anywhere within the building.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The site and the building were assessed to have low potential for roosting bats and no bat field signs were identified on the site. There is a high confidence in the results of this survey and therefore no additional surveys are recommended.

5.2. Nevertheless, individual bats can seek temporary shelter almost anywhere so it is recommended that all persons employed on the demolition are instructed to work carefully and to be observant. In the very unlikely event that a bat is found, the bat should be covered and protected and work should cease at that location until further advice has been sought from the undersigned.

5.3. The building is clearly well used by nesting birds and therefore it is recommended that the demolition be undertaken outside the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year.

5.4. If demolition is deemed to be necessary during this time, it is recommended that the works are preceded by a nesting bird survey and any active nests found should be left undisturbed until the end of the nesting season. It must be noted that a nesting bird survey is very likely to find active nests that will prevent demolition during the nesting season.

5.5. Another option would be to net the buildings before the nesting season starts to prevent birds from nesting but this would be very difficult in this case because of the size of the building.

5.6. It is recommended that, to increase the biodiversity of the site in line with the requirements of PPS9, a bat brick is installed at a suitable place within the new buildings to be constructed on the site.

5.7. It is also recommended that nest boxes be erected around the site to provide additional nesting opportunities.

Derek A Whitcher.

Natural England Bat Survey Licence Number.

20120510

Natural England Barn Owl Survey Licence Number

20120508

22.03.2012.

Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about bats, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Over 15 species of bat have been recorded in Britain. These fall into two families, the horseshoe bats and the 'ordinary bats'. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet, and habitat change.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Habitats Regulations 1994 and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

A breeding or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is therefore any structure a bat uses for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to use the same roosts each year, legal opinion is that the roost site is protected whether or not the bats are present at that time.

Bat roosts can be identified by looking for:-

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices.
- Bat droppings.
- Prey remains.
- By carrying out night observations using a bat detector.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

The person applying for that licence has to be suitably qualified and experienced in bat matters. That person is then responsible for ensuring that the measures contained in the licence are carried out.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about the legal protection offered to nesting birds in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Part 1.-(1) Of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

- (a) kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
- (b) takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- (c) takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1.-(5) of the Act states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

- (a) disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
- (b) disturbs young of such a bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in early April, peaks during May and June and continues until mid August.

It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub but others are ground nesting.

The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Appendix III. DATA SEARCH RESULTS.

Dear Derek,

I have run this search - there are no bat records within 1KM of the grid reference you have specified. As you would expect I won't ask for an invoice to be raised for this.

South Yorkshire Bat Group may hold records that we do not.

Best regards

Brian.