

## RSPB Bexley Group Local Walk – Joydens Wood Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019 Led by Ralph and Brenda Todd

Hannah, I blame Hannah – yes storm Hannah bringing a cold, 40mph winds into the woods and the threat of rain. Would there be anyone joining the walk this morning especially given the “relatively” early start – 8.30am? Well, 10 hardy members did turn up and despite the weather and at least 32 spots of rain plus a little sun and blue sky it turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable stroll. Just a pity no one told the birds we turned up against the elements to see them.

Timed to celebrate the first ever local walk by the group back in early May 1979 Joydens Wood has seen some changes since that first visit – now managed by the Woodland Trust being possibly the most significant. We noted that between 1979 and 1991 the group made 15 visits to this wonderful local wood then nothing until January 2018 – it is certainly worth more future visits.



Looking for goldcrest on Main Path



Male blackcap

As we led off, the local robin perched on the sign board to welcome us. Both song thrush and nuthatch called from nearby and a ring-necked parakeet reminded us we can never get away from them. It wasn't until we reached the back of the Norfield Road gardens that things picked up again with great views (and a photo or two) of male blackcap soon followed by a pair. A pair of jays was seen nest building and the expected blue and great tits turned up to show off. More robins and a dunnock weren't unexpected.

We walked as far as the enclosure with the two remaining carved Saxon soldiers with a brief explanation as to why they were there and not in their intended location. Then retracing our steps a little we wandered down one of the tracks for a short history lesson around the Faesten Dic. From here we cut through a nice piece of mixed gorse/birch habitat where Harry (young ears are so helpful on a walk like this) picked out chiffchaff and goldcrest – we couldn't locate them. Walking deep into the Corsican pine didn't produce the hoped for treecreeper or coal tit but it did bring us into the Valley path where we were able to begin appreciating the wonderful display of bluebells. We were beginning to realise the dominant bird of the day (other than jay) was the blackcap as we were serenaded throughout much of the walk – we must have seen/heard at least 8 including one pair.

The occasional jogger or dog walker were the only distractions from the beauty of the bluebell carpets – sadly the cold dull conditions meant the wood anemones remained closed up though there were plenty there. Joining the Main Path we began the uphill walk, again Harry alerted us to another goldcrest and chiffchaff – then a pair of long-tailed tits came into view – we believed they were collecting lichen off the branches for their nearby nest. Some saw the only coal tit of the morning.

We arrived at the heathland where all we could do was imagine what ought to be seen in this lovely clearing (tree pipits, spotted flycatchers, redstart) – not even a chaffinch. We viewed the informative signboard where the “soldiers” were once on duty then across to the picnic area to the Hawker Hunter carving – all rather enlightening for those who hadn't visited before or for a very long time.



Viewing the Hawker Hunter in the picnic area



Long-tailed tit (all images Ralph and Brenda Todd)

We ended the walk, bordering the golf course and woodland adjacent to Birchwood Road, investigating the Joydens Wood Residents Horticultural shed, before returning to the Summerhouse Drive entrance – where we started some three hours earlier.

Well done and thanks to all who turned out – as always, a good social informative gathering.

**Birds seen/heard (h)** Woodpigeon, ring-necked parakeet, wren, dunnock (h), robin, blackbird, song thrush (h), blackcap, chiffchaff (h), goldcrest (h), long-tailed tit, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, nuthatch (h), jay, magpie, carrion crow, starling, chaffinch (h), house sparrow (21 species)

Ralph and Brenda Todd  
April 27<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Next walks – Dawn Chorus – Lesnes Abbey 4.45am Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May and Hall Place North/Shenstone Park, 9.30am Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May.