



Helpline: 01677 470180

gamekeeperwtrust@btinternet.com

Being there for gamekeepers, stalkers and ghillies

## Unsung Heroines – wives girlfriends and partners

*I don't know what the divorce rate is for gamekeepers but I guess it is higher than the national average and you wonder why. It is not really hard to work out though is it - getting married in February more than likely to fit in with the rearing season, moving into a house which is not your own and sometimes in a new area with little choice, insecurity, hardly seeing your better half, never being quite sure he is out lamping when he is out all night, wet dirty clothes to wash all the time, meals at all hours, never having time nor money to spend on the finer things in life, long journeys to travel children to school, I could go on ....*

However when you first meet your gamekeeper; it is terribly romantic and your friends think it is a touch of the Lady Chatterleys; a walk through the woods and assignations in the feed huts after dark! More likely holding the lamp whilst out foxing or rabbiting or if you are lucky a bit of both. Beating can be fun with light hearted banter and little responsibility followed by log fires and early nights. The lure of a cottage in the wilds is appealing too, an independence seldom achieved for home owners at an early stage in life these days.

However the reality kicks in when there is no money or time for luxuries, children come along and it is not easy to take all the family along feeding or on the rearing field certainly in early stages. It can be a really lonely life at times and coping with a bad tempered man when the wind was wrong on a shoot day or a fox has been in the release pen can be difficult at times.

It all depends on your interests at the end of the day; if you are interested in wildlife and the countryside then it can be tremendous fun, training dogs together, shoot days and the camaraderie and friendship with others is invaluable. If the whole family are interested in time too, it can be immensely rewarding and enrich your lives. Realising and understanding the way of life and that it is not a recipe for a Mercedes sports and dining out every week and you will be fine. However there are basic pointers which both partners should consider to ensure an enduring partnership. It is important in any relationship to take stock and think about your partner and their needs. Maintaining a relationship is vital and should be considered in the same way as you would take your vehicle for it's MOT, on a regular basis.

Being sensitive to each other and understanding that there are boundaries, wives/partners do have lives of their own and that they are not totally taken for granted is paramount to a

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good relationship. Holidays, days out and a treat are not too much to ask for a person who gives a great deal to assist in the smooth running of a shoot and accepts second place most of the time. Are you taking this in chaps?

Taking time out to think about the future is also very important; don't underestimate the power of uncertainty, it eats away at a relationship and worry is a debilitating disease. Take advice and think about a private pension scheme, insurance scheme, savings plan, buy to let; make provision in other words for retirement or other unforeseen circumstances to protect your family.

A word finally to the wise; a gamekeeper's wife who finally saw the light and left her husband told me this story; she was making a flask for her man when he went out two or three nights a week supposedly foxing and giving him two cups as he said he did not like to drink his second cup out of a dirty mug. It turned out he was meeting another lady friend all the time his wife certainly felt a mug when she found out!! So be suspicious if your man asks for two cups when he is going out at night!

Well off to help with biting the next lot of pheasants - happy days!

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