



# Odds and Ends from Keepers Cottage

Autumn 2023



Welcome to odds and ends from Keepers Cottage, a collection of useful tips on living well, interesting collections of poems and prose from various sources and of course little clips of gamekeeping life, past and present.



[www.thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com](http://www.thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com)  
[enquiries@thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com](mailto:enquiries@thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com)

Rather late for Autumn as the clocks have already turned back and whilst we have for a short period lighter mornings our dark evenings soon arrive.

As we consider how fortunate we are in the light of War in many parts of the world and honour Remembrance Day and those who gave their lives so that we can live ours in peace, we also remember those in our profession we have lost, through ill health, long life and tragedy. We are remembering through November and continue to remember through our Memory Tree.

The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust has been busy in all sorts of areas but not least in our “Check in with a Mate Campaign”. Please help us to keep this going – its fun, it is serious and it is important to keep in touch, look after each other and encourage all of us to ask “How are you doing” and listen.

Our nurses have been busy with the health checks and we will continue wherever we have opportunity, helping to keep you healthy and enjoying life to the full which is the aim of us all isn't it.

We thank everyone who have been and continue to work hard on our behalf raising funds so that we can continue to support those who need us and everyone as students, in work and in retirement and later life.



## *The Memory Tree*

Our survey for partners/wives and husbands of keepers, stalkers and ghillies is underway and we look forward to competition so we can consider carefully how we can “do better”, in promoting ourselves so everyone knows what we do and how we can help, continuing to expand our services and so much more. Thank you to everyone who has taken part and please take a few minutes if you haven't as yet. It is confidential, and is important to us. A special thank you to Ruth, our Communications Manager who has devised the survey, has promoted and is collating replies.



As we approach the mad month of December, everyone on shoot days and trying to organise celebrations, we know there are those who are alone this year – we are here, we care and we will keep in touch with you. Do let us know if you know anyone you think may appreciate a call/a note/a small gift.

Take care all and very best wishes from us all in the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust

# Gamekeepers of Margam

Gamekeepers were essential outdoor servants. For over a century the position of Head Keeper to the Talbots was held successively by Isaac, William and John Stubbs, and the formal document appointing Isaac Stubbs to this position in August 1813, was signed by Michael Hicks Beach, William Hicks Beach and the Reverend Dr. John Hunt, vicar of Margam, trustees of the will of T.M. Talbot.

The trustees licensed the gamekeeper to kill hares, pheasants and partridges in the manors of Margam, Hadod y Porth, Higher Kenfig, Pyle, Kenfig, north Cornelly and Sker. They also authorised him to seize all guns, bows, greyhounds, setting dogs, lurchers and other dogs liable to kill hares or conies, ferrets, trammels, lowbels, lays and other nets, snares and other engines for the taking of game.

The allowances which they received in addition to their wages included rent-free accommodation in the keeper's lodge, £5 a year in lieu of hay for their cow, clothes, shot, powder, and food for their dogs. In 1829 Talbot considered "that whoever made the original agreement with Stubbs engaged him at the most extravagant wages I ever heard a keeper receiving." Isaac Stubb's salary was 50 guineas a year plus perks, whereas Talbot's uncle paid his keeper only twenty pounds.

Three keepers were employed at Margam, and several underkeepers; in 1830, on Talbot's recommendation, George Stubbs, eldest son of the Head Keeper, became keeper to the Nicholls of Merthyr Mawr. In 1896 there were two beats, those of John Stubbs and John White, while the underkeepers were William Jones, Arthur Powell, William Fabian, Q. Empson, F. Smith, R. Cope, A. Ferguson, Richard Powell, Henry Powell, William Lamb and E. Elward. Among the keepers' duties were the organisation of 'shoots', hiring of beaters, destruction of vermin, rearing of pheasants and preservation of nests (for which they received one shilling), night watching and the protection of game.

# FIVE LITTLE LEAVES

5 little leaves hanging in the trees  
Bobbing and swaying and dancing in the breeze  
The first little leaf fluttered to the ground  
Now there's 4 leaves left - red, orange, yellow, brown.

4 little leaves hanging in the trees  
Bobbing and swaying and dancing in the breeze  
The next little leaf fluttered to the ground  
Now there's 3 leaves left - orange, yellow and brown

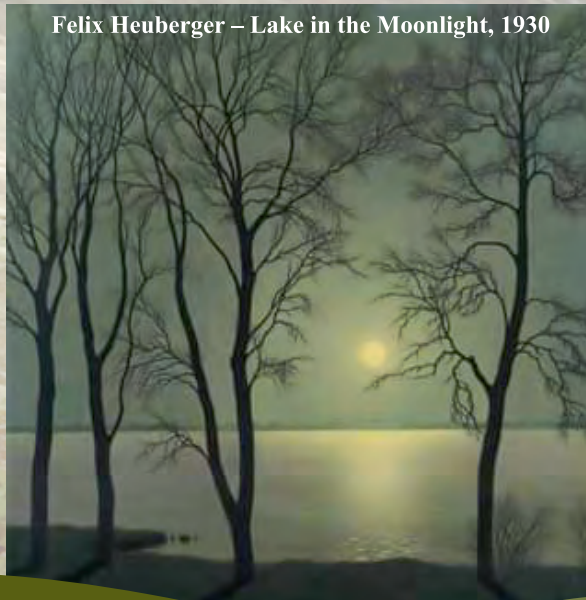
3 little leaves hanging in the trees  
Bobbing and swaying and dancing in the breeze  
The next little leaf fluttered to the ground  
now there's 2 leaves left - yellow and brown.

2 little leaves hanging in the trees  
Bobbing and swaying and dancing in the breeze  
The next little leaf fluttered to the ground  
Now there's 1 leaf left - and that one's brown

So there's 1 little leaf hanging in the trees  
Bobbing and swaying and dancing in the breeze  
The last little leaf fluttered to the ground  
Now the ground is a carpet - green, red, orange yellow and brown

All that is gold does not glitter,  
Not all those who wander are lost,  
The old that is strong does not wither,  
Deep roots are not reached by the front.  
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,  
A light from the shadows shall spring,  
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,  
The crownless again shall be king

**JRR Tolkein from the Fellowship of the Ring**



# The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free UK wide service which provides extra advice and support, including when there's an interruption to your electricity, gas or water supply.

It's easy to join the PSR... <https://www.thepsr.co.uk/>

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is free to join. It helps utility companies, including energy suppliers, electricity, gas and water networks like us to look after customers who have extra communication, access or safety needs. It helps us tailor our services to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut, gas or water supply interruption.



We're working together to make sure that your property receives all the support services covered by the Priority Services Register. By telling us once, we update your PSR request with your energy supplier (the company you pay your bills to) and your regional network companies including electricity, gas and water.

The PSR promise is made by all participating energy companies in England, Wales and Scotland. We will always follow privacy laws and your PSR information will never be used for marketing.

If you already know which company delivers your electricity or gas, just click on the links on the website for extra information and to register.

# Wise words indeed

Written by Regina Brett, 90 years old, of the Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio.

"To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the 42 lessons life taught me. It is the most requested column I've ever written. My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short – enjoy it..
4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and family will.
5. Pay off your credit cards every month.
6. You don't have to win every argument. Stay true to yourself.
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. Save for retirement starting with your first pay check.
9. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
10. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
11. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
12. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
13. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it...
14. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.
15. Get rid of anything that isn't useful. Clutter weighs you down in many ways.
16. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
17. It's never too late to be happy. But it's all up to you and no one else.
18. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
19. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
20. Over prepare, then go with the flow.
21. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
22. The most important sex organ is the brain.
23. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
24. Frame every so-called disaster with these words 'In five years, will this matter ?'
25. Always choose life.
26. Forgive but don't forget.
27. What other people think of you is none of your business.
28. Time heals almost everything. Give time time.
29. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
30. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does..
31. Believe in miracles.
32. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.
33. Growing old beats the alternative -- dying young.
34. Your children get only one childhood.
35. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
36. Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere. (I love this one)
37. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
38. Envy is a waste of time. Accept what you already have not what you need.
39. The best is yet to come...
40. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
41. Yield.
42. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.  
Walking My Talk - All I son



# Mick's Diary



November means the shooting season is well underway and at least we have partridge this year which is pleasing to see as well as some wild greys in places. It is always a moment of immense pride to witness their flight across the hedges, son George has re-laid as well as working so hard to protect.

October was very difficult for everyone on the land, whether farming, forestry or keeping. Just getting about and not getting stuck was a challenge. However, the birds seemed to cope and feed well.

Our first shoot day went well but tragic as well because one of the picking up team lost their dog when crossing the road. A car ran it over and just carried on despite the fact it was laid in the road and died at the scene. How someone can do that is beyond me but unfortunately a car number was not taken at the time so it is unlikely the driver will be taken to task.

On a different note our next shoot day will be rather different as our guns are guests for breakfast. We have no one at present to cater for the guns so I am cooking breakfasts which will consist of bacon, sausage, black pudding, fried bread, eggs from our own hens and mushrooms. All the beaters are waiting on and washing up afterwards. What a team effort it will be! However, we do reward them with some delicious pies, home baking and hot drinks.

Looking after our team is paramount; we expect a lot of them in some very inclement weather at times and we are very sorry for the lady who lost her best working dog.

Foxes are pairing up really early this year which seems to be a sign of the times but means many nights out and about.

With higher water conditions in the river there is optimism for the salmon working their way up from the estuary to their place of birth. However, increasing number of seals and other predators which include cormorants, goosanders and many others makes it a continual battle to reach their destination safely. It is the first year in 30 years I have not caught a salmon on our home river, not I profess to be a great fisherman but a sad indictment of the times as many rivers keepers, ghillies and ghillies are well aware.

Off to do the shopping for the breakfasts – we don't need to worry about the extra calories – it will all be walked off during the day!

I'm not a pheasant plucker, I'm a pheasant plucker's son  
I'm only plucking pheasants 'till the pheasant plucker comes.

Me husband is a keeper, he's a very busy man  
I try to understand him and I help him all I can,  
But sometimes in an evening I feel a trifle dim  
All alone, I'm plucking pheasants, when I'd rather pluck with him.

I'm not a pheasant plucker, I'm a pheasant plucker's mate  
I'm only plucking pheasants 'cos the pheasant plucker's late !

I'm not good at plucking pheasants, at pheasant plucking I get stuck  
Though some pheasants find it pleasant I'd rather pluck a duck.  
Oh plucking geese is gorgeous, I can pluck a goose with ease  
But pheasant plucking's torture because they haven't any grease.

I'm not a pheasant plucker, he has gone out on the tiles  
He only plucked one pheasant and I'm sitting here with piles !

You have to pluck them fresh, if it's fresh they're not unpleasant,  
I knew a man in Dunstable who could pluck a frozen pheasant.  
They say the village constable had pheasant plucking sessions  
With the vicar on a Sunday 'tween the first and second lessons.

I'm not a pheasant plucker, I'm a pheasant plucker's mum  
I'm only plucking pheasants 'till the pheasant plucker's come.

My good friend Godfrey is most adept, he's really got the knack  
He likes to have a pheasant plucked before he hits the sack.  
I like to give a helping hand, I gather up the feathers,  
It's really all our pheasant plucking keeps us pair together.

I'm not a pheasant plucker, I'm a pheasant plucker's friend  
I'm only plucking pheasants as a means unto an end !

My husband's in the forest always banging with his gun  
If he could hear me half the time I'm sure that he would run,  
For there's fluff in all my crannies, there's feathers up my nose  
And I'm itching in the kitchen from my head down to my toes.

I'm not a pheasant plucker, I'm a pheasant plucker's wife  
And when we pluck together it's a pheasant plucking life !

**For Colleen**



## Ingredients

- 700g mixed game, minced
- 350g sausage meat
- 350g bacon, minced
- 100g chestnuts, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp fresh thyme
- 60g butter
- 2 whole brown onion, finely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 35g plain flour
- 100ml red wine
- 1500ml chicken stock
- 125g cannellini beans, cooked
- 125g kidney beans, cooked
- 50ml vegetable oil

# Taste of Game

[www.tasteofgame.org.uk](http://www.tasteofgame.org.uk)

**Serves 6**

## Method

Mix the game meatballs recipe mince, sausage meat, minced bacon, chestnuts and thyme well together in a bowl. Season, and divide into 50g meatballs: you should get 30.

Fry the meatballs in half the butter and a little oil to give them a bit of colour, but don't cook them any further. Remove from the pan and put aside.

Fry the onion in the remaining butter in an oven proof dish until soft and golden brown, then add the garlic and cook for another 3 minutes. Add the flour, stir well and cook out for a further 5 minutes. Pour in the red wine and stock, stirring continuously until you have a smooth, light sauce.

Add the meatballs to the sauce, cover, and place in the oven at 180°C for 10 minutes. Mix in the beans and return to the oven uncovered for a further 8 minutes. Serve with mashed potatoes or fresh bread.



Helpline: 0300 1233 088

# AUTUMN MOMENTS

Over the stubble,  
carrion crows---  
the gamekeeper heads  
home for tea;  
apples overhang  
the orchard wall;  
drapes, about to fall  
bright bonfire-coloured  
leaves aglow  
overnight,  
the first heavy frost;  
dahlia petals on the lawn,  
dew-sodden;

in the October dawn  
Michelmas  
daises, limp and old,  
midst fading leaves,  
now spotted gold;  
Summer petals  
the landscape  
in a scarlet shroud;  
dank fog envelops  
the night;  
and hedgehogs snuggle  
in dormant pose.



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