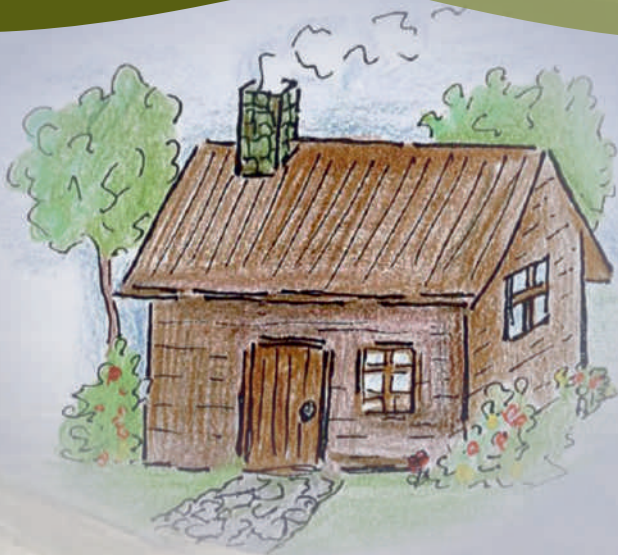




# Odds and Ends from Keepers Cottage

Autumn 2021



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.



The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust exists to support gamekeepers, stalkers and ghillies in work and in retirement and later life; for partners and for families in confidence and for short or long term.

The Autumn of 2021 has arrived almost unexpectedly with a warm wave and mixed fortunes for the shooting season; partridge beginning with some optimism whilst grouse stocks have dwindled and almost universally sparse from the North of Scotland to the South Pennines. Fishing too, has been an almost unprecedented dry season which has worrying consequences for long term stocks. However there has been a dry and warm summer which has been good for wild pheasants and once out of the pens for the commercial season too. Some of our wildlife, both flora and fauna have done well too, and it is with a huge sigh of relief that we can go forward into a season with some confidence of continuity. That is a big step forward from last year's stop and start, and with “well versed” systems in place we can as keep safe as possible.

We are very aware of the effects of Corvid 19, for businesses, for the profession and for individual gamekeepers, stalkers, ghillies and their families. There are financial consequences, strained relationships, and long term changes ahead for those affected and this is quite apart from the health issues, directly or indirectly after the pandemic.

We continue to “be there” for everyone, whether it is to find a job, personal issue, loneliness or whatever is affecting someone you know or a loved one – call us in confidence.

Jamie's Helpline 0300 1233088.

# Ian Sleightholm

## Head keeper Bolton Castle Estate



Our next Gamekeeper of the Month is head keeper Ian Sleightholm from Bolton Castle estate. Ian talks about the reasons behind his decision to become a keeper, what he loves about his profession the most and why he would encourage the young generation to consider a career in gamekeeping.

**Q:** Tell us a bit about yourself and what got you into gamekeeping?

**A:** I became a gamekeeper because from a young age I had a real passion for wildlife and the outdoors and a special interest in birds.

I was inspired by my grandfather who was a real countryman and who taught me the different bird species and their songs. He also taught me about different trees and plants, was a keen fisherman, and enjoyed following the local hunt (Wensleydale Fell Pack) too.



**Q: What do you love about this job the most?**

**A:** I love springtime the most. Seeing the young chicks from all the ground nesting birds thriving after the work we have done, like managing the vegetation and controlling predators, is truly rewarding.



At Bolton Castle estate, we are very fortunate to have thriving populations of many red listed species, such as curlew, lapwing, merlin, cuckoo, woodcock, skylark and ring ouzel. But our greatest success is the curlew, which are really bucking the trend and doing well on the estate all year round. We are lucky to have a large flock of over-wintering birds as well.

**Q: How much involvement have you had with the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust and how have they helped you?**

**A:** I think the GWT is great. I have been involved in events at shows and evening talks ran by the GWT and it is great to know there is always someone there to help out in times of difficulty.

**Q: Are you involved in any charity initiatives?**

**A:** We run a lot of charity events on the estate, raising money for the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research, either through our large clay pigeon events or by donating days' shooting to raise money for GWCT.

We also recently helped raise funds for an outdoor classroom for a local primary school through a working gundog event.

**Q: What does the job of a gamekeeper involve that people might not know about at all?**

**A:** I think people don't realise the amount of ground the keepers look after and how this benefits wildlife. We work not only on the moor but right across the estate, from moorland boundaries to the rivers and the valley bottom.

The money grouse shooting brings into the estate goes back into the management of the whole estate, e.g. planting trees, maintaining dry stone walls and creating more wader habitats.

**Q: What is your most memorable moment as a gamekeeper?**

**A:** I think lockdown has been a real challenge but for me it was a great chance to take my kids onto the moor every day at a time when the moor is bursting with life. It's been fun to be able to pass on my knowledge of the countryside to them.

**Q:What would you say to encourage the next generation to think about gamekeeping as a career?**

**A:** I would say to any young person wanting to take up gamekeeping as a profession, to come into the job with a mind open to change. The job is constantly changing, but it provides the opportunity to work outdoors in some of the most beautiful parts of the country and with the greatest abundance of wildlife.

**Q:What is your most essential piece of kit?**

**A:** My most essential piece of kit are my Swarovski binoculars which I use every day for spotting predators and observing the wildlife on the estate.

## The Family Grant was sent to several families this year.

We all just want to say a big thankyou for giving us the family grant and helping us have a long awaited and needed break away to make some good memories for a change! We had the best time, The girls asked me to send you this photo of them with the famous fisherman in Skegness...

Leanne



# JOHN KEATS

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too -  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.



**As we expect changes to fund social care in England and Scotland continue to provide the care element free of charge - A few reminders on Benefits available, their limits and their rates.**

## LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

1. Agree, never argue
2. Divert, never reason
3. Distract, never shame
4. Reassure, never lecture
5. Reminisce, never say "remember"
6. Repeat, never say "I told you"
7. Do what they can do, never say "you can't"
8. Ask, never demand
9. Encourage, never condescend
10. Reinforce, never force

Huey, 1996

[CereScan.com/Conditions/Alzheimers](https://www.cereScan.com/Conditions/Alzheimers)

## Capital limits

Rules common to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit unless otherwise stated.

Capital limits	Rates 2020 to 2021 (£)	Rates 2021 to 2022 (£)
Upper limit	16,000.00	16,000.00
Amount disregarded	6,000.00	6,000.00
Child disregard (not Employment and Support Allowance or Housing Benefit)	3,000.00	3,000.00
Amount disregarded (living in residential care or a nursing home)	10,000.00	10,000.00



# Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance	Rates 2020 to 2021 (£)	Rates 2021 to 2022 (£)
Higher rate	89.15	89.60
Lower rate	59.70	60.00

# Carer's Allowance

Carer's Allowance	Rates 2020 to 2021 (£)	Rates 2021 to 2022 (£)
Carer's Allowance	67.25	67.60

# Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance care component	Rates 2020 to 2021 (£)	Rates 2021 to 2022 (£)
Highest	89.15	89.60
Middle	59.70	60.00
Lowest	23.60	23.70
Disability Living Allowance mobility component	Rates 2020 to 2021 (£)	Rates 2021 to 2022 (£)
Higher	62.25	62.55
Lower	23.60	23.70

# The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust (GWT) has named Sue Stringer their 2021 Game Bird of the Year.

Gamekeeper's wife Sue is an NHS nurse whose spare time is spent supporting husband Steve, a full-time 'keeper on an estate near Chirk in North Wales and is a volunteer with GWT.

Steve describes Sue as his eyes and ears on what's happening at her end of the beating line on a shoot day. As well as making food for the beaters and guns, she is their on-shoot medic. Active throughout the year, Sue lends a hand with everything from looking after birds, dogging-in with her team of dogs, to sitting with her rifle for foxes.

She's a keen shot and the only female gun in her North Wales syndicate, where she also beats and helps out of season.

Steve told GWT 'I am so proud of her for what she does and would like to show her our appreciation for all her hard work and support for the shoot, and especially me'.

Sue was presented with the Lady Scott Rose Bowl by GWT Honorary President, Sir John Scott Bt. on 7 August 2021. The presentation was at the Tanfield Grouse Charity Clay Shoot in North Yorkshire, held courtesy of the Bourne-Arton family. Sue will also receive a gilet, courtesy of Game and Country, Selkirk in the Scottish Borders. All runners-up nominated for the award have also received a gift from GWT in recognition of their work.





Helpline: 0300 1233 088

# Mick's Diary

This summer has made for grumpy fishermen (myself included) and indeed genuine concern for fish stocks and the health of the River, not least on the River Ure where low levels are almost unprecedented in modern memory. Few summer evenings casting a fly but as reported in the National Press a bumper year for dragon flies and other species of insects and birds. Kingfishers in particular seem to be faring well as well as bobbing sandpipers and dippers.

For the pheasants and partridge there are constant bombardments from aerial pursuits i.e. buzzards and kites which benefit from the warm air currents. The game birds and other field species are hiding in the game crops and woods where they can. Water is needed constantly for the birds in the woods and is a daily task where piping has not been possible.

Insects are good supply, and this can be seen no more spectacularly than by the swallows and house martins swooping low on balmy evenings with a surfeit of flies and midges.

Harvest has almost gone along unabated this year with early winter barley and wheat safely gathered in and geese enjoying the remains of the crop in the stubbles.

There is a hedgerow bounty for birds and people alike with the wild raspberries earlier and blackberries and rowan berries and elderberries too. We used to make elderberry wine at one time until we had an explosion in the pantry one year! Put us off for a wee while cleaning the red wine from ceiling to wall.....

We have heard the curlews as they pass by on the way to the estuaries and wet places left, craving areas they can probe and feed on. Summer migrants have been making extra broods in the warm climate and we have babies in the nest still round the house just now. An early morning in the mist alerted young twin roe deer, which elegantly ran across to shelter in the game crops.

There are pockets of Field Scabious in the hedgerows, (The 'pom-pom' like nature of its flower has also given rise to alternative names such as Lady's pincushion, bachelor's buttons and blue bonnet) a lilac shade, contrasting with the many brown rust and red hues of the grasses and the ubiquitous bright pink Himalayan balsam which plague the woods and fields, though the bees love the bell like flowers, a source of nectar in the late summer.

A flurry of activity was experienced in August as the estate resumed the annual charity clay shoot with over 36 teams and an enjoyable day by all including the presentation of the Game Bird Award by Sir John Scott Bt, Honorary President of GWT. Susan Stringer was the worthy winner who has worked throughout the pandemic as practice nurse and still administering vaccines as well as her many jobs on the shoot and picking up on the shoot she works on. The two charities supported were GWT and Young Minds – so important for supporting young people with mental health difficulties and GWT – well, you know all about the help and grants given to gamekeepers and their families.

Finally, I officially stepped down as Headkeeper of Tanfield Estate at the end of last season but am staying part time to cast an eye over the younger generation as son George has taken over. It was a proud day and of course I have taught him everything he knows! I have also taken on another keeping job nearby so actually am busier than ever....Always a job to do and things to see.





# Pigeon & hedgerow salad

Blackberries and game go perfectly together in this light and seasonal salad  
By Barney Desmazery

## Ingredients

2 pigeon breasts, skin removed

2 tbsp olive oil

## For the dressing

3 tbsp olive oil

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tbsp cider vinegar

1 bunch chives, half snipped, half finely chopped

## For the salad

handful shelled hazelnuts, roughly chopped

2 large handfuls mixed salad leaves

small handful parsley leaves

100g blackberries

## Method

### · STEP 1

Toss the pigeon in the olive oil and some cracked black pepper, then set aside until ready to cook. Make the dressing by mixing the oil, mustard and vinegar with the finely chopped chives, a tiny splash of water and some seasoning. Set aside.

### · STEP 2

Heat a frying pan, dry-fry the hazelnuts, then set aside. Place the pan back on the heat, then pan-fry the pigeon breasts for 2-3 mins on each side until plump. Leave to rest for 5 mins.

### · STEP 3

When the pigeon has rested, remove to a chopping board. Toss the salad ingredients together in a bowl with the snipped chives and a drizzle of dressing, then pile in the centre of 2 plates. Finely slice the pigeon breasts and arrange around the salads. Spoon over the rest of the dressing and serve.

## GOES WELL WITH

· Deep-filled Bramley apple pie