



Odds and Ends from Keepers Cottage

Spring 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
enquiries@thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com

Spring is a season to cherish; new growth and new life abounds all around and a new beginning of their season for most gamekeepers/stalkers and ghillies. Tidying up, heather burning, grit boxes, vermin control, deer control, preparing game crops, pheasant and partridge rearing – the list goes on.

2023 looks more positive around bird flu zones and risks though we remain vigilant and many shoots are mitigating the risk by taking back on the mantle of rearing. No mean feat for keepers who are already busy with a plethora of jobs to do.

For the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust, the last of our 30th Anniversary socials was held recently and our thanks go to our Honorary President Sir John Scott Bt who regaled the audience with tales from his journeys around the country during the Clarissa and the Countryman programmes. Times have changed and yet they haven't, looking through past books on game birds and gamekeeping if we look at the challenges then and now. We were also thrilled to be able to thank Zach Turner who was given his Local Hero Award for his entrepreneurial spirit and support of GWT through the production and sales of his leads, key rings and other products from Country Life Kids. Beautifully made and presented he donates a percentage to our charity with generosity and a wide smile. Thank you, Zach.

The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust has a full programme of events and Game Fairs planned, not least the Nurse Advice Clinic and Health Checks around the country, and fundraising challenges. We thank all those who have given so generously over the past twelve months and are planning an event/fundraiser to support us this year or who already have undertaken fundraisers in 2023. The Devon Ball and Ormsary Clay Shoot and Ceilidh are highlights thus far thank you so much. We are so very grateful.

We are also planning a calendar of cultural activities. A quilt is being put together to celebrate tweed and the pride of the gamekeeper/stalker and ghillie in his/her career, history and future. Squares of tweed are being collected and photographs for a digital version. This is a long term project but one we feel is worthwhile in collating the historical connections of shoots and estates around the country. Other projects are underway and will be publicised in due course.

Meantime enjoy the Spring and look forward to a summer with sunshine, good broods and good health.

Best wishes

Helen and all in the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust





Balmoral

Gamekeepers were among the most valued staff on the estate, as hunting and shooting were popular sports. Donald Stewart was the Head Gamekeeper at Balmoral for over 50 years during the reign of Queen Victoria. Over this period, to thank him for his service, Donald received gifts from the Queen and other royalty. Donald died in 1909 and his will lists some of these treasures:

'Black marble clock inlaid with malachite presented to my late

wife by Queen Victoria...the platinum watch presented to me by His Majesty King Edward then Prince of Wales... gold watch and chain presented to me by the Emperor of Russia...gold watch and chain presented to me by the Grand Duke Sergius of Russia...Queen Victoria's silver brooch presented to my late wife after the Queen's death.' Donald's will also provided instructions of what was to become of these gifts upon his death.

Top 10 Reasons Farm Trucks Are Never Stolen:



1. It is hard to commit a crime with everyone waving at you.
2. Who wants a truck that needs a year's worth of maintenance, u-joints, £2,000 in body work, lights and a windscreen that you can see out of?
3. Top speed is only about 45 mph.
4. The large round bale in the back makes it hard to see if you are being chased. You could use the mirrors if they weren't cracked and covered with duct tape.
5. They're too easy to spot. The description might go something like this: The driver's door is red, the passenger's side door is green, the right front bumper is yellow, etc.
6. The Border Collie on the tool box looks mean.
7. It takes too long to start and the smoke coming up through the rusted-out floorboard clouds your vision.
8. It is difficult to drive fast with all of the fence tools, grease rags, ropes, chains, syringes, buckets, boots and loose papers in the cab.
9. Only the owner knows how to operate the door to get in or out.
10. They have a range of about 20 miles before they overheat, breakdown or run out of fuel.



Turn2us helps people in financial need gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help – online, by phone and face to face through our partner organisations.

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>



Spring 2023

The Scottish Government intends to have transferred all recipients of child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Scottish Child Disability Payment.

Changes to the rules for Support for Mortgage Interest. Waiting period to be reduced from 9 months to 3 months. Changes to zero earnings rules.



April 2023

Most benefits and the state pension will be uprated by 10.1%. The benefit cap will be uprated by 10.1%.

Don't Quit

By Rudyard Kipling

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're drudging seems all uphill.
When the funds are low, and the debts are high,
and you want to smile but you have to sigh.
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must but don't you quit!

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
as everyone of us sometimes learns.
And many a failure turns about.
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow -
you may succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out –
the silver tint of the cloud of doubt.
And you never can tell how close you are.
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit-
it's when things seem worst that you must not quit.



The 10 laws of spaniel:

1. Thou shalt possess great intelligence, yet thou shalt never be sensible.
2. Thou shalt not wag thy tail, but wiggle they entire body.
3. Somewhere a tennis ball is being thrown.
4. Thou shalt not steal. Unless it's a sock, shoe, or something the humans left on the worktop.
5. Thou shalt never walk by a muddy puddle without sampling it's murky waters.
6. If it runs fast, thou shalt chase it. If it flies thou shalt follow it (it might drop out of the sky).
7. Thou shalt never go over. It's quicker to go through.
8. Thou shalt embrace every minute of every day with ecstatic enthusiasm. When they sleep, do so upside down.
9. Honour and love thy human with all they heart.
10. In fact: love everyone you ever meet with all thy heart.

Painting sets sent for Easter



Mick's Diary



The weather has kept us guessing this last couple of months, from cold days to relatively warm days, extremely wet to extremely windy and an odd dry spell. However, Spring inexorably moves forward, and our migrant birds are returning whilst our winter visitors preparing to return to cooler climates in Scandinavia for the fieldfares and redwings.

The first chifchaffs were early and sand martins are back again; we hold our breath for the swallows which sadly are becoming fewer every year though later house martins seem to be managing the journey or thriving over winter in greater numbers. Barn owls seem to have wintered well here, whilst a tawny owl yesterday seemed to have its clock wrong, hooting in full daylight!

Meanwhile a routine of vermin control has never been more important; carrion crows are a huge threat to ground nesting birds and fox control is key to an effective season especially for the wild stock. It was immensely satisfying on evening to be accompanied by the next generation keen to learn and to witness one of our grandsons shooting his first fox with accuracy and a cool head. Our granddaughters, meanwhile, are keen on their dog training, though there is some work to do after one favourite ate all the school books; and was relegated to the kennel in disgrace.

Muntjac have been rarely seen in the area but are increasing year on year, and roe deer are a common sight at any time of day. Fallow have been released on nearby estates and although a nuisance for damaging feeders, are a welcome addition to the variety of wildlife seen.

The curlews have returned though lapwings are sparse, and it is hoped that conditions will be conducive to successful nesting for all. Gulls are a constant threat, harassing nesting birds and on the look out for eggs and unguarded chicks later on.

Spring flowers in the hedgerows and verges are a welcome splash of colour, with primroses, violets and blackthorn blossom. Buds are peeping through in hawthorn and hazel and the whole countryside is green and fresh.

The fishing season is open on The River Ure. There are high hopes that a reasonable season will be feasible after low water for an extended period last year. Tying flies is a welcome winter activity in the long dark nights and a trip recently to John Norris in Penrith has topped up various components required for a while.

The farmer's stile

If you have got a barbed wire fence
and need to get across,
the farmer has a sweet technique
he owns it like a boss.

And all he needs is one feed bag
tied round the wire with twine,
to make it safe to stride across
and know you'll be just fine.

He doesn't need a kissing gate
or fancy hardwood stile,
he uses what he has to hand
(they're very versatile).

You won't find it in farming books
it's stuff you learn to do,
you only have to get caught once
with a barbed wire scratch tattoo.

Jan Millward©

Chalkstream Trout Parsley Root Purée, Cucumber, Horseradish

Serves 4 (www.chewtonglen.com)



Ingredients

4 x 100g trout portions,
skin off and pin-boned

4tbs duck fat

1 parsley root, peeled
into long strips

1 cucumber

Baby watercress

Parsley root purée

500g parsley roots,
peeled & diced

150ml double cream

100g butter

Horseradish sauce

200ml skimmed milk

60g fresh horseradish,
grated

Pinch lecithin

Method

A traditional taste of Hampshire, and a world away from the tiny trout found on restaurant plates of old, today's fish is a fresh and delicious alternative to salmon. It is showcased perfectly in this recipe from Luke Matthews.

Fry the parsley root strips at 160°C till crisp and turn out onto draining paper. Peel the cucumber, scoop out into balls with a Parisian scoop, then vacuum pack with a pinch of salt.

To make the purée, cover the parsley roots with water, add some salt then boil till soft. Strain, then add cream and butter. Bring back to the boil and reduce by half. Blend in a processor to a smooth consistency, correcting the seasoning.

Bring the milk and horseradish to the boil. Remove from the heat and cover with clingfilm. Infuse for 15 minutes, then pass through a sieve and add the lecithin. Blend with a hand-held blender to aerate.

Set the water bath to 60°C. Vacuum pack the trout in single bags with a tablespoon of duck fat then cook in the water bath for ten minutes. If you do not have a water bath, warm the duck fat to 80°C in a pan, drop the trout in and cook for 6-8 minutes.

Warm the purée and set into the bottom of a bowl plate. Remove the trout from the bag, draining away the excess oil and place on top. Spoon over horseradish foam, then lay over a couple of the parsley crisps, three or four cucumber balls and the watercress.



Helpline: 0300 1233 088

Today I saw a butterfly,
A raindrop on a leaf,
I saw a stranger smile at me,
Saw sun shine through the trees.
A child's laughter echoed,
Was the sweetest ever heard...

Today I felt the beauty
Of heaven, here on earth.

Heather Lea



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