



Odds and Ends from Keepers Cottage

Spring/Summer 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.

During this past year and more, the world has seemed smaller and disconnected on an individual basis whilst communities have come together as they do in times of crisis and reached out where they can to alleviate loneliness and isolation. Rural dwellers are used to it but not to the extent we have experienced during lockdown and an extended pandemic. We have all felt the effects, however resilient we are and coming out of lockdown can be an anxious and worrying time even though we have been looking forward to meeting family and friends again with wide social networks.

We want you to know we are here whatever you are feeling, to keep in touch and help in a practical way as well as supporting anyone who is struggling with financial worries, disability, physical or mental health concerns.

You can contact us through Jamie's Helpline: 0300 1233088

email at help@thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com or messenger. However you contact us, you can be assured we will listen in confidence and be there for you.



Mark Howard

Head gamekeeper

Mark Howard is a head gamekeeper based in Woodbridge, East England. His motto is “old fashioned values with a modern outlook.”

Feature – By kind permission of BASC

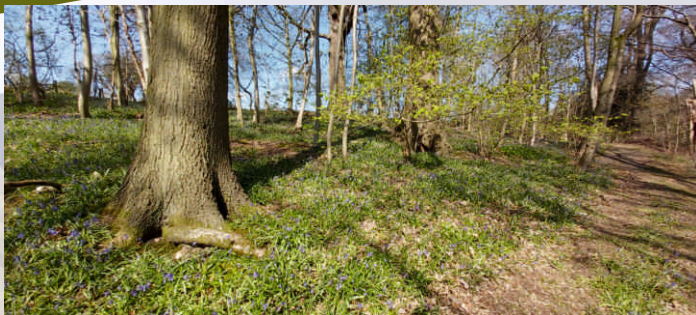
Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and what got you into gamekeeping?

A: The family has long been involved in game and game shooting. When I was younger, my uncle was a part-time gamekeeper at Cockfield Hall in Yoxford. He invited me to have a look around and it inspired me to pursue a career in gamekeeper.

Q: What's the best thing about being a gamekeeper?

A: Habitat management in the late winter; coppicing and tree planting. I like the idea that something is being done for future generations.

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



A: I attended a Christmas shoot, on an estate I joined just after leaving school, and we spent a week building a fire in the middle of a wood. On the shoot, we spent the whole day in one particular wood and at lunchtime they lit the fire and brought lunch for everyone by tractor. It was only a small bag but I remember the snow on the ground, the fire, and the fact it was Christmas. Of course, two other times I remember clearly was the birth of my two daughters who have both attended shoot days.

Q: What does the job involve that people might not know about?

A: The conservation aspect is probably the area that the general public misunderstand. It's conservation not preservation. Conserving a species as a whole rather than the individual animal or bird, is what people don't seem to grasp. There's also large misconception within the general public about where we fit into nature and the part we have to play to manage wildlife.



Q: Do you think there is a future for gamekeepers and what advice would you give to someone thinking of a career?

A: Yes. I think it's stronger now than it ever has been because of the numbers of people involved. But the infighting, whether it be between shooting and other fieldsports or between large and small game shoots, must end.

I would not encourage everyone to go into gamekeeping as it's something that you must make your own mind up about. So many people perceive the job as one thing and then realise it is something else.

All I would say is that if you are going to be a gamekeepers and it's in your blood, nobody is going to stop you.

Q:What do you do in your free time?

A: I run a rock 'n' roll club, go out to different clubs as well as vintage car shows and try to keep my Ford Zodiac on the road.

Black Grouse

They are black as night,
And like to take flight.

Their bright red wattle
Ready for battle.

In the morning light,
They start to fight.

On the lek,
They like to peck.

With their white fanning tails,
And her choice of males.

The greyhen choose the fittest,
To the biggest battle you ever will witness.

By Leo Page
Age 7.



Photo by Caroline Blackie (mum)



Helpline: 0300 1233 088

Chinese-style venison and broccoli

Serves 2

For the sauce/marinade

2 tbsp cornflour

4 tbsp oyster sauce

3 tbsp rice wine, sake or dry sherry

1 tsp sriracha sauce

1 tbsp runny honey

Other ingredients

2 tsp minced garlic

1 tsp minced ginger

2 Wild and Game venison steaks, sliced diagonally into thin strips

Half a head of broccoli, broken into florets (if you like your broccoli especially soft, steam it for a couple of minutes before following the instructions below)

4 tbsp sesame oil

Method

1. Mix together the ingredients for the sauce/marinade until smooth and put into a dish with the venison. Sit it in the fridge for half an hour.
2. Remove the venison from the marinade and reserve the marinade. An easy way to do this is to tip the venison and marinade into a sieve over a bowl.
3. Heat 2 tbsp of sesame oil in a wok (lidded if possible) and fry the venison for about 4 minutes until just cooked. Remove and set aside.
4. Wipe out the wok with kitchen towel if necessary to remove any marinade that strayed in with the venison. Heat 2 more tbsp of sesame oil in the wok and fry the broccoli until slightly charred.
5. Add about 4 tbsp of water to the wok so the broccoli cooks in the steam. If you have a lid, put it on the wok for this stage.
6. After about a minute, add the ginger and garlic and cook more gently for a minute more (don't let the ginger and garlic burn).
7. Add the venison, the reserved marinade and 4 tbsp of water. Heat until the sauce is glossy and bubbling.
8. Serve with rice.

Benefits rates 2021-2022

Changes to your pension



You won't get your State Pension automatically, you have to claim it. You should receive a letter about this no later than 2 months before you reach State Pension Age. This is now 66 years old for both men and women.

Increases to the new State Pension

You can now get up to £179.60 per week depending on the National Insurance contributions made during your working years.

Increases to the basic State Pension

The full basic State Pension under the old rules is now £137.60 a week for

people with at least 30 years of NI contributions.

Increases to Pension Credit

Guarantee Credit can now top up your income to at least £177.10 per week for single people and £270.30 for couples.

Savings Credit is now up to £14.04 extra per week for single people or £15.71 per week for couples.

Changes to benefits for your home

What you might be entitled to for some of these benefits depends on certain criteria. Some of these rates haven't changed for 2021-22 but it's worth checking if you might be entitled to any for the first time this year.



Your Council Tax Support

This varies depending on certain criteria and your circumstances, but it may cover your Council Tax in full.

Your Housing Benefit

This varies depending on certain criteria and your circumstances, but it may cover your rent in full.

Your Winter Fuel Payment

This remains one annual payment, normally £200 if you're under 80 and

£300 if you're 80 or over.

Your Cold Weather Payment

This remains £25 per week when the weather has been, or is expected to be, freezing or below for seven days in a row between November and March.

Your Warm Home Discount

This is a one-off discount on your energy bill from your supplier.

Changes to benefits for your wellbeing



Whether you need support during the day, at night or both, or you're a carer that helps support someone else, you could be entitled to some extra weekly money.

Increases in Attendance Allowance

This is now £60.00 per week if you need help in the day or at night, and £89.60 if you need help in the day and at night.

Increases in Carer's Allowance

This is now £67.60 per week if you care for someone.

Increase in Widowed Parent's Allowance

This is now £122.55 as long as you're still receiving Child Benefit.

Changes to benefits if you're working age

If you haven't yet reached State Pension age or you're a couple and one of you is yet to reach State Pension age you might be entitled to benefits for those of working age.

Changes to benefits if you're working age

If you haven't yet reached State Pension age or you're a couple and one of you is yet to reach State Pension age you might be entitled to benefits for those of working age.



Changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

The weekly rates for both the care and mobility components has increased.

£411.51 per month if you're single and £596.58 per month if you're a couple. These will be reviewed in October.

Changes to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

The work-related component has increased to £74.70 per week and the support component has increased to £114.10 per week.

Changes to Income Support

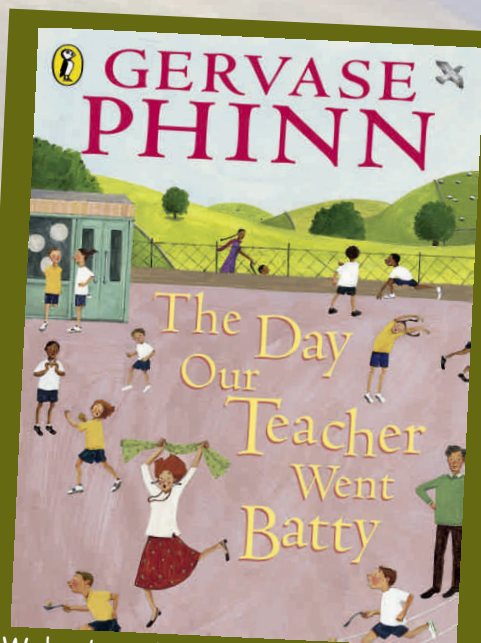
This has increased to £74.70 per week if you're single and £117.40 per week if you're a couple.

Changes to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

single and £117.40 per week if you're a couple.

Changes to Universal Credit

The basic standard allowances for Universal Credit have increased to



*We've been baking in class today,
Would you like my last jam tart?
It's funny how clean my hands are now.
They were dirty at the start!*

Mick's Diary



The swallows have just arrived at Keeper s Cottage and the blackcaps in the garden and woods around as well so the air is filled with song and hope for the nesting season. An osprey was seen recently taking a trout from the

lake as it passed on its way back from its winter in Africa and ready for the summer here. The roe deer are fit and increasingly bold as they feed (annoyingly) from the pheasant feeders still out for the birds and hen pheasants are sitting quietly in newly constructed cover as well as their own hiding places.

The River Ure is really low at present and crops beginning to suffer from a long period of dry weather not helped by the hard frosts of late. Late lambing farmers up the Dale are glad though of the respite and hope for some gentle rain when lambing is over.

Cowslips, primroses and wild violets are peeping through rapidly growing undergrowth in the hedge backs and woods which are heavy already with the scent of bluebells overlaid with wild garlic. Always wise to pen the poultry at this time of year – the taste of wild garlic in the egg yolks is not to be recommended!

Over 100 bird boxes have been put up in recent months which it is hoped will encourage woodland birds which can include pied flycatchers if we are lucky. Hedge laying has also been a priority and it is heartening to see this wonderful craft being revived and flourishing here at Tanfield. Son George has taken a keen interest and has carried out all this work as he takes over the reins.

Feeding and predator control continues to be a priority though, and there is always a new challenge. We are fortunate that we have plovers, oystercatchers and curlew but they are constantly battling with many predators which would take eggs and chicks.

Venison casserole for tea tonight – always satisfying after a day out and about!

Recipe For Preserving Children

Ingredients

1 Large grassy field

6 children

3 small dogs

Flowers

Narrow strip of brook with pebbles

Hot sun

Deep blue sky

Method

1. Mix the children with the dogs and empty the field, stirring continuously.
2. Sprinkle the field with flowers, pour the brook gently over the pebbles.
3. Cover all with a deep blue sky and bake in hot sun. When children are well browned they may be removed.
4. Will be found right for setting away to cool in bathtub.

