



Jamie's Helpline:  
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## Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust Annual Report 2022

### **Introduction**

In February 1992, The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust was formed and in 2023 there are founding Trustees still working hard to improve the lives of gamekeepers, stalkers, ghillies and their families including Chairman, Lord Aylesford; Mike Swan, Ian Grindy and Walter Cole as well as Trustees drawn from the gamekeeping community and related organisations.

#### **Core values and fundamental aims remain:**

1) TO RELIEVE GAMEKEEPERS AND PERSONS OF A SIMILAR OCCUPATION AND THEIR SPOUSES WHO ARE AGED, INCAPACITATED OR IN NEED

2) THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG PERSONS WHO MAKE OR WISH TO MAKE THEIR LIVING BY THE PURSUIT OF GAMEKEEPING

However substantial change has also taken place over the past thirty years in a variety of ways, both in terms of support offered but also in communicating and promoting the work of the Trust. An important addition has proved invaluable to many, through information and support principally through Jamies Helpline, volunteers support and website information.

In accordance with Charitable Commission law a third objective incorporates additional support and assistance which has developed since the inception of the Trust.

3) TO PROMOTE ANY CHARITABLE OBJECTS OR PURPOSES WHICH ARE CONSIDERED EXCLUSIVELY CHARITABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

### **Background**



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2022 began with anxieties over avian influenza and closure of eggs and bird imports from France which caused severe shortages in Red Leg Partridges and outbreaks in the UK throughout the year particularly in the Southwest and East Anglia. Following on from two years of disruption caused by the pandemic became untenable for some shoots creating redundancies situations or reducing shooting activities for a season. Lowground shoots adjusted their seasons and a long drought period followed by a bonanza of wild food caused anxiety for many gamekeepers with lighter bags. However, shoots carried on throughout the season with fortitude, resilience, and a clear indication of enthusiasm and commitment from guests for the future.

Further North, clouds gather for all sectors as deer culling continues, on an almost unprecedented scale on estates which have taken the decision to prioritise re-wilding, wind farms and re-planting. Crucially important, impending licensing of grouse moors through the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill will inevitably impact on every estate and every gamekeeper and stalker working in Scotland. In Wales the situation is very serious where licensing has been proposed for game bird releasing and effective vermin control is likely to become unlawful. River managers, ghillies and boatmen have also experienced a challenging season with a combined period of low water, increasing competition from predators and poor water quality.

Added to these challenges estates are increasingly looking to other streams of income; tourism, housing, and events which may not be easily compatible with shooting interests. However there continues to be a keen interest in shooting; organisations are encouraging interest and there are excellent initiatives to inform the next generation on the real benefits of conservation carried out by gamekeepers on estates and shoots throughout the country.

### **Communications and Fundraising**

“Reaching out” is always in progress as trainee gamekeepers progress to employment and eventually retiring or in later life and where life events change circumstances. Being aware of the range of services the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust can offer and how to access support is a constant message which is “headlined” wherever possible.



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Communications and information are disseminated through a variety of means: through newsletters and annual review, magazine articles and attendance at events and game fairs. Social media continues to grow in importance and is summarised in appendix 1 by Communications Manager, Ruth Kerr who continues to provide an excellent service.

2022 exceeded all expectations in terms of fundraising through events and donations to the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust. From shoot donations, to challenges, memorial donations, and Trust gifts, it was humbling to receive funds which enable the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust to function and to continue to build on services available to gamekeepers and their families.

Just Giving provides a platform for donations through a variety of sources, sometimes in memory of someone, a fundraiser challenge or just to acknowledge the work of GWT. Newsletters and social media as well as individual letters ensure that individuals, groups, and Trusts are acknowledged for their contributions. A condensed synopsis through social media at the end of the year and annual review summarised contributions.

### **The Memory Tree**

During November of 2022 on the Memory Tree page of the website and on social media, individual gamekeepers, stalkers and ghillies were remembered with over 70 names included. It is anticipated that this important way of honouring their memory will continue year on year. Feedback has been positive and enabled further contact with beneficiaries and other families to continue.

### **Game Fairs and Shows**

Normality resumed to a large extent in 2022 with the British Shooting Show in February at the NEC at which a stand was provided at no cost. Visitors include donors from shoots during the 2021/22 season as well as individuals supported during the year and general interest. Individual stands at The Northern Shooting Show Harrogate, Scottish Game Fair, Scone near Perth, Highland Fieldsports Fair at Moy near Inverness, and the Yorkshire Shooting Show and Game Fair near Doncaster in September which was the culmination of the raffle for the Quadzilla. Attendance at the Game Fair held at Ragley Hall was brief but effective, through a celebratory afternoon tea hosted by the British Game Alliance, and at the Welsh Game Fair through a presentation in the GWCT stand for the Lady Scott Award attended by Mike Swan.



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## **Presentations and Awards**

The Lady Scott Award was presented in September by kind permission of GWCT at the Welsh Game Fair. Trustee Mike Swan awarded flowers and gifts to Mrs Lorry Roberts whose family were present to join in the celebrations.

There were two Young Gamekeeper Awards, one to Esme Daubrah in the senior category who attended the Yorkshire Game Fair and Shooting Show in October and was presented with her award by Honorary President, Sir John Scott Bt.

In November Tom Waite aged 11 years was presented with his award at Highclere by Trustee Walter Cole. Tom was furthermore recipient of a young shot's day courtesy of the NGO.

There was also an award presented to Eoghan Graham at Moy Game Fair by the Chairman of the SGA Alex Hogg MBE and a local hero award to Mrs Carol Craddock at the GWT Dales Dinner in November presented by Honorary President Sir John Scott Bt. These are positive and enjoyable days which augment the inclusive nature of GWT throughout the gamekeeping community and throughout the UK.

## **Health**

Counselling support take up has increased quite markedly reflecting the need for assistance. Whilst the Mental Health lead volunteer continues to provide vital help, there is also advice available through the Nurse Advice Clinic and a more specific professional service tailored to need i.e., in different parts of the country face to face, online, telephone or with specialist support.

## **Nurse Advice Support**

At the end of November, a new service was launched initially with two nurses and two sessions available on Monday morning 9 am to 11 am and Wednesday evening 6 pm to 8 pm accessible either by telephone or online (zoom or teams).



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To date this has proved extremely helpful, principally from referrals rather than direct calls. Health concerns range from mental ill health, back injury, cancer diagnosis, terminal cancer care, circulation and vascular problems, support in and after pregnancy, arm and back injury after an accident, and other health issues.

There has been excellent feedback and callers feel supported on a regular or intermittent basis as required.

### **Long Term Health Grant**

Thus far the long-term health grant has assisted several individuals from cancer diagnosis, vascular issues, dietary problems, and heart disease. Offering financial support quickly and without fuss has meant lifting the burden and ensuring that travelling to hospital, and other immediate needs can be met.

### **Keeping in Touch**

It is a simple and basic need to feel in touch and interact with others, but this can become difficult when living in remote locations, someone is suffering from ill health or feeling overwhelmed by grief or other life events. Sending small gifts, letters and flowers has become an integral part of the care offered by the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust and appreciated beyond measure.

### **Staff**

Ruth Kerr as Communications Manager has provided a vital service in liaising with press and providing information to the wider community through social media channels and magazines.

Alan Tweedie attends the Firearms Practitioners meetings and other events in Scotland as well as fundraising through shoots and estates. His presence and work with the SGA and colleges assists to provide a continuous profile and support in Scotland.

### **Volunteers**

The small team of volunteers are invaluable and continue to provide support both to the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust and to individuals and families under our umbrella of support.



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Work continues to source volunteers with specific skills and expertise which will fill gaps in providing a holistic service, however it is clear paid support will also be required.

### **Planning Ahead**

The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is often considered the last resort in times of difficulty and one of the long-term aspirations of the charity is to create greater inclusion. Thus, a balance in provision of core aims and objectives, and a wider interest in the social history, current issues and family concerns are important. Projects are planned which are relevant to the gamekeeping community but of more general appeal.

Helping gamekeepers, stalkers and ghillies to cope in adversity ultimately helps them in becoming more resilient and financially independent or at least apprised, and in health; informed, supported and living well. Provision of health services, information and assistance has proved invaluable.

One of the main challenges of the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is reaching out to those who may need support. Ensuring that all regions have local supporters is in the five-year plan and which is becoming more urgent.

### **Social**

- "We need your Tweed" is one of the publicity campaigns planned for 2023 encouraging a square of estate/shoot tweed to add to a digital quilt and ultimately a physical quilt which will form part of the Gamekeeping community social history.
- A book of gamekeeper stories and poems are also planned during the year.

### **Information**

- Booklets as self-help guides on a variety of topics related to work, financial planning and training.

### **Students**

- Specific support through an outreach service and employed support officer for students in remote locations and in particular for young people undertaking apprenticeships and work-based learning.



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## Health

- Health Checks throughout the country are planned to continue a campaign to improve health.

## Work and Financial Health

- Financial Health Checks is also an opportunity to encourage planning and become self-sufficient in the long term if ill health or redundancy or other life event create a change in circumstances.
- Video on skills and training
- Online groups to support working keepers and their partners.

## Volunteers and Staff

- Recruit a benefit advisor.
- Recruit regional supporting officers/volunteers.

## Summary

Recovery from the pandemic has continued in 2022 with a slow response to training opportunities and steady rebuilding of relationships with organisations which have in some instances, restructured. Economic losses due to the pandemic combined with problems during avian flu outbreaks has had adverse effects on estates and shoots which in turn has caused individual gamekeepers and their family's anxiety, financial difficulties, and mental ill health.

Publicity and fundraising have proved positive and outreached all expectations along with other unforeseen opportunities for events, circulating information and encouraging reach-out for support.

The Five-Year plan is beginning to reap benefits with various health initiatives which it is hoped will help individuals and families. Equally to inform health services and organisations, and ultimately reaching those who are not necessarily aware of support available i.e., in later life and disabled. Policies and procedures continue to be assessed and recruitment of volunteers/staff with specific skills sets in distinct geographical areas is in progress.



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Adapting to a political and economic environment which is changing rapidly with direct consequences for field sports activities and enabling appropriate assistance and support is a major challenge. However, with a flexible approach and more effective engagement with estates and shoots as well at the point of need, the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is well placed to continue to support the Gamekeeping Community and expand services as needed.