

## **It's not the success it is the experience.**

**Chris Kelly, Preston.**

I started Wildfowling when I was fourteen. Thinking back about that time I had plenty of enthusiasm and not much knowledge. I was taken under the wing you might say, of an experienced wildfowler. He must have seen some promise in me and decided that he would teach me to do wildfowling, and to do it right.

My first recollection of true Wildfowling took place on Longton marsh one moonlight night, 61 years ago. I had never seen a widgeon in real life. But I knew what they were. I knew what they looked like, and I knew that they fed under the moon. I had read all the books on wildfowling I could get hold of.

So, on one windy night, my mentor and I, under the full moon, were out on the salt marsh, with decoys set out at a small flash, seated in nearby gutter, in order to bring our eyesight down to almost ground level so as to be able to see the birds against light clouds. With the tide pushing up the estuary, we waited. All of us to some degree or another, have in their make-up, the hunter gatherer instinct. For some it may be picking blackberries, it may be finding mushrooms, for others fishing or shooting. it is all nature's bounty. But Wildfowling, in a wild relatively untamed environment. That is the true hunter-gatherer experience. All wildfowlers are excited by that shrill, sometimes piercing call of a cock widgeon. But for me one of the most thrilling sounds is that deep husky growl of a hen widgeon, somewhere nearby in the dark. And on that night so many years ago, my heart was stopped for a brief moment by that seductive growl of a hen widgeon, only yards above me. I did not shoot a widgeon on that night, in my excitement I forgot to put off the safety catch. But in my mind's eye I can still recall that excitement, that fluttering of my heart all these years later. So often it is not the success that remains locked in our memory. It is the experience