

THE RANGER

The responsibility for overseeing the 4000 acres of the Hurtwood, and maintaining more than 60 miles of footpaths and bridleways (not to mention the countless miles of unofficial ones) is the colossal task of one man, the Ranger, Robert Ware.

Bob came to the Hurtwood from Galway 25 years ago. Ever since, for 6 days a week - and often 7 - from dawn till dusk, and if need be, night as well - whatever the weather, Bob has been out on the Common.

His job description defies belief. With occasional help, but usually on his own, he is firewatcher, vandal-hunter, and traffic patrol; litter-remover (everything from drinks cans and crisp packets to washing machines and burnt-out cars - at least a trailer-load each week); forest warden: clearing fallen trees, cutting back the edges of footpaths and bridleways, restoring overgrown views; godfather to the deer and other wild creatures; plus a myriad other duties. And all the while informing, controlling and cajoling the Great British Public - who are sometimes the wildest creatures of them all.

It seems almost miraculous that one man could cope with all this single-handed, but to an Irishman like Bob it's an irresistible challenge: It is impossible to imagine the Hurtwood without him.

THE RANGER'S TALES

Bob Ware has many tales to tell about the Hurtwood. Some of these are related here and occur throughout this booklet. The ranger's tales are indicated by the hurt berry symbol.

There's a lot involved in the job, you know. It's a day and night job, you can't keep hours, you've got to be on duty all the time, you see, that's the problem. When you come to think - you've got to watch campers, poachers - deer poachers - when you get a bit of snow at Christmas time I get them down from London tracking. They're devils you know, they don't use guns, they use the old crossbows - they don't make any noise at all, but you get them into a deer's ribs and it's dead every time. We found one up there one day and it was nearly 6 inches into a Scots pine.



2.

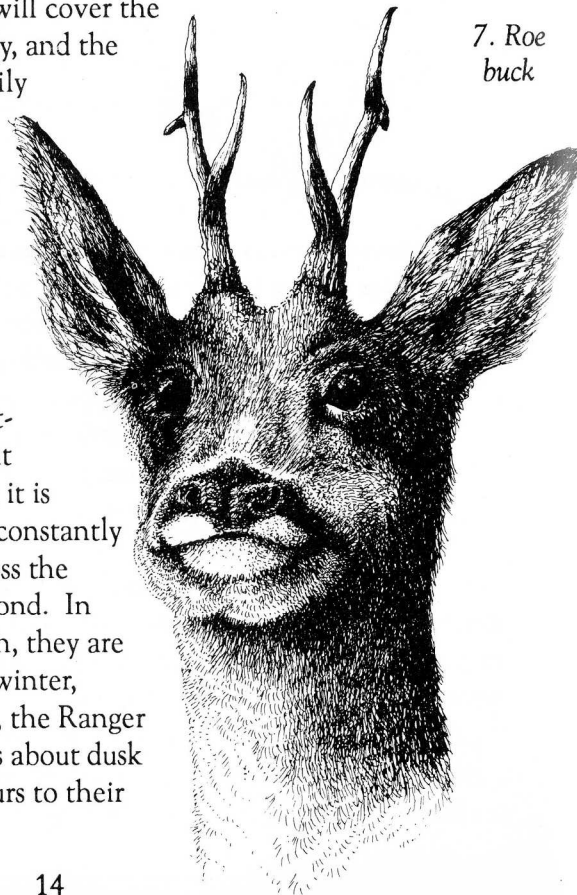
You don't need drink to make you happy - not at all. If I wake up in the morning feeling down in the dumps, all I need is a good set-to on the Common and I'll be right as rain - one of those horses will splash me all over with mud, and I'll be out after them and we'll have a right good barney, and Jeannie Mac, I'll be a new man!

THE PUMA, AND OTHER ANIMALS

For a brief, glorious period in the early 1970s, the Hurtwood was far more renowned for one of its animal inhabitants than it is now for the nightjar and the sand lizard. Those were the days when a puma roamed the Hurtwood - and the pages of the tabloid press! It was thought that it was probably a pet that grew too big and had been released in the Hurtwood, where it survived for at least a year. During that time it was seen by several people - the Ranger himself saw it almost a dozen times - but it was such an improbable denizen of a Surrey wood that many of these sightings were disbelieved, and the puma gradually acquired the status of a Loch Ness monster. Those who still doubt its existence should ask the Ranger - or read this book!

Apart from the puma, all the common woodland animals are there - rabbits, squirrels, foxes, and badgers (a few, on the outskirts of the Hurtwood). In a future issue we will cover the small mammals - the mouse family, and the bats, whose population has steadily increased since the hurricane - if you are in Horseblock Hollow at dusk, look out for the pipistrelles. Next year we plan to put up bat boxes in some of their favourite haunts.

The most attractive animals on the Hurtwood - for those lucky enough to see them - are undoubtedly the roe deer. There are about 100-150 deer at the present time; it is difficult to be certain as they are constantly on the move from Leith Hill across the Hurtwood to Winterfold and beyond. In summer, when the bracken is high, they are usually hidden from view, but in winter, when the bracken has died down, the Ranger says "The best time to see them is about dusk - they come down in threes or fours to their



7. Roe
buck

stables, as I call them. They've got some beautiful little houses in the heather where they all go back night times, the old heath is right above them and they're warm as Larry there. If you're in your car then, be very careful. If you see the deer cross the road in front of you - Stop! 10 to 1 there'll be another one or two behind, and they won't stop - they'll follow the one that's in front, the leader. But it's no use trying to see them if you're with dogs, or have the scent of dogs on you."

The roe deer is the smallest deer native to Great Britain. It is one of the most ancient British mammals - fossils of the roe deer have been found in the Cromer Forest Bed. A full-grown buck is less than 30" at the shoulder, and weighs up to 50lbs; the doe is smaller. The fawns, frequently twins, are born in May or June in a carefully camouflaged hiding place deep in the bracken, their dappled white spots like splashes of sunlight amongst the leaves.

The adult deer's summer coat is bright reddish-brown above, with slightly paler under parts; the coarser, longer winter coat is brownish-grey, with a white patch on the rump - what the Ranger calls their "half ounce of tobacco". There is a black line on either side of the nose, their lips are white, and there are white patches on the throat.

The buck's antlers are 6" - 9" long with several short points. At first they are covered with a soft velvety skin, but just before the mating season begins in July the skin dies and is rubbed off by the deer against tree stems or something similarly rough. The antlers are usually shed in December; the new ones will be functional by the following March.

Compared to the large branched antlers of the red or fallow deer, the roebuck's look deceptively delicate, but they are sturdy enough to withstand some fairly rough treatment, as the Ranger can bear witness. "When there's a fight I love it. The bucks don't half bang one another you know - I don't know how the devil their horns stand it, because those horns look very fragile, but they get up and walk around on their two legs you know, rapping one another - it's a real barney. And then one finds it's getting the worst end of the stick and he'll turn around and clear off, and then the other one will sometimes charge and chase him about 25 yards or so, but the fellow that's being chased can always run fastest."

"The fawns are lovely, och yes. I remember once, coming down to Hound House Road, where the banks are high on each side. There was an 'old lady' coming down there with two fawns, and they were I suppose a couple or three days old. She went up the bank, but when she got up the

top she was stopping and looking down, you see. And the little ones tried but they couldn't. I parked my car right in the middle of the road so they couldn't get past me, and I caught one - it was just like silk - so soft you couldn't say how it felt - but I got him up the top. The old lady took off with that one. Then I got down and got the other one, and I was struggling up the bank - it was very steep there - and she was waiting up at the top with the other one there, and she looked at me with her old eyes and her old ears as if to say, "Thank you very much."

To the forester, the deer are a pest - they feed on the leaves and twigs of trees, and are particularly fond of the young growth on new plantations. (In winter, their favourite food is ground ivy, and in a very hard winter the Ranger puts hay and 'mangles' out for them.) To the gardener, they can be a menace; they will devour almost anything, and are especially fond of roses. But to the rest of us there is no more enchanting sight than the sudden glimpse of a deer, startled amongst the bracken, bounding gracefully across the Common and out of view. Long may they flourish on the Hurtwood, and find safe refuge there.

Handa Bray



Did you ever see the puma? I did, several times. Jeannie Mac, I had some great laughs about that. I saw him several times you know, quite close, about 15 feet away - just before old Liza's place. Before you get up there, there's a sharp road into the left, and I was driving up there at about half past 4 on a winter evening - it was just getting dark - and 'the man' (the puma) came out of the black and stood in the middle of the road, and he had one front leg up and was looking at me and his eyes was like two diamonds you know, and he'd got very fierce-looking spikers on his nose. They kept on moving and he looked at me there for about 2 minutes. I was looking at him, you see, and he kept looking at me and his eyes - just like headlamps they were - and he walked across to me and he went on down the other road.

I should say he must have weighed about 110-120 pounds. The front is very high - it's like a greyhound, bigger in the front than he is in the back

- he's very narrow at the back, but a long powerful tail which he keeps on swinging. He's a sort of yellowy colour - a beautiful animal you know - but when he cocked his old leg up and I saw the tusk on him - Jeannie Mac!



She was a Canadian and the only woman that my wife would have shot, this old puma woman. She was rather plump but very good looking, and she had a right Canadian voice on her, and she said she knew how to catch it (the puma) and if she caught it, could she keep it? Well she went to see the Secretary who said she'd better see the Ranger. So she come into the Hollybush, and my wife said "If that woman wants you to help, make her pay you - the Hurtwood's not paying you to catch pumas - you'll only get killed probably." She got really worked up you know - I could tell that by the way her eyes shone. Jeannie Mac, we couldn't get rid of her. She had blankets, real big woollen blankets which she put apple blossom scent on. She said that was the biggest attraction to mountain lions (that's what she called them).

"If I can catch it alive", she says, "it's worth £2000." She used to put these blankets in various places all down past the reservoir where he was for a long time, and they always vanished you know. (And I know the person who took'em. One certain man in Peaslake - he used to take them blankets you see.)

One day she arrived at my place and what d'you think she had? - a 7 pound salmon on a rope!

"Now," she says "this is one of the things pumas will kill themselves to get. So what I'm going to do now is drag it all round the woodlands on the ground. Then I'll tie it on a tree and I'll dope it and he'll be knocked out for 24 hours, and I'll come and get him". And of course I thought to myself, well he never ...! But she turned round and she said "You've got to come with me." So there was me walking along the side of her, her dragging the bloody salmon behind you know, and with this big thing she was going to put down by the side of it - it was phosphorus or something and it shone.

"They're very inquisitive, you know" she says. "If anything shines, they must go to see what it is. When they sees this light they'll go, and when

he comes up to see what it is he'll eat the salmon and I'll come and get him. Then she started carting the old salmon around and Joe Soap, what I often calls myself, walking along looking up at the trees. "Come along pussy, I want to feed you!" Well I said to my missis, I don't know whether I'm insane or whether she is.

But she never caught the bloody thing. She drove herself mad, you know, and she went home. And the salmon vanished, you know. (And after a while the puma vanished too.)



BADGERS

There are still a lot of badgers in some parts of the Hurtwood. The corner near The Wilderness was a great badger place, there must have been about 9 or 10 holes there, and if I was not in a hurry in the morning I used to nip up in through the bushes to see if they'd got their beds out. They're very clean, badgers, they'd never make a mess near their holes, they'd always walk away about 10 yards from their holes, and they'd always fetch their bed out, which is dry bracken, and lay it on the top if it's going to be fine. If you don't see it there, I bet you'll find it'll rain.

The old lady from The Wilderness used to feed them on milk and bananas. She used to call them her little grunty darlings.

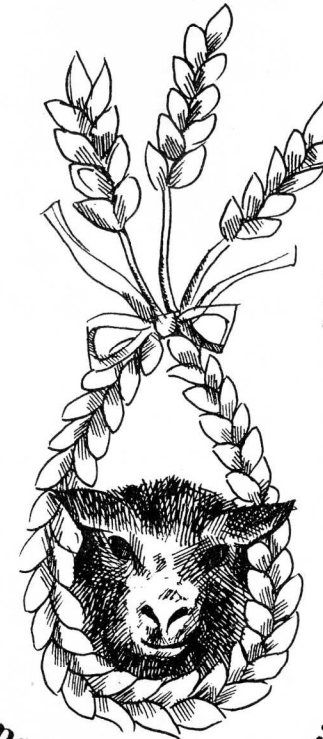


8. Badger

THE OLD FARM at SHERE

Baby lambs
Shearing the sheep
Spinning the wool
Weaving the cloth

Sowing the corn
Reaping the harvest
Threshing the grain
Milling the flour



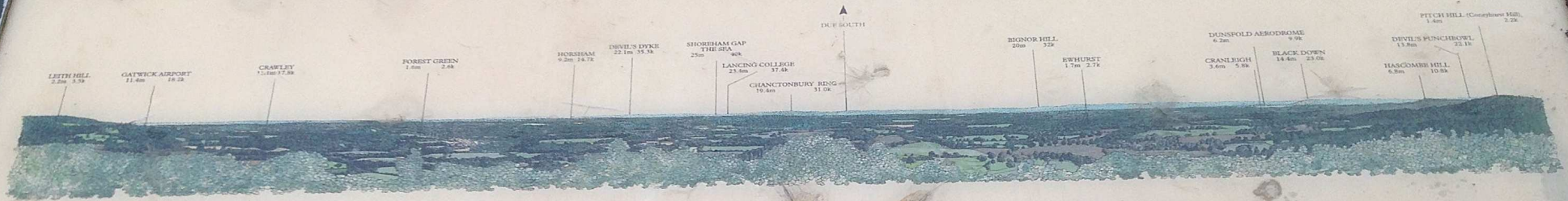
A Complete Farm Experience

"ACCORDING TO THE SEASON"

Open every weekend and Bank Holiday
April 1st – September 30th, 2pm – 5pm
Demonstrations and exhibitions
Wet or fine, there's always plenty to see and do!
School and group visits by arrangement
Telephone Shere (048 641) 2976

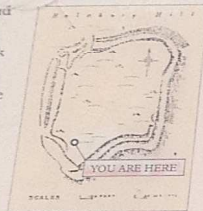
**SITUATED IN THE DELIGHTFUL OLD VILLAGE OF SHERE
THE FARM IS RIGHT BY THE CHURCH**

HOLMBURY HILL VIEWPOINT



The views from Holmbury Hill, 857ft (261m) high, and Pitch Hill, 843ft (257m) high, are among the finest in the Surrey Hills, the area once known as 'Little Switzerland'. They are not quite so high as Leith Hill to the east, or Black Down near Haslemere to the west (both belonging to the National Trust), but on a clear day you can see more than 25 miles (40km) over the Weald of Surrey and Sussex to the English Channel.

On the summit of Holmbury Hill you can see part of the outline of an Iron Age hill fort. It was probably built in about 150 BC and used until the Roman Conquest. The fort covers app. 8 acres (3.25 hectares) and was in all likelihood used as a refuge in time of danger, and perhaps as an enclosure for livestock, or as a meeting place for the exchange of goods: stone querns (handmills) for grinding corn have been found during excavations here. Down through the centuries the fort area has been used as a 'beacon station' for warning and celebration.



Plan of Holmbury Hill fort, one of several Iron Age forts along the Greensand ridge.

HURTWOOD CONTROL

Help us to keep the Hurtwood beautiful.

If you would like to become a Friend of the Hurtwood, please get in touch with the Secretary, Hurtwood Control, (see Guildford phone book).

From here, you can imagine the road that the Romans took from the site of the Roman temple at Farley Heath, on the western side of the Hurtwood, to Ewhurst village, and across to Stane Street - the most important of the Roman roads in Surrey, running from London to Chichester, past Bignor Hill (just to the east of the radio masts). Legend has it that smugglers also used this road - calling it 'Brandy & Silk Street' - as one of the main smuggling routes from the coast; cargo picked up on the beach near Shoreham after dark could be hidden on the Hurtwood by sunrise.

There are more than 60 miles of footpaths and bridleways across the Hurtwood (and countless unofficial ones) covering some 3-4000 acres (1200-1600 hectares).

The woodlands are privately owned, but since 1926 the public have been welcome to walk and ride throughout the Hurtwood. This 'right of air and exercise' was first granted to them by Reginald Bray, the Lord of the Manor of Shere, who - with his brother Jocelyn - is commemorated by the memorial seat on Holmbury Hill.

The Hurtwood is administered, and the footpaths and bridleways maintained, by a registered charity, Hurtwood Control. It is funded by public subscription and grants from Surrey County Council and Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils.

Please respect the tranquility of the Hurtwood. Please do not leave litter, do not light fires, and remember, no camping or caravanning is allowed because of the high fire risk.



NIIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)



SAND LIZARD (*Lacerta agilis*)

Flora and Fauna

The Hurtwood consists of a wide range of habitats from coniferous and deciduous woodland to heathland. Originally called the Chert or Churtwood, its name is popularly derived from the abundant Hurts, or Bilberry plants, that carpet the forest floor. Three types of heather can be found on the areas of heathland and along the bridleways and firebreaks: Common Heather (or Ling), Bell Heather, and the much less frequent but no less beautiful Cross-leaved Heath. The area is renowned for its vast range of wild fungi. Many of these are edible, and are collected in the autumn by those with sufficient knowledge and confidence to identify them.

The natural food sources support a variety of mammals, including a healthy population of Roe Deer, Foxes, Badgers, Squirrels and Rabbits.

Most of the usual woodland birds can be found breeding here, although pride of place must go to the Nightjar, a Summer migrant from Africa which regularly breeds on the local heathland, and the Woodcock which prefers open areas of woodland. To see both of these birds one needs to be around at dusk. The Nightjar will advertise its presence with a long drawn out churring call, while the Woodcock patrols its territory uttering strange whistles and ducklike calls.

Although not frequently seen, reptiles such as Grass Snakes, Adders, Slow Worms and Common Lizards are numerous. Sand Lizards, introduced from doomed Dorset heathland by the British Herpetological Society, now breed successfully on Holmbury Hill at what is probably the highest known breeding site in Britain. This marks a real achievement for conservation.



BILBERRY (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)



FLY AGARIC (*Amanita muscaria*)



Designed at

THIS TOPOSCOPE WAS ERECTED IN 1993
IN AFFECTION TO THE MEMORY OF
ROBERT WARE
HURTWOOD RANGER 1958-1992

THIS TOPOSCOPE WAS ERECTED IN 1993
IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF
ROBERT WARE
HURTWOOD RANGER 1958 - 1992