

It was while we were in Mafeking that my brother Gerald and I had a wonderful trip with an old friend of the family, Lieut. Willie Surman. He lost his right eye as a boy but with his one eye he could see more than we could. He was one of the best junior officers in Botswana and knew the territory better than any other man, for he travelled throughout it on patrol work and collecting hut tax from the natives. The trip was to be into the Protectorate through the boundary gate Ramathlabama. It was rather amusing to think that if one travelled by train the Immigration and Customs officials interviewed passengers but if travelling into the Republic by car or foot etc one just passed through as the gate was always unlocked. Things may be different today. In any case there is only a wire fence along the boundary as I have mentioned, so that if anyone wanted to smuggle something into the Republic there was nothing to stop them crossing the fence. Those persons fleeing the Republic find no difficulty in crossing the Border and I think the story of a secret way is all tripe.

Anyway, to get on with my story. For conveyance we had an over-sized waggon with a tent the full length, drawn by ten oxen. Inside there was a double cartel on which we could sleep in case of rain but we preferred otherwise sleeping in the open near the big camp fire for which wood had been collected. To experience sitting round a camp fire and listening to tales of old hunters like Willie Surman makes one almost long to live the life of a hunter. We of course had a tent which could be attached to the side of the waggon to give shelter and shade in the country in the south-west of the territory where there are miles of open country and not much forest.

Surman had been on the job of collecting tax for years and was well known and respected by the natives. Some of them were so raw that he told us that on one occasion he was going away from his camp and as he left he took out his glass eye and placed it on a chair and said that would watch them. His own servants knew but the others did not. Some of the natives had come from miles away to pay their yearly tax of £1 which, if they hadn't the money they paid in kind, wild animal skins, etc. It was a two week trek, for in some places we had to spend a whole day waiting for the men to come in and in any case it was a long trek right down almost the S.W. A. border, along the valley of the Noloopo. Sometimes we were ten miles away from the Noloopo but always in that direction. Surman had been doing this collecting for so long that years after he left when the next man came along they always said Surimoni was coming.

On this trip Surman taught us a lot of bushcraft of which he was a past master. He taught us how to go after buck and birds and for the first time I used a shotgun and a .22 rifle to shoot small buck and birds. One morning, as he had promised, he took us out for a shoot. We were up before daylight and after a cup of coffee started out, walking along quietly as at this time of the morning the buck are out feeding but they are always on the lookout for danger. After quite a time Surman, before one could say the usual Jack Robinson, had fired and shot a duiker. "Now", he said, "we will have our breakfast" and straight away opened up the buck and cut out the liver which was soon

sizzling/