



The History of the Forestry Commission in Wales

FC Wales will cease to exist from 1st April 2013. A project is under way to gather together stories, anecdotes and pictures that will provide a written record of its history and the people who have been part of it.

The first trees were planted in 1921 and there must be plenty of information on how things were organised and pictures to illustrate the operations and activities in those early days.

If you can contribute any information, contact Barbara Spence who is running the project.

Her e-mail address is:

b.spencehistoryfcw@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Retirees who have worked in Wales can make a major contribution to the success of this project.

Get writing and dig out those old photos!

From the Editor

I need copy for the next issue in December. No copy - no issue. It's your newsletter not mine. I do my bit by editing your copy, you must produce the goods.



I can't believe that some of you are not able to come up with any interesting stories. Not having copy makes me think you are all stagnating, and that can't be true.

Richard Toleman

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How to Cycle Out of Touch



Mike Penning, the UK Government Road Safety Minister, was asked by the House of Commons Transport Committee whether we could learn anything from the Netherlands on safe cycling. He replied that the Netherlands may want to learn something from the UK. Fewer cyclist were killed here and figures indicated we were doing better.

The Minister's rational was that the UK has 0.71 deaths per 100,000 people whereas the Netherlands has 0.84. The logical conclusion to the Minister's argument is that if nobody cycled, the

death rate could be reduced to zero, an even better example! The reality is that the UK has three times as many deaths per km cycled than the Netherlands. Although Mr. Penning's abilities on cycling are weak, he may be more competent in other areas of responsibility?



Website Message Board

If you have any announcements, news or forthcoming events, post or e-mail the details to the editor. Contact details are on the back page of this magazine.

www.fca-today.com

Worker Protective Clothing Scheme 1976

by Martin Fletcher

Having just donated one of my two pairs of PC14 1976 Safety Boots to a Scarecrow Diamond Jubilee competition, it is good to reflect on just what an excellent value this scheme was.

My two pairs of PC14 Co-operative Wholesale Society boots at £4 / pair have now done over 35 years use, with no resoling, but about 15 pairs of laces, mainly due to bramble and probably walked 10,000 + miles.

These were not the only really good value items in the scheme. The £2 green cotton PC2 work shirt, with sleeves shortened for comfort, still provides good winter warmth, albeit now with a somewhat worn collar.

Best value at £10 was the PC10 Breton red work trousers, with a pocket over the knee and leg to take Kevlar. These trousers were very hard wearing and it would have been a bargain to have purchased two or three more pairs at that price.

There was a sale of surplus sizes in the late '80s at knock down prices. The 30" waist trousers, then blue, with a 36" inside leg were irresistible at £2 / pair. My wife cut a foot and a half off the leg (for those of us vertically challenged!) but this meant the back pocket was just above knee level! Can you imagine anyone with such a bean pole figure working for the FC? Included in the sale were trousers with 52" waist x 22" leg. Who was the ordering quartermaster at HQ or Blairadam I ask?

What happened to the hard wearing waterproof Transatlantic jacket and trousers, I wonder? Any other stories of foresters' uniform or earlier clothing schemes?

At the 2012 AGM, Bryce Reynard modelled for us at the dinner, past items of foresters' clothing. His apt commentary and unique modelling technique were a memorable part of the evening. Ed.



The photo of Charlie Greenlees modelling a forester's uniform from the 1950's was taken in 2006 at Lochgilphead, Argyll and is reproduced from the Forestry Memories website www.forestry-memories.org.uk

Juniper in History and Folklore

by Karen Bell



Juniper is famous for its berries, which are used to produce gin. Another practical use of the juniper bush was to weave juniper withies into the walls of houses in times gone by, juniper withies were also woven into a type of basket called a scull. Juniper was also used in the smoking of hams, which imparted a slight turpentine flavour, very much an acquired taste. The berries were also used to produce wine and tea and yielded a yellow and brown dye.

The twigs and berries of the Juniper are said to have the power to avert evil and also to have great powers of protection and purification. Baby's teething rings were made from juniper wood to protect the babe

from harm and sprigs of juniper were tied to the tails of animals as a charm against evil or sickness.

At Samhain (Halloween) the branches were burnt to keep away evil spirits. The branches were also burnt in the home on New Years morning for the same purpose.

If someone in the household was sick then the home would be sealed and the smoke from the juniper was allowed to fill every room until all of the inhabitants were coughing and sneezing with their eyes streaming, this was believed to expel any illness.

Medicinally juniper was used for purging, stomach ailments, epilepsy and purification.

In the highlands the berries infused in hot whiskey were said to cure practically anything, even snakebites!

Forestry Commission Scotland on Facebook

The Official FCS page 'Enjoyscotlandsforests' is now active! Whether you are planning a day out, want to know what's on in your area, or you want the latest news on wildlife, mountain biking, walking, cycling, camping,

stargazing or any of the other great activities taking place in forest locations across Scotland, visit Forestry Commission Scotland's new Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/enjoyscotlandsforests>

Visit the FCA Today website at: -

www.fca-today.com

Memories of Kielder

By Don Amer

My first introduction to Kielder Forest was in 1959 when I was transferred from Culbin Forest in Morayshire. My wife and I and our two children were allocated a house in BATTERYHAUGH, at 1 Southend, a well-built house with a front-to-back living room, a kitchen-cum-dining room, a utility room and a coal store all on the ground floor, with a bathroom and three bedrooms upstairs. Unfortunately the house was in rather a dirty condition and although the Estates Branch would not put decorators in, they did pay for forty-one rolls of wallpaper and paint for me to do the work myself!

There were just two shops, a drapery / haberdashery shop based in a room of a house in BATTERYHAUGH, and a post office, also based in a room of a house, in Castle Drive. Mobile grocery vans provided provisions coming up from Falstone, the nearest village down the North Tyne valley, the main van being that of Andy Fletcher, on a twice weekly basis, who supplied not only food products but odd items such as shoe laces etc or anything else you might need. A limited public bus service provided transport down to Falstone and further down the valley to Bellingham and on to Hexham, from where there was public transport to Newcastle and beyond.



There had once been a train service linking Newcastle to Carlisle via the North Tyne valley, provided by the Borders County Railway which linked up with the Border Union Railway at Riccarton Junction in the Scottish Borders. This railway linked Edinburgh with Carlisle.

The Border Counties Railway was closed in 1956. However, it was possible to have a day visit to Carlisle using the local bus service to Steele Road Station, on the Border Union Railway in the Scottish Borders, to catch the train to Carlisle.

Some other recollections of my time at Kielder, whilst I was working at Mounces Beat, was that there was a very good community spirit, and on May Day, or the nearest Saturday to it, there was a gala day, with sports for the children and even a dance around a Maypole. In the lower half of the village that is BATTERYHAUGH, there was a wooden hall which acted as a Community Centre and another wooden hut which was a Catholic Church. The Church of Scotland was on the main road at Castle Drive.



The primary school was situated down below the viaduct, about one and one half miles from BATTERYHAUGH. The headmaster was a Mr Brown and Mrs Hope was the only other teacher. The new school was built on land next to where the Community Centre hut stood at BATTERYHAUGH, opening in the summer of 1969 when we left to go to Glentworth Forest in South Scotland.

The Community Centre hut was for the whole village, with dances, film shows, whist drives and evening classes in various subjects during the winter. I became involved with operating the film projector. I remember at one time I had changed a reel of film and went back into the hall from the projector room, to watch the film. When the film had finished I went back into the projector room to rewind the film, only to find that the film had not been fastened properly to the take-up reel, and that there were hundreds of feet of film lying in a heap on the floor. It took a while to rewind it but I managed it without doing any damage.

The then headmaster of the Primary School, a Mr Brown, asked my wife and I, if we would consider starting up a basket weaving class because he had seen a magazine rack in our house, which we had made from a basket weaving kit. Neither of us had ever taken an evening class before, but we agreed and so began what was to become a steep learning curve for us. Surprisingly, the class was well supported and we were paid for doing it by the Educational Department of the Northumberland County Council.

My Life in the Forestry Commission

By Eric Crofts

Part 4 Lynford and back to Faskally

In August and September 1955, I went to Lynford Hall FTS. The Hall was a huge, H-shaped building. The food supply was intended for double our number, so it was plentiful. We made our own sandwiches and, in addition to flasks of tea, had a bottle of fruit juice.



I worked at West Tofts, a forest of pines on poor, sandy soil. The land, known as Breckland, contained large quantities of flints. The Head Forester took me to the track, which started on the south coast, along which people from the south-east and Continent came to collect flints in ancient times. I remember four particular visits. One was to an area in Fenland, where poplars grew at a fantastic rate on the nutritious peat, providing veneers for plywood, baskets and matches. Others were to a former airfield where pines were growing well in cracks on the runway and roads, a flint knapper (chip-producer) who sent flints to Ethiopia and other countries for flintlock guns, and an abandoned nursery where knee height pines were as numerous as grass. I think we were taken there, not to see the pines, but to witness the

landing of large USAF bombers on a nearby airfield. As each one touched down, a parachute was released from the tail to help slow the plane.

I discovered that the road that went past the Hall went on to the wartime Battle Training Area. In early 1943, while waiting to go to radio school, I was at RAF Bodney on the other side of it. This was the satellite airbase for RAF Watton, a Flying Training School. Roy and I found the gate open. "Let's go in. If we see or hear anything dangerous, we'll scamper". We slowly cruised past shattered trees, devastated villages and ruined houses. When we stopped to listen, we only heard bird song. On what had been the large pine-enclosed field, where I had helped refuel Miles Master trainers, there was an empty army camp. The BTA was still being used.

I returned to Faskally for my second year. Dixieland was my favourite kind of jazz music.



Earlier in the year, I had gone to a dance in Dunkeld when I heard that the band would play Dixieland. During the summer, when I returned from home very early on Monday mornings, I often met the bandleader on his way to work in Aberfeldy. I had taken my skis and some of the juniors told me they had had a taste of the sport in Austria when in the army. This, and the memory of

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My Life in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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the large number of fans who accompanied the Dixieland Band to its venues, came to mind when, at a meeting, someone spoke of the possibility of having a dance in Pitlochry. I said I would organise one if I could use the money to buy skis. They approved and I booked the Town Hall.



Tavish MacMillan had his fiddle, Jack Sallie had his accordion. They agreed to provide music when the Dixielanders had a break. Bill Brittee volunteered to supply the rhythm.

On the big night, fans from as far as Perth and Aberfeldy came with the band. The hall was packed. Our lads performed magnificently and were much appreciated by the dancers. With the profit I bought 6 pairs of skis and stored them in the external game-larder.

In November we had a heavy fall of snow. Pat and I went skiing on moonlit evenings to Pitlochry golf course. Returning to the school one very clear, full-moon evening, we saw lights and dark shapes on the ice of the pond on the south drive. We stopped. The lights were lamps arranged in two long parallel rows. We heard voices and a faint rumble. "They're curlers, it's a real Highland bonspiel". We went down and the men made us welcome. When they finished playing, we went into the

Pavilion where their ladies provided tea and buns.



For several Sundays, Pat and I went to the head of Glen Shee to meet the Dundee Ski Club. They had a portable petrol-engine and winch. This was anchored at the bottom of a slope, a pulley-block was positioned someway up hill and these were linked by an endless rope. The engine coped with three skiers. When one released his grip at the top, another one held on at the bottom.

Pat and I spent a week with the FC trapper. The sight of woodpigeons starting to build their nests prompted him to tell us how to get a plump bird for pigeon-pie, "Push the end of a wire up through the bottom of a nest and tie it around the leg of a chick. Secure the other end around a branch. When the other chicks leave the nest, this one will remain and continue to be fed by the parents. In time, you'll have a fine, big bird". He showed us how and where to set snares for rabbits. Later, we visited the snares. One had caught a wildcat. This helped to increase my hatred of

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My Life in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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snare. It looked vicious. In order to release it, he knocked it on the head with a spade. Unfortunately, he killed it. Pat took the body back to Faskally, intending to skin it, but its smell was so bad he had to bury it.

In May, Pat and I decided to climb Ben a Ghlo. I went to Blair Athol and up

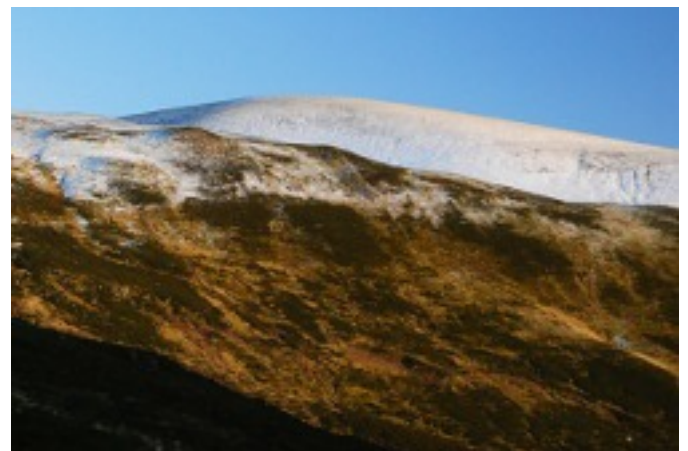


Glen Tilt

Glen Tilt to the foot of the mountain. I padlocked my bike and climbed to the summit. At the same time, Pat went along the road to Glen Shee and turned north along a track to a cottage and climbed the Ben. We met at the top, had lunch and exchanged keys. He went down to my bike, I went to his and we returned to Faskally. By that time, I had returned to my quiet spots in the wood or at the shore to prepare for the final exams. As well as the FC one, I

would sit the exam of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society. Dealing with subjects that an Estate Forester might have to deal with, such as building a road, it was more comprehensive than the FC exam.

In June, we felled trees for a proposed road line in Glen Shee. Roy Arrowsmith and John Bartle argued about the nature of a white patch on faraway Glas Maol. I agreed with Roy that it was snow and suggested that as it was light until nearly midnight, we should take a look. So, after dinner, some of us returned to Glen Shee on motorbikes and went over the hill road to Glenisla. We left our bikes at a gamekeeper's



Glas Maol

house at the head of the glen and climbed up Glas Maol to the white patch. It was a vast, deep field of snow. The tunnel made by the burn was big enough to allow us to stand inside. I said "We are near the top, let's go on". On the summit, it was calm and very clear. We saw the pass at the head of Glen Shee far below and the distant

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My Life in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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Cairngorm Mountains. As we sat down to drink our tea, thick mist formed around us. Then we heard the faint sound of clicks, like someone rattling a lot of small stones. They came nearer, the mist cleared. A long line of deer hinds and calves passed by a short distance below us. We were quiet, they didn't see or smell us. After they had gone on, someone said, "They must have been walking on stones". On our way down, we saw that the track had no stones. Strange! Years later, I read that deer have clicking ankles.



I was not among the five best, but I passed the FC exam. I failed maths in the RSFS exam but I passed a year later.

John Bartle and I wanted to go to Forest Research. The Chief Research Officer (North) came to see us. We were accepted. John went to Kielder with Gordon Forbes, and I went to Benmore with Andy Mair.

At the end of July, we said our goodbyes and headed home. During my holiday, I visited Andy.

The Research Office, Benmore Forest Office and kitchen and toilets were in a wooden hut on a loop of the old road near Rashfield Farm in Strath Eachaig, between Loch Eck and the Holy Loch.

I returned to start my new career on the last day of my holiday.

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The Pando Tree



The Pando tree, Quaking aspen, (*Populus tremuloides*) is thought to be the world's largest living organism. *P. tremuloides* forests occur widely in northern North America and, as with all aspens, they are characterised by having poor seedling reproduction but are very successful at suckering. The Pando is a single male clonal colony found at 2700m. elevation on the Colorado plateau in Utah.



It has about 47,000 stems that continually die and are replaced by the root system. It covers an area of about 43ha. and may be 80,000 years old, but there is much speculation about this. Frequent forest fires have prevented the spread of competitive conifers and the semi arid climate limits seedling regeneration of younger trees. After intense fires the underground root system survives to send up a mass of new suckers.



Although this colony has been closely studied, there are other larger ones, up to 80ha. in Utah, and are predicted to be even one million years old. However there are considerable difficulties when estimating the age and size of such organisms. It is thought that successful seedling regeneration may not have occurred in the western US since the last glaciation some 10,000 years ago, and the climate was very different when this did happen. (More information on Google).

Bark! Internal news and views of the Forestry Commission

Check out the new FC blog at <http://news.forestry.gov.uk>



North East England Conservancy, Foresters' meeting at Hamsterley in the late 50's or early 60's.

Foresters' Meetings

by David Chadwick

Foresters' meetings were once a feature of the summer months. All the Conservancy management staff, from Forester to Conservator would gather for a carefully planned and controlled tour of one of the Conservancy's forests. This photograph, which Alastair Rowan gave me several years ago, is of such a meeting at Hamsterley and is notable for some of those at the meeting.

By far the "grandest" is George B Ryle, then Director England, pictured with his right hand to his shoulder at front centre.

He is flanked to the right by George Batters, Conservator, and to the left by Walter Smith, Divisional Officer (North).

Also in the front row from second on the left are Ian MacDonald (District Officer Dales), Leslie Chapman (Chief Clerk), and on the right of George Batters stand Peter Thallon (DO Pickering), Alastair Rowan (DO Rothbury) and (unknown) (DO Hexham). Alan Rix (DO Durham) is on the left end of the second row and

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Foresters' Meetings continued

by David Chadwick

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next to him is Ian Marshall (DO South Yorks). I think the person standing behind George Ryle is Tom Johnston. Third from the right in the very back row is Les McCavish, for many years Game Warden at Kielder, and it could be John Voysey (DO) next to him. Seventh from the right in the back row is Charlie Simpson, one of the Kielder stalwarts, who became the Conservancy's first Chief Forester.

Ted Turnbull, another of that remarkable band of long term Kielder stalwarts is in the centre of the second row from the back. Frank Stephenson, who later became Head Forester at Hamsterley and was instrumental in the very successful development of the forest as a major recreational asset in the area is on the left end of the back row. Ted Parker, for many years Head Forester at Chopwell is second from the left in the third row from the front. There are many others whose faces are familiar but whose names escape me. No doubt others will put names to faces.

One face I very much remember is that great character, the late Ned Charlton, fifth from the left in the back row. Several years after this photograph was taken I was District Officer (Durham) and Ned as Head Forester Slaley made my life very interesting. Gifts of Christmas trees had got rather out of hand and an edict from the Conservator set limits for each District's gifts. I divided mine by Forests and heard, sometime later, that clergy from

Hexham Abbey, that for many years had a very large tree provided by Ned, had called at the Widehaugh office to make sure all was organised for delivery of the usual tree the following week. Ned announced that he had a new boss who had just directed what value of trees he could give away, and that as the tree the Abbey was expecting was several



Hexham Abbey

times the value of his entire allowance, he was very sorry but could not give it to them. As arrangements for decoration of the tree and the usual Christmas celebrations in the Abbey were all in hand Ned's announcement met with dismay. He stood firm until Abbey staff were going dejectedly out of the door whereon he said he would lend them the tree.

As a matter of interest, I wonder what this gathering cost and could such an outlay be considered by today's constrained Forestry Commission? Times have changed.

Letters to the Editor

Has the FC a Future?

When is the future of the Forestry Commission going to be announced? It seems to me having looked at the proposals for Wales (subsumed in a new Environment Department), and the report of the Working Party on English Forestry, (a totally new structure with no place for the Forestry Commission but perhaps for some of the staff), that its days are numbered. Indeed by the time FCA Today is next published, there might have been an announcement.

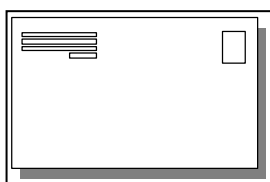
The media seem to have accepted the report on forestry in England as unmitigated good news, and compared with what might have happened, it is. However, the role of the Forestry Commission is glossed over and whilst the forests will remain in public ownership, it's goodbye to our former organisation. WHY??!!

Gordon M. Cowie

Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



by e-mail to editor@fca-today.com



by post to Richard Toleman, Manuel Stables, Linlithgow, EH49 6JF.

Do you have any pictures for the website gallery?

Post or e-mail them to the editor. Contact details are on the back page.

If pictures are sent by post, please indicate if you require them returned.

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OBITUARIES

JAMES "JIM" OGILVIE was born in Elgin in 1920. At the onset of WW2 he became an engineer in the RAF serving in Yemen, Egypt and Kenya. After the war he was invited to farm in Africa but declined and joined the FC, attending Lynford Hall FTS. While there he was involved in setting up the arboretum that is still thriving today.

He was subsequently posted to Monaughty Forest where he met Emily who became his wife. He and his family were posted to many places in Scotland, Achnashellach, Dumfries, Fort Augustus, North Strome, South Strome, Ratagan, Strathmashie and Laggan. During these postings he worked on forest management, production and research.

He had many anecdotes about working at Strome such as shocking queuing drivers at the ferry by driving past them and into the loch in an amphibious vehicle, or driving to the front of the queue to be beckoned by the ferryman with "Come on DOCTOR!"

He and Emily had many adventures abroad while on holiday. They were always keen to explore new wild lands and Jim was an enthusiastic botanist.

In his retirement at Forres he was never one to sit still, he would roam the highways and byways of Scotland often accompanied by his grandchildren. He quickly became involved in research into willow biomass growth on farmland. He led an active and rewarding life and will be remembered by his children,

grandchildren and great grandchildren. Jim was a dedicated forester who served the FC well in its isolated outposts. Whether on research or forest management, he was enthusiastic in his work and fully committed to the task.

FRED WESTON died on 17th April 2012 aged 95. He joined the RAF at the outbreak of the Second World War and became a rear gunner in Bomber Command 101 Squadron and Gunnery Leader in June 1943 with 620 Squadron. Fred was awarded a DFC by King George VI in June 1943.

After the war he went to Bangor University to study forestry, playing rugby for the university. After graduating in 1948 he went to Northern Ireland as a forest officer.

In 1952 he returned to England and joined the FC as District Forest Officer in South Hampshire, based at Winchester. In 1965 he moved to Helmsley, North Yorkshire as DFO for the Hambleton District and was deer control advisor for the North of England.

When he was 60, having spent 10 years at the Helmsley Office and two at Pickering, he retired and continued to live at Beadlam near Helmsley and was able to spend more time fishing and shooting.

GORDON CALE is remembered by Mike Whitlock. Gordon (often called "Curly" Cale by his colleagues) was born and brought up in London. After a public school education

and service in the forces, he chose the rural life and joined the F.C. at Bramshill Forest (Hampshire). After training at the Dean Forester Training School, he spent the rest of his career in forests on the borders of West Sussex and Hampshire. This was unusual because, at the time, most foresters moved around quite frequently. His final post was in charge of the Rogate forest nursery.

He joined the F.C.A. Alice Holt group on its formation and he and his late wife Sue regularly attended meetings and enjoyed the outings which were organised at that time. Before his final illness he made a particular point of attending the group lunches.

His other activities included membership of the local group of Diabetes UK and the horticultural society. He was an avid purchaser and user of "gadgets". During his illness he acquired an iPad which virtually replaced his laptop.

Gordon bore the increasing severity of bone cancer with fortitude. When he knew that he had not long to live he told me that he had had "a good life".

His memorial must surely be the many trees scattered around the forests which he was responsible for raising from seed when he was in charge of the Rogate nursery.

*I have just been told of the death of **George Pringle** who worked in Research and was active in the Civil Service Union. He had retired to Betws y Coed. An obituary will appear in the next issue.*

Forestry Commission Association Management Committee

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David Parnall (*Treasurer*)

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FCA Today Magazine

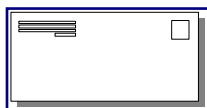
The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available **(depending on whether we receive any articles from you)** on the www.fca-today.com website during the Winter of 2012.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st November 2012.

Send your articles to the editor for publication in FCA Today



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Editor: Richard Toleman, Manuel Stables, Linlithgow, EH49 6JF. Tel: 01506 845575. e-mail: editor@fca-today.com