



Winter 2016-2017



FCAtoday

The newsletter about former Forestry Commission employees

Issue 59 - Winter 2016

From the Editor

I thought I was going into this issue with very little copy. However thanks to a last minute effort by the few stalwarts, I think you will agree that "We made it – just". I had to resort to book reviews and outside help to make it up. Why won't the readership help? Who knows the answer? I have one article held over for the Spring issue, and that's it. Do you really want our newsletter to disappear with a whinge and a whimper? I think not, so please have a go at contributing over Winter.

From time to time I am asked why there has been no notification of a retiree's death. I am not the fount of all knowledge. I can only publish contributions. If you do know of someone's death, please let me know with a little background information. It doesn't have to be exhaustive, just enough to remind the reader of that person's life. For example, I know of Ian Grant's death some time ago. He will be remembered from his old East Scotland days where he made a great contribution. But nobody has come up with anything to remember him. Sad that an interesting career has no acknowledgement.

Moans over. Have an enjoyable Christmas and do something exciting and different in 2017, and tell readers about it.

Richard Toleman



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FCA Today

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A Fiery Time

by Dick Ayre

First - a Three Bath Night

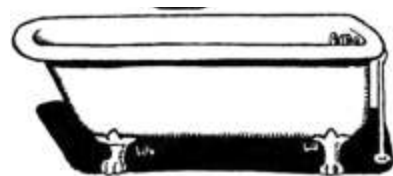
It was a Saturday in May 1970, six weeks wed and nearly out of my two years' probation after leaving Gwydyr Forester Training School. I was attached to Ampleforth Forest on the southern edge of the North York Moors.

My new wife had been at work all day, whilst I dug and planted the vegetable garden we'd



been lent in a border of the walled garden to the rear of the Helmsley Estate office and behind our rented cottage. After a late start to spring, it had become warm and dry.

As light faded I retired for supper and a bath. Across the road the alarm sounded in the retained fire station. Out of the bath and dripping into the front bedroom, I saw



the engine going south so I hastily dressed in the clothes I'd just shed.

A Landrover tooted outside, and I ran out in my slippers with boots in hand. The head and senior forester told me there was a fire on Wass Moor, a block of late thicket stage conifer 5 miles away off the A170 road to Sutton Bank and Thirsk.

Sure enough it was ablaze in several places. I teamed up with one of the retained firemen and together with his 1 inch hose

and my beater, we managed to put out a long length of one side of the largest fire site. Problem then was it was well past midnight and there was no light to help us find our way back through the unbrushed trees. Easy! We pushed our way out over the ploughing following the hose.

Other folk were busy tackling several satellite fires started by falling embers, and I helped them out until faint light began to show in the east and my boss found me. I was to take his Landrover, by now without an exhaust pipe and silencer, back to Helmsley and bring back a relief squad.

I was not very popular driving round a sleepy town at 4am on a Sunday with a silencer off, banging on doors



to say there was a fire to which folk were needed to fight, and then round again 30 minutes later to pick them up. In between times, I snatched a quick bath and then another when I saw the filth from the first one, followed by a sandwich and coffee.

Back at the fire, I was told to take our own fire engine driver back to his holding at Hawaby 12 miles away so that he could milk his cows. As I was due to be away the



following day on detached duty in the next district, I was then stood down, complete with a thumping headache from the fire smoke and exhaust fumes from the Landrover.

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A Fiery Time *continued*

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Second - "Fred Carno's Army"

The then Hambleton district office shared the top floor of the old rectory in Helmsley with my own Ampleforth forest plus Rievaulx forest and Hambleton civil engineers. The two floors below being Hambleton Rural District Council.

Eleven days later on the Thursday of the week following the above incident, and just back on Ampleforth from detached duty, I was left in the office to catch up. I was on standby in case of fire, whilst the head and senior forester, together with the Rievaulx head forester and the local civil engineer, went out with the pays.

Mid-afternoon the district office clerkess came down the corridor. There was a moorland fire on Slape Wath Moor, 10 miles to the north on the high ground between Bilsdale to the west and our Bransdale plantations to the east. The local estate had asked for help, and the district officer wanted me to take our fire trailer there.

So off I went down two flights of stairs and into the Landrover. There was plenty of petrol, but no fire trailer in the town end garage where it was kept.



As Helmsley was in a radio signal shadow area, I headed SW to the higher ground of Sproxton block where there was an old depot. I soon raised the boss on the radio and realised I'd guessed right. The fire

trailer was being used as a water bowser for chemical weeding and I soon found it.

As I hadn't seen the men spraying for some time, I hurriedly dispensed with the normal greetings and explained my appearance. Sprayers were soon filled, the trailer turned and hitched up, then I drove out of the wood trailing diluted Paraquat along the rides to empty the tank.

Turning onto the public road, I looked for and soon found a hydrant and luckily for me, the ranger arrived to help me fill the 400 gallons needed from the standpipe.

Trying to hold a 2½ inch canvas hose from standpipe to tank is a wet messy business!



Acutely conscious of passing time, I drove as fast as I dared with the loaded trailer downhill back to Helmsley and began the 10 mile uphill slog to Slape Wath. Three miles up the road, through Carlton village at Cowhouse Bank Top, I came across the Helmsley retained fire engine, complete with crew full of foul language because the appliance had broken down. Kirkbymoorside, the next nearest retained engine and crew, had by this time been called out and had passed them. Onward gently down the steep bank and then another long uphill drag, through Bonfield Gill to emerge on to the high moor.

Already keyed up because I'd taken so long to get thus far, worry set in, because by now I should have been seeing smoke and

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A Fiery Time *continued*

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couldn't. Further height gained and I came across the Kirkbymoorside crew stopped at the point where the council road descended into Bransdale and a moorland track continued north. They were on strange ground, so it was decided I would go first up the track. We made even slower progress, especially the fire engine because of its poor ground clearance. Another mile brought us to Stump Cross and a shallow wide depression across which, from west to east at about man height, smoke was blowing. The local estate agent and a couple of moor keepers were trying to control the edges.



I could see that the flames on the eastern edge were threatening our young plantations. Out of the smoke came our local resident forest worker, who guided

me through the heather to a point where we could reach the fire with our hoses.

We started the pump, kept it at half throttle to conserve our limited water, and together beat out and sprayed the leading edge of the fire, helped by the lessening of the wind as the fire crept down the slope.

By now the Kirkbymoorside appliance was busy and as our water was spent we gathered our hose.

The Malton fire engine arrived, followed soon after by the divisional officer. A quick look round and he spoke severely to the agent and threatened him with the bill for the fire brigades' call out.

My boss arrived and said I could return to Helmsley. Trailer re-filled and put away, I returned the Landrover to the office. There I was met by the district officer's clerkess who told me that the district officer wanted to see me just now.

So back up the two flights of stairs, still sensitive to the time it had taken me to get to the fire, I was baulking at the thought of a strip being torn off.



I stood on the piece of carpet in front of the DO's desk, a place that as a trainee forester I'd become used to, and explained the afternoons proceedings. The initial frost quickly thawed and I left for a belated tea, and another bath!

Visit the FCA Today website at www.fca-today.com

A Philosophical Moment

by Arthur Miller

We have all seen it on mugs, tee shirts and other memorabilia – ‘The Old Guys Rule’ ‘The older I get, the better I was’.

I must admit, that even in my modesty, I am guilty of following that rule. But no more than twice a week! But, you ask, where is this going? Well, one of the advantages of retirement is to look back on a career and remember the things that we did, and the people with whom we worked, and start to put it into context.

We have all done it. Filled out forms, written reports, stood in the rain, been in complete despair with our masters (no matter their grade) and completed all manner of forest operations.

Some things come back with a rosy glow, and others we would rather forget. Many of us were heroes at a forest fire, I know I was! Others climbed trees or developed new methods of ploughing, felling, tractor extraction, nursery work. Then there were those who led the way in Work Study, Genetics, Entomology, Pathology and Soil Science. Not to mention the folks who turned out every day in all sorts of weather to put into practice the grand designs of

others, often in poor conditions and for a small amount of pay.

When you look back, just be amazed at all the things that we accomplished in the long journey of producing a National Forest Estate.



Our memorial is everywhere to be seen. The common bond was trees, and no matter the passage of time, our trees are always there. Perhaps not the ones that we planted, but their successors.

I now look at trees and forests with an educated eye, but without the responsibility of making it happen.

I remember the details we were taught in our youth, the fashions in tree planting, choice of species, landscape design, coniferisation, ancient woodlands and all the different theories of thinning. I now try to read the story in the woodland and see where we got it right and where we went wrong.



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A Philosophical Moment *continued*

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I am always surprised at how tolerant the trees have been and no matter what we did, they still managed to grow.

I often think of those pioneers in British forestry who had the foresight to lead the way in enthusing enough people to support the project, to buy the land and develop it almost from scratch. They developed the ideas of planting, choice of species and maintenance. And the real heroes? The early foresters and their teams of forest

workers who walked for miles to the planting site, who worked in all weathers and bore, along with their families, the discomfort of remote living, in relatively poor housing.

And what brought all this on? I visited Bodnant Gardens in the Autumn, saw the trees and the rewards that they bring, both financial and spiritual, and was very thankful that I had worked in an industry that has brought more good than harm.

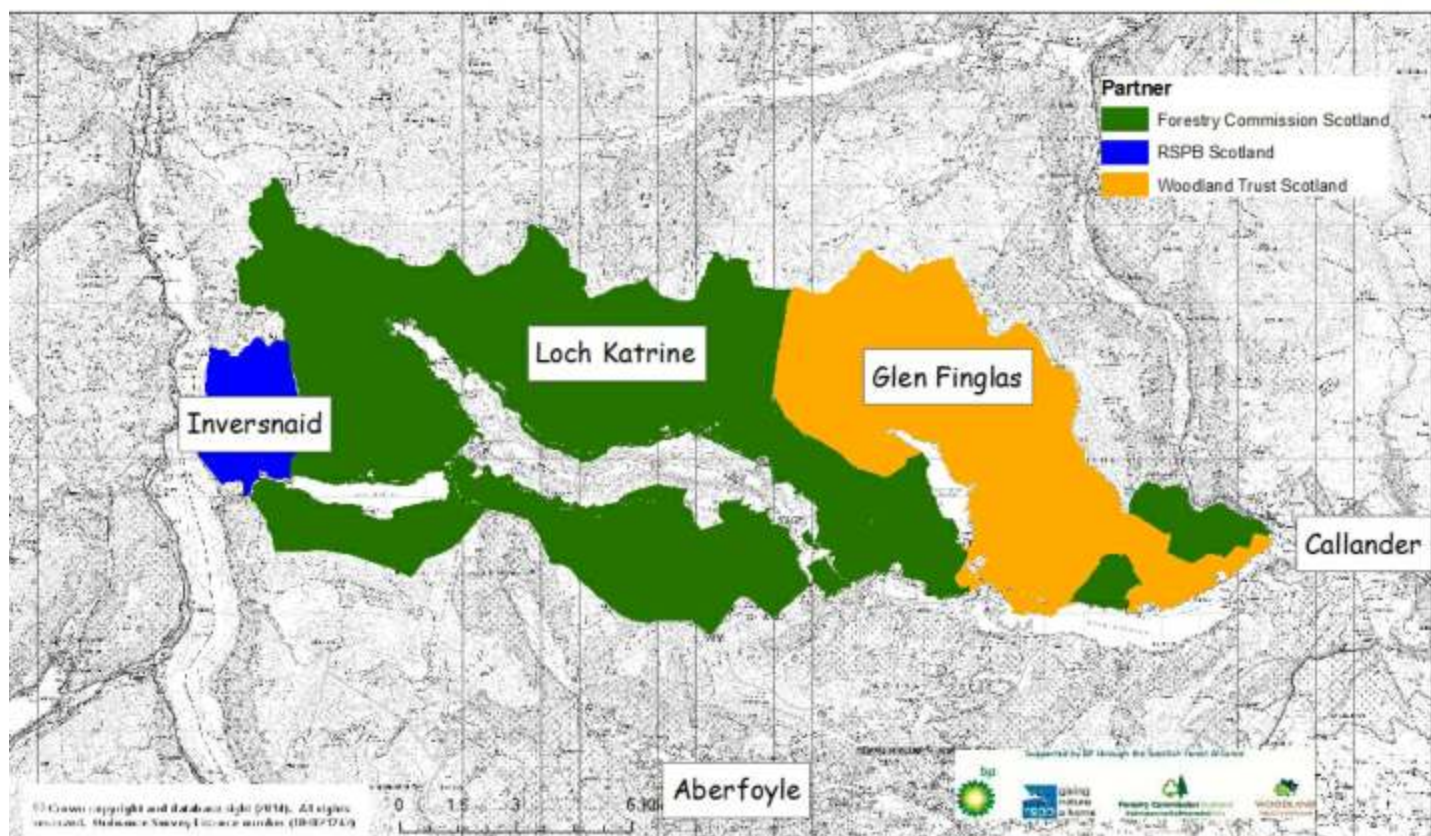
Just look at my pictures and you will understand.



The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve

by Sue Morris

The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve



How long is a reasonable timeframe for a forest landscape restoration initiative? Ten years? Fifty years? The Great Trossachs Forest is an ambitious 200 year project and partners have just completed the first 10 years.

The Great Trossachs Forest truly is forest restoration at a landscape scale, and covering 16,500 hectares, it accounts for 9% of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. It stretches from the RSPB Scotland's Inversnaid reserve on the Eastern shores of Loch Lomond, across the Forestry Commission Scotland's estate at Loch Katrine, to the ancient hunting forests at

Glen Finglas, owned and managed by Woodland Trust Scotland, and beyond.

The Great Trossachs Forest is the legacy project of the Scottish Forest Alliance (SFA), through which BP invested £10 million in 14 sites in Scotland. With 3 of these 14 sites being neighbours (each managed by a different project partner) an opportunity arose to combine individual woodland establishment schemes to remediate an over-grazed landscape.

The partners' collaboration has since streamlined land management within the

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The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve *continued*

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16,500 hectare project area and established a long-term goal of creating a natural mosaic of habitats incorporating ancient woodlands, wood pasture, moorlands, wetlands, designated habitats and protected species. It is going to take time to achieve this vision, but time is one thing that the partners have in abundance. It's not just the geography making this an ambitious conservation project - it is the timescale. Partners have committed to work together for 200 years. It is truly leaving a lasting legacy for future generations, as well as providing a huge space for nature.



From Forestry Commission Picture Library

In the first ten years, the restoration work which has been undertaken involved expanding the existing native woodlands by planting more than 2 million native broadleaf species and Scots Pine trees and encouraging regeneration in the wider landscape. There is now more than 4,000 hectares of connected, establishing woodland. Cattle are used to create the low-pressure grazing that



Picture from Scottish Viewpoint

is needed for the return to wood pasture habitat. They also help to control bracken levels, encourage wild flower glades and habitat regeneration. A programme of harvesting has started to transform non-native conifer woodlands into a more natural forest. Efforts to remove and control *Rhododendron ponticum* have also been extensive.

However this huge restoration effort is about much more than simply improving the area's aesthetics. It is helping to improve Glasgow's main water supply (Loch Katrine) and providing a superb area for recreation. Thanks to its scale and the great range of habitats found across the landscape, the project is encouraging native plants and animals to flourish and help them adapt and build resilience to climate change by shifting their ranges to find favourable conditions. Woodland resilience to tree diseases and climate change is also being encouraged by the creation of woodlands of different ages, species, densities and structure.

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The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve *continued*

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From Forestry Commission Picture Library

In 2015, The Great Trossachs Forest earned the accolade of becoming the UK's largest National Nature Reserve. This achievement recognises the dedication of the three land-managing partners - Woodland Trust



Forestry Commission Picture Library

Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and RSPB Scotland - who have developed an exemplary model of

partnership working which is enhancing the landscape and biodiversity, whilst at the same time celebrating its rich and varied cultural heritage. This model of partnership working enables individual partners to deliver their own corporate objectives, whilst simultaneously contributing to a bigger conservation vision.

The first 10 years of The Great Trossachs Forest has seen significant progress. Black grouse numbers have increased and are stable, and many woodland birds, red

squirrels and pine martins are thriving. Rare species such as the pearl bordered fritillary, narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth and the *Dendroxena quadrimaculata* beetle have been spotted on-site for the first time.

But there is still more to do. This winter our connected woodland will be augmented with montane species to try to establish this missing habitat within The Great Trossachs Forest NNR.

A 200-year monitoring programme is in place to measure the changes and effectiveness of the ecosystem function, and the above and below ground carbon capture of the establishing woodland, thereby gauging the project's impact on climate change.

And thanks to funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a host of new visitor facilities have just been installed, which is making 'The Great Trossachs Forest' a known, great destination to visit in the National Park, whilst still maintaining remote areas for the special wildlife that call The Great Trossachs Forest NNR home.



From Woodland Trust Media Library

National AGM 2017

by Arthur Miller

Do you have any plans for May next year? Why not visit North Wales and stop off at the National AGM. The North Wales Group of the FCA look forward to welcoming you to the National AGM on Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th May 2017.

We have chosen a venue close to the English and Welsh Border to make travelling easier. The hotel is less than 5 miles from the M56 and easy to find.



[Beaufort Park Hotel in Mold](#)

Flintshire is an intriguing county. It has a long history of border wars, coaching routes, industry, castles and some delightful scenery.

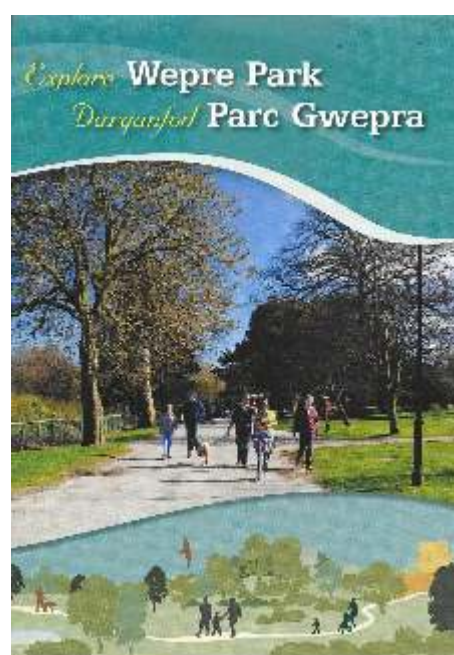
If you want a different experience, we are close to the cities of Liverpool, Chester and Manchester, so you can satisfy your penchant for maritime, Victorian or industrial heritage. If you have never taken a ferry across the Mersey, now is your chance.

The venue for the conference and dinner will be the Beaufort Park Hotel which is situated close to the Welsh border, near the little town of Mold. The hotel offers good bed and breakfast at very competitive rates.

We have arranged for the head forester from nearby Mostyn estate to be our guest of honour at the conference dinner. He will tell us about his experiences as a private woodland forester, his links with the Forestry Commission and the effects of the change from FC to Natural Resources Wales.

For the field trip on the second day, we have arranged a trip to a local public park. But it is not any ordinary park. It is based around the old Wepre Hall and has plenty of woodland, long standing links with the FC, and has won awards for the diversity of its habitats. There is even a castle for the more adventurous of us to explore. The local ranger will tell us about the park and some of the work that they do within it and the links with the local community.

We look forward to seeing you at the AGM, and to renewing our acquaintance with former, not old, colleagues.



Who and Where Are They and When?

David Foot has a considerable collection of old FC photos, most of which show senior staff at Corstorphine or, more often, somewhere in Scotland. Norman Davidson is planning to download them on the Forest Memories website. I have published one below. This is one of the few not taken in Scotland and is recorded as being near **Ludlow**. If you can identify the place, the year and the people, Norman would be keen to know.

You can e-mail him on nandh.davidson@btopenworld.com

I'll publish another in the Spring issue.



Written in Stone: The Walls that Celebrate Life

by Amy Jane Beer

A 'colossal' dry-stone art project is being built in Yorkshire.

In a forest on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors stands a stone circle, its entrance marked with standing stones aligned to the midsummer sunrise.

The circle is part of something bigger - a vast maze, full of tricks and blind endings and features with mysterious-sounding names such as smout holes, moon gates, bee boles and squeezer stiles. The walls are too high to see over, but when you look closer, you see they have been inscribed by hundreds of people, who came to leave their mark in stone, as long ago as... well, 2016 actually.

This colossal structure is not a Neolithic monument, but Yorkshire's newest land art project, the Dry Stone Wall Maze in Dalby Forest.

When complete, it will be the largest dry stone wall construction in the world, incorporating more than 4,000 tons of largely reclaimed stone. For now though, much of the structure exists only in the imagination of Mark Ellis, the Farndale-based dry stone specialist who has nurtured this grand idea for almost 20 years.

His dream has now begun a slow transformation into reality with the help of Ryedale District Council, the Friends of Dalby Forest, the Forestry Commission and sculptor Jennifer Tetlow.

Mark's ambition is to create a piece of land art that celebrates the technique and

heritage of dry stone walling while engaging a new generation. "If you drive around the moors or the dales you're bound to see walls," says Petra Young of the Forestry Commission. "You might even see one or two special features, but here visitors will be able to come and see them all in one place, touch them and understand how they were made and what they're for."

The art of building stone walls without mortar is thousands of years old, and developed in many places where suitable building stone was readily available and people had need of barriers and boundaries. Ingenuity was essential in fitting these variously shaped pieces together securely. The integrity of the walls relies on skilful interlocking, so the weight of the wall is spread evenly. Ancient examples are known as far away as Peru, and European methods were introduced anywhere settlers found suitable landscape, including North America and New Zealand.

In Britain, dry stone walls have become the upland counterparts of hedgerows, ideally suited to places where thin soils and exposed conditions mean hedges are unlikely to establish themselves.

The project is being largely funded by public donations. You can pay for a stone, or buy a block carved with your initials or those of a loved one. Or you can even join a stone carving workshop and inscribe a stone yourself. I signed up for a family session with Jennifer Tetlow.

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Written in Stone: The Walls that Celebrate Life *continued*

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The implements she laid out for us on wooden benches would have been immediately recognisable to a Bronze Age craftsman. I was invited to select a block from the piles heaped around the site, and use carbon paper to transpose beautiful serified initials onto its surface.

Jennifer set about demonstrating how to chip into the corners of each letter with a small chisel and carve the midline of each letter stroke as straight and sharp as the edge of a page. My first thought was how straightforward it was - with each blow of the mallet, the chisel bit easily into the stone. But with stone, every mark is a done deal - you can't unmake it. And so with my enthusiasm

tempered, I progressed more carefully, opening out the strokes little by little and trying to stay within the carbon lines. I realised I was holding my breath as I got close to each edge. Tap tap tap. There was something mesmeric about the sound and the sensation. After a couple of hours I had done a respectable job, our midlines a little soft and wobbly compared with Jennifer's crisply defined ones. "It's a snapshot of people's lives," says Laleh Hobbs, of the Forestry Commission. "We're not doing dates or memorials or anything like that -and we won't be taking stones out if couples divorce."

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Forestry Commission Ranger Simon Butcher takes a moment to reflect at Dalby Maze

An Ode to FCA Today

by Don Amer

The time has come the editor said
To ask for more
More anecdotes and stories
For the FCA magazine.

The Slasher, oh the Slasher
Why did it have to go?
It was available to all by post
Why did it have to go?



It was there for all to read
To be picked up and be read a little
Then put down
And again picked up to read a little more.
Why did it have to go?



It is now on-line
And still interesting to read
Thanks to all who send in copy
For all of us to read.

So come on ex FC lads, and lasses too
And also those in work
We all have tales to tell
To fill our on-line magazine.



Spare a thought for Richard
And Charles Dickens too
As they struggle to keep it going
Our on-line magazine.

So open up your iPad
And your laptop too
And start writing up your stories
And send them up to Richard
For all of us to view.



Website Message Board

If you have any news, announcements 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

Campsite News from the New Forest

by Martin Fletcher

On 15th July a number of former New Forest campsite wardens and FC staff gathered at their usual 'watering hole' at The Huntsman Inn, Brockenhurst. Wardens from Hollands Wood, Holmsley, Ashurst, Roundhill, Setthorns and Longbeech / Ocknell came, and we enjoyed a convivial lunch and swapped many stories of running the campsites in the 1980s and '90s.



*View or download earlier issues of FCA Today
from the FCA website at: -*
www.fca-today.com



Letters to the Editor



Memories of Bucks Horn Oak

In 1977 my husband and I made what we thought was just a temporary move to Bucks Horn Oak, but as is the way in life, we put down roots and now, nearly forty years later we are still here.

For the first thirty years, little altered in the area, apart from ever more traffic on the A325 of course, but now with additional housing in the village, the closure of the local pub, The Halfway House, the police house sold long ago, and increased footfall from the recreational activities at the Alice Holt Woodland Park, things are very slowly changing. For some years I have been idling with the thought of writing the history of the area, so maybe that time has come. Simon Malone, now in Norfolk recalled his time in Alice Holt in the early 1960s on pre-college forest training.

Simon mentions Head Forester George Cross who lived at Forest Lodge, and he tells me that many foresters and trainees lodged in Bucks Horn Oak – one landlady being a Mrs Blackmore, but he wasn't sure which property she lived at.

If any readers have memories and/or photographs that they would be willing to share with me, I would be delighted to hear from you. I can be contacted by email patriciaknight@talktalk.net or by telephone 01420 22548 or by post at Clonmel, Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LW.

Acknowledgement of contributions will of course be made, and any original material treated with the utmost care and returned immediately.

Tricia Knight
(Mrs P A Knight)

Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



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

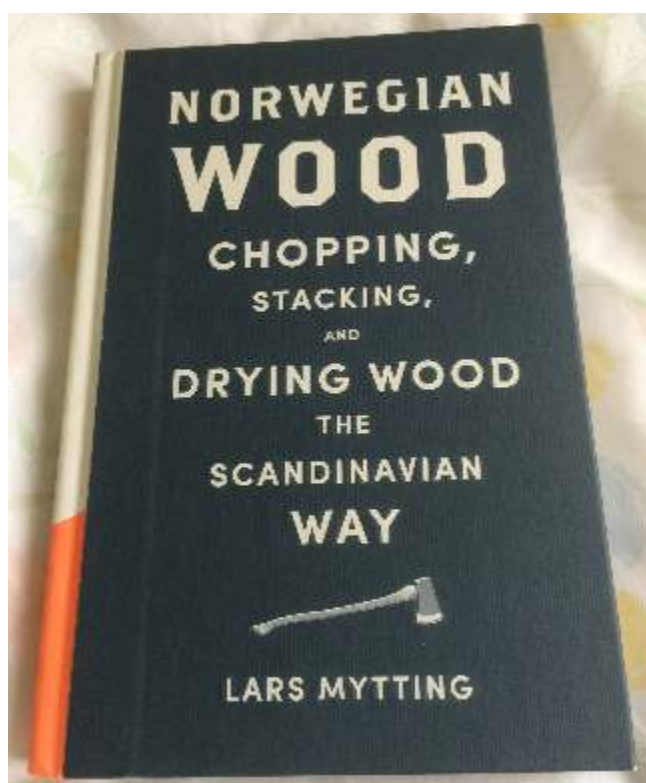
by post to: Richard Toleman,
Manuel Stables, Linlithgow, EH49 6JF.

Letters to the Editor



Dear Richard,

If you are looking for a "filler" for FCA Today you might consider featuring this book, which has become a best seller and something of a cult.



The technical information on the properties of the various types of wood and seasoning of logs is well worth reading, and I found that the section on the history and

development of the chain saw brought back memories of long forgotten names of cumbersome machines such as JoBu and Jonsered.

However, it is undoubtedly the superb photographs that are the main feature of the book, especially the pictures of the amazing log piles. These are built almost as sculptures in Norway and are indeed works of art, and are entered in the National Firewood Stacking competitions held for the most original designs.

Another feature that I liked was the section on how a person's character can be judged by the state of their log pile, and brides were even reputed to choose their husbands by this criteria. I am not sure my log stack would score on this scale!

I am certain that all foresters would enjoy reading this book. It would make a good Christmas or Birthday present and I can't recommend it highly enough.

Thanks for all your efforts in producing FCA Today.

Best wishes,
Brian Greig

Do you have any articles for publication in this magazine?

Send your articles to the editor

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

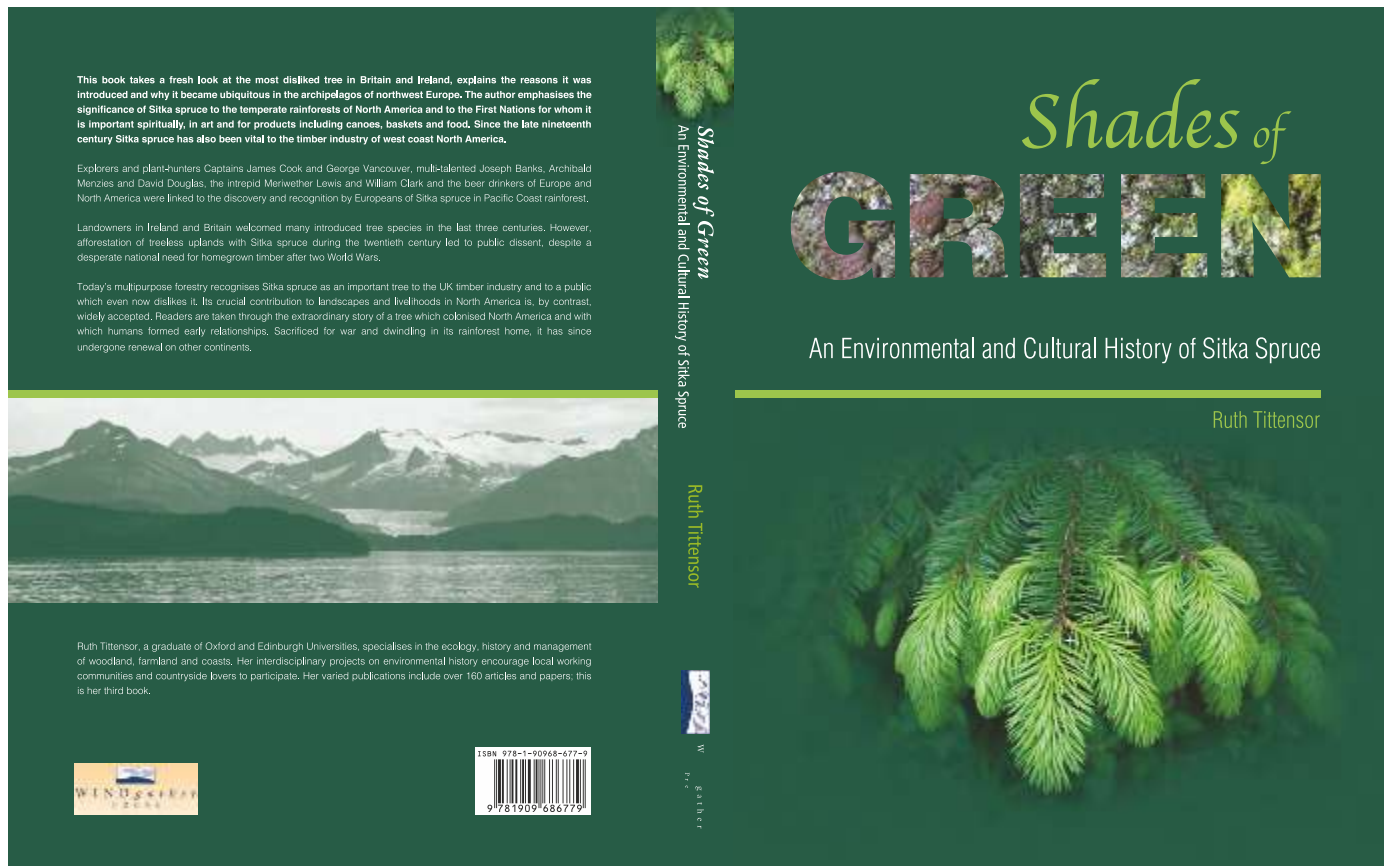
by post to: Richard Toleman,
Manuel Stables,
Linlithgow, EH49 6JF.



Book Review

Shades of Green: An Environmental and Cultural History of Sitka Spruce

by Ruth Tittensor



The sight and scents of beautiful conifers growing in gardens, parks and arboreta evoke in the citizens of the islands of Britain and Ireland a feeling of pleasure. But feelings of strong dislike emerge when the same trees are grown in the countryside, especially on the hills and mountains.



Zachary's Sitka Spruce Oil

Sitka spruce is a main focus of negative attention, perhaps because of its often prodigious expanses in landscapes open to wide views, where it is conspicuous in comparison with surrounding land uses.

As foresters you may not fit into this generalisation about the British psyche; you, I think, like tree species which will grow where you wish, tree species which are 'traditional' in your local area or for which you have particular empathy. And you probably

appreciate many other tree species which are not at present part of the commercial scene.

Sitka spruce, in contrast, is regarded with great affection, even worshipped, in its native habitats on the Pacific coast of the USA and Canada. However, before the First World War it was regarded by the timber industry as a useless, 'weed' tree in the mixed conifer-deciduous forests of Oregon and Washington where intensive logging of the western coastal forests began in earnest.



Zachary's Sitka Spruce Drink

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Book Review: Shades of Green *continued*

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Why the difference in attitude? Is it just because Sitka spruce is a species which was introduced to the UK and Republic of Ireland, the comparatively large size of its forests, or their location in the uplands? As there are examples of these three attributes which people like (woodlands of sweet chestnut, beech and Scots pine), there may be other, complex reasons for our strong, long-term, reactions: from myth, art and imagination, rather than from science and history.



Sitka Spruce Arrow Shaft

Public disquiet about coniferous forests has continued for over half a century, and still persists, despite big changes in the way forests are planted and grown, and despite Forestry Commission attempts to explain why and what they did and do: *which is to provide products people want, need and use*. But the link between woodlands and trees – and products used every day by people – has been broken, rather as the link between cattle in fields and milk in the shops is no longer apparent to many children.

As an ecologist, I try to be impartial and not to take sides in the Conifer v. Broadleaves debate. An ecologist is interested in the structure and functioning of any woodland, whatever its composition, age, size or location.

In my writings and during continuing adult education classes and field visits, I did my best to provide information, to allow differing viewpoints to be aired, and for members of the public to meet professional



SS Chips for Roxburghe Biomass Boiler

foresters at work, and hear why conifers were and are planted.

Despite big national changes in silviculture as a response to constant verbal battering during the 1960s to 1980s, public negativity continued; conifers were and are removed from deciduous woodlands 'to return them to their natural state'; deciduous trees were planted around forest perimeters and along rides 'to improve their amenity'; marshes and peat bogs within forests were de-treed 'to increase their conservation value'.

My friends, acquaintances and colleagues continued to query conifer restocking, and to decry the lack of plant or animal species visible in Sitka spruce forests.

Residents' groups continued to object to proposals for any afforestation with conifers in their immediate localities: they still do. So, several years ago, I decided that the time had come to discover the real story of the most despised tree of the twentieth-century UK and Republic of Ireland, the culprit at the heart of public unhappiness: Sitka spruce.

I thought it was time to present another image, a new mind's eye picture and an alternative cultural context with a more positive basis.



Old fish trap Alaska SS Hemlock

The publisher asked me to carry out the difficult task of producing a book which would interest readers in Europe, Canada and the USA. After all, the story of Sitka spruce did not start in the UK two centuries ago: it began in earnest in North America before, during and after the last ice ages.

But how could I write for an audience on one continent which adores this tree, and at the same time for readers on another continent who dislike

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Book Review: Shades of Green *continued*

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it immensely? I had a go at it, doing four years of research, travelling, field work and discussions.



Replica Fish Trap SS & Hemlock Alaska

Sitka spruce's interaction with humans started more than ten thousand years ago on the Pacific coast of North America. Its wood, roots and leaves had so many

uses which have continued throughout prehistory to the present day.

First Nations from Alaska south to California make use of it in what might be called 'traditional' ways. In comparison, its modern industrial uses mainly for pulp,



Avro 504K

construction and aircraft, ignore other possibilities where local communities can use its components in weaving, art, food or fishing. In the UK we also ignore its potential role as

an important riparian species, its part in the life-history of salmon for instance, and its possible role in water-management and flood reduction. Until recently, most ecologists had ignored the developing ecological composition and structure of Sitka spruce forests due to our biased attitudes.

I discovered that Sitka spruce is an amazing tree, has long and strong cultural links with rural communities in Pacific North America; that it was linked to a series of eighteenth century European explorers from George Steller to Archibald Menzies; and that it is developing a history, ecology and culture in its new home amongst the archipelagos of north-west Europe.

I hope my book will appeal to people interested in natural history, ecology, trees, woodlands, forestry, farming, nature conservation, the history of the countryside, rural amenity and our perceptions of the environment.



Steinway Usher Hall SS Soundboard



Removing the round of SS for guitar tops

"Shades of Green: An Environmental and Cultural History of Sitka Spruce"

written by Ruth Tittensor is published by and available direct from Oxbow Books at £29.95, from good bookshops and at a reduced price from other sources. Well-illustrated in colour and black-and-white. Paperback, 375 pp; Glossary and full Bibliography. [1015 words]

A recent 35-minute film "Tracing Roots" – about weaving hats and containers with Sitka spruce roots in Alaska historically and currently – is available for showing to community groups. The DVD can be hired for £20.00 including outward postage.

More information on chapters can be found on the Oxbow website. Ed.

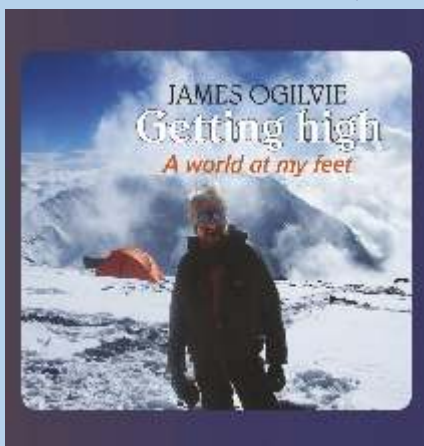


Book Review: Getting High



JAMES OGILVIE *Getting high* *A world at my feet*

"As I stepped up to the top of Antarctica, the true scale, majesty and magnificence of the white continent were overwhelming. On one side the curvature of the earth could be discerned along the distant horizon. On the other side, remote peaks - most never touched by human boots - stretched out below me. I was in heaven - or at least as near to heaven on earth as I was likely to get. It was, finally, the end of an era, the end of an Antarctic Adventure and the end of my Seven Summits odyssey."



James Ogilvie's passion for wild places and 'getting high' shines through in this account of his climbs of The Seven Summits and other mountains.

Available from Twinlaw Publishing - www.twinlawpublishing.co.uk
and from the author - James.Ogilvie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

£14.99

Twinlaw
PUBLISHING

About the Author

James' passion for wild places and 'getting high' stemmed from several family hill-walks in Wales and Scotland where he remembers surviving midges, rain and being dragged uphill in unsuitable footwear. Scouts and Duke of Edinburgh's Award camping trips followed and pretty soon it was off to Oxford University (Balliol College) and further-flung expeditions to places like Svalbard (see Chapter 1). An unlikely ascent of Kilimanjaro (Chapter 5) followed by Aconcagua (Chapter 6) seamlessly 'morphed' into his quest to climb the seven summits.

James' day time job has always been forestry. A Chartered Forester with a keen interest in trees, woods and forests, he has worked for the Forestry Commission for 35 years in many roles, including managing England's largest upland and lowland forests and overseeing grants and regulations in Scotland. He spent two years with the Lesotho woodlot project in southern Africa. Currently he heads up social & planning policy for Forestry Commission Scotland, managing a team of advisors dealing with planning, communities, access, recreation, health, learning and skills. As the owner of a small woodland, he knows the hands-on challenges - and priceless rewards - of looking after trees.

Rachel - to whom he was married for twenty years - bravely accompanied him to the backwoods of Canada (see Chapters 2-4) whilst Sarah - his partner for ten years - accompanied him up Kosciuszko (see Chapter 11). He is immensely proud to be the father of Charles and Imogen and a father to James and Selina; all wonderful individuals who have brought him joy and inspiration.

James' other books include *Heritage Trees of Scotland* (a celebration of Scotland's amazing trees); *Staring Down on Stars* (an account of his Everest ascent); and *Adventure Holidays Worldwide* (dedicated to his late Uncle James who died in a climbing accident on the Matterhorn whilst an undergraduate at Balliol College).

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Book Review: Getting High *continued*

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After finishing the seven summits, James is consoling himself by completing all of Scotland's Munros (282 mountains over 3000ft high) with hill-loving friends. Only 30 to go now (but who's counting!).

Introduction - the Seven Summits

The Seven Summits - the highest mountains on each of the world's seven continents - are regarded by many as the crown jewels of mountaineering, a rare prize sought by many but attained by only a few. The number of Brits who have summited 'The Seven' is only around forty, whereas ten times that number have stood on top of Mt Everest; the most famous mountain in the world and of course Asia's highest point at 8848m (29,029ft).

Similarly iconic is Kilimanjaro; at 5963m (19,339ft) the highest point in Africa. Situated close to the equator in Tanzania, it still displays its majestic icecap, although its glacier-like so many others nowadays - is shrinking due to the effects of global warming.

At 6196m (20,320ft) North America's highest mountain - Mt McKinley or Denali as it is usually called today - is better known than its South American counterpart - Aconcagua 6962m (22,840ft). Denali lies far north in Alaska, its harsh weather and crevassed environment a good testing ground for would-be Everest climbers.



[Aconcagua in Argentina](#)

By contrast, Aconcagua in Argentina has been called 'the highest hill-walk in the world'. Though non-technical, it still offers a demanding challenge as the highest mountain outside the Himalayas and one beset by challenging weather.

Although Mt Blanc is the highest mountain in political Europe, it is Mt Elbrus 5633m (18,481ft) in the Russian Caucasus range that takes the prize as the highest point in geographic Europe. Mt Vinson 4897m (16,067ft) is the highest point in Antarctica. Finally, opinions are divided about whether Australia or Oceania is counted as being the seventh continent, but 'down under' there lies a lowly but transcendent peak - Mt Kosciuszko 2228m (7310ft) - the highest in Australia.

Each of the seven summits is unique, each special in its own way. Each varies in its technical demands and each provides an excuse - as if any were needed - for climbing amongst the most spectacular scenery in the world. At one level, climbing the Seven could be thought of as a self-centred ego trip, a kind of glorified 'Munro

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Book Review: Getting High *continued*

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bagging' on a global scale. Therefore, partly to assuage my conscience but mainly because I believe that Tree Aid performs vitally important work, I have raised some £50,000 for that charity through all my climbs to date. "And what then?" you may ask. What does a chap do after summiting the Seven?" Well, it's a little known fact that the 2nd highest summits in the world's continents are more technically demanding than the highest. Now THERE'S a challenge...



Mount Everest

Claire Black's review of James Ogilvie's book *Getting High*



It's taken 20 years but James Ogilvie has now joined an elite band of climbers, writes Claire Black.

There can't be many people who climb a mountain accidentally. James Ogilvie did. Well, not exactly accidentally, but almost.

It was 20 years ago, Ogilvie, 58, head of social and planning policy at the Forestry Commission, had a week off work so he decided to visit a friend in Nairobi.

While he was in Africa, he reckoned he might as well climb Kilimanjaro and despite realising that in order to fit in the five-day ascent, he had to start the very next day, everything fell into place.

"There was a group staying in my B&B who just so happened to be starting the next day," he says. "So I joined them."

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Book Review: Getting High *continued*

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Serendipitous. And his luck continued. “On the way down, I realised I had to organise getting to the airport. I fell in with this guy who was on his honeymoon – luxury safari, the whole nine yards – but his wife had bottled out before they got married. He had a Land Rover organised to take him back to Nairobi so I went with him.” He laughs, as well he might.

The Kilimanjaro ascent was the start of something rather special.

Ogilvie, a chartered forester and director at Central Scotland Green Network Trust, can now include himself amongst just 40 Britons who have made it to the top of the highest mountains on the world’s seven continents: Kilimanjaro in Africa, Everest in Asia, Aconcagua in South America, McKinley in North America, Elbrus in Europe, Kosciuszko in Australia and Mount Vinson in Antarctica.

It has taken him nearly 20 years but he's done it, raising £50,000 for the charity Tree Aid in the process. “It's the end of an era,” he says of his achievement. “It's funny when you work hard for something over years and then it comes to fruition, there's a slight feeling of,” he hesitates, searching for the right word, “I wouldn't say anti-climax exactly, but it's a funny feeling.”

One would think that you'd have to be a serious mountaineer to do what Ogilvie has done, but he's an amateur. “I wouldn't underplay the determination needed,” he says, “but a lot of that is about mental



Mount McKinley in North America

determination as much as the physical side of things.” And that's not to mention the hard cash required. Ogilvie had to remortgage his house to climb Everest, even though he'd raised a third of the cost through sponsorship. His climbs took place roughly every three years because that's when he had the money together.

Astonishingly, he says that at no point did he consider giving up. “There was no point at which I was really demoralised. I've been lucky. I've managed to climb each one on my first attempt. I only know one other person who has done that.”

It is Everest that stands out of the list of seven for Ogilvie. Ascending it's 29,029 ft is a massive undertaking. “There is a feeling once you've climbed Everest that everything else is possible,” he says. “It changes your life when you look down and see the curvature of the Earth. You are, in that moment, the highest person on the planet.”

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Book Review: Getting High *continued*

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"You get a sense of how fragile life is. And you get this sense of being alive because you're in a very dangerous situation. You get a perspective on life that reminds you it's the big things that matter - love and friendship and all that. A lot of the small stuff, which we sweat every day, is in the scheme of things unimportant.

"There is one caveat though, since often when you actually reach that point, you are oxygen starved and so it's difficult to fully appreciate the achievement. And also, the job is only half done. Most people die descending, so you have to hold yourself in check and somehow postpone your moment of euphoria. Then you look at the photos you were only dimly aware of taking in the moment and you think gosh, yes, it was extraordinary."

On at least two of the ascents he's been on, he's seen a lot of death, bodies being carried off the mountain, memorials to those who have perished. "You are aware of mortality all the time, particularly going through the Khumbu Icefall on Everest. There are ice blocks the size of houses that are just waiting to fall on you."

Ogilvie has been lucky though. Climbing has given him a sense of what can be achieved.

"If there are things you want to do in your life then don't leave it," he says. "Do it while you can."

And what about for him now as he enters this new era? "I have 30 Munros left to do," he says. "I've set myself a target of a couple of years to get that done." Do you doubt him? Nope. Me neither.

Getting High: A World at My Feet by James Ogilvie is available from Twinlaw Publishing for £14.99.

www.twinlawpublishing.co.uk



Ogilvie is also raising money for Tree Aid.

To donate visit:

www.justgiving.com/james7summits

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FCA Today on Facebook

by Ian Blake



I have set up a FCA Today Facebook page. Those with an account can search for FCA Today to become a member. If you don't have an account, I recommend you access the site shown below to set one up.

Simply follow the steps shown - they are quite straightforward. Once you're signed up, search for the FCA Today group to become a member, then you can disseminate information as and when you like.

Alternatively, there are a myriad of sites to assist in setting up Facebook, if you don't like this one, just type 'How to set up a Facebook account' into your browser.

<http://m.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Facebook-Account>

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FCA Today Magazine

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Visit the FCA Today website on these dates to download the latest edition of the magazine

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