

JIM ROBERTSON, 73

Jim Robertson has recently celebrated his 73rd birthday – by running 10 miles every day for 73 days.

He has a long list of off-road ultra runs laid out for the coming spring and summer. And his goal event in 2014 is the epic 96-mile one-day West Highland Way Race – for the 12th time.

While you might expect a septuagenarian to favour an easy walk or a gentle round of golf, Jim is still racing around like a man half his age.

Surprisingly, the Dumbarton runner has never suffered a running-related injury.

Instead, he reckons his favourite outdoors activity keeps him physically and mentally young.

He said: "If I didn't run, I wouldn't know what to do with myself and I just can't

imagine spending my life with my feet up.

"It's great being retired and having my good health to enjoy the countryside around where I live."

In a typical week Jim, a former engineer, runs between 60 and 100 miles over four or five days.

And the grandad has a very simple philosophy.

"I listen to my body and I go at my own pace," he added.

"It's true that I used to be faster and I could run up hills as well as down.

"Now I tend to walk up the hills but I still enjoy running the descents.

"I don't think people should give up exercise at any point in their life, unless they are forced to due to ill-health.

"It is just so good to be active at this time in my life."

LET IT SNOW, LET IT SNOW

A ski resort has reported record-breaking snowfall this season.

Recordings at Nevis Range, near Fort William, reveal that snow has fallen every 24 hours since opening on December 20 last year.

Nevis Range managing director Marian Austin said: "The snow hasn't come without its challenges and the opening up process can take much longer than normal.

"But looking ahead, once the weather is more settled, the skiing will be amazing.

"We're already planning to continue skiing right up into spring."

See www.nevisrange.co.uk for more details.



SANDISON'S SCOTLAND

BRUCE SANDISON IS A JOURNALIST, ANGLER AND AUTHOR OF A STRING OF BEST-SELLING BOOKS ABOUT SCOTLAND'S OUTDOORS. HE LIVES IN SUTHERLAND.



AUTUMN SUN, DRIVING RAIN, THE BEAUTY OF THE HILLS AND A GLASS THAT CHEERS

This wonderful walk to the summit of Ben Cleuch (721m) starts in Tillicoultry – the Wee County of Clackmannanshire – at the end of Ochil Hill Road and just past the whitewashed facade of the Woolpack Inn in Glassford Square.

The route is a right of way north to Blackford in Strathallan on the A9 Glasgow to Perth road.

Tillicoultry has a clean, fresh, well-organised sparkle about it, guarded by the graceful bulk of the ben, the highest of the gentle Ochil Hills.

I set off on the seven-mile walk warmed by the sun of a perfect autumn morning.

A shorter walk encircles tree-lined Tillicoultry Glen and my route follows this path up neatly maintained steps. As you go, carefully count the wooden seats by the side of the track.

At the fifth seat, leave the well-trodden path and strike directly uphill. If you don't do so, you will eventually find yourself down in the glen facing a brutal frontal assault of the hill.

This would be a pity, because the right of way is a splendid walk, wandering north between King's Seat (643m) to the east and The Law (638m) to the west.

The Gannel Burn burbles below and, as you gain height, a marvellous vista unfolds – smoke rising, lazily from Tillicoultry's chimneys and matchstick-sized golfers below, busy spoiling a good walk – the blue splash of Gartmore Dam and a patchwork of fertile fields pricked by the tiny gold dots of straw bales.

Beyond New Sauchie, Keilarsbrae and Alloa, the silver thread of the River Forth meanders east past the dark pall of Grangemouth to the spikes of the Forth bridges.

The ancient town of Stirling straddles the plain, its intimidating castle dominating the surrounding countryside. To the south, the horizon is lined by misty-grey southern upland hills – Pentland, Moorfoot, Lammermuir, Coulter and Campsie.

After two-and-a-half miles, the route reaches a saddle in the hill at Maddy Moss. Turn left here. I did, and was soon enveloped in mist.

It started to rain, heavily. Fortunately, the track ahead was easy to follow but the wind was cold and biting so I stopped to pull on an extra sweater and waterproofs and consult my compass.

Care is required in misty conditions, since the route follows the edge of a deep corrie.

It is easy to lose height and become disorientated. A convenient fence line will keep you safe.

If you miss the track, walk north to find the fence. In doing so, you will cross and regain the path.

Just below the summit, on the north face, there is a stone-built shelter. Lunch time.

From here, a well-worn, wide path hurtles you back down the hillside to the head of Tillicoultry Glen, where Gannel Burn and Duiglen Burn meet in white-foamed flow.

I did not need compass and map to find my way to my final destination, the welcoming arms of the Woolpack Inn (telephone 01259 750109).

The Woolpack enjoys a considerable reputation and was Campaign for Real Ale Pub of the Year in 2012.

Sitting comfortably with a glass that cheers made the perfect end to a perfect day in the Wee County of Clackmannanshire.



AUTUMN CHARM Ben Cleuch from Alva Glen, the Ochil Hills



MOUNTAIN AIR Anne cross-country skiing, one of her favourite hobbies

THE WEEK



The tranquillity of the lochs and woods and the wildness of the surrounding mountains have drawn visitors to the area since Victorian times. The

continual changes in mood, light and colour provide visitors with a feast of sensory experiences throughout the year.

TAKE THREE..

Whether you're heading abroad or skiing the record-breaking snow in Scotland, a bag to carry your snowboard is a must.

SAVE

Trespass Tomb snowboard bag

A padded snowboard bag that is transported by a shoulder strap or stowaway rucksack straps.

Sale price £39.99, www.trespass.co.uk



SPEND

Wed'Ze Easy 2 travel board/ski bag

You'll fit two snowboards, or two pairs of skis or one of each as well as most of your snowboard clothing into this roomy bag. Luckily, it also has wheels.

£79.99, www.decathlon.co.uk



SPLURGE

Evoc Snowgear Roller

Leading sports luggage brand Evoc have created a spacious, highly durable and padded snowboard bag that can be wheeled along.

£169.99, www.ellis-brigham.com



LIGHT YEARS AHEAD

Silva have launched their lightest and brightest head torch yet. The Silva Trail Speed Elite is extremely lightweight and smaller than a 50p piece in diameter. Yet it brightens the trail ahead thanks to two LED light bulbs that offer 600 lumens output. Power comes from a neat rechargeable battery that can be held or put in a pocket. The Trail Speed Elite is useful for a variety of activities. Wear it on an elasticated headband for trail running or after-dark hiking. Affix to a bike helmet or use the handlebar attachment for night-time riding. Shop around to find the Silva Trail Speed Elite on sale from £188.99. See silva.se/