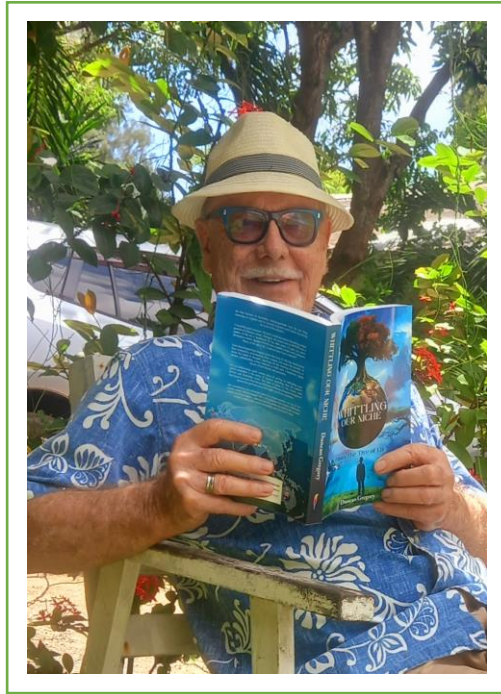


THE THRILL OF IT ALL! I was thrilled to read through my first book



- **WHITTLING OUR NICHE: from the Tree of Life** - after it arrived by air from publisher Austin Macauley, in London. To see the beautiful magenta cover for the first time in book form, and then to open and skim through the lead pages: all very exciting! *How does it look? How does it read? Are there obvious mistakes we didn't pick up before printing?* An adrenalin rush that I can only guess most writers get at that moment in time.

Thankfully, I was pleased with that first impression. From the outside it looked good, the first few pages seemed to gel together and lead in nicely to the main text, the chapter headings all worked well, and the font was easy on the eye. On closer reading later, I did pick up a few mistakes; more obvious perhaps to me the author, rather than any first-time reader. But in general, and after almost 12 months in the publication process, I was more than happy with the end result.

I'd asked the publisher not to label the book as autobiography; perhaps semi-autobiographical, but I even shrink from that title too. Yes, it does pull many of my experiences together, from illegitimate birth in UK, right through to retirement and residence on the tropical coast of Kenya. But I have tried to expand beyond that, to portray a range of diverse places and charismatic people, as well as addressing the reasons for all of us being here together, on Planet Earth.

My hope is that the reader, in whichever country they reside, can find as much pleasure in reading the book as I did in writing it. Yes, it was a lengthy and daunting task, but many things with a gratifying ending tend to be that way. I've now moved on to a second book of short stories, and again, have really enjoyed immersing myself in the process. With writing, I find I am '**In My Element**', and can recommend the pursuit to others who also lean towards this noble art.

Duncan Gregory

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