21st January 2015
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Dear Equal Opportunities Committee,

I listened to the conversations on BBC Radio Scotland this week regarding loneliness in old age and young people. I was particularly interested in what can be done to improve the physical and mental well-being of retired men and women.

To that end, I have enclosed 2 pieces I wrote in November 2014 regarding Opportunities in Retirement Cym. They are self-explanatory and show what has been done for 30 years.
now, by the retired, for the retired.

I also enclose a copy of our last Newsletter (Winter 2014). We produce a newsletter quarterly which is distributed to each member. Membership is around 1500-1600 from Lyr, Prestwick and the surrounding villages.

Also, I've enclosed a leaflet (flyer) which advertises our self-help organization. I'm so enthusiastic about our organisation - I always feel I must spread the good news, as I have been a member since April 1996.

Yours sincerely,

Amy Kinnaird (Mrs)

(AMY KINNAIRD)
Opportunities in Retirement, Ayr

The year 1995. The place—Ayr County Buildings. Inside—forty retirees and women—with a will to start a retirement group.

Four people, including Isabelle Johnston, a retired Education Officer, the prime mover, had called a meeting to try to set up a self-help body of retired people. They envisaged an organisation in which the members would offer their skills and abilities acquired over a lifetime for the benefit of other members. By doing so they hoped to help each other to continue to lead active and useful lives.

It was decided then to go about which activity groups would be feasible. For the record, four groups seemed to get support. These were Fitness and Health, Gardening, Money Matters and Photography. From these small beginnings OIR Ayr, as an infant organisation was born. As great oaks from little acorns grow, so too has OIR Ayr as it is known, developed. Membership is now around 1500 and there are now 78 Interest Groups or Activities. These range from several Walking and Hill-climbing Groups, 6 Drawing and Art Groups, Photography Groups, Scottish Dance, Bridge, History—a variety too many to list. The choice caters for members to enable them to keep healthy and happy as the length of retirement increases.

In addition to the groups and classes there are fortnightly Tuesday afternoon General Meetings in Ayr Town Hall where 200-300 members meet to have a Speaker, a Digital Presentation or other entertainment.

Occasionally OIR’s own Folk Group, known as The Vintage Blend, provide the company with a splendid afternoon’s fun. This meeting also gives members the opportunity to socialise—an important aspect of our organisation.

Two of our members organise Day Trips in the summer months, plus two holidays abroad each year. Since starting these holidays, Ann and Andrew Monaghan have provided 22 successful trips abroad.

A Quarterly Newsletter is also provided for each member. This supplies information for members about “happenings” in OIR and contains interesting features written by members. OIR provides the above range of services with the aim of enriching the lives of the retired citizens of Ayr, Prestwick and the surrounding villages. The Government is much concerned with the ever increasing number of older people in our society and the resulting financial and medical drain on the UK’s resources. Loneliness in old age has come to prominence in the media of late. OIR members, over the past 29 years, have testified that belonging to the organisation has kept them out of GP’s surgeries, hospitals and nursing homes.

There are other OIR’s in Ayrshire—Largs, Troon, Kilmarnock, The Three Towns and Maybole. In the early years of OIR Ayr a few Executive Committee members visited these towns to hold meetings to encourage and help the retired citizens in these towns to form their own OIRs. There were also similar organisations in Irvine and Cumnock but these have folded due to lack of support. We do have regular get-togethers of Ayrshire’s OIRs that meet socially and exchange ideas.

To join OIR Ayr or for further information, please call at the OIR Office, 61 Main Street, Ayr KA8 8BU. Telephone: 01292 260086. Email: info@oirayr.org.uk

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—10am-2pm

Annual subscription is £18 with a small charge in certain groups to offset the cost of hall rentals.

OIR Executive Member 10th November 2014

Amy Kinnaird

10/11/2014
Amy Kinnaird

From: "Amy Kinnaird" <amy4kinnaird@btinternet.com>
To: "Amy Kinnaird" <amy4kinnaird@btinternet.com>
Sent: 10 November 2014 12:40
Subject: Opportunities in Retirement, Ayr

I thought I would add a my own personal experience of what OIR Ayr has meant to me, having been a member of the organisation since 1996. I joined the organisation in April 1996, having been widowed in the January of that year. My husband had suffered from Parkinson's Disease for 19 years and for the last 5 years of his life I was his full-time carer. Prior to that, my sister-in-law, a widow with no children, had cared for David during my working day to enable me to keep my job as a Primary School Head Teacher. However, she died suddenly one morning on a visit to a Chiropodist as a result of a heart attack and I had no option but to take early retirement. Over the years, due to my husband's illness we had little social contact and after he died I felt a bit lost with no seeming compass in my life.

Fortunately, in March 1996, I met an old schoolfriend who told me about this superb organisation called OIR. I went to the OIR office right there and then and paid my subscription which was then £5. I examined the list of groups and decided that I would join a Walking Group, simply because I knew I could enjoy walks. On the first Tuesday morning walk in the Carrick Hills and Heads of Ayr area I felt so good. I was made very welcome in the group which astonished me by consisting around 65 walkers—all wrinklies and all enjoying the spring sunshine, the birds whistling and the beautiful Ayrshire scenery. The Tuesday Group's walks were between 5 and 6 miles in length.

I had arrived! Later that year, I met Hector, another walker, also widowed, and we became firm friends. Over the subsequent years we walked, usually about twice a week in all weathers, all over Scotland and beyond.

We had a dozen OIR holidays together and enjoyed many OIR Walking Weeks and Weekends in the Scottish Borders and the Highlands. We were both elected to the OIR Executive Committee in 1998 and also started a Saturday Walking Group which lasted for 14 years. Sadly, Hector died in December 2012, but life goes on albeit differently. I am still on the OIR Executive Committee, having been in the Chair for 4 years from 2005—2009.

These walks, outings and holidays provided me with experiences which I turned into writing articles for various publications—"Scottish Home & Country"—the magazine of SWRI, and "Scottish Memories"—a magazine published mainly on readers' memories. If I hadn’t joined OIR all those years ago this creativity might not have happened.

The network of support among OIR members is truly heart-warming as many members can testify. A quote from myself, which was used in OIR's advertising leaflets—"I consider OIR Ayr to be a very strong Bank where, despite my deposits over the years, I am still overdrawn, and I am happy about that". 

Amy Kinnaird 10th November 2014