

Open houses and a warm welcome

Eday woman urges Orkney ladies to get involved in 5W organisation

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Travelling and making new friends is probably something that most of us say we want to do more of at some point in our lives.

Moira Byers, from Eday, certainly did and, 20 years ago, she joined an organisation which gave her the opportunity to meet other women from many different cultures, backgrounds and ages and visit new and interesting places.

Moira is now appealing to other women in Orkney to get involved.

Women Welcome Women World Wide (5W) is an organisation which aims to promote international friendship by encouraging women of

different countries to visit one another in their own homes.

5W has well over 2,000 members, of all backgrounds and ages, in 86 different countries.

Moira explained: "Since joining 5W, I have visited and stayed with ladies in Ottawa and Germany, travelled to Amsterdam and toured Australia and the Netherlands."

"Since retiring two years ago, I try to attend the Scottish 5W outings, which are held every couple of months. Usually around ten ladies meet for a lovely lunch, then we go on an interesting outing afterwards."

"In January, I went house-sitting in Morningside, Edinburgh,

for my 5W friend who was touring Vietnam."

It is not just the travel experiences that Moira enjoys. Over the years, she has made many friends and met many women who may have different backgrounds and cultures but all share the same desire to experience new places and make new friends.

"I have hosted a succession of kind and appreciative ladies, solo travellers, widows, husbands, partners and children. All have been mesmerised by Eday and Orkney and some have returned twice over."

"My first 5W visitor to Eday was Marjorie, from Sydney. She was approaching 80 years old and a widow. She arrived in Stromness the same day as Cameron Stout returned home after winning *Big Brother*. What a welcome party she witnessed! Then in Eday, we danced the night away at the Eday Show dance."

"Marjorie described the trip as the 'greatest of her life' and she made a return visit."

Moira continued: "Last year I had visiting women from Sweden, USA, Australia, China, and even entertained one 5W lady from Finland, who arrived in Kirkwall for the day via cruise liner!"

"I have made lifelong, worldwide friends, meeting some exceptional people, and can't imagine life without 5W now."

5W, or 3W as it was originally known, was founded in 1984 by Frances Alexander in High Wycombe.

It was first envisaged as a European organisation and publicised in *Women of Europe* — the EU information bulletin



Moira Byers, retired psychiatric nurse from Eday, (left) pictured with some of the international guests who have visited her in Orkney through the international women's friendship group, Women Welcome Women World Wide.

on women's affairs.

However, according to the organisation, as friendship knows no boundaries, 5W now has members in every continent except Antarctica!

The organisation believes that, after experiencing other countries and ways of life from within private homes, members return to their own with greater understanding and a broader vision.

Founder Frances Alexander said: "If only people would learn that experiencing a different lifestyle is interesting, enriching and mind-opening. Too many people regard different as threatening. This suspicion and mistrust causes wars. Women have a gift for making friends, and I know 5W has in its own way made the world a smaller place."

"It pleases me that ordinary women travel the world, discover the joy of befriending people from very different cultures, and learn about themselves at the same time in our web of international friendship."

Moira has recently been appointed as a 5W trustee, which allows her to attend the international trustees' meeting, which is held in a different country each year.

"I attended my first International 5W gathering in Amsterdam last week, at Easter. This was a magical year, spent

touring Holland and the Hague, exploring Amsterdam and sampling the Dutch culture."

"Our 5W hosts had organised a wonderful tour. Our group of 15 ladies all got on splendidly together. Some knew each other, but many others did not. I shared a room with an enchanting French lady and now, of course, we are firm friends. I made new friends from Holland, Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, USA, Australia and Germany."

Moira believes that more Orkney women would be interested in joining 5W. Also, she feels she could do with some help in coping with the numbers of "very interesting women" who want to visit Orkney, and her calendar is already filling up with 5W guests for this summer.

There is only one other member of 5W in Orkney.

Moira explained: "It would be lovely to share 5W with other Orkney women. My friend Pam Farmer is the only other Orkney member. Maybe, in the future, I could envisage a two-monthly 5W Orkney outing, where we could meet for lunch and spend a pleasant afternoon together."

"The great thing about 5W," Moira said, "is that you just do what suits you. You are not compelled to keep or entertain anyone. In the years when I worked flat out, I simply sat

and read the 5W newsletters and learned about travel experiences, and how other women lived."

"I would be delighted if others could experience some of the travel pleasures that I have had, purely based on international friendship among women and an interest in travel experiences."

Pam Farmer travelled to Australia last year and toured the country, staying with 5W members.

She said: "It is such a warm experience to be trusted by total strangers to be allowed into their homes, live with their families and be a part of their lives for the short period of time you're with them, all on the strength of 5W membership. With little or no expectation of reward other than the slim chance of a return visit, this is human generosity at its best."

"I would highly recommend the experience to anyone with an interest in the outside world, whether with a view to travelling yourself or just to meeting people from other walks of life. It costs nothing other than a few days of your time, but it can open doors to all corners of the world."

For further information, see www.womenwelcome-women.org.uk or contact Moira on (01857) 622258 or email moira5eday@gmail.com.



Moira and her friend Brian pictured with a 5W family they visited in Stuttgart.

Stromness and Round About

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When a twopenny piece of 1797 was found here in 1945, it was described as a "cartwheel . . . with a well-defined rim, no less than two ounces in weight", bearing a bust of George III.

It was presented to the museum, unlike a half-crown that "seemed like an enormous cartwheel of opulence" at the Lammus Market (1930s).

The language of seals was how a

the old sweeties.

Nor can they be kept for repeated perusal, as were many of the "seals" cards . . .

Tuffy's Park was a popular resort of youngsters in "snow-time" a couple of generations ago.

"It took in Manse Park and St Peter's Park," one veteran mused (2000), being "fine nursery slopes" for those wishing to learn the management of clogs or experience the exhilaration of sledding

only the gunpowder and soap used to bring flavour and "kick" to alleged spirits bought by travellers in the Old West. . .

Described as palatable but heady, the "cocktail" was poured ceremoniously into artistically carved wooden basins, whose arrangement of staves was attractively variegated, presented with equal formality to the bride for her to take a sip, before the cog was taken round for the gathering to taste the couple with "honours three

version into *Stromness: A Picture in Verse*, printed on February 16, 1967, a few months before his death.

A pleasant piece of observation, the later work was a salute to the town which he said he had grown to love during his stay in St Peter's — referred to by him as *El Paradiso*.

Both haiku and descriptive poems have admirable features — crispness of the former's statement and the other's leisurely account of activities in Stromness under the time worn but

general practice, the veteran said, the work was not any easier, nor were the wheel-assisted ploughmen seen to be better at "the ancient art of the plough . . ."

Nostalgia for the between-the-wars period, when ploughing matches proliferated and an informed farming community "talked about and discussed feelings, finishes, furs, socks, coulters, mouldboards . . ."

Likely enough, sight of the enthusiastic, extremely prodigious exponent's