

Dornoch

Heritage Society - The Dornoch Heritage Society started its winter season with a talk by Mike Hook entitled "Dornoch, World War I and me".

While focusing on how the war impacted on Dornoch and the many tragedies, there were some remarkable facts revealed as well.

Not least was the money raised by the townspeople of Dornoch for the National Relief Fund, which amounted to £385 - equivalent to £31,000 today - and this from a population of around 800.

The suggestion that the names of the subscribers be published in the local paper was rejected as the cost of 2p a line was considered excessive.

In September 1914, the *Northern Times*, was particularly impressed that the fisher girls of Embo had knitted 50 pairs of socks for the Royal Navy Reserve and 50 pairs for the Territorials at Bedford.

The personal aspect of Mike's talk was that his great uncle, LCpl James Mackay, 61st Battalion Machine Gun Corps, was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry during the Battle of Cambrai. He was subsequently killed in action at Artres on 1st November 1918, only 10 days before the Armistice.

With one son already serving, James' parents, Kenneth and Johan Mackay of School Hill, Dornoch, had forbidden their younger son, Mike's grandfather, from enlisting before his 18th birthday. This act sufficiently delayed his enlistment so that, serving in the Royal Military Police in Calais, he survived the war marrying a French lady and preserving the Mackay lineage.

Mike is proud to have in his possession his great uncle's Military Medal and documents relating to his gallant service.

The next talk is on November 20th, when Jennifer Bruce will be talking about the migration of Border shepherds to Caithness and Sutherland.