

WW1 stories explored at Historylinks

By Staff Reporter

reporter@northern-times.co.uk

A NEW exhibition has gone on display at the Historylinks Museum in Dornoch to mark 100 years since the end of the First World War.

Heroes and Homecomings tells the stories of a few of the local men and women who served at the Front during the conflict.

It also examines the impact on a small community such as Dornoch, and a special Roll of Honour has been created by Historylinks volunteer Stuart Campbell to commemorate those who did not return home.

The First World War provided a temporary boost to the Scottish farming economy. In 1917 there was a high demand for wool and animals for war use. Young men who left the community to serve in the forces were replaced by women, children and older men.

The fishing industry in Embo suffered a blow however, when the North Sea was deemed dangerous to shipping due to mines. It was not until food supplies became insufficient, that fishing restrictions were lifted. By this time most fishing vessels were being used to support the Royal Navy.

As an incentive to enlist, soldiers and sailors were promised land on their return to the Highlands. However, they were not allocated land quickly and some demoralised men resumed a practice



Lynne Mahoney, the curator at Historylinks and the creator of the exhibition.

that had primarily taken place during the 1800s – land raiding. Although this time it was largely a symbolic gesture to gain sympathy for their frustration at being let down by the government.

The government's response was to pass the Land Settlement Act (Scotland).

Land was bought through compulsory purchase orders and began to be distributed to servicemen. The Duke of Sutherland even gifted the 12,000-acre Borgie Farm in north Sutherland for the Settlement of Soldiers and Sailors. Despite this, the Act failed to provide for many Highlanders. After only five months the government could no longer afford to purchase land and all pending

settlements were suspended.

Another post-war economic problem for families living and working along the east coast of Scotland was the collapse of the fishing export markets to Germany, Eastern Europe and Russia. The price of coal and the repairs for boats that had been requisitioned put further strain on the industry.

By the end of the 1920s the problems of poverty and land-ownership in the Highlands were still unresolved.

In 1922 the Empire Settlement Act was passed. In the period between the First and Second World Wars, Scotland had the highest emigration rate in Europe.

The exhibition is open daily from 10am to 4pm until October 25.