

Do you have any information on Dr Bremner?

DOES ANYONE remember, or have any information on, Dr Alexander Bremner who was Medical Officer for Health for Caithness and Sutherland from 1911 until 1925?

That's the appeal that has gone out to local people from Dr Bremner's grandson, Stuart Bremner, of Apsley, Hemel Hempstead.

Stuart admits that, a century after his grandad's 16-year sojourn in Sutherland, it's highly unlikely he will receive a response to his appeal, but he holds out a faint flicker of hope.

He says: "For anyone to recall grandfather, they would need to be in their 90s at least, so it's a bit of a long shot, but you never know."

Stuart (63) began researching his family history once he had more time on his hands after retiring from his job as a bank manager.

He has amassed a considerable amount of information about Dr Bremner but, frustratingly, there are still missing chunks.

He knows that his grandfather lived at Kyle View, which is now a guest house, in Dornoch, and that his children, including Stuart's father, Ian, went to Dornoch Academy.

Dr Bremner served in the First World War and Stuart has tracked down his medal record card through the National Archives file on-line.

He says: "From what I can determine from his record card, he served with some distinction in France. His record shows a Mention in Despatches and a Military Cross."

He would dearly love to know the details of how Dr Bremner came to be awarded the Military Cross.

The family moved to Lancashire in 1925/1926 and Dr Bremner died suddenly in 1932 at the age of just 48.



Stuart says: "Prior to Dornoch, the family appears to have lived in the parish of Canisbay, near John O'Groats, for over 200 years and it puzzles me why they went to Lancashire.

"My only guess is that with four children and the Great Depression looming, grandfather might have thought there would be better prospects in England."

In search of more information about his grandfather, and particularly his Military Cross award and the move south, Stuart and his wife Diane made a trip to Dornoch in November last year.

He had hoped that, given his important position in the

community, some mention might have been made of Dr Bremner in the old files of the Northern Times. However, Stuart trawled without success through the 1926 edition of the paper on microfiche in Dornoch Library.

"I was looking to see if I could find any reason for the move south, but it was a tedious task and I found nothing, probably because my attention span was not strong enough," he says.

Visits to the town's Historylinks Museum and Royal Dornoch Golf Club were more successful

"We did find a photograph of some of the family on Dornoch beach in Historylinks' image archive

and the RDGC secretary found grandfather's subscription as a member in 1913!" says Stuart.

The Historylinks archive also shows copies of receipts for Dr Bremner's salary in 1913-15, before he set off for France. He received the sum of five guineas per annum, paid half-yearly.

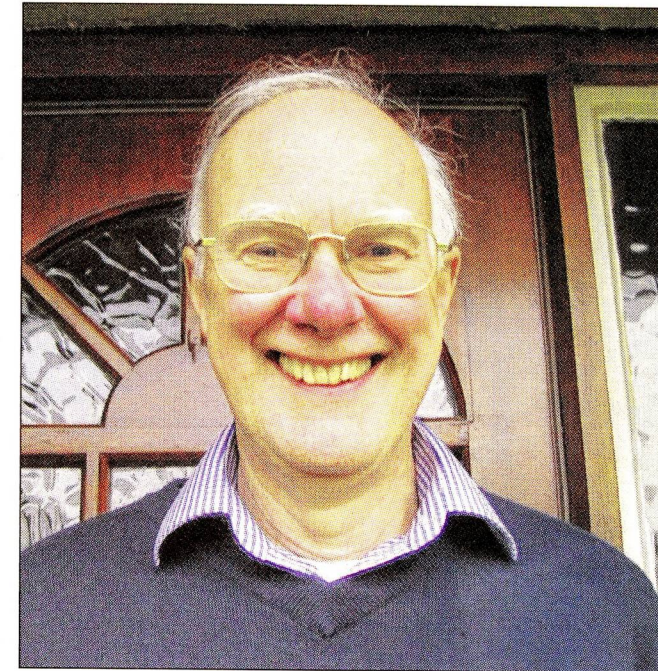
Stuart and his wife also visited the old family home at Kyle View and learned from the guest house proprietor that it was thought to have been built originally on land bought by world famous architect Donald Ross for his daughter to live in when she married.

Stuart says that his grandfather must have been well liked locally,

RIGHT: Stuart Bremner is appealing for information about his grandfather who was Medical Officer for Health in Caithness and Sutherland early last century.

LEFT: This picture of Dr Bremner's young family playing at Dornoch beach is in the Historylinks archives.

BELOW: Dr Bremner and his wife would have had to be good at budgeting as he was paid half-yearly. This image of a payment receipt from 1913 is also courtesy of Historylinks. Sue Higgins of Historylinks says: "We have five salary documents in total dating from 1913 to 1917. They were with other burgh documents donated to the museum."



judging by one incident. He recalls: "My father, Ian, took us on holiday to Dornoch one year in the 1960s and a chap who had been at Dornoch Academy with him many years earlier stopped him on the street.

"On ascertaining that he was indeed Dr Bremner's son, he invited the whole family - there were seven of us! - for a lovely sea-trout meal at his house.

"Apparently grandfather had acted very promptly and skillfully when this chap had badly broken his leg many years previously."

Anyone with any information about Dr Bremner is asked to e-mail Stuart on: stuart.bremner@lineone.net

