

The Northern Times April 12, 2013

Looking back on Highland medical care

DORNOCH'S Historylinks Museum is mounting an exhibition to mark the centenary last year of the Highlands and Islands Medical Services Committee.

This was commonly referred to as the Dewar Committee after its chairman, Sir John Dewar, MP for Inverness-shire.

The committee was commissioned to look into the medical services which existed in the Highlands and Islands following the realisation that crofters were not covered by the

1911 National Health Insurance Act. The Dewar Report reviewed reports, held 17 public sessions questioning 178 witnesses, and conducted questionnaires.

This gave them a unique insight into life in the Highlands and Islands in the early 20th century, and the appalling conditions under which many people lived.

The report outlined proposals for health care reform which led to the first state-provided health service in the world — the Highlands and Islands

Medical Service. This service revolutionised medical provision, and is considered to be the precursor to the National Health Service.

To complement the Dewar exhibition, there will also be a display remembering the well-loved Dornoch GP Dr Aeneas Macleod. The museum has recently been given his home birthing maternity case dating from the late 1940s, and many of the items used are on display.

The exhibition runs until 31st May.