

# Remote and Rural Remedies Activity Guide

“LANDS & ISLANDS”



**Created by the Heritage Department at  
The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh  
Scotland's Oldest Medical Library**

# Madainn Mhath

## - Welcome -

This activity booklet will highlight the people and places of Scotland's Highlands and Islands in the middle of the 1850s. After a devastating potato famine hits the remote and rural areas of Scotland towns and villages were in need of better, and more affordable, medical care. The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh sent a **survey** to physicians and parishioners to find out what the people of their village needed most. The **survey** also revealed the rough and tumble life physicians and their patients lived during this time. Rough waters, terrible roads, bitter winters and unproductive summers made living in the Highlands and Islands tough, and it made the people even tougher. Learning to trust neighbours, and themselves, with their medical emergencies was essential. And when trained physicians were posted into close communities the physicians had to earn their trust.

This booklet will take you through the successes and struggles of medical care in the Highlands and Islands.

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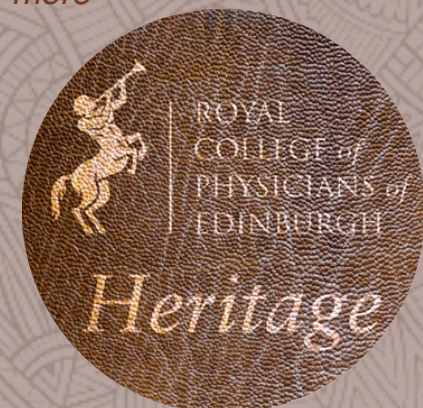
Page 6: Medicine and *Materia Medica*

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## Glossary of Terms

- **Ferry** - A boat OR body of water
- **Gig** - A small cart pulled by one horse
- **Heritor** - A person who is given land in the Highlands and Islands through a pre-arranged contract with a family member upon their death or is wealthy enough to purchase lands and estates outright. They could also be landlords.
- **Highlands** - A large swath of land made up of the northwest portion of Scotland. It is over half the landmass of Scotland
- **Howdy** - An Orkney term for a midwife - Also spelled "Howdie"
- **Indigestion** - A sickness in the stomach that can lead to vomiting or diarrhoea
- **Inflammation** - Swelling of a body part
- **Islands** - Bodies of land entirely surrounded by water. There are almost 100 inhabited islands (Isles) in Scotland
- **Materia Medica** - Literally the "materials of medicine." Ingredients used to make what was considered good medicine at the time. Materia Medica is often a flower, mineral or animal product dried and ground into a powder
- **Quack** - A person who sells mixtures known as "nostrums" that are advertised to cure, literally, every ailment a person may have. They are sold at a high price but are almost never effective. They are known to do more harm than good
- **Simple** - A medicine with one or two ingredients and mixed in a liquid
- **Survey** - A series of written questions given to a group of people that are answered and returned. The information is gathered and plotted onto charts and graphs



## HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS - A FEW FACTS

The Highlands and Islands are a defined area in Scotland. It stretches from

**Shetland** in the north

all the way to

the **Kintyre peninsula** in the south.

It spans from the

**Outer Hebrides** in the west

to **Moray** in the east.

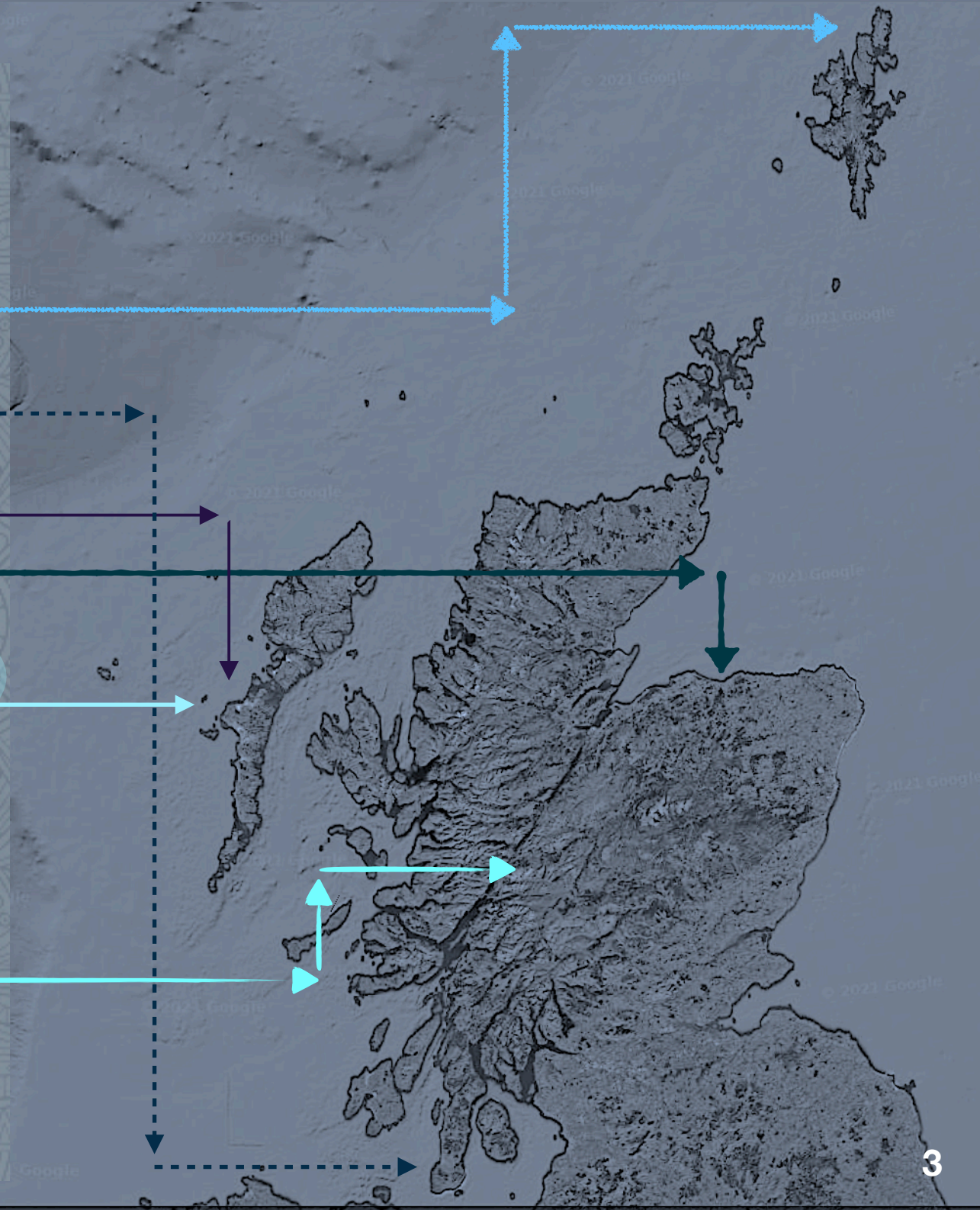
There are **over 100** isles.

The biggest being the **Isle of Lewis and Harris**

The highlands are **over 25,000** square miles.  
The **population is about 469,000**.

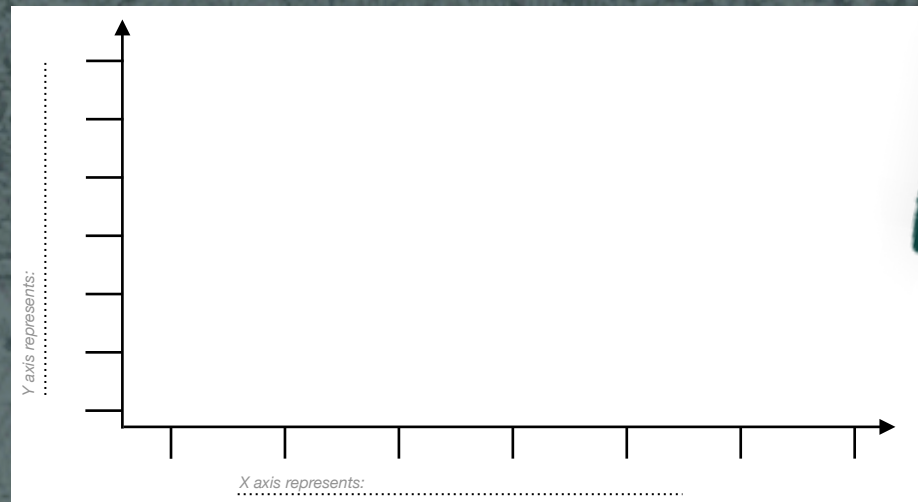
The Highlands and Islands make up **well over half the landmass** of Scotland  
but only **10% of its population**.

**Ben Nevis**, the highest point in the United Kingdom (1,345 metres) can be found, near Fort William.



## SCOTTISH PHYSICIANS IN 1850

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh has educated young physicians since 1681. Almost 200 years later, graduates from the college have spread across the Highlands and Islands in order to treat people in the remotest places. Physicians were paid to settle in remote areas through charity and local taxes. 58 physicians were **surveyed** about the needs of their local area, their daily commute, and the kind of medicine they use. Here is what we learned about our physicians in the Highlands and Islands from the **survey**.



Can you make a bar graph using the information from one of these tables?

### HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN PHYSICIANS?

YEARS PRACTICED	NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS
0 - 5	13
5 - 10	12
10 - 15	9
15 - 20	6
20 - 25	5
25 - 30	2
More than 30 Years	9

### DISTANCE TRAVELED TO SEE PATIENTS

MILES TRAVELLED	NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS
0 - 5	1
5 - 10	5
10 - 15	5
15 - 20	16
20 - 25	4
25 - 30	4
More than 30 Years	13

### HOW DID PHYSICIANS GET AROUND?

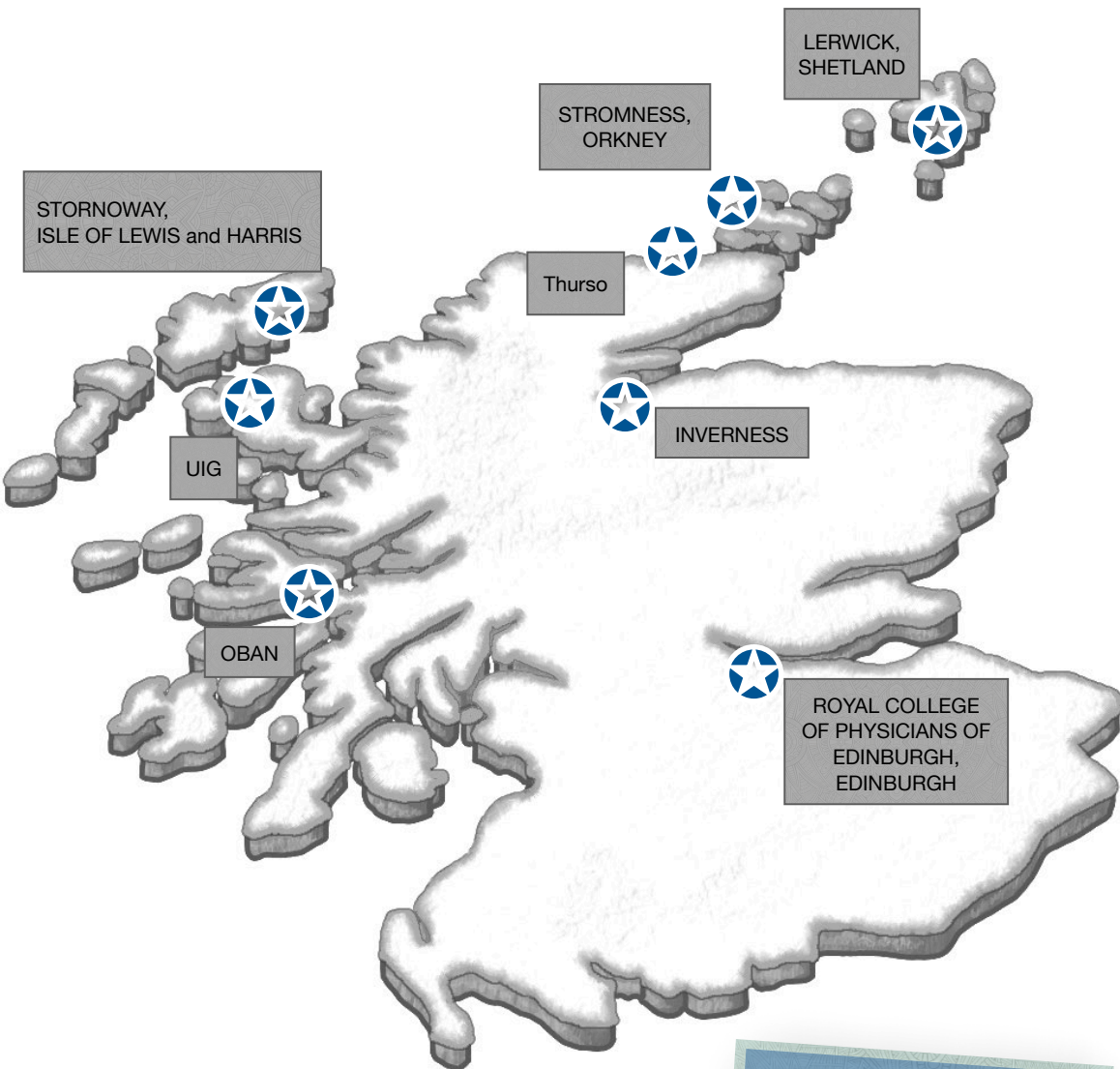
KIND OF TRAVEL	NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS
Gig	13
Horse/Donkey	24
Ferry/Boat	22
Walk	8
Train	1

# PLOT THE COURSE

Travelling around the Highlands and Islands in the 1850s was difficult. To get a sense of how much travelling would be involved, let's plot the course from one place to another using the means of transport in 1850.

Plot the course below, and state the result of the duration in hours. Use the conversion chart below to help you find the answer.

A **GIG**: 4 Miles Per Hour  
 A **HORSE**: 6 Miles Per Hour  
**WALKING**: 3 Miles Per Hour  
**FERRY**: 4 **KNOTS** Per hour  
 1 Knot = 1.15 Miles



## 1. From LERWICK to INVERNESS for *materia medica*.

He takes the **ferry** 122 miles from Lerwick to Stromness, Orkney. He takes another **ferry** 30 miles from Stromness to Thurso. Finally, he takes a **gig** 110 miles Inverness. If our physician did not stop to rest, how many hours would it take to make it to his destination?

## 2. From OBAN to EDINBURGH for *simples*.

He takes the **gig** 73 miles from Oban to the new **Caledonian Train Station** in Helensburgh. **BONUS!** That amazing train goes 30 miles per hour! And there's only 74 miles between there and Edinburgh. If our physician did not stop to rest, how many hours would it take to make it to his destination?

## 3. From STORNOWAY to INVERNESS for *emergency surgery*.

He takes the 33 mile **ferry** to Uig. From there he takes a **horse** 144 miles to Inverness. If our physician did not stop to rest, how many hours would it take to make it to his destination?

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (in hours)

#1 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_

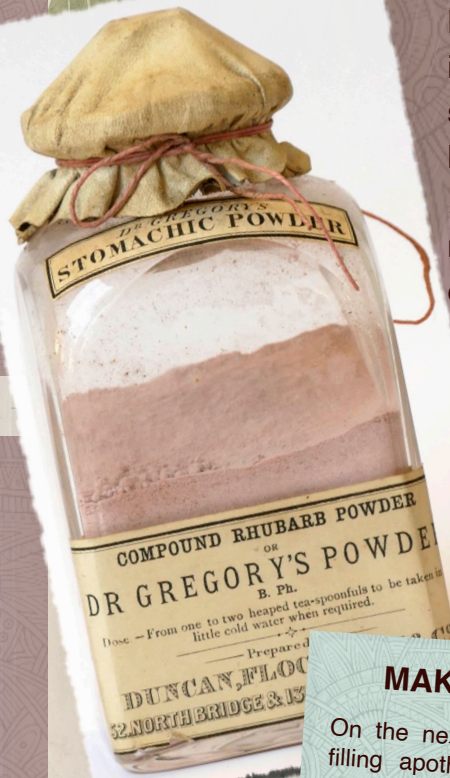
### Help Yourself Out!

These equations can be hard! You can try it yourself and then check your results on a calculator. You should also round your result to the nearest whole number.

Especially when you are converting knots into miles. It's tricky!

*AINEAUS CASTLE*  
*RECIPTS.*

To make Household Bread.  
 A peck of good wheat will afford 3 malshekens of  
 water to set the sponge with, made with warm in  
 moderate weather; if cold weather let it be a little more  
 in very warm weather let the water be cold; add to the  
 water about a tea-cupfull of good Barm strained, if  
 Barm be better reduce the quantity.  
 Let your Flour be put into a Baking-trough  
 and make a hollow space with your hand in the flour  
 so that the end of the Baking-trough makes one side  
 of the space; then pour in the Barm mixed as above  
 with the water, mix it up well with your hand, taking  
 great care that all the flour be clean taken from



Physicians would often be in charge of making their own medicines. Medicines like **simples** would be made by boiling or cooking plant and animal materials like roots, bone, droppings, leaves, and flowers. They would be mixed using oils and waters or left as powders that would be stirred in liquid. **Simples** would be taken by mouth over a few days.

Materials were scarce in the Highlands and Islands and some ingredients were very expensive to make. Home recipes for good **simples** could be found in hand-written notebooks. Sometimes, the home recipes would be slightly changed and added into a *Dispensatory* where physicians could follow the recipe and make the medicine in bulk. Ingredients and **simples** were often borrowed and exchanged between wealthy landowners (**heritors**) and physicians.

THE  
**EDINBURGH**  
 DISPENSATORY.

SECTION I.  
 MEDICINAL SIMPLES.

VEGETABLES.

Names generally received, and the parts in use. Synonymous names and descriptions.

**A**Bies, the fir-tree; its wood, tops and refin.  
 Abrotanum mas, male southernwood; the herb.  
 Abrotanum femina, female southernwood; the herb.

The greater narrow-leaved male southernwood, C. B.  
 Chamæcyparissus, Lavender-cotton. Female abrotanum, with roundish leaves, C. B.  
 Roundish-leaved santolina, Tournefort.

Abinthium vulgare, common wormwood; the herb.  
 The greater common wormwood, J. B. Broad-leaved or Pontic wormwood, Ger.

**MAKE YOUR OWN RECIPE**

On the next page, you will try your hand at filling apothecary jars full of medicines and **simples**. You should follow the recipe on THREE of the jars. See if you can find out the amount of ingredients, in percentages, you need. Draw and colour in the ingredients into the correct jar. Round percentages to the nearest whole number.

For the rest of the jar, make your own "medicine recipe" for a make-believe patient. Read what each ingredient does, and determine which ingredient is best suited to their needs.

Fill all the jars below with **simples** and *materia medica*.



## FOR A COUGH

The recipe calls for:

- Licorice Root - - - - - 100 grams
- Mint - - - - - 50 grams
- Cinnamon - - - - - 150 grams

If the bottle holds 300 grams of medicine, how much of a percent does each ingredient make of the total medicine?

- Licorice Root 100 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Mint 50 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Cinnamon 150 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %

Fill and colour the bottle on the shelf with small drawings of the ingredients to show your answer.



## FOR AN UPSET STOMACH

The recipe calls for:

- Rhubarb - - - - - 75 grams
- Cochineal Bug - - - - - 150 grams
- Spanish Fly - - - - - 225 grams

If the bottle holds 450 grams of medicine, how much of a percent does each ingredient make of the total medicine?

- Rhubarb 75 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Cochineal Bug 150 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Spanish Fly 225 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %

Fill and colour the bottle on the shelf with small drawings of the ingredients to show your answer.



## FOR AN INFECTED EYE

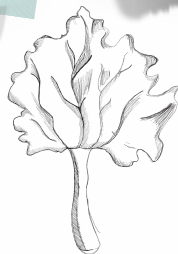
The recipe calls for:

- Sheep Droppings - - - - - 300 grams
- Cochineal Bug - - - - - 5 grams
- Scurvy Grass - - - - - 25 grams

If the bottle holds 330 grams of medicine, how much of a percent does each ingredient make of the total medicine?

- Sheep Droppings 300 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Cochineal Bug 5 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Scurvy Grass 25 grams = \_\_\_\_\_ %

Fill and colour the bottle on the shelf with small drawings of the ingredients to show your answer.



### Cochineal Bug

- Makes a **RED** colour
- Helps **indigestion**
- Lowers fever

### Root of Rhubarb

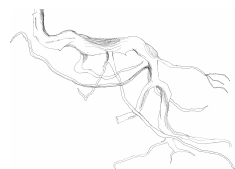
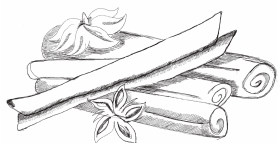
- Helps **indigestion**
- Treats spots on the face

### Mint

- Helps heartburn
- Helps upset stomach
- Helps toothache

### Scurvy Grass

- Helps with weak bones
- Helps with pocks on skin



### Cinnamon

- Reduces **inflammation**
- Lowers fever

### Spanish Fly

- Reduces fever
- Reduces pain
- Heals wounds

### Licorice Root

- Helps with **inflammation**
- Helps upset stomach

### Sheep Droppings

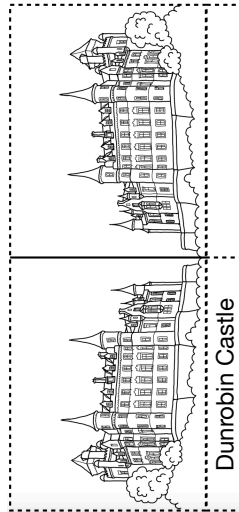
- Helps healing wounds
- Helps with pimples



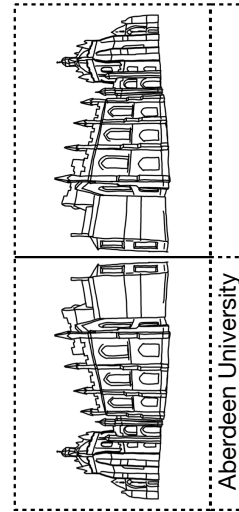
Travelling in the Highlands and Islands would mean that physicians would have the chance to see beautiful and remote parts of Scotland. Colour and cut out the small playing pieces and place them on the map of Scotland. Not sure where they go? Use your power of ESTIMATION to find out the location of each playing piece.

**Here are some clues to help you out**

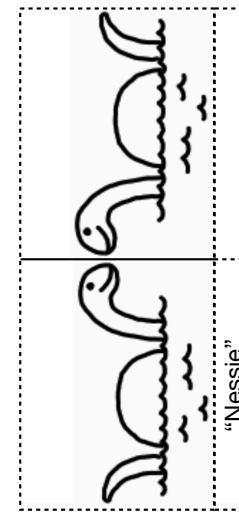
- ☼ The Blair Castle is 80 miles *southeast* of the Munloch Cloutie Well.
- ☼ The Butt of Lewis is on an Island in the Hebrides.
- ☼ Dunrobin is on the northeastern coast of where Nessie is known to live.
- ☼ Glenfinnan Monument is 90 miles south-southwest of the the Munloch Cloutie Well
- ☼ A Physician would need to take a **ferry** to get to the Stones of Stenness, and he would take that **ferry** leaving from Thurso.
- ☼ The Shetland Broch is the most northern of all these locations.
- ☼ Aberdeen University is 100 miles west-northwest of the Fairy Glen
- ☼ Glenfinnan Monument is the closet location to the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, although it is still 125 west-northwest of Edinburgh.
- ☼ The Fairy Glen is almost exactly west of Nessie.



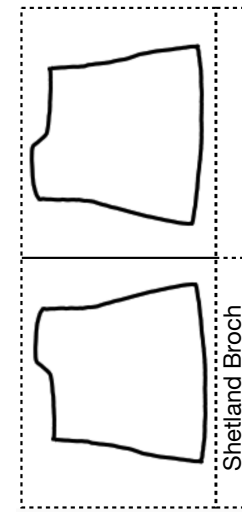
Dunrobin Castle



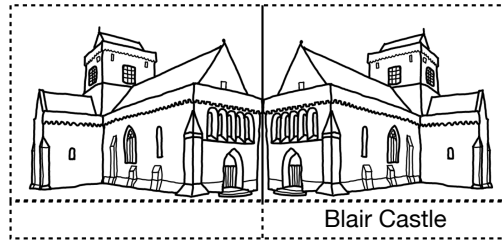
Aberdeen University



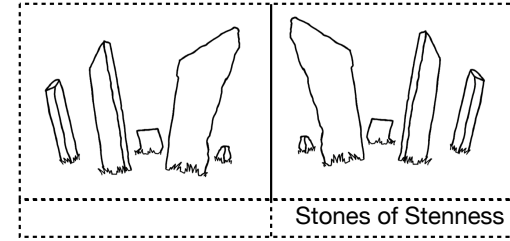
"Nessie"



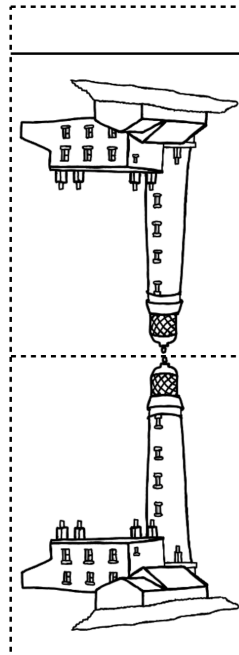
Shetland Broch



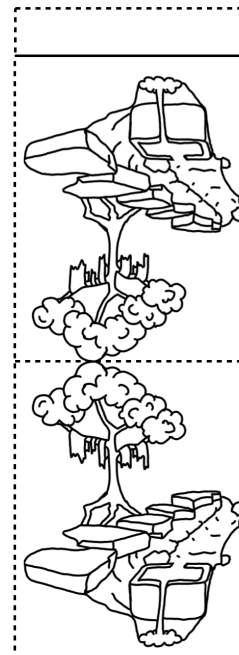
Blair Castle



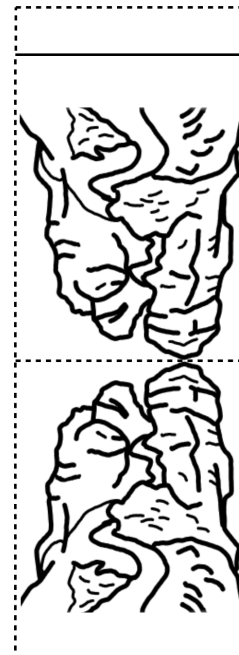
Stones of Stenness



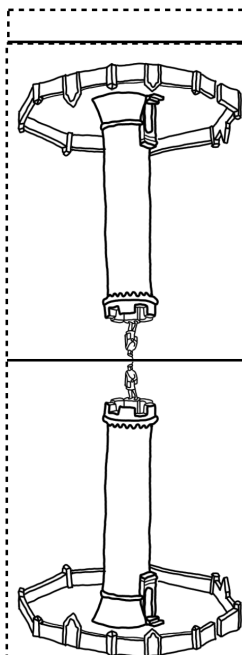
Butt of Lewis Lighthouse



Munloch Cloutie Well

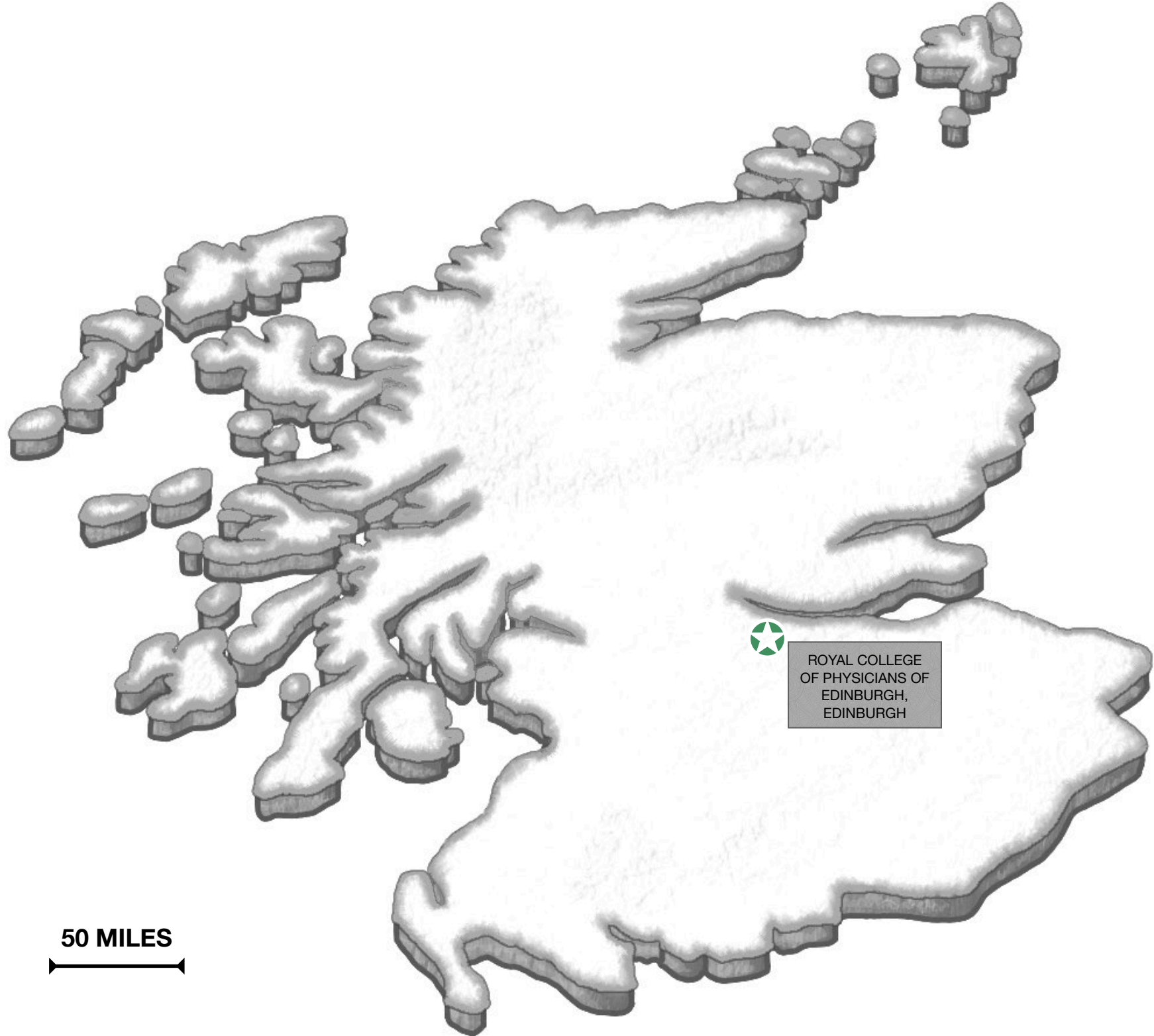


Fairy Glen



Glenfinnan Monument





ROYAL COLLEGE  
OF PHYSICIANS OF  
EDINBURGH,  
EDINBURGH

50 MILES

“I regret to say that an ignorant quack, who if he does not destroy many lives, certainly puts them in imminent peril”

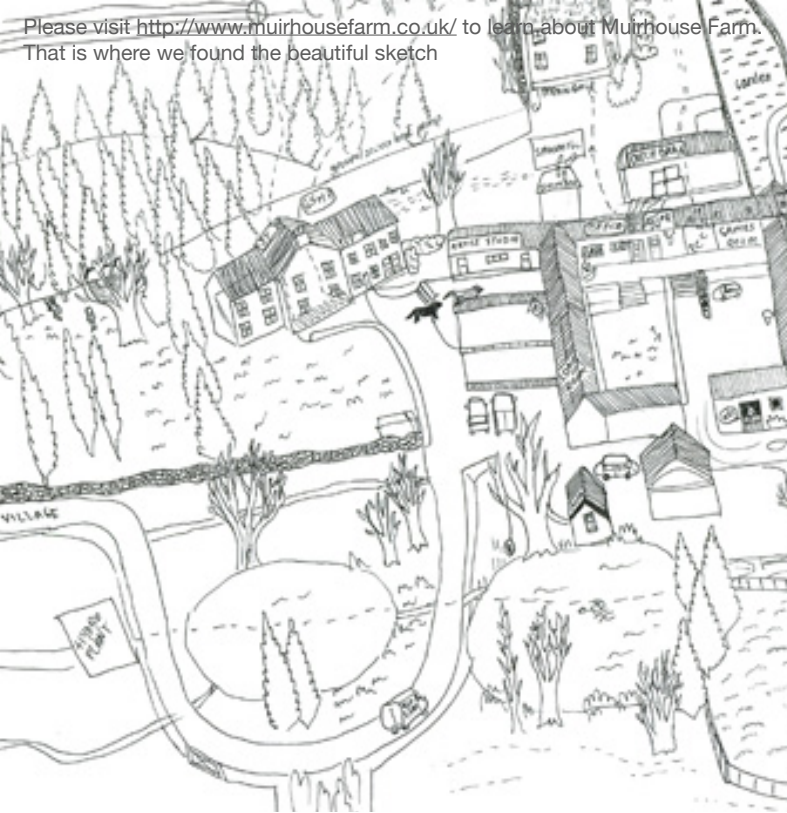
—Survey Response from The Reverend D. MacKinnon from Fearn



In 1850, it was difficult to know who was trying to heal you, and who was trying to scam you. Physicians want to heal their patients. **Quacks** are people who sell liquids, powders, and pills that look like medicine but are not actually medicine. They would travel from one village to another and sell their wares from small carts, they would often sing songs to tempt the people to have a look at what they were selling. They would promise the people that their powders and *elixirs* would cure anything from broken bones to bad acne. Sometimes the “medicines” sold by **quacks** would make people even more sick than before.

These **quacks** are mentioned many times in the **surveys**, they are often called “pretenders” “ignorant” and “evil.” These **quacks** created a prejudice among physicians who were genuine in their efforts to heal the sick.





Which of these phrases sounds like a **QUACK?**

Which of these phrases sounds like a **NEIGHBOUR?**

“I have *just* the thing to cure your back ache, head ache, swollen angle, missing tooth, blurry vision *and* the pimples on your face! Buy it today while supplies last!”

“Some of William’s children have a fever, I have some **simples** left over from when I had a fever, I’ll send it over with a strong Scotch broth to make them feel better”

“We need to make sure we take care of one another, we’ve come to know and trust one another”

## IN CONTRAST...

The people who live in the Highlands and Islands had to work together to make life possible in rural and remote areas. Empathy and kindness were a part of daily life. If someone needed help, medicine, or food then they could rely on their neighbour for help. **Heritors** gave money, cooked food, and supplied physicians with **simples** to help the community. In return hard working farmers tended gardens and flocks that made life easier for all.

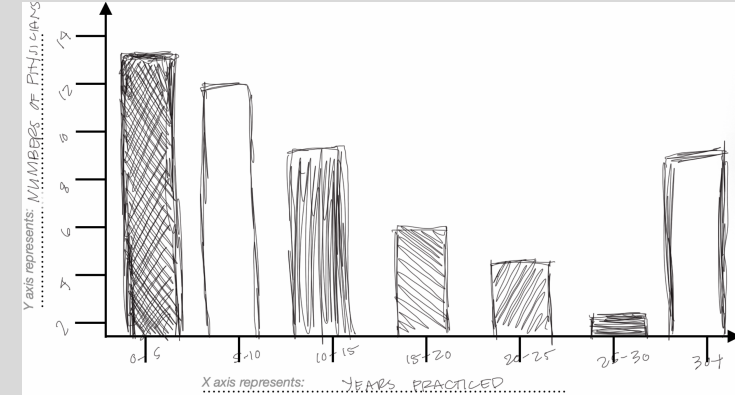
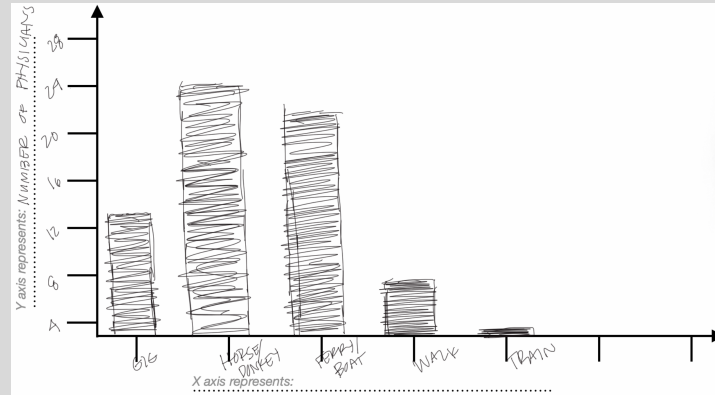
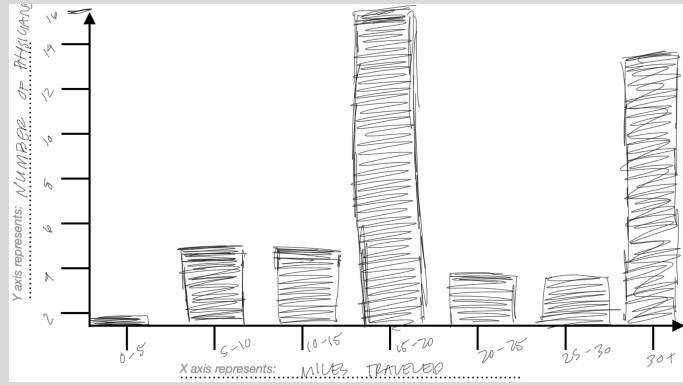
After many years of reliance and help, a deep bond is often created among families and friends in communities. Which is why some people were reluctant to trust physicians when they arrived in their area. Because of the **surveys**, more money, medicine, and physicians were moved into the Highlands and Islands. With trust, financial support, and time communities began to trust their local physician. With the adoption of the NHS in 1948 medical help has been as secured as possible for all the people of the Highlands and Islands.



Karen Wallis was artist in residence on the Ness of Brodgar dig. She sketched this beautiful image.

# ANSWER KEY

PAGE 4



A THANK YOU to the Wellcome Collection for providing the images on PAGE 10. We've done a bit of tweaking but you can find the originals here:

- <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/s988a4mb/images?id=bqe7vzm6>
- <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/wtdbwn9u/images?id=wwakat2c>
- <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ba643wv9/images?id=ks2ju52q>

PAGE 5

#1 \_\_\_\_\_ 62 Hours \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_ 20 Hours \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_ 31 Hours \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE 11

The FIRST quote came from a QUACK  
 The SECOND quote came from a NEIGHBOUR  
 The THIRD quote came from a NEIGHBOUR

PAGE 7

For A COUGH:

Licorice Root 100 grams = 33 %

Mint 50 grams = 17 %

Cinnamon 150 grams = 50 %

For An UPSET STOMACH:

Rhubarb 75 grams = 17 %

Cochineal Bug 150 grams = 33 %

Spanish Fly 225 grams = 50 %

For An INFECTED EYE:

Sheep Droppings 300 grams = 91 %

Cochineal Bug 5 grams = 2 %

Scurvy Grass 25 grams = 8 %

PAGE 9

