



**Second Lieutenant Gilbert Thomas Gordon (8th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders) lies interred in Choques Military Cemetery – Grave reference I.B.4.**

**Perhaps arriving in St. John's at the age of sixteen from Scotland\*, Gilbert Thomas Gordon enlisted into the Newfoundland Regiment at the Church Lads' Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on September 2, 1914, a recruit of the First Draft. Some three weeks later, on September 21, he was promoted to the rank of lance corporal.**

***\*There appears in the Ancestry.ca files, a young Gilbert Thomas Gordon who travelled from Le Havre on board the SS Corinthian and eventually worked for T.A. McNab, Manufacturer's Agent, in St. John's.***

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Lance Corporal Gordon embarked in St. John's harbour on October 3 onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel*. The ship sailed for the United Kingdom on the following day, joining the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas off the south coast of Newfoundland.



(Right: *The image of Florizel in St. John's harbour is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

Having remained on board ship for several days after its arrival in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport, the Newfoundland contingent was transferred to the large military camp on the Salisbury Plain. There it trained and lived under canvas at *Pond Farm Camp* where he, Lance Corporal Gordon, received his corporal's stripe before the unit moved to *Bustard Camp* in early November.

On the final day of that same November, Corporal Gordon was struck off the strength of the Newfoundland Regiment. Whether he had sought an Imperial Commission during these first months of military service - or perhaps even before - is apparently not recorded, but he seemingly was successful in his application to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders.

Having transferred to the Scottish regiment at Aldershot, by February 15 of 1915 he was undergoing further training at the nearby Bordon Camp. On May 10 his unit, attached to the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 9<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division disembarked in the French port of Boulogne. Second Lieutenant Gordon was now on *active service*.



(Right: *Boulogne during or at the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

At the time the British Army was still relatively small – although expanding rapidly – much of it at first being stationed in northern France and in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. There is little documented as yet a propos the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion until September 25 at Loos: any infantry activity involving the unit during the interim time had surely been local in nature.



(Right above: *The French village of Loos which was taken and then eventually lost during the battle of the same name – from Le Miroir*)

The *Battle of Loos*, officially fought from September 25 of 1915 until September 28 (inclusive), was an organized offensive involving six divisions of the British Army. Heavy losses were incurred and while at its outset there had been some opportunities to exploit the meagre success in certain areas, the re-enforcements were not available on time and the chances had soon been lost.

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The result was that while the German lines were broken into, they were never broken *through*, and the British incurred fifty-thousand casualties – a further source has sixty-one thousand.

On the first day of the attack, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gordon's had been handed the strong Hohenzollern Redoubt as its primary objective. By morning's end, the unit had occupied the German trench-network around the strong-hold but then counter-attacks had driven the British force back. Finally, the Highland battalion had been given the order to withdraw. A further counter-attack by the Germans on the following morning was to drive the British even further back.

By the afternoon of September 27, the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade had been reduced to just some six-hundred men – normal brigade strength was approximately three thousand – yet it still took part in a further attack. The fighting then abated somewhat for a number of days before being subsequently renewed on or about the 13<sup>th</sup> of October.



On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade retired to Beuvry – today merged with the northern French town of Béthune.

(Right above: *Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos* – photograph from 2015)

The son of Mrs Margaret Carmichael Gordon of *Craig House*, Morningside, Scotland, he was also younger brother to William who was also to serve in the Army during the Great War. Second Lieutenant Gordon was reported as having *died of wounds* on September 28 of 1915.

The 1901 United Kingdom Census cites him as having been born *about 1896*.

Second Lieutenant Gilbert Thomas Gordon was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

