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Gordon Highlanders in the First World War

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The Gordons raised 21 battalions in the First World War, serving on the Western Front and in Italy and winning 65 battle honours. The regular force battalions (1st and 2nd Gordons) were immediately assigned to the British Expeditionary Force on the outbreak of war. 3rd (Reserve) Gordons remained in Aberdeen to serve as the depot unit for the duration of the war. The 1st Gordons in Plymouth was assigned to 8 Brigade of the 3rd Division, while 2nd Gordons was assigned to 20 Brigade in the 7th Division following its recall from Cairo. The first line Territorial Force battalions; 1/4th (Aberdeen,) 1/5th (Buchan and Formartine), 1/6th (Banffshire and Donside), 1/7th (Deeside), were assigned to 153 (2nd Highland) Brigade of the 51st (Highland) Division. This brigade was also known as the Gordons Brigade until May 1915 because of its composition solely of Gordon Highlanders battalions. A further eight Territorial Force battalions (2/4th, 2/5th, 2/6th, 2/7th, 3/4th, 3/5th, 3/6th, and 3/7th) were formed as part of the second line Home Service. These units were chronically undermanned and ill-equipped throughout the war and did not serve overseas. Four Service battalions - 8th (Service), 9th (Service), 10th (Service), and 11th (Service) - were formed as part of Lord Kitchener's New Army scheme with 9th Gordons eventually serving as a pioneer battalion. A 1st Garrison battalion was formed in 1916 for service in India. Unusually, The Gordon Highlanders did not serve on any of the other battle fronts where British soldiers fought during the war. The sole exception was the 2nd Gordons which was sent as part of a joint Anglo-French force to aid the Italians in 1917 after their heavy defeat by Austro-German forces at the Battle of Caporetto. The regiment lost 1,000 officers and 28,000 men during the war.

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