

## Pte Gordon Hume Hand

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When Gordon Hume Hand died from severe injuries in Laren, in the Dutch province of Gelderland, on April 5th, 1945 he had not even serviced in the Canadian army for a year. In November 1944 Hand had crossed the Atlantic from Canada to England and in February he was transferred to the European mainland to take part in the fight against Nazi Germany. He was a member of the Black Watch, the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada.

After he died his belongings were all wrapped together and sent to his relatives. Hand left behind a golden ring, a leather wallet, a key, some coins, a newspaper cutting, a tie-pin, some letters, two framed photographs and some snapshots of a young woman.

After all these years the pictures of the woman are still in his file. Most likely the woman had been unknown to his relatives too.

When Gordon Hand joined the army he didn't seem to be much of a womanizer. To lieutenant Gaston Fateux, Gordon came across as somewhat effeminate. "Hand is a smart young man, of average length," Fateux wrote down after first meeting Hand. "His manners are a bit effeminate. He is polite and willing, he is a bachelor and fifth in a family of six children. He doesn't have any complaints." Whether Gordon was the fifth or the fourth child in the family was a bit difficult to determine. He was one of twins. He was born in Sherbrooke Hospital in Quebec, together with his brother John Windsor.

When he entered the army in May 1944 he had a group of friends but he wasn't very close to anybody, is what he said. He wasn't dating anyone nor had he been going steady with anyone in the past. He didn't like sports, neither as a sportsman nor as a spectator. He would never refuse to participate though whenever someone asked him to join. He preferred dancing and listening to popular music and reading, though.

When Gordon died he was found carrying some snapshots of a young woman. She had dark, wavy hair and she looked grown-up. In one of the pictures we see her in a small boat on a lake or a wide river, probably somewhere in Canada. It is still fresh outside, there are no leaves on the trees and the woman is wearing a neat overcoat and a light-coloured dress with a lace collar.

On the back of the picture we find a clue: Photo Club – Magog Que. Could it be possible Hand had made a boat trip with this lady on Lake Magog, near the city of Magog in the Canadian province of Quebec? Was she the woman he had given his heart to? Magog was the city in which his father Urban Archibald and his mother Kathleen Mary Josephine Dickson had exchanged their wedding vows. The file doesn't provide any information on who this woman is. Was she one of many unknown, unmarried widows who would never see their lovers return from overseas?

Hand was 18 years old when he entered the army. He wasn't yet 20 when he was killed in action in Laren on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945. It was there that he found his temporary resting place. His body was later transferred to its final resting place in Holten Canadian War Cemetery : plot 1, row E, grave number 16.

Woman in the boat – Who is she?



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*Bron: Canada, WWII Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947*

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