

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

### Sergeant Pilot Harold Clinton Cotnam

**Sgt. Pilot Harold Clinton Cotnam** son of **William James Cotnam** (b. Westmeath Twp) and **Minnie Ethel Jackson** (b. Ross Twp), was born on 13 Sep 1919 in Pembroke Twp., Renfrew, Ontario, Canada. His father was born in Westmeath Twp., and his mother was born in Ross Twp. He had a sister who died in infancy and a younger sister Ketha. He attended public school at S.S.#3, Pembroke from 1927-1932; and Pembroke Collegiate Institute from 1932-1937.<sup>1,2</sup>

Harold Clinton Cotnam enlisted on Dec 9, 1940 at Montreal. He listed his occupation as bank teller at Royal Bank, Mount Royal, QC for 3 years. His religion is listed as the United Church and he was single. His education is listed as high school and a banking course by correspondence with Shaw Schools, Toronto, Ontario. He engaged in hockey moderately, track and rugby extensively. He was described as 5' 5 3/4" tall and weighing 130 lbs. He had a fair complexion, blue eyes and fair hair.<sup>2</sup>

He had previously made application to RCAF in Kingston, Ontario, on Jun 17, 1940 but had not been called yet. His four references were L.J. Bromley of Montreal, Timber Merchant; S.G. Dobson, General Manager Royal Bank, Montreal; Dr. I.D. Cotnam, Pembroke; Rev. H.H. Mutton, Pembroke, Ontario.<sup>2</sup>

Harold Cotnam's training and service in Canada was located in Toronto, Picton, Victoriaville, QC, Windsor Mills, Summerside, PEI and on Sep 1, 1941 to Halifax, N.S. He received his pilot's flying badge on Aug 30, 1941. He embarked for the UK on Sep 18, 1941 and was stationed at the Royal Air Force base at Ashton Down, Gloucestershire, England. He was a Hurricane I pilot serving with the 52 Operational Training Unit, Royal Canadian Air Force, Service Number R77479. Sgt. Cotnam died in a fatal aircraft accident, 1 1/2 months after arriving in England. He was 22 years old.<sup>2</sup>

At about 3 pm on Oct 31, 1941, a witness at Rudgey heard a plane overhead with the engine not working properly. He saw the plane come through the clouds nose first and went straight to the ground. The plane was a Hurricane I, Merlin III P.3021 and was totally damaged and Sgt. Cotnam was killed on a training flight. A court of inquiry for accident that occurred at Washing Pool Hill, Almondsbury, Gloucestershire, England included a list of witnesses: 3 members of their unit; 3 civilians and 1 other military personnel. The purpose of the flight was determined to be air combat at 10,000 ft. The cause of the accident was loss of control in cloud and inability to recover in 500-1000 ft below.<sup>2</sup>

Sgt. Pilot Harold Clinton Cotnam was buried in Bristol (Canford) Cemetery, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol Unitary Authority, Bristol, England.<sup>2,4,5,6,7</sup> The Memorial Cross was sent to Sgt. Cotnam's mother.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the cemetery stone at Canford Cemetery, Sgt. Cotnam's name is engraved on his parent's gravestone in Greenwood Cemetery, Greenwood, Ontario<sup>8</sup>. His name is also commemorated on the Greenwood United Church WWII Honour Roll<sup>9</sup>; Greenwood Community Tablet dedicated to WWII soldiers, Greenwood United Church<sup>10</sup>; the Pembroke Collegiate Institute WWII Plaque<sup>11</sup>; and The Pembroke War Memorial (Air Force Panel)<sup>12</sup>.



Sgt.-Pilot Harold C. Cotnam,  
Pembroke, Ont.

*Image 1: Sgt. Pilot Harold Cotnam<sup>3</sup>*

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

### Pilot H. C. Cotnam Pembroke Township Killed Overseas

PEMBROKE, Nov. 2.—(Staff) — Word was received today by Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Cotnam, Pembroke Township, that their only son, Sergeant Pilot Harold Clinton Cotnam, had been killed on October 31 in a flying accident in Britain. Sgt. Cotnam had been overseas less than a month.

A popular young man of this district, Sgt. Cotnam attended collegiate in Pembroke and later entered the office of the Royal Bank of Canada here. He was subsequently with the bank in Brockville and Mount Royal, Que. After enlisting he trained at Victoriaville, Que., and Summerside, P. E. I., receiving his wings on August 30 last. He was the first flyer from Pembroke township to become a pilot.

Surviving, besides his parents, is one sister, Miss Ketha Cotnam, and there are a number of other relatives in the district.



Image 2: Newspaper clipping<sup>13</sup>

Image 3: Gravestone in England<sup>6</sup>

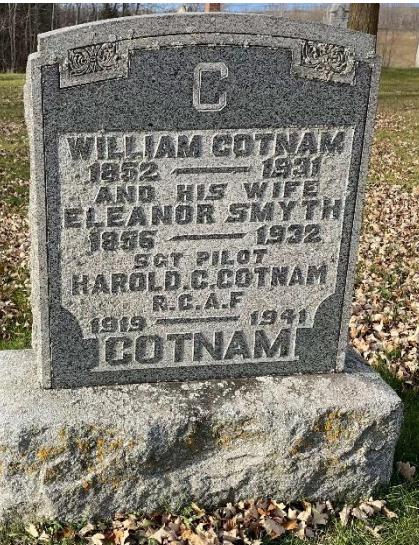


Image 4: Parent's Gravestone<sup>7</sup>

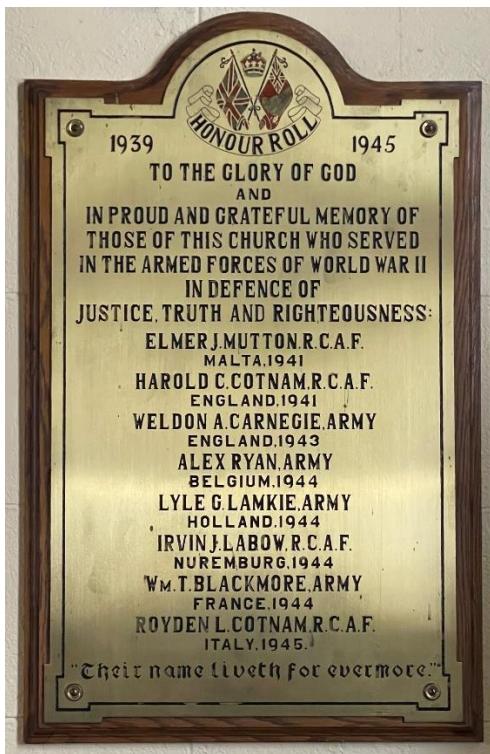


Image 5: Greenwood Methodist Church WWI Memorial Tablet<sup>10</sup>

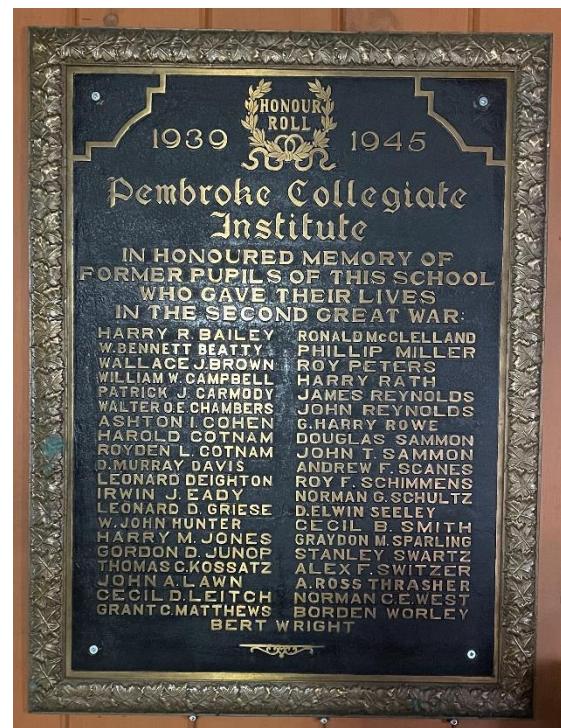


Image 6: The WWII Honor Roll, PCI<sup>11</sup>

LEST WE FORGET

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

Additional information and photographs would be appreciated.

### Sources:

1. Bennett, F. (2024). *Faysgenealogy.com*. www.faysgenealogy.com. family history database & images; 2001-present. Cobden, ON. (Original sources noted in database)
2. "Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947." . Digital images. Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada. *Library and Archives Canada*. <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?idnumber=7392&app=kia>
3. *Photograph of Sgt. (Pilot) Harold Clinton Cotnam, The Canadian Fallen | Home*. (n.d.). <https://canadianfallen.ca/soldier-profile/?id=71390>
4. The Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Veterans Affairs Canada. "The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)." Database. Veterans Affairs Canada. www.veterans.gc.ca/eng. <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/rememberance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2450669>
5. CWGC. *Sergeant Harold Clinton COTNAM | War Casualty Details R/77479| CWGC*. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2450669/harold-clinton-cotnam/> Accessed Nov 2024.
6. *Sergeant (Pilot) Harold Clinton Cotnam (1919-1941) - Find a Grave Memorial*. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59357987/harold-clinton-cotnam>
7. *Harold C. Cotnam (1919-1941) - Find a Grave Memorial*. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/238552711/harold-c.-cotnam>
8. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of the Cotnam Family Gravestone*, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2024.
9. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Greenwood Community WWII Honor Roll*. Greenwood United Church, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2022.
10. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Greenwood Methodist Church WWI Memorial Tablet*. Greenwood United Church, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2022.
11. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The WWII Honor Roll*. Pembroke Collegiate Institute, Ontario. November 2022.
12. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Airforce War Memorial*. Pembroke, Ontario. November 2022.
13. "Pilot H.C. Cotnam Pembroke Township Killed Overseas", *The Ottawa Journal*, Nov 3, 1941 p. 1941 p. 19.
14. Book of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada  
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/rememberance/memorials/books/page?page=27&book=2&sort=pageAsc>
15. The National Archives <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C16998205>
16. Royal Canadian Air Force Association. (2023, July 24). *Corner to Creeden - Royal Canadian Air Force Association*. <https://www.rcafassociation.ca/heritage/history/fallen-aviators/rcaf-casualties-second-world-war/corner-to-creeden/>
17. *Royal Air Force Commands, RCAF Casualties Overseas*  
[https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/casualties\\_rcafoverseas.pdf](https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/casualties_rcafoverseas.pdf)
18. *Canadian Aircraft Serials Personnel Information Resource*  
<https://caspir.warplane.com/personnel/unit-search/p/600004086>