

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.^{1,2}

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.²

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.²

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 ½ months after arriving in England. He was 22 years old.²

At about 3 pm on Oct 31, 1941, a witness at Rudgeway 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.²

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

In addition to the cemetery stone at Canford Cemetery, Sgt. Cotnam's name is engraved on his parent's gravestone in Greenwood Cemetery, Greenwood, Ontario⁸. His name is also commemorated on the Greenwood United Church WWII Honour Roll⁹; Greenwood Community Tablet dedicated to WWII soldiers, Greenwood United Church¹⁰; the Pembroke Collegiate Institute WWII Paque¹¹; and The Pembroke War Memorial (Air Force Panel)¹².



Image 1: Sgt. Pilot Harold Cotnam³

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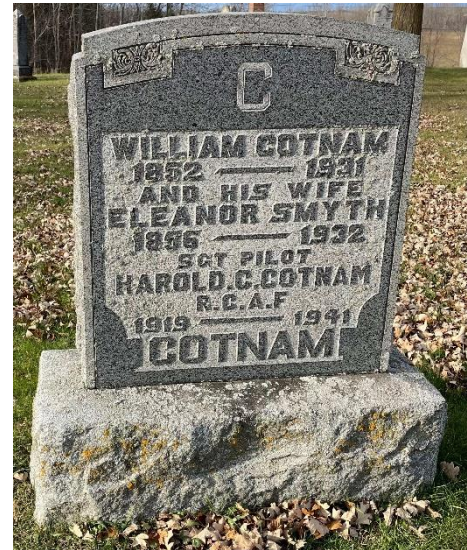
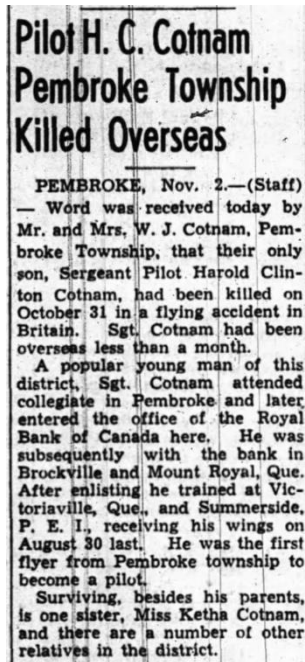


Image 2: Newspaper clipping¹³

Image 3: Gravestone in England⁶

Image 4: Parent's Gravestone⁷

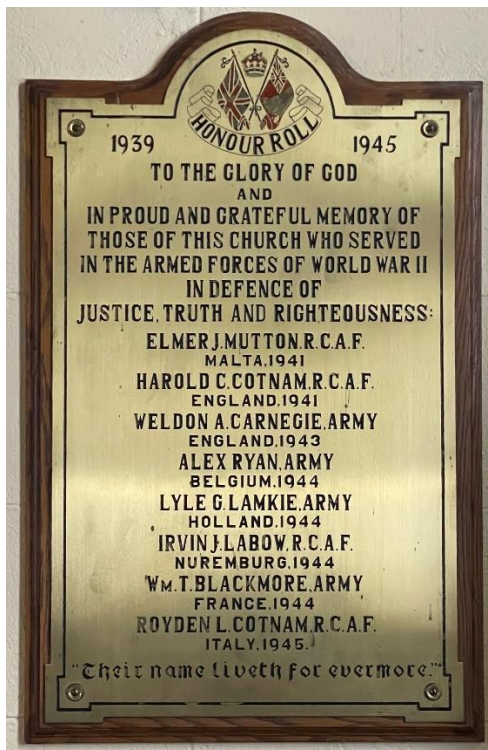


Image 5: Greenwood Methodist Church WWI Memorial Tablet¹⁰

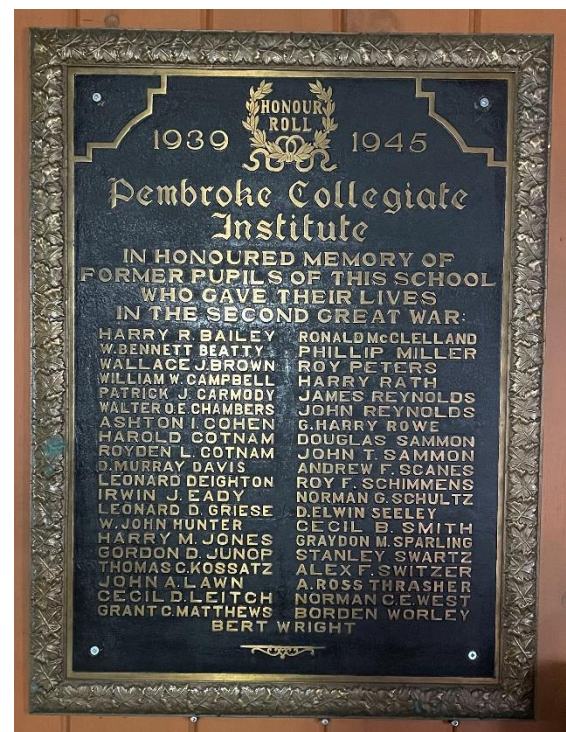


Image 6: The WWII Honor Roll, PCI¹¹

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Additional information and photographs would be appreciated.

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10. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Greenwood Methodist Church WWI Memorial Tablet*. Greenwood United Church, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2022.
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