

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

### Flying Officer Royden Leslie COTNAM

**Flying Officer Royden Leslie Cotman**, son of **George Charles Leslie Cotnam** and **Alice Esther Coburn**, was born on 29 Aug 1920 in Pembroke Twp., Renfrew, Ontario, Canada. His parents were born in Pembroke Township and two of his grandparents were born in Westmeath Township. The family were part of the Greenwood community which sits at the junction of Westmeath and Pembroke Townships and close to Stafford Township. Royden's parents were farmers. He had one older sister, Eileen Sexsmith. Royden's second cousin Sgt. Pilot Harold Clinton Cotnam was killed in action in 1941 (before Royden enlisted).<sup>1</sup>

Royden Leslie Cotnam enlisted on May 13, 1942 at Ottawa, Ontario at 21 years old. On his Attestation Papers, his education was summarized as attending S.S.#3 Pembroke Twp from 1925-1932; Pembroke Collegiate Institute from 1932-1940 completing Jr. Matriculation (Grade 12) plus upper school English & composition. He spoke French & English. His occupation was warehouseman and salesman at National Grocers, Pembroke from 1940-enlistment. He had previously worked on father's farm. His religion was listed as United Church and his father Leslie Cotman was his next of kin. His sports interests included ruby, softball and swimming. He was described as 5' 9 1/2" tall, weighing 162 lbs. He had a fair complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. His previous experience included Lanark & Renfrew Scottish, Pembroke from July 1940-Feb 1942. He left to join the RCAF. He had previously made application in Ottawa on Feb 1942 but changed his preference to an observer or pilot. His references were Rev. Brown, Pembroke; R.H. Davison, manager National Grocers; Wallace Fraser, Mayor of Pembroke; R.B. Summerhays, Principal.<sup>3</sup>

F/O Royden Cotman served with the 417 Squadron, RCAF # J/26636. He was based at Toronto, Rockcliffe, Oshawa and Camp Bordon before being transferred to Halifax Jun 11, 1943 He was awarded his pilots flying badge on May 28, 1943.<sup>3</sup>

On April 8, 1945 after operations overseas, F/O Cotman's plane was reported missing. The 417 (City of Windsor) Squadron's Spitfire LF.IX MK951 left base at 17:55 to bomb a target near Lendinara and exploded in a bomb dive south-east of Lendinara, Italy.<sup>4</sup> It was another inexplicable casualty as no flak was encountered or seen by the other 2 aircrafts on the mission. The suspicion was



Image 2: Death Notice<sup>6</sup>

that this pilot was one of three killed by faulty bomb fuses.<sup>5</sup>



Image 1: F/O Royden Leslie Cotnam<sup>2</sup>

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

F/O Cotnam was 24 years old. He was buried in Padua War Cemetery, Padua, Provincia di Padova, Veneto, Italy.<sup>2,3,7,8</sup> There were 14 other Canadians buried in this cemetery including another member of 417 Squadron – Pilot Officer Reginald Wolfe McKinnon.<sup>9</sup>

The family were notified on Nov 21, 1945 that F/O Cotnam's status was changed from 'missing' to 'believed killed in action'.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the cemetery stone at Padua War Cemetery, F.O. Royden Cotnam name is engraved on two cemetery stones in Wesley United Cemetery, Pembroke Ontario. His parent's gravestone contains his name; on one side of a 4-sided stone his name is also engraved and the name of Alexander McKenzie (1831-1891) is on another side.<sup>10</sup> I am not aware of the connection to Mr. McKenzie. His name is also commemorated on the Greenwood United Church WWII Honour Roll<sup>11</sup>; Greenwood United Church Tablet dedicated to casualties of WWII soldiers, Greenwood United Church<sup>12</sup>; the Pembroke Collegiate Institute WWII Paque<sup>13</sup>; and The Pembroke War Memorial (Air Force Panel)<sup>14</sup>. His name is also recorded on a number of websites dedicated to Airmen.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

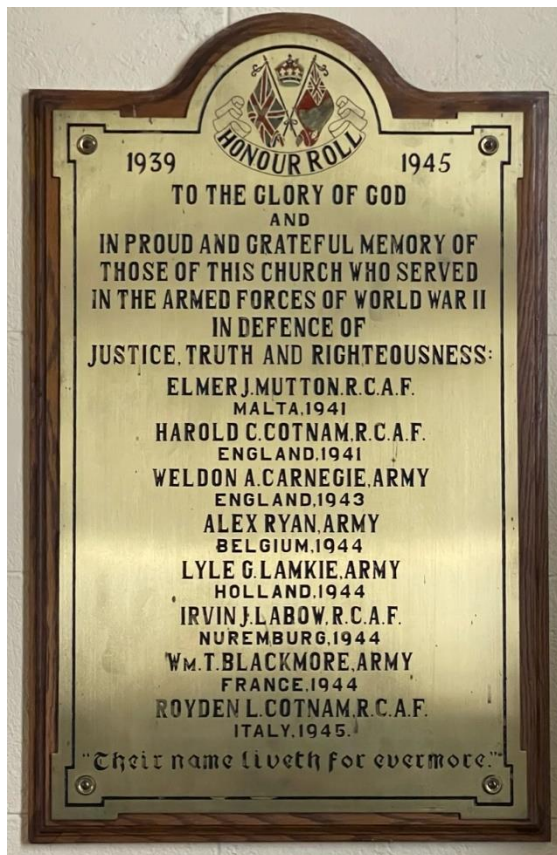


Image 3: Greenwood UC WWII Plaque<sup>12</sup>



Image 4: Greenwood UC WWII Honor Roll<sup>11</sup>

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties



Image 5: PCI WWII Honor Roll<sup>13</sup>



Image 6: Pembroke War Memorial (Air Force Panel)<sup>14</sup>

Additional information and photographs would be appreciated.

### Sources:

1. Bennett, F. (2024). *Faysgenealogy.com*. [www.faysgenealogy.com](http://www.faysgenealogy.com). family history database & images; 2001-present. Cobden, ON. (Original sources noted in database)
2. *Photograph of F/O Royden Leslie Cotnam*, The Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Veterans Affairs Canada. "The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)." Database. Veterans Affairs Canada. [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng).  
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2817192>
3. "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?app=kia&IdNumber=7393&q=J26636>
4. *Royal Air Force Commands*  
<https://www.rafcommands.com/database/wardead/details.php?qnum=9544>
5. All Spitfire Pilots <https://allspitfirepilots.org/pilots/972-royden-cotnam>

## Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

6. "Believed Killed", Newspaper article, *newspaper unknown*, date unknown. Newspaper clipping from the scrapbook collection of John Costello.
7. CWGC. *Flying Officer Royden Leslie Cotnam | War Casualty Details J/26636* | CWGC. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2817192/royden-leslie-cotnam/> Accessed Nov 2024.
8. *Flying Officer Royden Leslie Cotnam (1920-1945) - Find a Grave Memorial.* <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/21559429/royden-leslie-cotnam>
9. Bruce Ricketts. (2018, June 21). *Padua war Cemetery – Canadians at arms.* Canadians at Arms. <https://canadiansatarms.ca/cemetery/padua-war-cemetery/>
10. *Royden L Cotnam (1920-1945) - Find a Grave Memorial.* <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/242391383/royden-l-cotnam>
11. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The WWII Honor Roll.* Greenwood United Church, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2022.
12. Bennett, Fay. *Greenwood United Church Tablet dedicated to casualties of WWII soldiers,* Greenwood United Church, Greenwood, Ontario. November 2022.
13. Bennett, Fay. *Pembroke Collegiate Institute WWII Paque.* Upper Ottawa Valley Heritage Centre, Pembroke, Ontario. November 2022.
14. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Airforce War Memorial.* Pembroke, Ontario. November 2022.
15. 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/>
16. *Canada's Bomber Command Museum Archives* (n.d.). [https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/casualties\\_rcafoverseas.pdf](https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/casualties_rcafoverseas.pdf)
17. Cotnam, Royden Leslie (Flying Officer). *Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum* <https://caspir.warplane.com/pdoc/pn/600004087/>
18. *The Canadian Fallen | Home.* (n.d.). <https://canadianfallen.ca/111240/COTNAM>
19. Book of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=506&book=2&sort=pageAsc>