

# Cormie, Thomas

**Age:** 23

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Rank:** Flying/Officer

**Unit:** No. 135 Squadron

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** J/39535

**Birth:** 30 December 1921  
Windsor, Ontario,  
Canada



**Home Town:** Windsor, Ontario,  
Canada

**Death:** 24 May 1945

Crash of Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk 726,  
Mount Newton, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Windsor Grove Cemetery,  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

## Biography

Thomas Cormie enlisted in the RCAF in August 1942, for the duration, wanting to be a fighter pilot and hoping to become a member of the permanent Canadian Air Force after the war. He was a pleasant, likeable boy, popular with his fellow students and hard working.

Thomas left school with junior matriculation and was working as a clerk for Chrysler in Windsor before enlistment. He was accepted for training as aircrew and earned his pilot's wings and a commission on 10 December 1943. He was an average student about whom there were few comments during his training, other than that he applied himself well and his deportment and attitude were good. Thomas's training was almost entirely in Ontario until he was posted to Western Air Command in January 1944 for Occupational Training. He moved among Sea Island, Tofino and Patricia Bay stations, until 27 March 1945 when he joined No. 135 (fighter) squadron at Patricia Bay. By this time, he was considered an above average pilot.

Thomas was born in Windsor, Ontario, 30 December 1921, the older son of Thomas Cormie, a plasterer, and Elizabeth Mason, both born in Scotland. A second son, George, was born a year later. In 1924, Elizabeth died, giving birth to a stillborn child and Thomas's father returned to Scotland in 1930. Thomas was raised in Windsor by his uncle and aunt, Andrew, a carpenter, and Margaret Cormie. When Thomas joined the RCAF he did not know his father's address and gave his uncle as his next of kin.

On 24 May 1945 Thomas was playing ball with a group of friends when he was called for a routine training flight. He was in excellent spirits and keen to fly. Thomas lost control of his aircraft and spun into the ground at Mount Newton, BC. The aircraft was completely demolished and



Thomas was killed on impact. He was returned to Windsor for burial in Windsor Grove cemetery, Ontario.



FO. THOMAS CORMIE  
Accidentally Killed



#### FO. CORMIE

FO. Cormie was killed in a flying accident at Patricia Bay, -B. C., on Thursday, May 24, the R.C.A.F. casualties officer at Ottawa has advised his next-of-kin in the city, his aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Cormie.

He was born in Windsor on December 30, 1921, and received his education at Victoria Avenue Public School and Kennedy Collegiate Institute. Previous to enlisting, he was employed in the Windsor office of Chrysler Corporation.

FO. Cormie was an active member of Westminster United Church, having held the office of president of the Young Men's Bible Class and was a former member of the church choir and the Young People's Society. He was a past president of the Windsor Junior Optimists Club and was elected member of the Ontario Older Boys' Parliament in 1938.

He enlisted on October 1, 1942, and trained at Toronto, Centralia, Windsor and Dunnville. He received his wings and was commissioned a pilot officer at Dunnville on December 6, 1943. In January, 1944, he was transferred to the west coast and attached to the Western Air Command, R.C.A.F.

Besides his local relatives he is survived by one brother, George of Detroit, and his father, Thomas Cormie, living in Scotland.

A military funeral will be held in Windsor at a date and time to be announced later. Firing party will be a squad from the Kennedy Collegiate cadet corps and active pallbearers will be R.C.A.F. officers.

## Details of Crash

On 24 May 1945 at 9:50 am, Flight Lieutenant Andrew McKenzie ordered Flying Officers Cormie and Myles to accompany him on a routine training flight. Cormie was flying in Number Two position in Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk 861, and Myles in Number Three position. The aircraft took off at 10:05 and once airborne, assumed a Vic formation and climbed to 13,000 feet, where F/L McKenzie ordered them to form a line astern in which formation they carried out a chase. It was a standard exercise in the training syllabus and one they had carried out many times.

The leader, followed by the other two pilots, took a diving turn to port followed by a climbing turn and levelled out at about 12,00 feet. F/L McKenzie received a report from F/O Myles that F/L Cormie had “flicked” out of formation. According to F/L McKenzie this happens when a P-40 pulls out of a dive too quickly and the aircraft turns over onto its back. He tried to contact Cormie with no success and received a report from the pilot of another P-40 in a different section that an aircraft had been seen to crash about two miles south of Patricia Bay. Witnesses of the crash saw the aircraft spiral down with no effort on the part of the pilot to either pull out of the dive or to bail out.

The crashed aircraft was located on the side of Mount Newton, near what is now John Dean Park. It was totally demolished and the pilot, who was still strapped in his seat, was killed in the crash. The cause of the crash was not immediately clear. The aircraft was totally serviceable, the weather was not a factor, and the pilot was competent in this type of exercise. At the height the aircraft went out of control, the pilot had time to recover or to bail out.

The only feasible explanation the investigating officer could offer was that the “flick” was sufficiently violent to cause the pilot to hit his head and be rendered unconscious and thus unable recover or bail out. It would also explain why there was no message from Cormie when he lost control.

This explanation was refuted by the C. I. Accidents, who gave the opinion that the accident was caused by the pilot pulling back too hard on the control column, though he provides no opinion on why the pilot failed to recover or bail out.



