

Thomas, Norris

Age: 27

Nationality: British

Rank: Pilot/Officer

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: 49136 RAFVR

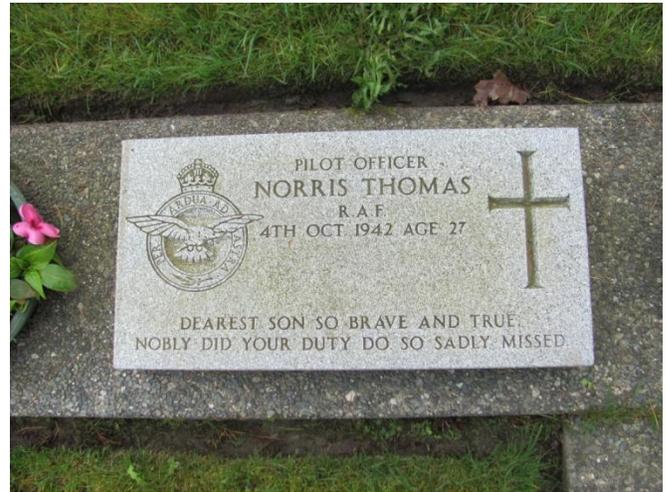
Birth: 7 November 1914
Whitchurch, Glamorgan, Wales

Home Town: London, UK

Death: 4 October 1942

Crash of Handley Page Hampden AN105
Mount Tuam, Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada

Burial: Royal Oak Burial Ground, Victoria, BC, Canada



Details

Norris Thomas was a Welshman, born in Whitchurch, a district of Cardiff, Glamorgan, on 7 November 1914. The family subsequently moved to London, UK. He was with the RAFVR and had been at Patricia Bay, Canada, for four months of training. Norris was not married and was survived by his father. His service records are not available to the general public.

On 4 October 1942, four RAFVR pilots were authorized to practice dusk and dark landings in Handley Page Hampden aircraft. None of the pilots had experience of flying this type of aircraft at night. The weather was not good, but it was fit for this exercise and the pilots were given a circuit to follow that was marked with flares. Norris Thomas was piloting AN105, which took off at 7:00 pm.

After dark, the Officer in Charge called each of the pilots to ask how they were getting on and how good was the visibility. They all replied they were fine and although it was murky, they could see the flares around the circuit. The runway floodlights were turned on after dark and the landings improved.

At 8:15, the pilots were instructed to make one more landing. At 8:30, when P/O Thomas was the only pilot left in the air, a red glow was observed in the sky and he failed to return to base.

The duty engineer arranged a search party of 12 men, salvage equipment and rations. The party set out in a boat under the mistaken impression that the aircraft had landed in the sea. A faint remaining glow was seen on the summit of Mount Tuam, Salt Spring Island and the party landed there to continue the search on land. After a couple of hours it was decided that with the thickness of the undergrowth and the impossibility of seeing the crash site in the dark, the search should be abandoned until the next day. The following morning the party reached the aircraft, still smouldering, at the summit of the mountain. It was totally destroyed with the burned body of the pilot still inside. P/O Thomas had travelled wide of the prescribed circuit and flown 200 yards in a straight line through the trees. The aircraft exploded on impact and caught fire. The pilot was assumed to have died on impact. It was noted that provision for lights had, at some time, been fixed at the top of the highest trees. The Hampden crashed about 400 yards from those trees.

At the court of Inquiry, it was noted that Norris Thomas was an average pilot, somewhat rough on the controls, and inclined to be overconfident on a new type of aircraft. He had 16 hours solo flying on Hampdens.

The cause of the crash was judged to be poor airmanship, the pilot should have known he did not have sufficient height to miss the trees. The recommendation was that the summit of high hills should be marked with an obstruction light.

On 14 January 1944 Sgt/Pilot H.C. Birch, also of RAFVR, crashed Hampden AN136 into Tuam Mountain very close to this crash.

**Burial on Friday
For R.A.F. Pilot**

P.O. Norris Thomas, R.A.F., who died Sunday night when the twin-motored bomber he was flying alone on a training flight crashed on Salt Spring Island, was from London, England, and had been in Canada four months, R.A.F. Headquarters here announced yesterday. He was a pupil of No. 32 O.T.U.

Burial will take place at Royal Oak Cemetery on Friday at 10 a.m. with full R.A.F. honors. Pilot Officer Thomas was not married and is survived by his father at Hearne Hill, London.

