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PREPARED & PRESENTED BY: J.T. Ruxton

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Bro. MONTAGUE (MONTY) CHARLES CARRINGTON COTTON

The following letter to the editor was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 18 October 2006:

I went to the funeral of an old friend the other day. He was buried in the local cemetery with a loving family and a host of friends present and he was given an RSL and a Masonic farewell. He was a man who had served his country and his community with courage and sincerity-in fact he had done more than that. He went to the war in 1940 and was in the first group of young men to be selected for the Empire Air Training Scheme. Because of his skill and application he was accepted as a pilot with one of England's most famous fighter squadrons, the 43rd Squadron. He fought through the Battle of Britain and became a squadron leader, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and finished his war service as a commander of a flight of Hurricanes in Burma.

He continued to serve his country and was appointed a member of the Order of Australia for services to his community. He was one of those people whom I believe Ben Chifley spoke of when he said words to the effect that a grateful government and a grateful nation will never forget you.

As his coffin was lowered into the ground I looked around to see what a grateful country had done to remember this warrior. There was no honour guard, no catafalque party, no air force bugler to play *The Last Post* and not even an air force flag to drape over the coffin. I don't know if the widow even requested one but surely she shouldn't need to.

I wonder who will be the next person to be given a state funeral and if they will have done as much for this country as my friend did. Will it be footballer, an actress or even a radio talkback guru?

I wonder who the government will consider to have been of greater worth to the nation than my friend?

Ian Brewer, Bathurst

The writer was Bro Ian Brewer, a member of Lodge Barham, No. 561. He was referring to Bro. Montague, (Monty), Charles Carrington COTTON. Monty Cotton died on 30 September 2006 and the following tribute was kindly supplied by Sydney Legacy from their Bulletin of November 2006.

Legatee Monty Cotton

Born in Broken Hill, Monty was the second son of Hugh Leslie Carrington Cotton and Muriel Florence (nee Pearce). He was one of a family of six-Bob (Sir Robert), Monty, John, Pauline, Betty and Jeanette.

He was educated in Broken Hill and also St Peter's College, Adelaide and Roseworthy College, Adelaide.

He served pre WW11 in a Light Horse unit and later was commissioned in a Militia Infantry Company but his main interest was in aviation. In 1938 he joined a newly formed gliding club at Waikerie. Here he gained some initial experience in flying, and on the outbreak of war put his name down to join the RAAF. At that time there was a considerable delay in being called up for service, so while waiting, he had some sixty hours of private flying at Broken hill, before enlisting in April 1940.

Initially mustered as an observer, he topped the course and was sent to Somers for pilot training. As with many trainees, Monty completed his initial training in Australia, and then in Canada, arriving in Vancouver on 29th September 1940. Here he received his "Wings" and was commissioned before leaving for England in late December.

Monty's objective was to become a fighter pilot and this would soon be realised, though not in the manner he would have expected. At Sutton Bridge training command Monty just happened to cross paths with a chap who served with one of England's most famous fighter squadrons, No 43, (which hosted the likes of Peter Townsend who, incidentally claimed 1st blood for England during the beginning of WW11.)

Monty was granted an interview with the commanding officer of Sutton Bridge. Monty asked him if he would be able to get him a posting to No 43. "Well, Cotton, I don't know if you're lucky or not, but 43 are at the bottom of the barrel for pilots."

As it happened 43 were now based at Drem in Scotland (originally based at Tangmere in England) with the Hawker Hurricane Squadron, the much talked about "fighting cocks" of the Battle of Britain. On arrival Squadron Leader Thomas Dalton-Morgan, DFC, the CO took one look at Monty in his dark blue uniform and called out "Look chaps, a bastard from the bush." From then on he was affectionately referred to as "Bush."

After 50 hours clocked up in Hurricanes, Monty's place as a fulltime member of No 43 was confirmed. His next posting was to be to No 17 Squadron. In early 1942 the whole of 17 Squadron was posted to Burma. Bush Cotton's tour of duty in Burma stretched from early 1942 until mid 1944. He flew in some of the most inhospitable conditions of climate and terrain in the world (including heat, monsoon rains, malaria and dysentery) with a break of only 8 months while recovering from leg wounds received in air combat during the 1st Burma campaign for which he received the DFC.

Bush shot down a Japanese bomber just moments before being wounded himself. Shortly after returning to operational flying in the 2nd campaign he was promoted to command his old Hurricane Squadron, No 17, and was engaged in long-range strafing of Japanese supply lines and cargo ships, interspaced with bomber-escort duties and reconnaissance flights over 18 wearying months.

After being wounded in Burma and on recovery, Monty was posted back to Australia and spent the latter part of the war testing a new type of "G" suit with the RAAF Test Flying Unit.

After discharge Monty joined the family business of Timber Industries in Oberon, NSW as General Manager which position he continued to hold when the business became a public company in 1978 until his retirement in 1982.

Monty joined Bathurst Legacy in 1949. He has been recognised as the longest serving member in NSW.

He was one of four Foundation Members of the Bathurst Soaring Group in 1962 and flew gliders in two Australian Gliding Championships and was co-manager of the Australian Team to fly at the International Gliding Championships in Yugoslavia.

His son remembers accompanying him to the Australian Championships as part of his crew and driving out in the middle of the night to recover him from some paddock, hundreds of miles from where he was meant to be, drinking cold beer with the farmer. His philosophy was that if you had to land away from the airfield, then you needed to choose a good looking homestead. Monty enjoyed Freemasonry and in particular the humanitarian aspect of their philosophy.

Monty was a long-time member of the Oberon Shire Council, President of the Oberon RSL, Trustee of the Oberon Showground and of the Jenolan Caves Trust. He received the OAM for community service.

He is survived by his wife, Stella, and his family of four daughters and one son.

Montague Charles Carrington Cotton was initiated, passed and raised in the three degrees of craft freemasonry on 17 March 1950, 4 August 1950 and 16 March 1951 respectively in Lodge Oberon No 355 UGL of NSW & ACT, the same dates as his blood brother Bob, (Sir Robert), whose obituary is also give here. Monty Cotton died on 30 September 2006.

Ref: SMH 18 October, 2006

Sydney Legacy Bulletin of November 2006.

Records of UGL of NSW & ACT.