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PHILIP ATHILL Managing Director TOM EDWARDS Director

Stuart REID (1883-1971)

2nd Lieutenant Gilbert Stuart Insall V.C. M.C. (1894-1972) attacking a German Aviatik near Achiet, France, 7th November 1915. Action for which he was awarded the V.C.

Oil on canvas. Signed. 16 x 20 inches.

Provenance: Insall Family to the previous owner.

Citation for the Victoria Cross

‘For most conspicuous bravery, skill and determination, on 7 November 1915, in France. He was patrolling in a Vickers Fighting Machine, with First Class Air Mechanic T. H. Donald as gunner, when a German machine (Aviatik) was sighted, pursued, and attacked near Achiet.

The German pilot led the Vickers machine over a rocket battery, but with great skill Lieutenant Insall dived and got to close range, when Donald fired a drum of cartridges into the German machine, stopping its engine. The German pilot then dived through a cloud, followed by Lieutenant Insall. Fire was again opened, and the German machine was brought down heavily in a ploughed field 4 miles south-east of Arras.

On seeing the Germans scramble out of their machine and prepare to fire, Lieutenant Insall dived to 500 feet, thus enabling Donald to open heavy fire on them. The Germans then fled, one helping the other, who was apparently wounded. Other Germans then commenced heavy fire, but in spite of this, Lieutenant Insall turned again, and an incendiary bomb was dropped on the German machine, which was last seen wreathed in smoke. Lieutenant Insall then headed west in order to get back over the German trenches, but as he was at only 2,000 feet altitude he dived across them for greater speed, Donald firing into the trenches as he passed over.

The German fire, however, damaged the petrol tank, and, with great coolness, Lieutenant Insall landed under cover of a wood 500 yards inside our lines. The Germans fired some 150 shells at our machine on the ground, but without causing material damage. Much damage had, however, been caused by rifle fire, but during the night it was repaired behind screened lights, and at dawn Lieutenant Insall flew his machine home with First Class Air Mechanic T. H. Donald as a passenger’.

From the XI Squadron RFC Website

‘This was not the end of Lieut. Insall’s exploits however. Later that year, on the 14th of December, he was on patrol and sighted a German machine and pursued it deep behind enemy lines. During the engagement his gunner, Corpl. Donald was shot in the leg and the petrol tank perforated by gunfire. After the German machine made off, he tried to return to his own lines but an anti - aircraft star shell exploded underneath the aircraft and a large fragment blew through the aircraft and hit Insall in the base of the spine. Although at times he lost consciousness he was able to land the aircraft but was captured immediately. He was operated on and the fragment removed. In the ensuing two years he escaped three times, the third attempt seeing him (along with two companions) walking 150 miles over a period of nine nights to cross into Holland. Two weeks later he was summoned to Buckingham palace to receive his award’.

Further information on 2nd Lieutenant Gilbert Stuart Insall

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_Insall

http://www.xisquadronassociation.co.uk/feature/install/install_story.html

WWI Aviation paintings by Stuart Reid in the Imperial War Museum and British Public Collections

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/stuart-reid>