

**A SUPERB 'MARCH OFFENSIVE' MILITARY CROSS GROUP TO 11 VICTORY FIGHTER ACE CAPTAIN R W CHAPPELL WHO FLEW WITH BOTH 27 AND 41 FIGHTER SQUADRONS DURING WW1. STAYING IN THE AIR FORCE POST WAR HE WAS SECONDED TO THE JAPANESE NAVAL AIR FORCE ONE OF HIS TRAINEES BEING COMMANDER MINORU GENDA, WHO LATER PLANNED AND LED THE PEARL HARBOUR ATTACK. DURING WWII HE SERVED IN FAR EAST SECTION AND FIGHTER COMMAND AS AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER**



MILITARY CROSS GEORGE V REVERSE ENGRAVED 'CAPT. R.W. CHAPPELL, R.F.C. MARCH 1917 FRANCE', 1914-15 STAR 'PTE. R.W. CHAPPELL, HARTIGANS HSE', BRITISH WAR/VICTORY MEDALS WITH M.I.D. OAK LEAF 'CAPT. R.W. CHAPPELL, R.A.F.' M.I.D. OAK LEAF, 1939-45 STAR, BURMA STAR, WWII DEFENCE MEDAL, WWII WAR MEDAL WITH M.I.D. OAK LEAF, 1935 JUBILEE MEDAL, 1937 CORONATION MEDAL.

Military Cross Gazetted 22 June 1918:

*"T./Capt. Roy Williamson Chappell, R.F.C. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He showed the greatest skill and courage in leading patrols, with the result that during four days' operations the formations which he led destroyed 19 enemy aeroplanes and drove down several others, the fate of which was not observed, owing to the intensity of the fighting. He has destroyed altogether five enemy machines, and has driven down seven others out of control."*

The original recommendation, from which the above was taken, varies a little and notes 12 enemy aircraft accounted for by 6<sup>th</sup> April 1918 (the date of the recommendation). It is also more specific a time period, which was for the German 'March Offensive', an incredibly confused and chaotic period on both land and air ;

*'For continued Gallantry and good service in the field, especially during the recent operations.'*

*From March 21<sup>st</sup> to March 25<sup>th</sup> 1918, whilst on offensive patrols, this Officer has led his formations with the greatest skill and Gallantry. As a result of these patrols Capt. Chappell's formations destroyed 18 EA, whilst he personally drove down two EA out of control at Sailly*

on March 24<sup>th</sup> and crashed another at the same place on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Owing to the intensity of the fighting it was impossible to ascertain the fate of several other EA driven down by himself, and his formation.

Whilst serving with No.41 Squadron Capt Chappell has led 30 offensive patrols.

The total number of EA accounted for by this officers is 12. 4 crashed, one in flames, and seven driven down out of control.'

Roy Williamson Chappell was born on 31 Dec 1896 in Cheddleton, Leek, Cheshire and moved to South Africa in 1913, enlisting into Hartigan's Horse cavalry unit in Dec 1915 and serving during the campaign in German South West Africa before returning to the UK to train as a pilot. Receiving his Royal Aero Club pilot's certificate on 17th July 1916, he was commissioned Flying Officer of the Royal Flying Corps on 24th August 1916. Clearly a natural pilot, he was immediately selected as a fighter pilot and posted to 27 Squadron Here. Chappell flew the Martinsyde G100 Elephant's; a single seat fighter aircraft renowned for its immobility and ungainliness. Despite this, Chappell was one of the few pilots to score 2 victories with this machine.



On 27<sup>th</sup> September 1916, Chappell was flying with a formation of 27 Squadron Elephants when attacked by Albatros scouts of Jasta 2, led by the famed German 40 victory Ace and Pour Le Merite winner, Hauptmann Oswald Boelke. During this combat, two Elephant's were downed, another pilot was wounded and another aircraft was shot up, as was Chappell's own plane, which suffering extensive damage and over 100 bullet holes all over! Despite this, Chappell recorded his first aerial victory during this combat, sending a German fight down Out of Control. On 17th March 1917, Chappell scored his second victory, from his combat report he;



*'...fired into the machine and saw tracers entering the pilot and observers seats. Pilot continued combat down to 6500 feet when hostile machine started to spin, with a small stream of smoke coming from the fuselage. The EA was last seen in a spinning nose dive at 1000 feet'*

Chappell was eventually withdrawn from combat in May 1917, taking up duty as an instructor at Central Flying School, here switching to SE5's and promoted Temporary Captain. An interesting communication from the Commanding Officer of the famed 56 Squadron (aces such as McCudden VC, Ball VC, Bowman etc etc), details that he wished Chappell to come to 56 squadron to become a Flight Commander (copy included). However in the event when Chappell returned to operational service in late October 1917, it was flying SE5a's as a Flight Commander with 41 Squadron.

During a contact patrol on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1918, Chappell was wounded in the face but managed to land his aircraft. The wound was only slight and he remained on duty. However on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1918, Chappell had his first two victories as an SE5a pilot. According to RFC Communiqués;

*'Capt R Chappell, 41 Squadron, shot down an Albatros scout which crashed, but was then attacked by six more EA scouts. He put his machine into a spin and on coming out saw one EA in front of him and five still above. He attacked the single EA which did a long side-slip and was last seen about 2000 feet from the ground still spinning out of control'*

Then on 6<sup>th</sup> March, Chappell sent a Pfalz DIII fighter down over Niergnies, securing the coveted title of fighter 'ace'. Ten days later he destroyed an LVG C over Brebieres. According to Communiqués;

*'Whilst on DOP, observed three two-seater EA over Brebieres. He dived on the topmost getting in a burst of about 70 rounds from both guns at about 125 yards range. A large cloud of smoke and a sheet of flame came from the EA's cockpit and it appeared to spin down. Captain Chappell could not see this EA hit the ground as he had to return owing to oil pressure trouble'*



CAPTAIN CHAPPELL NEXT TO HIS 41 SQUADRON SE5a





On 23 Mar 1918, an Albatros DV over Bourlon Wood. The following day, his prolific run continued, scoring against 2 Fokker DRI triplanes; his second 'double' in the same day. His 10th victim was scored the following morning; an Albatros DV over Sailly but he was apparently somewhat shot up himself (though uninjured)

On formation of the RAF, Chappell added one final victory of a German reconnaissance machine, sent down south east of Arras on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1918. However a month later and after a second tour of over six months combat service, Captain Chappell MC, was sent to Home Establishment as an instructor. His final victory score was 11, though it seems he likely claimed several more that were not confirmed. He did not return to France during the War.

#### LIST OF CHAPPELL'S CONFIRMED AERIAL VICTORIES DURING WW1

1. 27 Sep 1916 - Albatros D - Martinsyde G.100 27 Sqn - OOC
2. 17 Mar 1917 - Albatros C - Martinsyde G.100 27 Sqn - Havrincourt - OOC
3. 2 Feb 1918 - Albatros DV - SE5a (B663) 41 Sqn - Erchin 1430hrs - DES
4. 2 Feb 1918 - Albatros DV - SE5a (B663) 41 Sqn - Erchin 1430hrs - OOC
5. 6 Mar 1918 - Pfalz DIII - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn - Niergnies 1000hrs - OOC
6. 16 Mar 1918 - LVG C - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn - Brebieres 1145hrs - DESF
7. 23 Mar 1918 - Albatros DV - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn - Bournon Wood 1130hrs - OOC
8. 24 Mar 1918 - Fokker DRI - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn. - Sailly 1455 hrs - OOC
9. 24 Mar 1918 - Fokker DRI - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn. - Havrincourt 1500hrs - OOC
10. 25 Mar 1918 - Albatros DV - SE5a (B624) 41 Sqn. - Sailly 1040hrs - DES
11. 16 May 1918 - Albatros C - SE5a (C5436) 41 Sqn. - SE of Arras 0750 hrs - OOOO

#### POST WORLD WAR ONE

On 5th November 1919 Chappell was appointment flight commander of the Air Inspection Squadron or 24 Squadron (Bristol Fighters). He transferred to 70 Squadron on 13th December 1922 and on 20th February 1923 to 84 Squadron flying DH9's in Iraq (no medal entitlement). On 13th October 1923, he became supernumerary at the RAF Depot but on 11th February 1924, he was assigned Test Pilot at RAF Hendon. It seems that during the early 20's, Chappell flew in various aerial derby's with other wartime pilots, indeed a newspaper article in one of his albums tells of how at one in 1920, Chappell crashed but '*by skillfull manoeuvring*' was just able to miss the crowd! Within the group, are various programmes for derby's and meets, many well known pilots and aces are noted as taking part.

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 1925, after a period of study, Chappell was assigned to the School for Oriental Studies and posted to the British Embassy, Tokyo as Languages Officer. On 10 Oct 1928 he was promoted to Squadron Leader and to London as Intelligence Officer, RAF. However on 26 Sep 1930 he was seconded for duty as instructor with the Imperial Japanese Navy, teaching amongst others a Commander Minoru Genda - who later planned and led the infamous WWII Pearl Harbour attack. In June 1931 Chappell re-qualified as a Japanese Interpreter, First Class. On 12 Nov 1933 he was appointed Officer Commanding, No.1 Squadron (Hawker Fury's), promoted to Wing Commander and posted as Air Attache, British Embassy, Tokyo.





CHAPPELL WHILE ATTACHED TO THE JAPANESE NAVY

On the outbreak of WWII and probably given his experience with working in Japan with their air force, Chappell was appointed Deputy Director of Intelligence, Air Ministry, Far East Section on 16 Sep 1939. As Japan invaded Malaya and Singapore in 1942, Chappell left for Java and flying to Britain via Calcutta, Cairo and Equatorial Africa. On repatriation to the UK in 1942, he was appointed Chief Intelligence Officer, Fighter Command and subsequently Air Attache to Brazil, finally retiring from service aged just 50 in 1946, with the rank of Air Commodore. Air Commodore Chappell died on 7th February 1982



#### THE ALBUMS AND RESEARCH

Accompanied by a wealth of Chappell's WWI R.F.C and later ephemera, including 2 photo albums of original photographs. Content of the albums very mixed with a large number of

WW1 aviation, civilian/family and photos of his service in the early 1920's in Iraq and the UK. Of most interest are the numerous photos from 41 squadron; Chappell with other squadron members, SE5a's, several of a captured Albatros DV and in particular 3 close up shots of fighter pilots in the cockpit's of their SE5a's. Also included are original newspaper cuttings and a selection of 8 named diplomatic invitational cards, aerial derby programmes, and a few loose photos, including a photo of him with Minoru Genda and other Japanese Naval Officers.

Condition of the medals is GVF. The cover missing from one the albums and both are a little worn in places. Please note, this group was sold though Spink auctions a number of years ago and was incorrectly described as '*Rank officially corrected on Victory*'. The Victory medal actually has no correction on it.

All in all this is a quite superb group to a high scoring fighter Ace in one of the top SE5a squadron's during WW1 and had a highly interesting service post War and into WWII. The above is only a briefly outlines Chappell's service but the group comes with a very large file of research, including various articles on Chappell and his squadrons, combat reports, RFC/RAF Communiqués, MIC, copy photos, Army service records, copy MC recommendation etc etc