

**INDIVIDUAL HISTORY**

**MITSUBISHI Ki-46-III 'DINAH' BAPC. 84/8484M**  
**MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1989/0307/AF**

1943-5 Probable construction date. Constructor's number 5439. Built at Nagoya as one of 609 production Ki-46-III (Hei) aircraft which first entered service in the summer of 1943.

Apparently allotted to No 81 Sentai (Regiment/Group), No 3 Chutai (Company/Squadron) Imperial Japanese Army Air Force which had detachments (Independent Companies) throughout the South West Pacific. Restoration at St Athan in 1975 revealed this units' markings.

Whilst the aircraft was undergoing restoration at Cosford c.1990, Mr M.Morita recalled its likely origins. At the end of the war he was serving with a Japanese reconnaissance party based at Kahan airfield on the Malay peninsula and received British orders to hand the two Ki-46 aircraft used by his unit to the Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit, South East Asia (ATAIU SEA). His unit moved to Kuruan airfield early in Sept.1945 to join their parent unit, the First Field Supplement Squadron which mainly trained Officer pilots and boys for service in a youth squadron with a detachment operating against allied forces in Sumatra and Borneo. Upon arrival at Kuruan propellers were removed and the aircraft handed over to the British. In October 1945 the order was given to restore the two Ki-46 aircraft to airworthy condition, but necessary parts were unavailable.

In November Mr. Morita was again ordered to get the Ki-46 flyable and a successful trial flight was accomplished in Jan/Feb 1946. In the absence of specific orders the aircraft then made an unhurried flight at around 10,000 feet to Seletar, Singapore piloted by Mr. Morita, accompanied by two Japanese maintenance personnel in the rear cockpit Mr Morita had heard that the aircraft was to be shipped to Britain. RAF roundels replaced the 'rising sun' discs and the unit markings, based on the Japanese character 'HO' from 'Supplement/Hojyu', in white, was removed. At this time the upper fuselage was dark brown. Colour profile – Famous Airplanes of the World No 38, 1993-1 p.5 (RAFM X005-6115).

All this contradicts the report in 'War Prizes' that the ATAIU 'Dinah' arrived at the former Imperial Japanese Navy airfield at Tebrau, Johore State, Malaya from Kuala Lumpur flown by an RAF pilot.

At one stage after capture the aircraft reportedly carried the code '29' which may indicate that it had been flown for communications duties by RAF Headquarters, Singapore, who used similar two-number codes, prior to ATAIU use at Tebrau. The aircraft were flown by Japanese pilots for press or VIP visits rather than actual evaluation.

Photo at Tebrau in ATAIU markings - Flypast Mar 94 p.56; Sekai No Kesakuki No 8; Photo in flight - War Prizes p.145.

- 25 Mar 46 Selected for shipment to the UK for museum purposes by S/Ldr Prosho. Air Ministry Intelligence, in Association with the Ministry of Aircraft Production, originally selected 64 aircraft for evaluation in the UK. Shipping space for these was refused by the Ministry of War Transport whose priority was repatriation of personnel for demobilisation, but four aircraft were allowed space, including the Dinah.
- Apr 46 Crated under the supervision of No 390 Maintenance Unit at Seletar.
- Jun 46 Moved to Singapore and loaded on a Royal Navy vessel along with three other Japanese aircraft, the 'Zero' whose centre section survives with the Imperial War Museum, the Ki-100 now at Hendon, and the Jungmann copy burnt at RAF Wroughton c.1957.
- 24 Aug 46 Arrived at Portsmouth Dockyard, Hants.
- 26 Jan 47 Crated for long-term storage at No.47 MU Sealand, near Liverpool.
- Jan 48 At the German Air Force Equipment Centre at Stanmore Park, Middx by this date.
- Late 1955 To No 15 MU RAF Wroughton, Wilts with other Air Historical Branch airframes.
- Mid 1958 To Air Historical Branch store at RAF Fulbeck, Lincs.
- 1961 Stored at RAF Finningley, Yorks repainted dark green and light blue with Japanese markings. Photo - Airfix Magazine Apr 61 p.522. Both RAF Flying Review Mar 61 and Wrecks & Relics 1<sup>st</sup> edition also list the Dinah as being at RAF Henlow, Beds in early 1961 according to information provided by the AHB.
- 1963 Displayed with other Air Historical Branch airframes at RAF Biggin Hill, Kent Photos- Aero Modeller Jan 66 p.25; Flying Review International Jan 66 p.316; Sekai No Kesakuki No 8 (colour); Aircraft in Profile - Mitsubishi Ki-46 (006919). Colour Photo, September 1965; Supplement to Aeroplane April 2001 p.34.
- 1968/69 Stored at RAF Museum store at RAF Henlow, Beds. Photo; Wrecks and Relics-The Album p.52 (colour)
- 1970 To RAF St Athan for storage alongside other historic aircraft.

- 18 Sep 71 Displayed at Battle of Britain Display at RAF St Athan. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated Nov 71. Other photos at St.Athan - Aircraft Illustrated Jan 1978 p.41; Air Britain Digest Mar-Apr 77 p.45-46. Colour photos of cockpit whilst at St Athan - Sekai No Kesakuki No.130 pp28-29.
- 1975-81 Restored at St. Athan. Photo under restoration - Flypast Dec 81 p.13. Paint stripping revealed the original colour scheme of brown top surfaces and light grey-green undersurfaces. The fuselage sides and wings also carried RAF roundels; The fuselage carried the 'ATAIU-SEA' markings and the red fin marking carried by the aircraft at Biggin Hill was found to be duplicated underneath by a white marking.
- On the tail wheel doors was found etched a stylised version of the badge of the 81<sup>st</sup> Sentai - its 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron flew Ki-46-III aircraft in Burma in 1944. On the wing tip was found a strip painted blue, possibly signifying a Squadron Commander's aircraft, the blue referring to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron machine. The constructor's number, 5439, was found on various engine nacelle panels. Photos of fuselage markings and unit emblem - Flypast Jan 88 p.60; Air Britain Digest Mar-Apr 77 p.46.
- 17 Feb 76 Allotted RAF Maintenance Serial 8484M.
- 18 Sep 82 Newly restored aircraft displayed at RAF St. Athan's Battle of Britain open day. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated Dec 1982; Aviation News 2-15 Dec 1983 p.630.
- 3-10 Mar 89 To the Aerospace Museum, Cosford, Salop and stored dismantled.
- 17 Dec 92 Fuselage to RAFM RC&RC Cardington, Beds for repainting following restoration by No.1 School of Technical Training at RAF Cosford from Aug 1992. Photos at Cosford – Famous Airplanes of the World No. 38, 1993-1 (RAFM X005-6115) pp. 6 – 8. Photo after repainting - Air World International Sep 95 p.28. The forward canopy glazing had decayed and was replaced.  
Wings restored by Trent Aero at Castle Donnington, Derbyshire.
- Jun 93 Restored components returned to Cosford and displayed disassembled at the July 1993 open day. Photo of completed fuselage - Aeroplane Monthly Aug 93 p.5; Flypast Aug 93 p.5; Flypast February 2000 p.86. Assembled by Nov 1993. Interior restored by volunteers at Cosford.
- Photos at Cosford following the £60,000 restoration partly sponsored by Mitsubishi heavy industries of Tokyo who contributed £30,000. - Aircraft Illustrated Jan 94 p.57; Flypast February 2000 p.86; War Prizes – The Album p.118. The tail markings were applied by Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 pilot Captain Takeshi Suzuki, an expert in Japanese sign writing. Photos - Flypast Nov 93 p.6; Aeroplane Monthly January 1994 p.5.
- Aug 98 Donated to RAFM by MoD.

The aircraft is now displayed at Cosford as the sole surviving 'Dinah'.

Photos – RADAR Issue 4, winter 2014 p.27; Aviation News April 2015 p.38.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

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