

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

DOUGLAS DAKOTA IV/C4 KN645/8355M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 85/AF/75

- 45 Built by Douglas at Oklahoma City to contract No. AC - 2032 as a C - 47-B -35-DK with the USAAF serial 44 - 77003. Constructors number 16587/33335.
- 18 May 45 Accepted on charge to RAF under Lend - Lease arrangements, under Requisition BSC 43194. Flying hours at this time 2 hours 15 minutes.
- 23 May 45 Arrived at No.45 Group, Montreal, Canada en route to UK.
- 26 May 45 Departed for UK.
- 27 May 45 Arrived in UK.
- 2 Jun 45 To 2nd Tactical Air Force Communications Squadron at Brussels/Evere, Belgium.
- 10 July 45 Squadron moved to Buckeburg, Germany.
- 15 Jul 45 Squadron renamed the British Air Forces of Occupation Communication Squadron.
- 6 Sep 45 Renamed the BAFO Communications Wing, still at Buckeburg.
- 8 Nov 45 No.151 Repair Unit, (Aircraft) BAOR.
- 22 Nov 45 Returned to BAFO Communications Wing.
- No.151 Repair Unit.
- The aircraft was fitted out as a VIP aircraft, with kitchen, armchairs, settees, cocktail cabinet and toilet and used for a time by Lord Montgomery, and in 1947 by Lord Wavell. Flown at this time in overall silver colour scheme.
- 11 Mar 46 BAFO Communications Wing, Buckeburg. From 1946 - 49 KN645 was used as the personal aircraft of the British Military Governors of Germany - MRAF Sir Sholto Douglas, later Lord Douglas of Kirtleside and subsequently General Sir Brian Robertson later Lord Robertson of Oakridge. Duties at this time included weekly Thursday trips to Berlin for Control Commission of Germany meetings. Pilot at this time was Neville Freeman, whose logbook records various flights in the aircraft during June 1949.

Photo at Northolt, 15 February 1948; Aeromilitaria Spring 2017 p.29, wearing the four star markings of General Sir Brian Robertson on the fin..

- 1 Jun 49 Flown Rhein Main - Gatow - Melle.
- 7 Jun 49 Flown Melle - Buckeburg - Melle - Orly (France) - Rhein Main.
- 8 Jun 49 Flown Rhein Main - Gatow.
- 10 Jun 49 Gatow - Schleswig. Flying time 1.35 hours.
- 11 Jun 49 Schleswig - Lubeck - Gatow - Melle.
- 12 Jun 49 Melle - Gatow.
- 13 Jun 49 Gatow - Villacoublay (France).
- 16 Jun 49 Villacoublay - Orly.
- 17 Jun 49 Orly - Luxembourg carrying Ernest Bevin and Lord Henderson, then Luxembourg - Melle.
- 19 Jun 49 Melle - Luxembourg - Le Bourget carrying Mr. Bevin, M.Schuman and Lord Henderson, returning to Melle.
- 21 Jun 49 No.1 BRSD (BAFO) for modifications.
- 24 Jun 49 Luneburg - Buckeburg - Melle - Northolt.
- 26 Jun 49 Flown Northolt - Gutersloh - Melle - Gatow. Crew Neville Freeman, F/O Tyler, F/L Scull and F/L Woods.
- 27 Jun 49 BAFO Communications Wing, Buckeburg, flying from Gatow to Melle that day. Flying time 1 hour 20 minutes.
- 29 Jun 49 Flown Melle - Buckeburg - Gatow - Buckeburg - Rhein Main.
- 11 Aug 49 To UK for Special Servicing by Airwork General Trading.
- 24 Aug 49 Returned to BAFO Communications Squadron, Buckeburg.
- 11 Aug 50 'For Use of High Commissioner'. Possibly Far East Communications Squadron H.Q. F.E.A.F/AHQ Malaya, RAF Changhi, Singapore-one of six VIP Dakotas on strength for use by senior officers until replaced by VIP equipped Vickers Valetta aircraft. See file letter from Mr R.G. Moore, 30 September 2009.
- 7 Jun 51 No.12 Maintenance Unit Silloth, Cumbria for storage. Photo at Silloth - Airfix Magazine Mar 61 p.461.

4 Jan 54 AHQ Malta

11 Jan 54 Malta Communications Flight.

28 Mar 55 No. 22 MU RAF Kirkbride, Cumbria.

8 Aug 55 To RAF Hendon, Middx.

55 To RAF Northolt, Middx. for use by SHAPE - Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe Communications Flight. Photo at this time (1957, at Blackbushe Airport) in overall silver; air Britain Digest April 1961 p.40)

30 Dec 58 No.22 MU RAF Kirkbride.

19 Oct 60 No.23 MU RAF Aldergrove, Northern Ireland due to the closure of RAF Kirkbride.

13 Jan 61 To the Queen's Flight at RAF Benson for use during the Nepalese leg of HM the Queen's Asian Tour.

9 Mar 61 RAF Northolt. Photo around this time at RAF Sillith, Cumbria - Airfix Magazine March 1961 p.461.

6 Sep 62 No.60 MU at RAF Leconfield, Yorks.

18 Dec 62 RAF Northolt for use by AFNE - Headquarters of the Allied Air Forces in Northern Europe, detached to Oslo.

Jun 65 Visited Aden.

23 May 66 To Scottish Aviation Ltd at Prestwick for major servicing and wing anti - fatigue modifications.

21 Sep 66 To RAF Northolt for further use by AFNE

27 Apr 67 To Scottish Aviation for Modifications - Nav/Radio refit.

20 Sep 67 Arrived at Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment, Boscombe Down, Hants following Loan to the Ministry of Technology. Used for trials of radio/navigation installation.

3 Nov 67 From Boscombe Down to Scottish Aviation at Prestwick for repainting. Final RAF scheme was natural metal with white upper surfaces and blue cheat line. Photo - Berlin Airlift (Pearcy) 029044. Flying hours by this time were some 5,000.

1 Dec 67 To RAF Northolt for AFNE, being used by the NATO Commander in Norway, based in Oslo. Photo around this time – RAF News w/e 24 January 1970 p.4.

- 1 Apr 70 As the last Dakota in service with the Royal Air Force, made its last operational sortie, flying from Oslo to Northolt. Photos - RAF News w/e 16 May 70; Flight International 9 Apr 70 p.598; The Dakota - Percy - p.312/314.
Flown back by a crew of 5 including pilot S/Ldr Neil Franks. Replaced by an Andover C.1.
- 3 Apr 70 Flown from Northolt to No.5 MU at RAF Kemble, Glos, again flown by Neil Franks with co-pilot John Wells, Chief Tech Les Barnes, Navigator Bill Coupar and Radio Operator Ron Radford, who knew her as 'Belching Bertha'. Photos of cockpit and cabin at this time - The Dakota - Percy - p.313.
- There was however one more RAF Dakota flight when Dakota Mk. IV KP208 flew from Kemble to Odiham, Hants on 18 May 1970 en route to preservation outside the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot where it remained on display until June 2009, moving to Merville Barracks, Colchester, Essex in January 2010 for further display as F/Lt Lord VC's 'KG374'. (Today there is again a Dakota on RAF active strength - ZA947 has flown with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby. Lincs since 1993).
- 10 Jan 72 To non - effective airframe for RAF Museum.
- 73 Painted by No.5 MU to represent No. 271 Squadron Dakota KG374 'YS' in which Flt.Lt. David Lord won a posthumous Victoria Cross over Arnhem in September 1944. Photos at RAF Colerne as repainted - Aircraft Illustrated Nov.74 p.472; Control Column Aug 74 p.127.
- 1 May 74 Moved by road to RAF Colerne Station Museum with ground instructional serial 8355M (allotted 1973 but not worn).
- 16 Oct 75 Fuselage by road to the Aerospace Museum at RAF Cosford, Salop, the wings following 29th October, where it remains on display. Photos – Ever Better – The History of 71 MU RAF (Wise) p.47.
- Nov 79 Used at Cosford in the filming of the BBC series 'A Family at War'. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated Feb 1980 p.90.
- 19 April 05 Moved into MBCC at RAFM Cosford for repainting into post-war overall Transport Command white and silver colours for suspended display in Cosford's new 'Cold War' building. Painting complete by October 2005. Photos- Flypast October 2005 p.15; The Flying M Yearbook 2005 p.11; Wrecks and Relics 20th Edition.
- 8 Feb 07 Placed on public view with opening of new National Cold War Exhibition building. Photos - Aeroplane March 2007 p.14; Flypast March 2007 p.20; Air Britain Aviation World September 2007 p.103.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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