

## INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

### DOUGLAS C-47A-10-DK/DAKOTA MK.III KG437/G-AGYX/N9050T MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER X002-9932

- 1944 Built as USAAF Skytrain 42-92648, manufacturer's serial 12472, from serials batch 42-92573/92743.
- 4 Feb 44 Delivered to United States Army Air Force
- 14 Feb 44 Delivered to RAF at Dorval, Montreal, Canada as a Lend-Lease Dakota III, KG437, part of a batch of 500 Dakota III aircraft, serials KG310 – KG809 delivered February – August 1944. The RAF received over 1,900 Dakotas on lend-lease.
- 23 Feb 44 Arrived in UK, having crossed the Atlantic via the Azores.
- 29 Feb 44 Issued to No.233 Squadron RAF at Gosport (RAF Bircham Newton, Norfolk from 1<sup>st</sup> March 1944, Blakehill Farm, near Swindon, Wilts from 5<sup>th</sup> March 1944, (with a detachment at Nivelles, France from January 1945 to supply routes within the Continent) and finally at Odiham from 8<sup>th</sup> June 1945. Carried codes 5T-B.

This transport unit was heavily involved in the liberation of Europe. Following intensive paratrooping exercises with the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in March 1944, it began operations in April 1944, flying 'Nickel' propaganda leaflet dropping sorties over the Caen area on 25<sup>th</sup> April and over Alencon on 26<sup>th</sup> April. As part of a force of 108 Dakotas dropping the main element of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Brigade it provided 30 aircraft for Horsa Glider Towing (six gliders) and parachute dropping (407 men, all dropped successfully in advance of the landings to secure canal and river bridges and eliminate coastal batteries) on D-Day, 5/6<sup>th</sup> June, taking off from 10.50pm on the 5<sup>th</sup>; on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 21 aircraft flew re-supply drops to elements of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. After two of its aircraft landed at B.2 airstrip for freight delivery and casualty evacuation from the Allied Beachhead on 13<sup>th</sup> June – the first Transport Command aircraft to land in France - it provided transport services to allied bases in Europe. During June 1944 an average of five flights per day were made to France, carrying freight, spares and bombs outwards and personnel inwards, included wounded and German POWs. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1944 it took a whole 2<sup>nd</sup> TAF Fighter Wing to its new French base, and continued shuttling supplies out to France and casualties back to the UK, making 259 sorties in August 1944 alone; during August, ten aircraft dropped supply panniers to troops at Chambois.

The Squadron made 37 sorties in the first two days of operation Market at Arnhem 17/18<sup>th</sup> September 1944, plus later hazardous re-supply missions, losing several aircraft to enemy flak and fighters. In the initial assault on 17<sup>th</sup> September it provided

22 Dakota/Horsa combinations, carrying 308 troops plus equipment, taking off from 10am, heading for Landing Zone 'S', north of the Arnhem-Utrecht railway.

This was followed by 16 similar combinations the following day, when No 233 Squadron took off from 10.43 hours, providing 17 Dakota/Horsa combinations, of which one landed prematurely, the others reaching Landing Zone 'S', carrying troops, Jeeps, 6-pounder anti-tank guns, trailers and hand-carts. (See 'Tugs and Gliders To Arnhem' Arie-Jan Van Hees 2003 (DoRIS ref X002-8520). In correspondence to APS in April 2004, Mr van Hees commented;

'It seems that KG437 has been a 'workhorse' for a number of Squadrons within No.46 Group of RAF Transport Command, as the Operation Record Books and my added research show a number of moves within these Squadrons even when Operation 'Market-Garden' was in process.

17-9-1944, D-Day for Operation 'Market' (the aerial part of Market-Garden), 233 Squadron, RAF Blakehill Farm

On this first day of Operation 'Market', KG437 towed a Horsa glider to Landing Zone 'S' west of Wolfheze (See 'Tugs and Gliders to Arnhem' page 102. The glider's Chalk Number was '202'. Regrettably the name of both glider pilots nor the exact load are known as not all 'Glider Load Manifests' were filed after the operation.

KG437 took off at 1008 hours crewed by:  
Flying Officer J. Stewart, RCAF, pilot  
Flying Officer D.A. Todd, co-pilot,  
Flying Officer R. Phillips, navigator, and  
Flying Officer W.C. Bradley, RCAF, wireless operator.

Having safely delivered the Horsa glider to its Landing Zone KG437 returned to base at 1525 hours.

19-9-1944, 575 Squadron, RAF Broadwell

KG437 took off at 1245 hours, carrying 16 wicker panniers with supplies and one bundle of bedding.

ORB RAF Station Broadwell: "14 a/c of 512 Sqn plus 16 a/c of 575 Sqn took off between 1242 and 1256 to drop supplies to the Airborne troops at Arnhem at DZ 'V'. A great deal of flak was experienced en route to DZ and at the DZ itself great opposition was met from enemy ground defence, and 20 a/c were damaged. 28 a/c dropped panniers of food and ammunition and bundles of bedding at the DZ. One a/c considered, from the fire experienced from the DZ area that this DZ was in enemy hands and so did not drop, but returned with load to base. One a/c of 575 Sqn (F/L Slack) did not return from this operation. One a/c of 512 Sqn force landed at Woodbridge, one at Brussels, and one a/c missing".  
ORB 575 Sqn: "Supply drop on DZ 'V'. 16 Aircraft were detailed. 256 Panniers and 16 bundles of Bedding were carried.

The crew on this re-supply sortie was:  
Flying Officer P.R. Sandford, pilot  
Flying Officer J.C. Chitty, co-pilot,  
Warrant Officer P.N. Siddons, navigator, and  
Warrant Officer E.T. Fennell, wireless operator.

KG437 returned to base at 1755 hours.

21-9-1944, 437 (RCAF) Squadron, RAF Blakehill Farm

KG437 took off at 1314 hours, loaded with 16 wicker panniers, to be dropped in the 'Oosterbeek perimeter', near the HQ of 1st airborne Division at the Hartenstein Hotel. Out of ten aircraft despatched by the Squadron, five did not return to base! KG437 made it back to base.

ORB 437 Sqn: "Ten aircraft were detailed to convey and drop panniers again in the Arnhem area in an effort to give the airborne elements there supplies, mostly of ammo, which our guard forces required very urgently.

The route taken was Base - Hatfield - Bradwell - N. Foreland - 5116N 0300E - Ghent - Bourgh Leopold - W of Eindhoven - DZ and return on reciprocal. 240 panniers were successfully jettisoned on or near the DZ. Over DZ visibility was 3-5 miles and 8/10 cloud cover, base 5000ft. Enemy reactions were concentrated mainly in the area of DZ and enemy fighters appeared between Eindhoven and DZ on return the journey.

The following aircraft did not return: KG387 (F/L Alexander), KG489 (F/O Cressman), FZ656 (P/O Kenny), KG489 (F/O Chambers) landed at B56 engine damaged by flak. 376 (F/O Hagerman) was abandoned when crew baled out. KG427 (F/S Lane) received slight damage from strikes from FW190 just above main plane starboard side. Attacked at 6000 ft 25 miles from DZ on return route. KG410 (F/O Semple) shook off 2 FW190's by diving into cloud. Crew state at present as follows: KG387 captain and 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot killed, W/Op returned safely, Nav believed to be in hospital. 376 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and nav killed, W/Op slightly wounded, pilot safe. KG489 (F/O Chambers) and FZ656 (P/O Kenny) all members of crew are missing.

Today's flying crew of KG437 was:  
Flying Officer W.E. McLean, RCAF, pilot,  
Flight Sergeant D.A. Cox, RCAF, co-pilot,  
Warrant Officer P.A. Turner, RCAF, navigator, and  
Flight Sergeant R. Mercer, RCAF, wireless operator.

KG437 returned to base at 1832 hours.

#### 23-9-1944, 233 Squadron, RAF Blakehill Farm

KG437 took off at 1318 hours, loaded with 16 panniers. DZ as 21-9-44.

ORB 233 Sqn: "To further re-supply the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division fighting in Holland seventeen aircraft were detailed to drop panniers on a DZ to the west of Arnhem. Route taken was the same as on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Enemy opposition was again very stiff but fighter cover was excellent, shooting up many flak positions as soon as they opened fire. Nine aircraft were damaged, the worst being FZ681 - W/O Cranefield and crew. W/O Cranefield received bullet wounds in his knee and thigh, and a hole two feet in diameter was blown in the starboard wing. The second pilot Flight Sergeant Stapleford took control and brought the aircraft safely to base.

Four aircraft were loaded at Down Ampney but they returned direct to base from Arnhem. Fifteen aircraft were completely successful, jettisoning 240 panniers on or very near the DZ. Two aircraft, due to the upsetting of the load were forced to return with it, to base. One aircraft was forced to jettison the load near an Allied convoy of lorries. All aircraft returned safely to base".

On this sortie KG437 was crewed by:  
Flying Officer J. Stewart, RCAF, pilot  
Flying Officer D.A. Todd, co-pilot,  
Flying Officer R. Phillips, navigator, and  
Flying Officer W.C. Bradley, RCAF, wireless operator.

KG437 returned to base at 1855 hours'. (Arie-Jan van Hees)

In October 1944 it made 450 short-range shuttles to the Continent, and in the period 22-31 March 1945, flying from Birch, Essex provided 24 Dakotas for Operation Varsity, the crossing of the Rhine, making 22 sorties.

- Jul 45 No.233 Squadron ceased flying, prior to moving to Burma in August.
- 5 Sep 45 Allocated to Nos. 435/436 ('Chinthe' and 'Elephant') Squadrons RCAF at RAF Down Ampney, which were at the time en route from India to their new UK base. No unit code carried.  
Used for transport services to allied bases in Europe, carrying supplies and personnel to Istres, Ghent, Brussels, Naples, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Buckeburg and various points in Great Britain.
- 6 Oct 45 Marshall's for repair – category B
- 18 Dec 45 Repairs complete – awaiting collection
- Dec 45 No. 437 'Husky' Squadron RCAF; unit then based at RAF Odiham, Hants with a detachment at Evere; unit code DM if worn. Used for transport to allied units in Europe, including a regular passenger service to Naples and Athens. Unit code Z2.
- 15 Jan 46 Sold for civilian use with BOAC as G-AGYX
- 8 Feb 46 Cat E – written off RAF Charge. Last entry on RAF movement card.
- 21 Mar 46 Issued with Certificate of Airworthiness
- 19 Aug 46 Transferred to the newly formed British European Airways - BEA -as Pionair class 'RMA George Holt-Thomas' for passenger duties. Flew in overall natural metal scheme with white upper fuselage and tail and union jack on fin. The aircraft appears in the background in the classic 1951 film 'The Lavender Hill Mob', starring Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway, Sid James and a young Audrey Hepburn. This was in a scene filmed at Northolt (representing Paris).
- 27 Apr 61 Sold to Autair, Luton Airport; operated by Skyways. By 1961 the BEA Pionair fleet was reduced from 50 to just six, serving Guernsey in the Channel Islands, until replaced by Viscounts in 1961 after the airport at Guernsey received a hard runway, although the last BEA Dakotas were not sold until the winter of 1965.
- 12 Feb 62 To Charles John Bicknell, Libya, Trading as Libyan Aviation; in Libyan Aviation colours by 1964, in use for oil exploration support work; had been leased to United Libyan Airlines 1962

22 May 62 Transferred to Brian Lovell Reginald Pocock, but operated by United Libyan Airlines.

17 Jan 63 To John William Beazley, but still operated by United Libyan Airlines

10 Jun 65 To aircraft traders W S Shackleton Ltd.

1 Jul 65 Sold to Martins Air Charter (trading as Martinair), Netherlands as PH-MAG. (UK registration cancelled 1<sup>st</sup> July 65) Martinair used DC-3s on charter flights until replaced by Convair 340s in 1967.

Leased to Delta Air Transport

2 Oct 68 Sold to Moormanair, Amsterdam for cargo charter work; carried Moormanair Holland titling on upper fuselage.

14 May 73 Sold to Scorpio Films

Apr 74 Sold as 5N-ATA with Nigerian Trade Wings Airways Ltd, Ikeja; colour scheme of white upper fuselage and grey lower fuselage, divided by blue cheatline, with Nigerian Trade Wings titling and company wings logo on rudder.

May 77 Ferried to Malta for overhaul at Miaco, completed June 1978

24 May 78 Leased to U L Drew

29 Jan 79 Sold to Lease Air Inc Florida as N9050T; markings not taken up

Used in the Sudan; later noted derelict at Khartoum by 1980 as 5N-ATA.

To Autair Malta Ltd

May 83 Registered with ATC Inc. of Santa Rosa, California

1984 Returned to Malta and stored with Malta International Avn. Co, later CFS Aeroengines.

Aug 87 Registration N9050T cancelled.

Lay derelict at Hal Safi, Malta, minus wings and engines, awaiting sale for a reported price of \$60,000. Photos – Flypast February 1992 p.39; Flypast July 1992 p.41. Port mainplane passed to the Royal Aerospace

Establishment (now BBMF) Dakota C.3 ZA947 following an undercarriage collapse in 1989.

- Oct 91      Following acquisition by restaurateur John Woodhouse, dismantled for shipment to the UK; starboard mainplane left in Malta as not required. Rest of airframe departed by sea 29 October 1991.
- Nov 91      Arrived at Thruxton, Hants where it was prepared for its new role as Bistro centrepiece at John Woodhouse's Flying Services facility. The 2.3m long nose section was removed and refurbished, and the fuselage cut longitudinally so that the two halves, each 5.97m long, could form sides of the cocktail bar, with a refurbished propeller hanging over the bar as a low-speed fan.
- Sections installed as features in 'Dakotas', American Bistro, Fleet, Hants, west of Aldershot. Cockpit, main undercarriage leg, tailwheel oleo and refurbished R1830-92 engine on display in bar, and rear fuselage/tailplane initially placed in Fleet Pond as a display feature to attract custom. Photos – Flypast July 1992 p.40.  
Bistro opened 29 April 1992. The rear fuselage was later removed from the pond and only the tailplane retained.
- 2002      Bistro closed and converted into pub; Dakota components removed and stored; sold to RAF Museum by the new owners of the pub, Scottish & Newcastle Retail following site visit by RAFM May 2002.
- 26 Jun 02      Nose and smaller components to RAF Museum Cosford; fuselage sections to RAFM Hendon for later incorporation into 'Aeronauts' gallery, being rejoined and repainted into original 1944 period olive drab by RAFM Aircraft restoration team friends late 2002 and installed in 2003-photo, The Flying M Yearbook 2003 p.22.
- 5 Mar 03      Nose section from Cosford to Medway Aircraft Preservation Society premises at Rochester Airport for restoration. Photos; Flypast Sept. 2004 p.95; As completed; Aviation News May 2006 p.372.
- 19 Jan 06      Nose section by road from Rochester to RAF Museum at Hendon.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

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