

Dakota G-DAKK to be rescued...

by Michael Prophet



After seven years out in the open G-DAKK is finally back on the Lelystad tarmac. Through the years the white paint has slowly turned into the colour the aircraft is destined to be finished in: olive drab. Despite its terrible looks, the interior structures seem to be in reasonable condition. (Lelystad, 26 October, Classic Wings photo by Vincent Kok)

The former South Coast Airways Douglas C-47A-35-DL (9798) G-DAKK arrived at the Aviodrome Museum in Lelystad back in September 2006. The initial idea was to use it for local pleasure flights from the museum. At that time the Aviodrome was running many projects simultaneously. Due to the join-up with DDA Classic airlines and many projects within the museum, Dakota G-DAKK was left outside and had to endure the cold Dutch wind and rain for several winters. It is unclear why G-DAKK was not being cared for. Her Pratt & Whitney R1830 radial engines were never routinely run up nor properly conserved. The carburettors remained in open position, while the battery's froze during the winter. With each year passing her red and white paint started to fade more and more. The Aviodrome ran into financial trouble and was declared bankrupt in November 2011 and she was asked to be removed from the museum display area.

Classic Wings, which is based at Teuge Airport and operates an Antonov An-2 for pleasure flight has decided to take on the task of getting this World War 2 veteran back in the air. After some negotiating Classic Wings was able to purchase the DC-3 from its former owner. Restoring a DC-3 cost lots of time and money and 'common sense' would dictate, not to go ahead with this ambitious project. Classic Wings has been brewing on this project for over a year now and decided to at least try to save this World War 2 veteran.

First order of things was the dismantling of the aircraft and moving it to Weeze Airport in Germany (just over the Dutch border). Having arrived there, an assessment team will inspect the aircraft physically and determine if it can be saved. Classic Wings is going to round up volunteer, international aviation students/technicians to start the initial work. This will be done under guidance and supervision of aviation experts which will have the necessary Dutch/German technical licenses. All the work will be done inside an approved maintenance facility. Meanwhile halfway the project Classic Wings will search for corporate sponsors and more technical backing.

G-DAKK started life with the US Air Force as military transporter with serial 42-23936 during World War 2, delivered in July 1943. She moved to Oran in North Africa with the 8th

AF in August 1943. By February 1944 she was transferred to the European Theatre, in time to take part in D-Day, Arnhem, crossing of the Rhine and other major events of that period. She was used in the liberation of Holland. With this in mind the aircraft will be painted in green WW-2 colours including the invasion stripes.

Like so many Dakotas 42-23936 had an interesting career before turning up in Holland, now seven years ago. After the war, the aircraft was sold to the Czecho-Slovakian airline CSA as OK-WDU. The airline later sold it as OK-WZB to the VZLU, a test institute based Kbely airbase. From there, the veteran transport went back in, this time French, military service with the Armée de l'Air as 23936. Next stop was a career in the French Aeronavale as '36'. After many years of faithful service the navy guys sold the aircraft as F-GEOM to the French charter company Stellair as F-GEOM. In 1994 the final registration of G-DAKK was taken up and as such used by several consecutive British owners before finally arriving at South Coast Airways.

Preliminary work started during the fall (September and October) by removing the tail flying surfaces and wing ailerons. During the weekend of 26 and 27 October she was moved from her spot at the Aviodrome Museum to the QAPS paint hangar on the other side of Lelystad Airport. Normally QAPS handles biz jets up to the size of Fokker 70s, but they kindly offered to remove the paint of the G-DAKK. Fortunately a time slot was available and G-DAKK was moved inside. It has been many years since she had seen the inside of a hanger and the QAPS team got to work straight away. A couple of days later, on 6 November, she was moved out on the apron now in bare metal condition. During the morning she was hoisted onto a flatbed trailer in preparation of her nightly road trip to Weeze Airport, just across the border in Germany. Due to road construction along the chosen route, her journey has been postponed until 11 November. That night, thanks to careful manoeuvring by the driver of the truck and trailer, G-DAKK was safely delivered at her destination. Sometimes there was not more than ten centimetres on each side between plane and obstacles. (see: <http://classicwings.nl/project-c47/>)

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