

Off-Duty at Sculthorpe

With many hundreds of men and their families on and around RAF Sculthorpe, provision had to be made for off-duty activities. There was a bowling rink, baseball, basketball and football teams and athletics clubs, as well as clubs for the ladies. Many men found their way to the pubs in the surrounding villages or Fakenham where there was sometimes differences of opinion between the two allied airforces! Coaches were laid on to King's Lynn and to Norwich where the entertainment was more expensive!

There were a number of clubs on the base for officers, NCOs, other ranks, families and youth clubs so there was plenty of work for musicians. Names that crop up are Ray McKinley, Tommy Tucker, Paul Chris and Norman Woodhouse. There were also home grown musicians, a black Close Harmony Group and The Western Playboys. On one occasion a group from the base held a concert in Fakenham giving the town its first sight of an electric guitar!

These were the days before 'beat groups' and 'pop groups' I remember once working with a local pop group at one of the clubs when an American asked if he could have a go on the drums, he was better than our drummer and so we let him stay for a few numbers! Local groups were not considered high enough calibre to play on the base and we did not return there. At times the USAF would push the boat (or aeroplane) out *and bring* in a Hollywood Star. Jayne Mansfield was flown in where she called in at the youth club to add some glamour to the Pool Table and Jukebox!

Things changed when Sculthorpe became a Standby Airfield with fewer personnel. The individual clubs went, with only the Families Club remaining to cater for all. There was still work for musicians and 'beat groups' and 'pop groups' were by then acceptable!