

Lots to see

Sculthorpe as a standby airfield

By 1973 Sculthorpe was completed ready for a standby airfield, although ten years later it would need another £500,000 spent on it. Five years after this, the munitions area had a makeover but the proposed internal fuel line did not go ahead. The airfield was scheduled to host named exercises such as Coronet, Flintlock and Hammer.

Flintlock and Hammer were much the same, generating a lot of movements of C130s and C141s and the occasional C5, although there were always concerns about their weight. Now and again a T39 would put in an appearance(possibly undertaking radar calibration duties) there would be visitors from NATO, The Italians with G222s, the Belgians with C130 and the Turkish with Transalls. NATO combat aircraft would call in from time to time but it was the big guys who created the most interest - such as the KC135s and the HH53 Jolly Green Giants. In 1986 there was a visit from a P3 Orion, there were no reports of submarines at Sculthorpe at that time! In 1988 a strange long-nosed C130, which may have been civilian, was recorded.

While on the subject of visits we must not forget the SR71 Blackbird that called in one afternoon. Why it was there is not certain because there were no facilities to handle it there. An eyewitness said it stayed a while then took off together with a B52, this is more likely to have been its attendant KC135!

The 1970s and 1980s were a time of transition in paint jobs on military aircraft. The C141s were mostly in silver or grey although there were some spotted in camouflage. The C130s were quite a mix of styles of camouflage with some black and green while others were grey and green, or grey overall.

The USArmy U21s were a nondescript neutral colour although the UH1s tended to be green.

The last exercise at Sculthorpe was cut short by the outbreak of the Gulf War, the A10s on exercise were sent home prior to them being sent to the Gulf. Sculthorpe was then preparing itself for a 'Casevac' staging post when it was announced that the place would close. The living quarters and technical areas were sold off but the MoD retained the airfield to train the Army, RAF, and the USAF. At times there is much flying to see but it is not as interesting as it used to be.