

Spotting Days

My early days of aircraft spotting were wonderful days when aircraft flew at altitudes allowing identification. In 1958 I decided to make a note of what I saw, not just the regular hardware from Sculthorpe and West Raynham but unusual and interesting other aircraft.

April was a good month when I saw a triple-tailed Miles Marathon. The RAF called it a T11. Marks 1 to 10 are somewhat of a mystery but it may be explained by the fact that the RAF had the unsold ones that Handley Page had built having taken over the project from Miles who had ceased trading.

The next day I saw my first Lockheed C130, at that time only the US forces were using them. In this month I also saw a C54, a Mosquito, and a Valiant BK1. A Gloster Meteor TT8 flew over, a pilot in these had to be skilful when taking off to avoid losing the towed target!

Another Marathon showed up in May together with a Spitfire (mark unknown) and a Balliol 2. The jets were represented by a Vampire 9 and the first Vulcan that I ever saw.

May was a time for the Americans apart from an RAF Vampire 5 with trainer markings and a Lincoln. First off was a C121 Samaritan then I had three sightings of Chase C-122 Avitrucs which were later reimagined as Fairchild C-123 Providers.

July was an interesting month. An RB66 was in trouble over Walsingham when the sound of two 'bang outs' alerted me to the fact that the crew were all leaving the aircraft by parachute. The aircraft carried on only to come to earth later near Holt (I believe).

Without seeing the paint job it is difficult to tell the difference between a Convair T-29 and C131, both are called Samaritans and the paint job would indicate the mission and tell one from the other! The mission of a C47 with a radar nose was a mystery. Together with a C54 these were the sightings for August.

The year ended naval style with a sighting of a Sea Hawk.

The next year started with a bang with two F-101 Voodoos flying over and for a couple of days a Miles Hawk was around.

I still keep a record of what I see today but it is not as interesting as it was in the 1950s and 60s unless you include an E4, an Il-76, a Hercules C2, a E8C J STARS, a P-8 Poseidon, a Trislander AEW, a Voyager and an Atlas.