

The Turkish Affair

How the US Airforce came to Sculthorpe

In 1946 there was a suspicion that the USSR was going to invade Turkey and reclaim some land that they once owned. This would destabilise the area where a civil war was going on in Greece, and terrorist activity in Palestine and unrest in India. The USSR had considerable concentrations of troops in Romania and Bulgaria with more kicking their heels in Iran where they should have left after the war in Europe had ended (Stalin was after the oil). The US was not happy about the situation and so sent the US Navy to the area. They also wanted somewhere to base nuclear armed bomber groups and so Britain was asked to help in this respect. The Cabinet agreed although, rumour has it Parliament was not consulted. There were some members of the Government who had little time for Stalin and his brand of Communism.

Sculthorpe was one of the airfields preferred but it was not ready, work on the rebuilding had stopped towards the end of 1945 and there was still much to do. So the bombers had to go elsewhere on a temporary basis although it took sometime to effect.

Sculthorpe became ready towards the end of 1948 just in time for the Berlin crisis so it was needed even more. The agreement was for the RAF to staff the airfield and undertake all the ground based tasks. However, in practice this did not work out as the Americans wished to operate Sculthorpe themselves. At one time this plan proved unworkable and so the RAF handed the airfield over to the Americans some years before the agreed date. For most of the next 69 years there was an American presence at Sculthorpe, in fact, at the time of writing, the USAF are still using it for training on an occasional basis.