

THOSE WERE THE DAYS



by Godfrey Mangion

One Saturday morning in the early 1950's I accompanied my father to an airshow at the former RAF Station Takali; I was eleven years old then. I can still recall the huge traffic jam which forced us to abandon the motionless bus and continue our journey on foot through the fields to arrive at the airfield in Ta' Qali.

It must have been a wonderful airshow as from then on I was hooked on aviation as my main hobby. From that day onwards I helped my family with work around the house so that over the weekend I could earn some pocket

money which was then spent on the monthly magazine 'Air Pictorial' as well as the then very popular 'Airfix' model kits which I started to collect, build and paint in earnest.

I delighted in painting the models, not as suggested by the instruction sheet provided, but by following research carried out on my own on different colour schemes.

I next discovered how convenient it was to photograph aircraft movements around Luqa airfield. Therefore my next purchase was to be a photographic camera which was a Kodak Brownie.

Later on, when I had more money on hand, I upgraded to two Pentax SLRs, one for colour slides and the other for black and white photography. These I always carried with me on my very frequent visits to Luqa, which at that time was an aircraft spotter's paradise. Three RAF Squadrons were based there and numerous other military types frequently visited the airfield, mainly flying with the RAF or Nato countries. Some of the shots I took in the good old Luqa days are printed here for all to see.

During 1971 a society of aviation aficionados came into being, this was then

Top: Meteors TT.20 and T.7 landing in formation at Luqa on 13 February 1968. The TT.20 was WM159-040 and T.7 was WL350-044

Right: C-45 Expediter from the US Navy base of Sigonella, Sicily. It was a regular visitor to Luqa. Date 27 June 1968



known as the 'Malta Aircraft Enthusiasts', of which I became a founder member. There has been a slight change of name since those early days and today it is known as the 'Malta Aviation Society'. The main function of the society today is the organisation of the Malta International Airshow.



Right: Lockheed Sea Star underside view. Note deployed air brakes and the clean condition of the aircraft. It visited Luqa on 7 May 1967



Left: United States Navy Lockheed C-121 Warning Star made a rare stop at Luqa on 1 May 1968. Nicknamed 'Hazel' on the nose it carried identity 137892/6-MH

Vulcans were frequent visitors in the 1970s. This is XM655 at rest at 'Old Sunspot' on 14 November 1971



Hunter T.7 XL601 on short finals to runway 06 at Luqa on 2 November 1967



Below: Sea Vixen FAW2 as it crosses the public road close to Runway at Luqa. It is XJ584, 246 from HMS Victorious. about to land at Luqa on 25 May 1967

Bottom: Canberra PR9 XH134/A of No. 39 Squadron being towed to Safi maintenance base on 23 October 1967. To avoid frowns from the MP's across the road, I snapped the picture from inside the car!

