ISLA GRANDE

During a holiday to visit family in Puerto Rico during December 1979 and January 1980, **Philip Pain** explored Isla Grande Airport, a former US Navy base that boasted some surprise residents

As unexpected as the presence of Sunderland V N158J/VH-BRF was the distinctive 'Brummie' accent of the engineer working on it! Look out for more on this aircraft next month.

The two Short flying boats being overhauled in a hangar, in preparation for flights to the UK, came as a surprise. Sandringham IV N158C/VH-BRC was down to bare metal; it is now on display at Solent Sky in Southampton.

Antilles Air Boats Grumman G-73 Mallard N7338 heads down its slipway on departure. Built in 1948, this machine had many notable owners including Universal Pictures, Esso and Japan Domestic Airlines. It was re-registered for turboprop conversion in 1985 but never completed, and is still stored in Texas as a spares source.

LEFT: Built in 1942 as BuNo 0206 for the US Navy, then FP500 with the Fleet Air Arm before being transferred to Bolivia, G-21A Goose N5548A was part of the Antilles Air Boats fleet. It suffered a fatal accident in 1999 with Tropic Bird Airways, and today is undergoing restoration in Florida to its original US Navy standard.

RIGHT: Cessna U-3A 58-2109 was assigned to the Virgin Islands National Guard as its sole air asset.

LEFT: Beech D18S HI-211 of Línea Aérea Nacional in the Dominican Republic had been retired in 1978. It was originally N5883C with the Grimes Flying Laboratory, but its latter-day fate is unknown.

Mallard N83781 arriving on a scheduled Antilles Air Boats service. The 1946-vintage machine had various registrations, and made a ferry flight through the UK in 1977. It crashed in 1986 at Saint Croix and was sold for parts.

Have you got photos to contribute to Personal Album? If so, e-mail the editor at ben.dunnell@keypublishing.com