

Building the Heathrow of the Seventies

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Responsibility for the construction of the transit sheds lies with the airlines who will be the tenants (on leases of 50 years). The total area of these will be two million sq ft under the first stage of development. For its part, BAA is responsible for building the aprons, taxiways, agents' building, operations building and the tunnel which will connect the cargo area with the Central Area. This tunnel, 2,800ft long (of which 2,000ft will be shield-driven tunnelling), will have a single bore carrying one lane of traffic in each direction, total roadway width being 24ft and height 16ft 6in, with a capacity of 500 vehicles an hour. One of the chief factors necessitating this tunnel connection with the Central Area is the proportion of cargo carried in passenger aircraft—about 60 per cent at present and not likely to fall below 30 per cent in the foreseeable future. The tunnel is on the airside and is in bond. Of the total £23 million cost of the cargo terminal, BAA will spend £8-£9 million, BEA and BOAC about £10 million and the other airlines about £4 million.

The theoretical capacity of the cargo terminal will be in the

region of one million short tons a year, allowing for use of the expansion areas. Its population by 1970 will be about 5,000 employees, most of them airline personnel. Some preliminary talks have been held with British Rail on the pros and cons of establishing a freight liner train depot in the vicinity of the terminal; however, it may prove impracticable to incorporate this with the actual transit sheds, and if the freight has to be transported by road at all, it may be as efficient to transport it to another liner train terminal in the London area.

The opening of the cargo terminal will be eagerly awaited by all concerned. The recent report by the working party of the Economic Development Committee for the Movement of Exports said: "Heathrow has for some years been suffering from freight-handling facilities which are quite inadequate for the volume of traffic; a striking result of this is the piecemeal development which has been forced on BEA in the Central Area. . . . [Heathrow's] position for both import-export traffic and entrepôt trade has been in growing peril and the building of a comprehensive cargo terminal on the south-west of the airport is urgently necessary. This terminal is now expected to be completed by the end of 1968; it is of national importance that this programme is met and that it becomes fully operational as soon as possible thereafter."

THE TOP TWO DOZEN—1966

THE table below lists the world's leading airports in order according to the number of transport aircraft movements (take-offs and landings counted as two) recorded in 1966, with the total and general aviation movements, average movement rates per hour and passengers handled. Ranking order for other than transport movements is given in parentheses. Where no ranking number is given, either the figures are the totals for a city's two airports (those of Paris and Rome), or the ranking is relatively low and cannot be given accurately. Although some have very high total movements figures, US airports which are used primarily by sport and business (general aviation) aircraft are not included. Examples of these busier US general aviation airports are Opa Locka, Florida, with 546,985 movements, only one of which was by a transport aircraft (an average of 64 movements an hour); Van Nuys, Calif (534,331 movements at 61 an hour); and Long Beach, Calif (478,092 at 55). Very high movement rates are possible at airports used for flying training and general aviation in VFR conditions, but the average for such primarily air transport airports as Chicago O'Hare, JFK New York, Miami and Denver is high usually because multiple runways are in use, because they operate primarily to VFR, and because there are no noise restrictions. But a price has to be paid in the acceptance of heavy peak-period delays, both in the air and on the ground, which are extremely costly for the airlines. Only last month a senior executive of Eastern Airlines said that the economics of jet aircraft are "being eroded by a mounting burden of costs caused by air and ground congestion." He called for a three-point programme to meet the problem—including the construction of separate airports for general aviation, the development of STOL aircraft and a revision of fares to reflect the higher per-mile costs for the short-haul passenger. Heathrow London's ranking of 53rd in terms of total aircraft movements, making it the busiest major airport outside America, shows the extent of the pressure on US airports. Of the 52 leaders, at least 20 are also among the leaders in air transport movement rates.

	Aircraft movements		Passengers handled (×1,000)	General aviation movements	Aircraft movements per hour	
	Air transport	Total			Total	General aviation
1 Chicago O'Hare ...	478,644	562,975 (1)	23,590 (1)	78,124	64	9
2 Kennedy NY ...	390,898	438,670 (5)	17,086 (2)	45,514	50	5
3 Los Angeles ...	321,182	415,433 (8)	15,251 (3)	83,011	47	9
4 San Francisco ...	226,867	291,069 (28)	10,145 (5)	56,393†	33	—
5 Atlanta Mun ...	223,074	306,991 (24)	9,441 (6)	80,535	35	9
6 Washington Nat ...	216,629	312,835 (22)	7,920 (7)	90,536	36	10
7 Heathrow London ...	209,870	224,086 (53)	11,963 (4)	13,759	26	2
8 Dallas Love ...	190,614	319,575 (18)	7,076 (9)	124,491	36	14
9 Miami ...	186,177	424,407 (6)	7,108 (8)	232,454	48	27
10 Newark NJ ...	183,383	239,639 (47)	5,144 (12)	53,490†	28	—
11 La Guardia NY ...	167,028	302,234 (25)	6,274 (10)	133,883	35	15
12 Boston ...	158,548	251,804 (39)	6,131 (11)	76,487†	29	—
— Paris* ...	153,198	191,023	7,571	24,947	—	—
13 Philadelphia ...	138,358	231,251 (50)	—	85,376†	26	—
14 Detroit Wayne ...	135,221	251,411 (40)	—	81,552†	29	—
15 Frankfurt ...	133,985	147,297	5,474	13,312	17	2
16 Cleveland Hopkins ...	124,973	275,225 (33)	—	90,691	32	10
17 Pittsburgh Gtr ...	120,060	201,670 (68)	—	41,999†	23	—
18 St Louis ...	114,890	328,470 (17)	—	191,703	37	22
19 Denver ...	106,821	420,925 (7)	—	310,924	48	35
— Rome* ...	106,326	139,692	4,298	17,160	—	—
20 Copenhagen ...	105,703	121,067	3,786	14,669	14	2
21 Kansas City Mun ...	98,819	232,314 (49)	—	122,807†	27	—
22 Honolulu ...	94,096	287,199 (30)	—	63,335	33	7
23 Montreal ...	92,273	202,100 (67)	—	32,086†	23	—
24 Houston ...	90,679	259,412 (35)	—	146,924†	30	—

This table, as explained above, lists the world's busiest airports by air transport movements in 1966; among them Heathrow London ranks as seventh. Including the general purpose airports, more than 23, all in the USA, had total movement rates per hour in excess of 35. The highest rates were for Chicago O'Hare and Opa Locka, Florida, a general aviation airport, each of which recorded an hourly average of 64 movements

Sources: Federal Aviation Administration; Service Statistique de l'Aéroport de Paris; British Airports Authority.
* Paris = Orly + Le Bourget; Rome = Fiumicino + Ciampino. † Itinerant movements only.