LONDON TRANSPORT SCRAPBOOK FOR 1977

FLY THE TUBE

The Heathrow extension of the Piccadilly Line was formally opened by Her Majesty The Queen at 12.13pm on Friday 16th December 1977. **Jonathan Roberts** tells the history of this tube link and of the unfulfilled proposals for other rail-connected airports around London.

Press coverage at the time of the Heathrow Central opening mentioned frequently that a tube link to the airport was first mooted 30 years ago. This is wrong. Ideas for a major civil airport at Heathrow existed before the war, and the need for high-quality access between central London and its airports was appreciated fully in that era.

In fact, except for the war, Fairlop would have been the world's second major international airport to be linked to a major capital city by an Underground railway, in 1942. The honour of being the first went not to Heathrow in 1977 but to Berlin Templehof in 1927: Heathrow differs only in that it was built for a later generation of larger aeroplanes.

At first, many UK local authorities were enthusiastic about owning their own airport, although these rarely covered their full costs. But the London and Middlesex County Councils restrained their civic pride, since any worthwhile municipal airport in London would assume national status and commensurate costs. They preferred central government to finance London's airport development, which in the event was what generally occurred.

From the 1920s onwards, it was government policy to establish a ring of airports round London. At least one airport, it was hoped, would be as convenient as possible for central London. Four types of location were considered in a 1930 survey: inner London parks; elevated sites, with catapult launching (!), built over railway termini or goods yards; an inner London airport using slum clearance powers; or failing these, open space, including existing airfields, as close as possible to the built-up area: "such aerodromes must be connected by express train or tube services to the City and West End". For what would now seem obvious reasons, the fourth category prevailed.

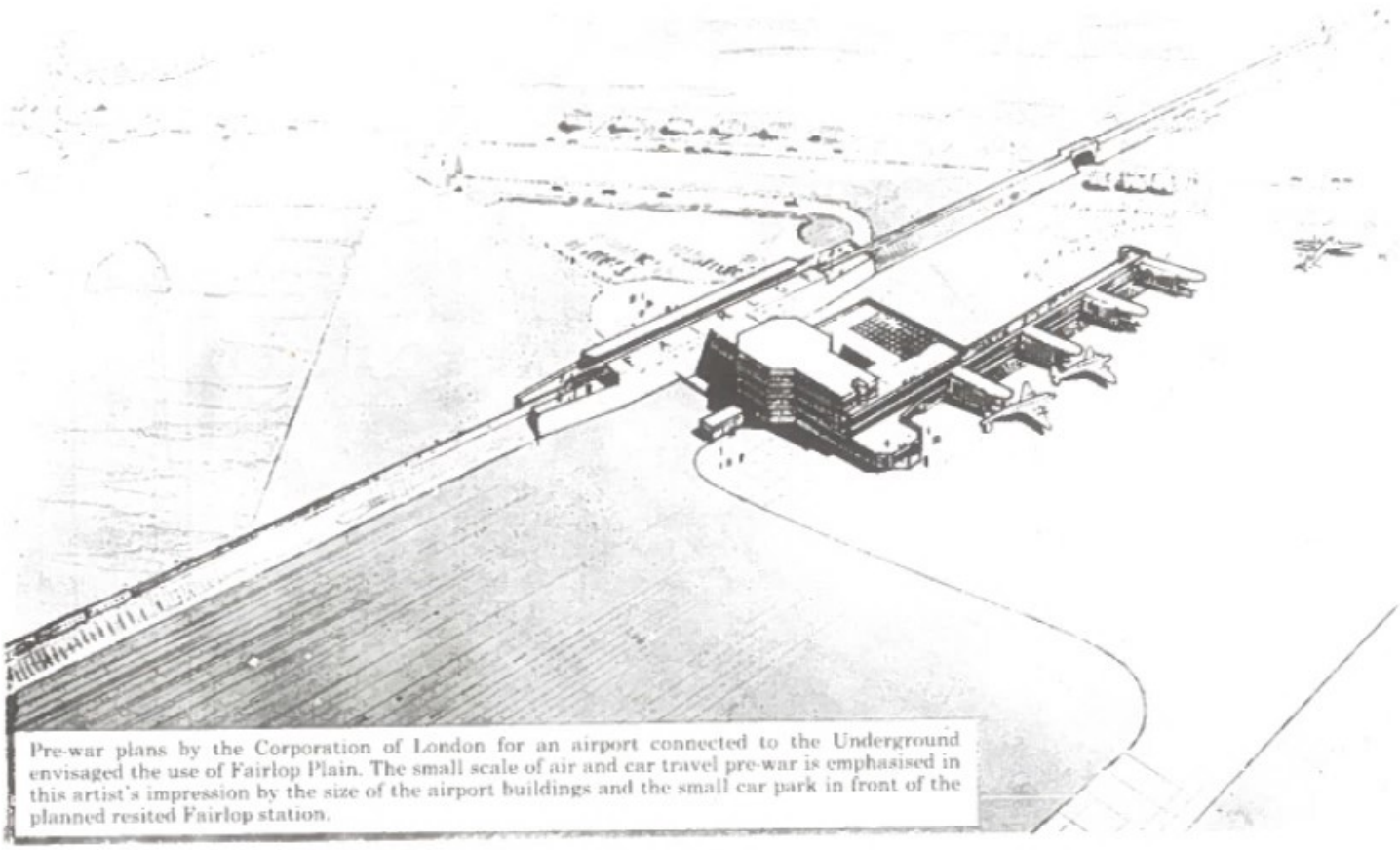
The London County Council had no suitable 'green field' site within its boundaries. Existing civil aerodromes at Croydon, Heston (Hounslow), Hanworth Park (Feltham) and Stag Lane (Kingsbury) were not rail-connected, although this was considered. On 20th April 1930, the Secretary of State for Air minuted: "Is an Underground from Waterloo to Croydon an impossibility? I should have thought it would have paid quite apart from the aerodrome". An elevated railway (precursor of monorail links to airports?) was also mooted. His civil servants preferred development of existing railways, such as the SR electric service from Victoria to Croydon. Possible new locations included Barking and Dagenham, the latter on the District Railway extension to Upminster.

Lack of funds and limited passenger traffic—aircraft could only carry 16 passengers at the most at this stage—were major hindrances to the development of new London airports and associated rail links at this time. Airline coaches connecting with flights were a better match for the passenger traffic.

During the 1930s, several factors dominated London airport planning: the rapid expansion of the built-up area which from an aviation viewpoint required safeguarding of all suitable airport sites; improvements to road and rail communications; aeroplane development requiring longer and stronger runways; and the rapid growth of air travel. London might need four airports by the 1950s.

Seven London airports were short-listed: the existing aerodromes at Croydon, Gatwick and Heston, plus new sites at Aldenham, Fairlop, Lullingstone and a north London scheme. However Aldenham and the north London scheme had to be discarded because of unsuitable topography. The principal sites reviewed for a west London airport were Heston and the Great West Aerodrome (also called Heathrow), the latter being favoured by Middlesex County Council. During the short-listing process, it was noted that "from the point of view of the travelling public, the time taken to reach the airport rather than its distance from the town centre is the criterion of accessibility".

The Air Ministry noted that the area around Heathrow was "so level and free from obstructions that no better site within 20 miles of Charing Cross is known". "In all respects except rail access, the Great West Aerodrome is as good as, if not better than Heston and possibly cheaper. The great advantage of Heston over other airports lay with the possibility of connecting it with Paddington by an 18/20 minute rail service", at a cost of £0.2m. Plans already existed for the GWR spur in March 1936. Road access, via the A4, was comparable for Heston and Heathrow, being 45/50 minutes from Hyde Park Corner. Possible main line rail access to Heathrow was noted: via the GWR main line; via the GWR Staines–West Drayton branch; and via the SR Windsor and Reading lines. One other disadvantage with Heathrow was that Faireys owned it as a testing aerodrome for their Hayes aircraft factory which was engaged on important re-armament work. The Air Ministry finally purchased Heston Airport in 1937.



Pre-war plans by the Corporation of London for an airport connected to the Underground envisaged the use of Fairlop Plain. The small scale of air and car travel pre-war is emphasised in this artist's impression by the size of the airport buildings and the small car park in front of the planned resited Fairlop station.

An LPTB link from Hounslow West to Heathrow was first tabled in 1938, when Middlesex County Council again campaigned for the development of Heathrow. GWR and SR access was also mentioned. But the Air Ministry was now committed to Heston: a new Trans-Atlantic civil aeroplane would be flying in 1941, and Heston could be ready for it, albeit on a makeshift basis, whereas Heathrow could not. So Heston was to be London's first 'super-standard' airport with 2000-yard runways, covering one square mile, to be completed by 1943 at a cost of £2.7m.

In one respect the Heston scheme was now no better than Heathrow: rail access would no longer be provided. The GWR now estimated the journey time from Paddington to Heston as 30/32 minutes, while by 1941, with the intended opening of the Cromwell Road extension, Hyde Park Corner would be only 35 minutes from Heston. The expense of rail access could not justify the few minutes' saving.

The official but disputed policy for Croydon Airport was that once two London 'super-standard' airports (Heston and Fairlop) existed in 1943, Croydon would be closed for enlargement to 'standard' size. A rail link was ruled out as it would cost £0.5m. Suggestions for new airports elsewhere in south London, especially if rail-connected, were therefore received gratefully by the Air Ministry. Gatwick Aerodrome (along with Gravesend) was already a bad weather alternative for Heston and Croydon flights, but the prevailing SR attitude was that it "could not contemplate any interference with the service between London and Brighton for the sake of improving facilities at Gatwick".

Since 1935, there had been the notion of an airport at Lullingstone, on the North Downs above Swanley. In 1937 SR (which was electrifying the railway through Swanley) and Imperial Airways discussed the merits of a 'standard' airport for continental passengers, costing £0.8m, linked by three or four trains an hour to the new Imperial Airways terminal at Victoria in a typical journey time of 36 minutes, or 26 minutes non-stop; a City service could also be operated. SR said "a much better service could be provided at Swanley than could ever be provided at Gatwick", with coaches detached from London trains at Swanley Junction, to run along a new branch to the airport. The LPTB thought of extending the Bakerloo Line, via Camberwell, into south-east London suburbs and had in mind the possibility of taking it to Lullingstone. However, an extension towards Lewisham and Dartford gained greater acceptance.

In early 1938 SR decided it could not pay for the airport itself, although it was prepared to construct the railway link (additional cost £0.2m) from its own funds. A station was built near Lullingstone by 1939 to cater for local housing development, at the junction of the Maidstone and proposed airport lines, although it never opened to traffic. The Air Ministry took Lullingstone on board and concluded in 1939 that a two-square-mile 'super-standard' airport could be installed, although construction would not begin until the mid-1940s. Lullingstone might, with Heston and Fairlop, have permitted total closure of Croydon Airport, becoming in the process the 'Third London Airport'!

Unlike the London and Middlesex County Councils, the City of London Corporation was willing to incur the costs of developing a London Airport: "we are convinced that in the future the advantageous position hitherto occupied by the City of London in relation to World Trade and Commerce cannot fail to be enhanced by the existence of an Airport which will be within a journey time of less than half-an-hour by Tube".

Ideas in the City of a rafted aerodrome over the River Thames had been diverted gradually towards land at Fairlop Plain, extending eastwards from the LNER Hainault Loop line. After a public inquiry in 1935, planning proceeded for a 'City of London' Airport at Fairlop, to open in 1939. LNER rail access had been regarded as adequate, and the subsequent announcement of the Central Line eastern extension was a bonus. In November 1936 the LPTB advised the City that Barkingside Station would be 37 minutes from Marble Arch and 27 from Bank. However the necessary 1½ square miles of land were only purchased in 1938, by which time it was hoped to open a modest 'super-standard' airport in 1942, at a cost of £1m, to be operated jointly with Heston for air traffic and revenue purposes.

Many airport layouts were contemplated for Fairlop; the final scheme required the closure of the existing Fairlop LNER station, to be replaced by a new station about 300 yards to the south, at an additional cost of £0.1m. At first the LPTB were willing to contribute towards the new station, in scale with their proposed financial outlay at Fairlop LNER, but by 1939 this was to be minimal: the LPTB therefore proposed to make no financial contribution. Construction of Fairlop Airport was to begin in 1940.

Of the four major London civil airports

existing, authorised or firmly planned in 1939, at Heston, Croydon, Lullingstone and Fairlop, none exists today. Wartime events utterly wrecked pre-war intentions. All London's civil airport schemes were shelved by November 1939, although the RAF later installed military airfields at Heston and Fairlop. The immediate war crisis ended in July 1941 and many post-war planning committees were established in due course. Technical design of aircraft accelerated rapidly: 3000-yard runways became standard, with 5000 yards the next objective.

Post-war aviation had to cater for not only continental and UK domestic flights, but also international and trans-ocean land planes which were supplanting flying boats. On 7th April 1943 the Air Ministry rejected Heston Airport, as inadequate for post-war needs, and plumped for the natural alternative, Heathrow. With the proximity of Heathrow and Heston, this implied the eventual closure of Heston. Heathrow was ideal for the Trans-Atlantic run, and was designated the main UK international airport.

The War Cabinet finally approved the first stages of a much amended Heathrow scheme on 6th April 1944, initially for Air Transport Command. Faireys Ltd were moved in the first instance to Heston, where alternative facilities were provided. The Air Ministry decided on 23rd April 1945 to enlarge Heathrow to the fullest extent practicable: with three runways it could handle all London air traffic at least until the mid-1950s. Heathrow opened for civil flights on 31st May 1946. The central passenger buildings, which had been in use since 17th April 1955, were formally opened by HM The Queen on 16th December 1955. At present Heathrow occupies about 4¼ square miles.

The search for subsidiary 'short-haul' passenger airports continued during wartime: sites reviewed included Croydon, Fairlop, Gatwick, Hatfield, Lullingstone and Matching. Lullingstone was now a non-starter, because of inadequate dimensions, costs and air navigation requirements; Croydon failed on the first two points. Fairlop was considered more accessible than Gatwick, Hatfield or Matching, and was favoured for eventual development in the 1950s. Croydon and Fairlop, together with airports at Bovingdon and Hurn, were to be used temporarily while Heathrow was developed for full civil use. In the event, RAF Northolt was used extensively, and Fairlop remained in abeyance.

The Air Ministry thought it a "happy coincidence that Heathrow fits so well" into post-war planning, especially following meetings in August and November 1943 with Professor Abercrombie, who was drafting the 1944 Greater London Plan. His scheme was to connect the airport to the proposed nearby orbital and radial motorways, and to the GWR and SR via a north-south loop line. Heathrow could also "be connected to the Underground system by an extension from West Hounslow, the present terminus". At that time the passenger terminal was to be where Terminal 4 is now proposed, south-west of Hatton Cross.

In parallel with the Air Ministry, the Ministry of War Transport (MWT) took on board railway schemes proposed for Heathrow. These were generally regarded as supplementary to the basic (!) railway programmes for repair of wartime damage and deterioration, completion of the 1935-40 New Works Programme, works related to Greater London replanning, and the Railway (London Plan) Committee schemes.

Two inter-related reports were prepared under the aegis of the Standing Joint Committee of London Transport and the main line railways. The first (5th September 1946) discussed the transport needs of a proposed World Fair 1951 to be staged at Osterley Park. The report concluded that two express cross-London railways (tube Route A from Liverpool Street, via Trafalgar Square or paralleling the Central Line; plus main line Route B from Kings Cross via Victoria and Cromwell Curve) would be required for the World Fair. A local station could also be provided on the Piccadilly Line at Syon Lane. The railways were designed for post-exhibition needs: "that part of Route B which lies between Cromwell Curve and Osterley could be used as the major part of the proposed direct tube between London Airport and the Airways Terminal in West Central London, assuming that Cromwell Curve is selected as the site for the terminal".

The second report (17th October 1946) reviewed access to Heathrow Airport. The need for fast and frequent rail access with a journey time of 15-20 minutes made it impracticable to use existing tracks for air passengers. After looking at a range of options (from "Pullman standard" tube carriages to main line saloon stock with buffet facilities; a choice of routes via Feltham, Osterley or Southall; and a central London terminal at either Earl's Court, Cromwell Curve, Olympia, Paddington or Marble Arch), the report

Hatton Cross bus station was closed for a time on 16th December while crowds gathered for the arrival of Her Majesty The Queen at the start of her short journey to Heathrow Central to perform the opening ceremony.

OPENING OF THE PICCADILLY LINE TO HEATHROW CENTRAL

FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER

Because of the opening ceremony, this bus station will be closed from about 09 00 until 11 30.

Between these times, Buses 90B and 285 towards Feltham will stop on the other side of the roundabout in the Eastern Perimeter Road (Eastchurch Road).

favoured Cromwell Curve and Route B. It would provide a "fast non-stop shuttle service between the Airport and central London, with specially designed rolling stock affording a high standard of comfort and amenity".

With extra works at terminals, the line could accommodate Post Office traffic. The cost of the passenger works would be about £12m, plus another £1m for main line rolling stock. The Cromwell Curve terminal required rearrangement of the District/Circle tracks between Earl's Court and South Kensington at an extra cost of £2m. Cromwell Curve had in fact been envisaged by the LPTB as an air terminal as long ago as 1937, when the General Manager (Railways) commented: "Perfection of the helicopter will enable roof-top landing to give direct air-exchange from continental and imperial routes at many of the Board's in-town stations. Through bookings may be carried at Mansion House for Singapore. 'No. 2 platform, Sir, and change at Gloucester Road for Cromwell Curve Airport.'"

The MWT had also enquired about the cost of extending the Underground to Heathrow. The report envisaged a 3¼-mile line, principally for airport staff and sightseers, with new stations at Hounslow West (resited) and Cranford, and additional four-tracking west of Northfields. 2¾ miles of the extension would be in tunnel. The cost excluding rolling stock would be £4m (Piccadilly Line) or £5.75m (District Line). The report said "any extension of the Board's railway ... would not be justified commercially even if all the Airport workers used the line". This however assumed that Route B was also built.

The MWT thought it required "priority on the Battle of the Atlantic scale" to achieve even a proportion of the railways' mammoth new works programmes in straitened post-war circumstances. If built at all, Route B would have to suffice for the World Fair and the main Heathrow access, plus a District Line extension (£0.75m extra for rolling stock) from Hounslow West.

A Passenger Handling Committee reported in 1948 to the new Ministry of Civil Aviation that "all passenger handling should be centred eventually on the airport, which should be treated by the airline operators as the start and finish of an air journey". However collection points—"Air Stations"—should "be sited at convenient points throughout the London area". The LPTB had commented in evidence that, with scattered airports and London air terminals, "the only practical solution to the problem ... is by the provision of special express road services". The LPTB already operated the BEA coach fleet and presumed it might cater for other airlines in due course.

A December 1948 review of the Passenger Handling study concluded that diversity of London air terminals was unavoidable, as also was some pre-booking of passengers at these terminals. This effectively interred Route B in its original form. However the railways' London Plan Working Party report of 1948/49 favoured tube lines approximating to Routes A and B, for urban traffic requirements: these were referred to as Routes C and D. The report commented that one possible western outlet for Route D (from north-east London via Liverpool Street, Trafalgar Square and Victoria) might cater for "the requirements of workers and sightseers at London Airport". The British Transport Commission investment programme 1948–52 as submitted made provision for a start on Routes C and D in 1951. Actual investment was restricted and it became clear that funds would not be available for Route D, which was discarded by 1955. Certain Route D features were incorporated in a revised and greatly truncated Route C, which was finally authorised in 1962 as the Victoria Line.

The establishment of express coach services meant that any railway to Heathrow was an unnecessary luxury for the time being, especially with the post-war road improvements which culminated for Heathrow with the opening of the M4 spur in 1964. The Cromwell Curve air terminal went ahead since it was well sited for the A4/M4 and any eventual Underground link to Heathrow. Work on the terminal began in 1955, including necessary revision of the District/Circle tracks. It opened on 6th October 1957, served by the LT-operated BEA coach fleet, and was formally opened as the West London Air Terminal by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on 6th November 1963. Both LT and the London County Council hoped other airlines would move eventually into the terminal, so generating sufficient traffic for a direct Underground link into the terminal and possibly into the airport. However this was not to be: BOAC for example remained at the ex-Imperial Airways terminal at Victoria.

Indeed Victoria was emerging as an air transport mecca. The first step in this process was when, around 1950, Gatwick supplanted Fairlop as the favoured 'short-haul' airport, with its opportunities for

Until the opening of Heathrow Central, posters at Hounslow West advised passengers to alight at that station and travel to the airport by A1 bus. Mention of the A1 was also made on Piccadilly Line car diagrams.

Withdrawal of A1 Express Bus

On 16 December, H.M. The Queen opens the Underground extension to Heathrow Airport.

After that day, A1 Express Bus will be withdrawn. Bus 82 will continue to run.

further expansion unhindered by the built-up area and the Green Belt, and its acceptable if less-than-perfect rail link to Victoria. Gatwick also provided a Southern England airport, which matched the development in the 1950s and 1960s of London and the South-East as a single regional economy. In effect government policy once more was to establish a ring of London airports: the distance scale was merely factored up, with Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, and Bletchley or the Isle of Sheppey being Airports 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Many factors coalesced in the 1960s to produce a major review of surface transport links to London's airports: regional airport policy; the need for connections between the various airports; the desire of the British Airports Authority (BAA) to relieve pressure at Heathrow by establishing extensive check-in facilities in central London; the possibility of enlarging such facilities to produce one central London air terminal for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted; the likely trends in air travel over the subsequent 15 to 20 years, including the possibility of a rail-based Channel Tunnel; the extent to which one central London terminal could cater for all international traffic—cross-channel and ocean liner boat trains, Channel Tunnel trains, and traffic to the various London airports; increasing congestion on the existing road access to Heathrow; the probable emergence of a strategic motorway network within London; and the possibility of using novel forms of transport such as monorails and busways.

The Transport Co-ordinating Council for London—acronym 'tickle'—delegated this task to its Interchanges Group. Numerous routes were assessed for the Heathrow to central London link: SR new railway, SR and WR existing railways, LT new railway (essentially Route B from Victoria), LT existing railway (Piccadilly Line), Safege and Alweg monorail proposals, and coach services using busways, new motorways or existing roads. Options were tested jointly as well: LT Piccadilly Line plus coaches, and SR existing railway plus the Piccadilly Line.

The SR existing railway scheme was favoured: it was reckoned to have the lowest long term capital cost (£23.2m) and the highest profitability. The LT Piccadilly Line extension ran a close second (£24.3m).

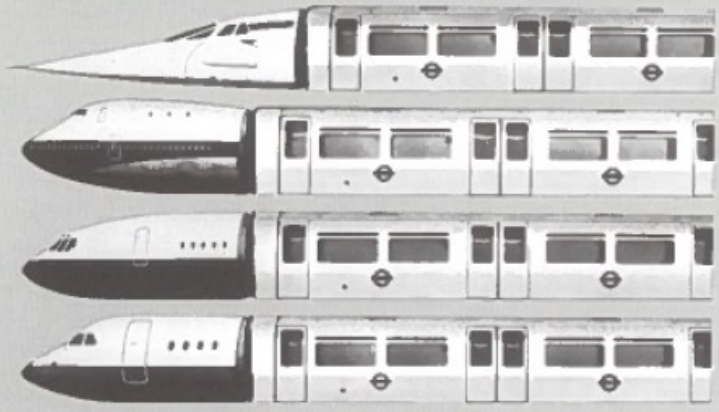
LT dissented from the conclusions. The Board thought the large investment needed at Victoria including major road works, plus the abandonment of one or more of the existing air terminals, would be impracticable. However the BAA was delighted since the LT scheme could have required £10.8m works at Heathrow, much chargeable to the BAA, and would have increased the pressure on Heathrow check-in facilities.

The LT viewpoint was upheld in a specific study of rail links with Heathrow Airport undertaken in 1969/70, which showed the Piccadilly Line extension plus existing coach services to be the best option in every probable situation. The different result was caused mainly by "changes in the study method", and "changes in the input elements such as costs": LT had costed and designed more completely than BR. The Piccadilly Line might connect at Kings Cross with the rail link to the Third London Airport. Although problems remained with the inability to guarantee a train seat for air travellers (especially in the outward PM peak) and with baggage capacity, the report was sufficiently convincing to warrant early action by the GLC and central government. Concurrently LT was involved in several property development projects along the Piccadilly Line, with the Heathrow extension in mind: stations favoured for schemes included Hammersmith, Hounslow East, Hounslow West and Hatton Cross.

Parliamentary powers had been acquired in 1967 for the Heathrow extension, and the GLC approved the scheme on 7th July 1970, welcoming the benefits to airport staff and the direct service to the main hotel districts of Gloucester Road and Bloomsbury. The line was expected to open throughout in 1974, at a total cost including rolling stock, but excluding capitalised interest and BAA works, of £14.9m.

BELOW Royal, spare and guests' trains (244, 110 and 248 respectively) in Northfields depot just before the opening of the Heathrow extension. *FACING PAGE* Advertising inserted in the national press (upper) and the travel trade press (lower). The television commercial lasted 30 seconds and the stills reproduced are from the second version, screened after the opening. A similar advert with slightly different wording appeared prior to 16th December.

Fly the Tube



From 15 00 today, December 16, the Underground brings Heathrow Airport to London's doorstep.

The new Heathrow Central Station connects the Piccadilly Line to all three Heathrow Terminals.

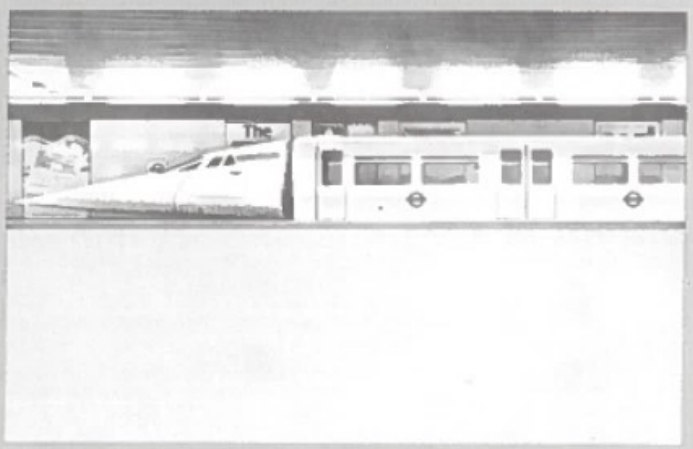
So you can get from the London Underground to your departure lounge, under cover all the way.

The journey from Piccadilly Circus to the heart of Heathrow will take 40 minutes and cost 80p.

With a frequent service, trains every 4 minutes in peak hours.

Take the Tube to Heathrow Airport.

It's the only way to fly.



New York is just up the line from Piccadilly Circus.

From 15 00 on December 16, the Underground brings Heathrow Airport to London's doorstep.

The new Heathrow Central station will connect the Piccadilly Line to all three Heathrow Terminals.

So passengers can get from the London Underground to their departure lounge.

Under cover all the way.

The journey from Piccadilly Circus to the heart of Heathrow will take 40 minutes and cost 80p.

With a frequent service, trains every 4 minutes in peak hours.

Free leaflets are available from London Transport Marketing, 55 Broadway, London SW1H 0BD.

Tell your customers to take the Tube to Heathrow Airport.

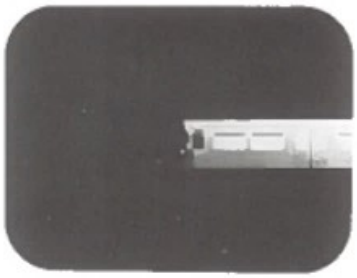
It's the only way to fly.

A lorry has shed its load on the M4, yet your journey from Hyde Park Corner to Heathrow has taken about 37 minutes . . . by Tube.

Now the Piccadilly Line extends into the Heart of Heathrow, you can safely predict your journey time.

Trains every four minutes in peak hours.

Moving walkways direct to your terminal building.



Eighty pence buys you the fast, reliable link between central London and Heathrow Airport.

Take The Tube. It's the only way to fly.

11.30am on 16th December and the royal train arrives at Heathrow Central for the opening ceremony.

Government gave the go-ahead on 6th November 1970, but refused to pay 75% capital grant in view of the project's expected profitability. The GLC confirmed its 25% grant for LT works, and LT prepared to borrow the other 75%. The GLC lobbied government to establish a better framework for public transport grant-aiding. This was partially successful and on 21st July 1972 the government agreed to pay a 25% grant. Shortly afterwards, LT reached agreement with the BAA over the Heathrow central area works. At that time, allowing for LT's share of these works, plus inflation and design changes, the Heathrow extension was estimated to cost £22.2m.

After construction started in April 1971 there were many delays, especially at Heathrow Central where extensive re-designing was necessary and labour disputes persisted. Such problems were encountered early on and by mid-1972 it had been decided to open Hatton Cross in advance of the through service to Heathrow Central. Hatton Cross was opened on 19th July 1975. The opening date for Heathrow Central was continually pushed back: latterly January 1978 was

The Queen, watched by LT Chairman Kenneth Robinson, passes through one of the exit barriers on her way to declare the station open.

mentioned. However a special effort was made to coincide with the date of HM The Queen's previous opening ceremony at Heathrow, and this was adhered to in spite of a dispute involving the escalator contractors, Otis. The ceremonial opening during midday on 16th December 1977 was followed by the public opening at 3pm the same day.

The estimated cost of the LT works at December 1976 prices was £29.8m. This excludes subsequent changes in costs, principally inflation, and also omits capitalised interest and the BAA share of works at Heathrow. There remains the financial risk of legal proceedings between LT and BAA about works at Heathrow Central where each party is unhappy about the other's contractual performance. The name of Heathrow Central station has also been in the wars. Following belated local representations in 1976, the London Transport Passengers Committee and the GLC Transport Committee wanted to incorporate the word 'Airport' in the name. However the expense of re-signing meant that 'Heathrow Central' prevailed, although LT agreed to give greater emphasis to the aeroplane motif in publicity.

Eighty-eight new trains (1973 stock) were ordered for the Piccadilly Line, effectively to replace much of the 1938 stock on the rest of the tube system and also to provide the latest standards of comfort on the airport service, including some room for passengers' luggage. The new trains and the extension to Hatton Cross were described in the *London Transport Scrapbook for 1975*.

The extension beyond Hatton Cross was built almost entirely in twin tube tunnels beneath the aircraft runways. The tracks combine in a crossover tunnel just east of Heathrow Central, and continue in overrun tunnels at the western end of the station, ready for extension to a 'Heathrow West' station if a new passenger terminal were built near Perry Oaks. The opportunity was taken to rebuild Heathrow Central bus station.

Heathrow Central station itself was built on the cut and cover principle, in the airport central area, as a large reinforced concrete box, 390 ft long, 75 ft wide and nearly 50 ft deep, with three levels below ground. Bottom level is the station island platform which has an orange/dark brown colour scheme. A 'Concorde tailplane' motif has been incorporated in the walls; this was designed by Tom Eckersley. The mezzanine level comprises staff accommodation, and above is the main ticket hall concourse. Two separate pairs of escalators provide direct access between the ticket hall and the platforms, and provision has been made in the structure for a lift, although this is not yet installed.

The ticket hall includes a computer-controlled 'journey planner' which illustrates Underground journeys from Heathrow and gives supplementary advice about the journey in English, French or German. A London Transport/British Rail/London Tourist Board enquiry office and a currency exchange office are provided in the general concourse. Extensive signing guides the passengers towards the appropriate Terminal buildings, although regrettably the BAA signing is inadequate when coming from the Terminals to the station. Generally however the station and the BAA subway system (including travolators) linking the ticket hall to the various Terminals incorporate the latest standards of decor, including attractive and intriguing murals in the BAA subways.

Piccadilly trains run generally every four or five minutes, with up to ten-minute intervals on Sundays. The signalling on the entire Heathrow extension is controlled from Earl's Court Regulating Room. At the time of opening the single fare from Piccadilly Circus was 80p, but this was due to rise to £1 in June 1978, incorporating a surcharge for travel to and from central London anticipated in the original financing for the project.

TOP 1973 stock train in No. 2 platform at Heathrow Central. *CENTRE* 1959 stock train in No. 1 platform. *BOTTOM* The station name signs incorporate the aircraft motif used on publicity and destination blinds. Note also the 'Concorde tailplane' design above the seating.

TOP LEFT The first passenger train from Heathrow was composed of cars 231-631-431-310-510-110, which earlier in the day had been the spare train provided in case the royal train developed a fault. It had been given the same thorough cleaning as the royal train. *TOP RIGHT* It had been hoped that only 1973 stock would reach Heathrow but this proved impossible and most 1959 stock west-end units remaining on the Piccadilly Line at the time of the opening were fitted with new blinds incorporating a Heathrow display. *CENTRE LEFT* The plaque in the station concourse unveiled by The Queen during the opening ceremony. *CENTRE RIGHT* Owing to a strike by the contractors Otis, the escalators were unfinished when Heathrow Central was opened. *BOTTOM LEFT* Heathrow Central station concourse looking towards the ticket barriers. *BOTTOM RIGHT* The computerised journey planner gives Underground travel information on a television-type screen.

ABOVE Apart from the press and television advertising campaign, 'Fly The Tube' publicity also appeared in the form of posters, including bus sides. *BELOW* A number of souvenirs were available for visitors to the newly-opened extension. By arrangement with London Transport, commemorative postal covers were sold during the first week by an enterprising local stamp dealer, while LT itself provided souvenirs in the form of 'Fly The Tube' T-shirts, sold on trains between Hatton Cross and Heathrow Central on the first day at £2 each.