HEATHROW: WHAT IF THE AIRPORT HAD NOT BEEN BUILT IN 1944-1945

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Luckily I saved the Heathrow piece....so here is the link:
http://www.larashots.com/appleyard/sf/heathrow_alt.htm

HEATHROW: WHAT IF THE AIRPORT HAD NOT BEEN BUILT IN 1944-1945
(fictional alternate history)
by Anthony Appleyard

For more about "alternate history" and its terminology, see
http://www.alternatehistory.com/. OTL (Our Time Line, i.e. real history): For the
real history of London Heathrow Airport see

It was built starting in 1944 on the site of a small country village called Heathrow,
which the Air Ministry took over in queryable circumstances.
(see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heathrow (hamlet))

ATL (Alternate Time Line): In this fictional version the Air Ministry's plan was
revealed and the airport construction was stopped, and Heathrow village was saved.

POD (Point Of Departure between the two time lines): In 1944 when the Air
Ministry's plan was revealed in ATL but not in OTL.

The weather is usually as in OTL. Deaths of public figures are as in OTL.

Clickable hyperlinks in the story usually point to explanations. Click here for notes.

SOURCES Information sources for real events (i.e. before the P.O.D., with all
thanks):- * Philip Sherwood, author of books about the history of Heathrow and
around. * Old 1:2500 scale 1934 and 1935 Ordnance Survey maps, reproduced at
about 15 inches = 1 mile, published by Alan Godfrey Maps, and text information
printed on their backs including entries from a old Middlesex public directory:-
real history) birth and death dates of Frederick Josiah Philp (1875-1953) and his son
Josiah Frederick William Philp (1908-1987).

CHARACTERS
Some of the characters are real, but their deeds after the point-of-departure time are
fictional:-

Politicians
Frederick Marquis, 1st Earl of Woolton, Minister of Food (Lord Woolton) Harold
Balfour, Air Ministry man

Heathrow residents
John Wild (lived in Croft House), farmer, there in 1944: ref. 2 books by Philip
Sherwood.
- His earthorse Captain (black or dark-coloured, probably a Shire): ref. ditto
F.W.Longhurst (had a market garden area on the east side of Cain's Lane opposite
the airfield)
William Howell (lived in Bathurst market garden house, east side of Heathrow
Road, a bit north of Heathrow Hall), market gardener
Frederick Philp (lived in Heathrow Hall, son of Josiah Philp), farmer, there some
time in or before 1935, born 1875, OTL died 1953 aged 77 or 78, ATL died in 1977
aged 102.
Irene (Frederick Philp's wife)
Josiah Frederick William Philp (a son of Frederick Philp), born 1908, died OTL
1988 aged 79 or 80.
Edgar Charles Basham, beer retailer at the Plough and Harrow pub, there some time in or before 1935: ref ditto (the directory misprinted his surname as Sasham.)

George Dance, market gardener, in a small market garden house on the south side of Heathrow Road nearly opposite the Plough and Harrow

Henry Curtis (lived in Heathrow Farm), market gardener

Sidney Whittington (lived in Perry Oaks), farmer, there some time in or before 1935: ref ditto (the directory misprinted the farm name as Percy Oaks.)

Children at Perry Oaks (known of via report that OTL they had to be taken to and from school by taxi because the airport site was in the way)

Others

Sir Charles Richard Fairey, founded and ran Fairey Aviation

Existence assumed and names invented for them, or completely fictional

Nicholas Curbishley, male nurse, first-aid and minor ailments man at the airport

Richard Dance, son of George Dance

John Harrison, a farm worker

Jack Hobson, innkeeper in the Plough and Harrow, came in after Edgar Charles Basham got old and retired

Peter Philp, son of Frederick Philp

Colin Shrigley, runs a small market garden in Heathrow

Henry Sutton (airliner pilot in 1947)

Suzette: horse, daughter of half-sister of Captain.

Paul Whittington, a son of Sidney Whittington, of Perry Oaks

Paul Whiton (air traffic control man at RAF Northolt in 1947)

David Wild, son of John Wild

Janet Wilkins, old widow living in a small house between Heathrow Farm and Perry Oaks in Heathrow

Kenneth Wilkins, her son, lives and works in Southampton

Lord Woolton's aide

Stephen's Barn, a name for one of Heathrow Hall's farm buildings.

Quarry Lane (fictional only), a lane going off the south side of the Bath Road, east of Heathrow Road, made (ATL only) after 1945.

NOTE: THIS DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS IS FICTION

It is an attempt to reconstruct one course of events possible if the plan had leaked. In reality the plan did not leak, and the inhabitants of Heathrow village did not return, and the big Heathrow Airport was built.

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END OF AN ERA

JANET WILKINS

LIFE GOES ON
THE PLOT IS REVEALED

It was the most violent row for a long time in Britain's Parliament. In 1943 and 1944 during World War II the Air Ministry had planned to take over Fairey Aviation's Great West Aerodrome on the west edge of London and the adjacent small quiet farming and market gardening village of Heathrow to build a big airfield with long runways. (The village started as a row of cottages along what then was an edge of Hounslow Heath in the south of Harmondsworth parish in Middlesex, thus the name; it is first found named (spelled La Hetherewe) in about 1410 AD; it may be the same place as a Southcote or Southcoterow which was first mentioned in 1265.) When they revealed the plan to Parliament and the Cabinet in 1944 the Air Ministry said that it was for long-range heavy bombers, or for long-range heavy transport, for the late stages of the war, although Fairey's needed their airfield to develop and assemble war aircraft. The Cabinet and the House of Commons had believed this statement. But in the run-up to D-Day Winston Churchill had better uses for the money and supplies used and the labour of 3000 men, and said so; and Heathrow's land is in the 5% best farm and market garden land in Britain (classed as Grade A agricultural land), and Frederick Marquis, 1st Earl of Woolton, Minister of Food, wanted to keep it producing food in that time of shortages and U-boat blockade. Middlesex County Council refused to hand over the sewage sludge works that were started in 1931 west of Perry Oaks farm in the west end of Heathrow, unless an adequate replacement was provided first, for obvious hygienic reasons, and after a major row the planned runway layout had to be changed. In summer 1944 most of Heathrow and its land (but not the sewage sludge works) was requisitioned and fenced off and the airport building contractors came, with orders to remove or flatten everything to ground level and build the runways, and work started. Perry Oaks farm at the west end was requisitioned but was not fenced off and its inhabitants were allowed to remain for the time being.

But soon after, someone in the Air Ministry "did not like what was going on" (the term "whistleblower" for such people was invented in 1970) and photographed several very sensitive relevant documents (photocopying was invented in 1959) which showed that the plan was only for a civil airport and nothing for war, and sent many prints of them to several national newspapers and the BBC, who felt that the public needed to know and published without asking the censor. The radio news was broadcast; the newspapers went on the newsstands and were bought and read; then the volcano erupted.

Harold Balfour (OTL from 1945 1st Baron Balfour of Inchrye), speaking for the Air Ministry, denied it and said that it was an already-cancelled old idea. (This was not the same man as in the 1917 Balfour Declaration.) Members of Parliament did not believe him, and angrily said so. Someone else in the Air Ministry and someone in the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) leaked more documents to the BBC. The Speaker went hoarse calling "Order, order" against the endless loud confused shouting and unparliamentary language. Hansard's shorthand man had to call for help. Members pointed out that that there were already plenty of heavy-bomber-and-transport length runways at RAF bases near London, and the row and din went on, and the shouts of "liar!" and equivalents, and the unprintable words, and the threats. Balfour fled from the House, leaving a scribbled note resigning from the Air Ministry and from his seat, and shut himself in at home in a state of shock. Funding for the Heathrow scheme was abruptly stopped. Unpaid contractors abandoned the work site and made their own arrangements to get their workmen and
tools and equipment home. Anything which was "Government property" was left on site, imagining that "the Government" would sort it out; but the Government in Westminster is only a head, and its body and limbs are its various subordinate bodies; and the Heathrow Airport site committee dissolved along with its funding, and its files were closed and archived. The bean-spiller went into hiding. The newspapers printed an official statement that the bean-spiller was due a long prison sentence for revealing secret information in a time of war; but many said that he was helping the war effort better (by uncovering the misuse of money and effort) than those in the Air Ministry who had been developing the scheme in secret. (Information about the D-Day plans did not leak.)

Frederick Marquis, 1st Earl of Woolton (he got a peerage in 1939 for services to industry), Minister of Food, realized that he had been right all along, and visited the Heathrow village evictees in their temporary housing in Air Ministry property near RAF Heston, and told them that they could return to Heathrow and restart their lives and get the land producing food again; and he told Fairey Aviation that they now had their airfield back to develop warplanes on. A bit east of Heathrow, the evacuated residents of Hatton Road (which runs straight from Harlington Corner to Hatton) also took this as authority to push barriers aside and return home.

RECONSTRUCTION

Lord Woolton got hold of some army tents and took them and the evictees and their property in Army lorries back to Heathrow, and went with them to see for himself what problems they had to face. He told them to put "Your Ref: Heathrow/3" on any letters that they sent to him about the matter. They went to Cranford, over the River Crane bridge, past Harlington Corner, and saw Heathrow again, and went along its main street (Heathrow Road), with its well-known sequence of houses on the north side: Heathrow Hall, Palmer's Farm, Perrott's Farm, the Plough and Harrow pub, Heathrow Farm, various small buildings, and Perry Oaks at the west end, and the fields around; and along Cain's Lane: Wild's farm with its two farmhouses (Croft House and Shrub End), then various small places and Fairey's airfield, then Cain's Farm nearly opposite Heathrow House. It was a mess. Many gaps had been bulldozed in hedges. Many trees had been pushed over. The contractors had started to scrape up land to dig gravel to make concrete. Two giant concrete mixers stood on land, destroying large areas of growing crops. Site huts were everywhere. Much standing corn had been trampled by vehicles or obliterated by builders' equipment. Much market garden crops had been taken by contractors' men. A large unremoved bulldozer had on its sides the name of a contractor based near Ipswich. A huge dragline stood near Pease Path like an alien monster. Fruit orchards had been pushed into heaps to dry for burning. Houses had been entered and stripped. Land had been scraped up along the three first runways, and trenches started to lay runway drains. One of the returnees found a big rubbish pit containing much of the sort of personal item that means plenty to its owner but not to others. Heathrow Hall in the northeast was a wreck, with all its windowframes and doors missing; the demolishers started there early because it was in the way of the planned east-to-west north runway. Heathrow Farm also was badly damaged, with some buildings already partly demolished, as it was in the way of the northwest-to-southeast runway (that deception that would have cost £350,000 at World War II period prices to build, as it was to make the airport look like an RAF base for planes with small crews, and no use for a civilian airport that would need plenty of space in the middle of the triangle of runways for a passenger terminal). They told him that they first needed their farm implements and work horses and carts and wagons back, and crop seeds, and
livestock, and then house furniture and kitchen equipment. "And my good kitchen
dresser!" said Mrs. Wild of Croft House by the north end of Cain's Lane, and others
said similar, after looking round the area.

Not all returned. One old market gardener had died in exile at Heston, in bed of a
heart attack, and he was buried at Harmondsworth, and his son inherited.

It was nearly midsummer, and they had been ordered out in May. After Woolton
left they settled in where they could, Army-type camping, or in site huts and
habitable houses. They took institutional-looking but usable necessary furniture and
bedding from the site huts; the contractors' men had decamped quickly. The
returnees had plenty of hand tools which they had brought away with them. Some
had gone to Heston on their market wagons and so had them and horses for them.
They had taken their stored food and clothes and bedding with them to Heston, and
had brought it back, so they had something to eat and keep them warm, but skill at
snaring and cleaning and cooking wild rabbits and other game of the area was soon
very useful. More than they had hoped for had been saved by Sidney Whittington
and his men of Perry Oaks farm, which was outside the "Occupied Zone" and had
not been taken over, and so they got it back, including much of their hay. But they
remembered for a long time their makeshift living conditions, fortunately in the
summer, and on top of much delayed farm work and crop salvage they had a race to
make houses habitable before the snow and cold came. During WWII (and for some
time after) the Government encouraged town and city people to have working
holidays on farms to help to grow food, rather at the seaside (and many seaside
resorts were fenced off for defence), and these people had to be found somewhere to
sleep, some in the contractor's hut on Heathrow Road between Perrott's Farm and
the Plough and Harrow. Of those sent to Heathrow, one was a builder, which was
useful. Heathrow Hall's doors and windows and missing items from Heathrow Farm
and elsewhere were found in site huts and re-installed, using cement taken from
contractor's stores. To make mortar to rebuild brick walls, there was plenty cement
in unremoved contractors' stores, but they eked out their supply of builders' sand by
pounding down old lime mortar left where old walls had been demolished. The
Wilds of Croft House and Shrub End east of the north end of Cain's Lane had
dismantled and stored their greenhouses and packing shed and planned to rebuild
them on replacement land that had been found for them near Colchester; but
unexpectedly they could return to Heathrow. On 6 June 1944 the D-Day landings in
Normandy happened, and soon after got in the newspapers and radio news, causing
more public and Parliamentary anger that the Air Ministry had been prepared to
impede such an important stroke against the Axis Powers by diverting much money
and 3000 men's labour to building a civil airport in wartime.

Much other damage had to be mended as and when they could, including (helped
by two electricians and two plumbers which the Ministry sent) remaking house
electrical and plumbing systems from a mass of cut-up pieces, including a load of
lead piping already on a lorry to be taken away, likely intended to end up as bullets.
They recovered kitchen ranges and stoves and fireplace grates and fire-irons from
site huts and a scrap dump, and some from lorries - the people had come back just in
time. Some items were damaged, and had to make another journey, down Cain's
Lane to the blacksmith at Hatton for repair and back. In a hut someone found a
cartoon drawing of airport builder origin saying "Before Heathrow there was The
Heath" and showing airport site security men chasing wolves and highwaymen and
Macbeth-type witches off a desolate wind-blasted heath; they kept it to show when
they could as an example of official untruth. In 1944 John Wild of Croft House,
with no hope of return then, wrote a poem (at the end of the web page at this link)
lamenting Heathrow village, but beyond hope he and the rest were allowed the
return after all.

They found far too much crop which had ripened and spoiled while they were
away. A big crop of lettuces across High Tree Lane from Fairey's had bolted to
flower: something could be salvaged from this: they let the plants set ripe seed, then threshed the plants for the seeds; with so many people "digging for victory" there was a good market for lettuce seeds. A crop of broad beans back of Perrott's Farm had ripened and been picked clean by contractors' men. Some of the village roads and lanes had been resurfaced in concrete, and sometimes also widened somewhat. A market gardener five years before had let a patch of celery bolt, and it became perennial, flowering and making good celery seed every year; the crop had been badly damaged by trampling and driving vehicles over it, but they salvaged some seed, and the plants' rootstocks would grow again next year. And the landgirls (correctly known as the Women's Land Army) had to be fed and found somewhere to sleep and keep personal property. The corrugated iron chapel near the Cain's Lane junction was still there, but had to be well cleaned out and re-consecrated after contractors' men had used it as a rest-and-toilet room.

John Wild, checking near his farm's east border east of the north end of Cain's Lane, saw some workmen still at work, away east at the old earthwork commonly known as Caesar's Camp. He investigated. They had hand tools only, not any sort of excavator, and at the time they were scratching about with trowels in the bottom of a trench that they had dug. 'Caesar's Camp' was an old earth-ramparted rectangular enclosure, for a long time known as Shakesbury Hills or Schapsbury Hill or variants. It had been several feet high from oldest memory, until Harmondsworth parish's common lands were enclosed in 1819; after that, the area was changed from common grazing to farmland and the ramparts were fairly quickly ploughed out. They explained that they were archaeologists. "This site's from about 500 BC, that's early Iron Age, not Roman," one of them said, "Circular hut sites, and in the middle another sort of building. The airport contractors were snapping at our heels to finish quick, but the cancellation's given us more time." John asked them to separate topsoil from brickearth subsoil from gravel in any bulk digging that they had to do. He went back to work. Over time the archaeologists found fifteen hut sites and what may have been a temple there, and the usual household rubbish and farm animal bones, and finished, and left and wrote up, and the area could be ploughed again. One of them took away more than specimens, and in Rickmansworth a back garden path got a new surfacing of Heathrow gravel. Likely also they were hoping that the airport plan would restart after the war, to give them a chance to dig the house sites in the old part of the village.

In one of the giant concrete mixer compounds they found several big tanks of diesel. Frederick Philp of Heathrow Hall hot-wired and started the bulldozer, and started using it to put scraped-up gravel and brickearth back in its natural place, and topsoil on top, filling runway drain trenches and putting topsoil back in runway course scrapings; he got used fairly quickly to its army-tank-like steering with two speed/reverse handles, one for each track. Perry Oaks's children named it Smaug after a dragon in a storybook that they had, and the name stuck and the name's use spread. Recovering topsoil that had been used to fill holes left by old small local diggings for brickearth and gravel would have to wait until dry summer made the water table much lower. One of his first jobs with it was to push back upright some lengths of hedge that had been grubbed out in the last few days; they cut off much of the top growth to reduce water loss while the roots re-rooted, and the hedge lived, and the top grew up again over time. He found how to start and drive the dragline, as long as the fuel then in its tank lasted, and with it repaired some of the damaged land, and recovered topsoil which had been used to fill Shepherd's Pool by the north end of Tithe Barn Lane. Heathrow Farm's phone alone worked, rerouted to a site hut which had been the site head office. Heathrow Road, running east from Perry Oaks, ran diagonally into the site perimeter wire, but the plain barbed wire fence and locked site security gate were no Western Front and they cut through easily.

They found a big heap of bombsite rubble brought from London to help to harden ground. (Not the only place; 750,000 tons of London bombsite rubble (1700
Over time they gradually sorted through it, taking out the re-usable bricks and finding many household objects mixed with it.

Frederick Philp soon rode 'Smaug' to Fairey's airfield, and had work plenty for it: the planned northeast-to-southwest runway went through Fairey's, and he had to fill the usual runway drain trenches and put topsoil back, and move a big site hut to the edge of the airfield out of the way. He scraped much turf off the verges of Cain's Lane, and Fairey's men used it to patch the wide damage to the airfield turf: it was a grass airfield. Fairey's was soon using their airfield again to test and assemble warplanes, and the replacement Air Minister was thankful. Two days later one of Fairey's managers came to Heathrow Hall in a lorry, bringing something as thanks: a crude-looking but effective multiple plough for fastening to the bulldozer's back ripper. Also plenty of diesel to replace what had been used. With it Philp started badly-delayed spring ploughing. The result would have earned no prizes in the 99 ploughing competitions that had been held once a year there (the last in 1937), but it worked, and later they sowed 1945's crop of winter wheat.

Some of them and some farmers around had a farm tractor already. (In the week starting 8 September 1924 a power-farming demonstration organized by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders was held on Heathrow Hall farm as an extra to the annual horse-ploughing competition; the farm still belonged to Josiah Philp then.) Luckily when they left in 1944 they had handed their machinery to other farmers around, not sent it to salvage as scrap, and after the Return they got much of it back, but in the wartime shortage some items had been cannibalized for parts, and it took time getting replacement parts made or found.

A distraction that they were not thankful for was a large group of gipsies moving north up Cain's Lane from the Feltham area. Complaints of theft follow that sort of organized vagrant around like chicken feathers after a fox, including this time, and the returnees had lost too much already. Frederick rode 'Smaug' south and stopped in the road blocking them. Men with him stood in the remaining gap each side. Meanwhile someone galloped on a horse across country to Perry Oaks farm, which telephoned the police, who came and arrested the gipsies for vagrancy and thefts, and to investigate the younger fitter males for suspected evading conscription in a time of war.

They dug up brickearth (all too much of it was exposed in ground scrapes) and made it into raw bricks, and spread them out to dry. Then they piled them and wood fuel (all too much was for their taking from bulldozed-out hedges and trees) to make a brick clamp, and set fire to it, and earthed it up well to keep the heat in, using old spare bricks to keep air inlets and outlets open. Thus they made bricks to mend damage to buildings, as their ancestors had made bricks since at least Queen Elizabeth I's time. More lorryloads of London bombsite rubble arrived: clearly someone had not yet been officially informed. When the first came, its driver found the Heathrow Road entry security roadblock gone and drove in, and William Howell came out of Bathurst market garden and told him to dump his load on the old quarry land, where later it and later loads were sorted through for reusable bricks. Finally it filtered through the system to the rubble transporters that the big Heathrow Airport plan had been cancelled.

He did a job that he did not like doing, but it had to be done: behind Perry Oaks he was called on to bulldoze out two and a bit acres of plum trees which were badly infected with a fungal disease called silverleaf (Chondrostereum purpureum): wartime shortages and the period away had prevented adequate spraying in time. Nobody wanted the wood, as they did not want to carry the disease about; he piled the trees to dry out, and later they were used as fuel in a brick clamp.

It was a rather desperate struggle with damaged accommodation and not enough food, rebuilding as well as ordinary delayed farm and market garden work, but they
got through it. Farms in the area, including north of the Bath Road, helped with seed and tools and food and replacement livestock, including returning any of Heathrow's which had been given to farms around before the exile, which Heathrow's inhabitants had thought would be permanent. Hedges and trees flattened by contractors provided plenty of firewood. Rebuilding at Heathrow Farm included a 17-brick chunk of a grimy docklands terrace house brought with rubble by contractors as runway material and incorporated whole in a rebuilt wall to save mortar. Over the next weeks equipment and furniture and horses came back, from various depots and stores, and they got most of their land under some sort of crop for year 1945. John Wild of Croft House ecstatically greeted his returned carthorse Captain. Their telephones and mains electricity were reconnected, and a public telephone callbox was installed on Heathrow Road a bit west of Heathrow Farm. The British civilian organization called the Women's Land Army helped any farmers in the country (including them), when help was needed at work rushes; they came back and had to be fed and found somewhere to sleep. Some Polish refugees who had escaped to England offered to help also; most of them knew little or no English, and getting there was not helped by persistently asking for directions to "Hé-atroff". Edgar Charles Basham came back to the Plough and Harrow pub. The contractors' men had taken all his glasses - plenty of them were found about in the contractors' site huts, so he got some of them back, but the returned Heathrow population for a long time did not have the money or time to go for drinks, and he had to help with work on the land to pay his way. A cart mare gave birth to a filly foal, a sign of hope in that bleak time.

An unwanted interruption for Frederick Philp was a summons to attend a court martial in Hounslow Barracks, about three miles to the east. As he described it afterwards, feeling rather shocked: "I was only a witness there, but they went at me as hard as if I was the accused. ... When the war started, they took all the road signs away in case the Germans invaded - including the signs warning about dangerous bends. The contractors had made such a mess everywhere that on top of it I just didn't want that car or van going too fast in the night down Heathrow Road from the main road going on the verge at the sharp bend by my house gate leaving a long skid in the grass and only just missing my gate lodge that we had only just rebuilt. Row in the night, woke me, car horn blaring, brakes squealing, it set the dogs barking, men came out of it arguing. They got it back on the road and away. Once was a warning, so I got two pieces of flat wood and made them into signs "Warning, dangerous bend ahead, 20 m.p.h.", and put them up beside Heathrow Road one each side of the bend. Three days later someone took them away and left in my letterbox a stuffy note warning me in officialese about unauthorized road signs. Same as those letters from the Air Ministry ordering us out, they called the place Heath Row in two words. So I made a placard like demonstrators make, with "Warning, dangerous bend ahead, 20 m.p.h." on, and kept it and a torch [USA: flashlight] by at night. About a week later I was about to go to bed when a car came racing up Cain's Lane at a rate that could never have got round that bend. so I ran out with the placard and showed it to the car and shone the torch on it. The car blared its horn at me and whizzed past full speed, and too late, brakes squealing, went in the ditch on its side, dogs barking waking someone's baby, I ran to see what had happened. Three army men in it: two high officers and a private. Smell of petrol, so I had to get them out in case the car caught fire. We'd only got our phone line back two days before - Irene rang the fire brigade and the ambulance; the court martial "ripped a strip" off me for doing that, getting more un-security-cleared civilians round a security incident. I got the three men out on the grass. When I got them away from the petrol smell, the officers' breath smelled of drink, but the private was clean; he was the one driving. Secret papers spilled about, I had to read a few of them to find a phone number to ring to tell their base what had happened, and they ripped another strip off me for
doing that. Irene phoned the number. The private had broken ribs from hitting the steering column. He said to me: "Thanks, I saw your sign ... I went to slow down but the major said "Keep to fifty or you're on a charge.". ... They'd stayed for drinks and toasts and then expected me to drive too fast to make up lost time.". I could tell they were itching to charge me with insubordination for explaining in full when they'd ordered me to answer in one word, but it wasn't the private's fault he was ordered or else to drive that fast. An army ambulance and an army towtruck came, I remember the men out of them arguing with the firemen and the civilian ambulancemen about what they must not report back to their bases about. In court the prosecution witness said the word "petrol" in a funny way as if he knew that it wasn't petrol but something secret that they were carrying and got spilt. I better put new signs up at that bend, and I guess that this time they'll leave them there." (The new signs were left there, and while the war and the tight petrol rationing lasted there were no more accidents at Heathrow Hall gate bend.)

Bulldozer noise and waving hedgetops gave a man visiting from Harlington fear of that theme of nightmares, that the airport site contractors were back. But on looking he saw that it was not so. Some of the Heathrow men, exasperated by rabbit damage, were taking a severe measure against a big known rabbit warren. Frederick Philp was pushing topsoil aside down to below rabbit digging depth. Women and children were holding up several rabbiting long-nets surrounding the work site. He dug close alongside a hedge both sides, avoiding grubbing it out unless he had to. Rabbits - over 210 of them in the end - and a hare fled every way but struggled in the nets. Lurcher dogs had a field-day. Ferrets cleaned out the remnants of burrows in the remnant ridge with the hedge on. At last Frederick pushed the soil back. Meat was scarce in that time of tight food rationing; they distributed many of the rabbits in areas around near Heathrow as a first repayment for the help which Heathrow had received in the time of struggle setting up again after the return. Some of the captured wild rabbits were kept alive in hutches to turn market garden waste into meat.

Frederick Philp and his family and some of his men were cutting his too-small supply of seed potatoes into pieces with one eye on each, to make more seed, when a policeman came, wanting a word about misleading advertizing.

"Ehr? I don't advertize, I just take my crop to Covent Garden market like the rest," he answered, "14 miles each way. At least with a lorry it's quicker than the old days with horses and wagon, that was 6 hours each way, we had to leave at ten the night before to get there in time: that market had to start early so greengrocers and fruiterers could stock up and get back to their shops before shop opening time: we didn't need to be an airport to have night departures.".

"It's that sign on that bulldozer that you've got. People have been trying to book work from the name on it, and losing their money. The firm's done a runner, but they're still getting their letters somehow.". "Sounds like they spent a lot to get in the airport scheme, which then collapsed and they lost the money and did a runner. Sorry, I've got some paint, I'll paint it out. Sometimes people thought I was that firm's man, but I told them I wasn't and told them to write to the address. Sorry.".

"Why have you got it?"

"I didn't 'take it without their consent', they left it here, and they tore our land upside down and back to front without our consent. If I'd left it out at night, all sorts of scrap pickers would've been at it. If the firm want it back, they've only got to sent their transporter for it, it's always in Heathrow land, that's Harmondsworth parish between the Bath Road and the Duke of Northumberland's River; but it was on Hatton Road Farm's land in Hatton Road land between Harlington Corner and Hatton three days patching up that big scrape the contractors started to make to get gravel there."
"Well, that firm on its sides has been compulsorily wound up. Its bankruptcy case comes up at" and he said a date and a time and a place, "You will be needed there."

"What am I accused of?"

"It's only a witness-summons, they'll want your side of what happened."

"I suspect this case'll keep running on like another case with some builders that's been running around here."

"One thing. I'm told that one of the farms here is Percy Oaks, but it isn't on maps."

"Not again please. Percy Oaks is Perry Oaks, it's a misprint in that Middlesex County directory. Same as, the Plough and Harrow's innkeeper is Mr. Basham, but that directory printed Sasham. Can't printers be more careful?"

"Or whoever made up Heathrow's list for them didn't bother to write legibly. I'd soon get told off by my inspector if I wrote Basham so it looked like Sasham, or suchlike."

Frederick Philp painted out the contractor's name and replaced it by his own name and address and telephone number, duly went to the court, and gave his evidence. The court ruled that the bulldozer was now property in court but that it could stay where it was until instruction came what to do with it, as long as every night it was in the farm outbuilding known as Stephen's Barn at Heathrow Hall on Heathrow Road in the parish of Harmondsworth. On hearing the name 'Stephen's Barn', a lawyer queried about the apparent discrepancy about ownership, and had to be told that in the countryside a possessive word attached to something often refers to whoever built or made it or to a long-ago owner. After the case he got the bulldozer road-registered and went by bus to Rotherhithe and there managed to get a backstreet workshop to make necessary replacement parts for farm machinery.

The contractors' men had spade-dug quantities of potatoes long before the right time, and much of them were found abandoned in site camp kitchens, as site security's last act was to check all departing workmen and vehicles for all articles found on them. Perry Oaks (which had stayed on site through but had lost the use of much land) sold them as new potatoes, and so salvaged something from it.

In late July 1944 the rest of Heathrow village at last had enough produce at one time for a fullscale market run rather than asking for space in runs from Mayfield Farm or north of the Bath Road - miscellaneous salvagings from damaged crops; quickly-grown crops such as lettuces and other saladings sown after the Return; self-sown tomatoes which grew from seeds in sewage sludge from the sludge settlement beds behind Perry Oaks used as field manure; seed from crops which had bolted during the Occupation, useful to home gardeners; parts of 5 acres of crop of swedes (USA: rutabaga) which had survived among vehicle trampling and scraping; three fat lambs from Perry Oaks; snared or netted wild rabbits and pheasants; crop from the un-Occupied southeast corner around the south end of Cain's Lane: about enough for three market wagons. The wagons were brought into Heathrow Hall's front yard and loaded, including the lambs (on their sides, each with its legs tied together). But how to get them to market? They had other work for what horses they had; some of their cart mares were heavily pregnant, as, during the First World War a sudden massive ruthless requisitioning of cart-type horses across Britain for the army had left many farmers unable to cultivate, and when war came again in 1939 they and many others across the country decided to breed replacements sooner, and another such requisition may reject heavily pregnant mares, so any suitable mare which went into oestrus was bred from. And some were slow returning horses and vehicles. Their tractors and other implements were back from the people around who they had been passed to at the Exile, but nearly all cannibalized for spare parts in the general wartime shortage; the workshop in Rotherhithe made and supplied the needed replacement parts eventually, but not quite yet.
They finished loading as the summer evening sun got lower over distant Longford. Such loadings had happened countless times since market gardening started there, using horses for work and haulage - for a journey that long, well-rested horses which had not been worked that day and preferably not the day before; but history said that long ago in the Middle Ages when Heathrow was called Southcotrow, bullocks were used for haulage and ploughing instead like in India. John Wild in his one-horse wagonette brought a late-pulled batch of radishes and endives and lettuces, and Frederick added them to his list of who had provided what. From Fairey Aviation three trays of lettuces and a tray of radishes, grown on the airfield edge where contractor damage had not been re-turfed, and a sackful of trapped wild rabbits and two hares. High Tree Farm brought more crates of broad beans and runner beans and selfset tomatoes picked in the deepening dusk - contractors' men had picked the runner beans that grew while they were there, but had not destroyed the plants, as it was well away from the north runway site area. After a quick dinner and packing plenty of packed lunch for the next day, a large diesel-powered roar from Heathrow Hall's barns announced the coming of the only good way that they had then to haul the wagons to market - the bulldozer which an airport site contractor bankruptcy had left them with. It came out of one of the barns and appeared, driven by Frederick Philp, who had caught three hours sleep in the early evening to be as fresh as he could for a night awake; in old times he would have caught some sleep on the journey while someone else took turn to drive the horses, but he was the only man there who could drive what he was riding. His wife Irene came out to see him off.

They hitched Heathrow Hall's and Cain's Farm's wagons side by side behind their unusual tow, and Perry Oaks's wagon behind Cain's Farm's. "Court order or not, 'Smaug' going have to spend a night away from his den." Frederick Philp said as he restarted the engine, "Everybody get on a wagon who's going: not beside me, these things are one-seater. Someone get hold of that dog and keep it here till we're well away. Check everything's loaded. Here we go."

There was a loud heavy engine roar and a vertical cloud of black diesel smoke instead of the familiar irregular ironshod treading of carthorses getting a heavy load under way. They set off and turned left out of the farmyard gate, which is about 130 feet south of the farmhouse gate, which is on the sharp corner of Heathrow Road. The steel tracks, and the wagons' iron tyres, made a disconcertingly tank-like noise on Heathrow Road's tarmac; but the passing tread of eight or sixteen heavily loaded Shire-size draught horse hooves can also be noisy on hard roads. As they passed Bathurst market garden, William Howell came out with ten trays of lettuces (planted on the site of cabbages and cauliflowers destroyed half-grown by contractors on runway site work) to add to their load, under the bright moon, which in wartime was more often dratted as a help for enemy bombers than praised as anything romantic. Steel tracks scraped on tarmac as they turned right out by the Three Magpies, whose customers came out to watch; they hoped that it would not tear the roads up. Then the long road east, which Frederick and his father Josiah had often made in a more usual way behind two or four strong heavy carthorses. Along the Bath Road. From Magpies to Hounslow is four miles. At Harlington Corner was an expected meeting; two men and a two-horse wagon with produce from market gardens between Harlington and Cranford. They hitched the wagon on behind Heathrow Hall's wagon, to make two behind two; one man stayed with the wagon, and the other man took the horses home, riding one sidesaddle bareback and leading one, to their stables to rest after a long day's work before the short wagon haul. As Frederick started his engine to set off, he heard a loud crack; after a moment he identified it as not a motor fault but a whip crack from his right as a man driving a laden cart up Hatton Road from Hatton Road Farm whipped his horse to a gallop to catch Frederick's attention before he left. Vegetables were transshipped, and the cart went back home. They set off again in the moonlight and crossed the Cranford bridge,
and beyond soon started the endless width of London. Other market loads came with them from the northern villages and from the far west, some horse-drawn, some behind coal-fired steam-powered traction engines or on lorries steam or petrol or diesel powered from much further west than horse reach. He found that by force of long habit he had brought his cart-whip with him. The men riding on the wagons slept as they could.

The country stopped and continuous suburb started; there was no more open countryside for nearly thirty miles eastwards. After about two and a half miles from the Magpies they passed Hounslow West Underground station, dark and locked; earlier it was named Hounslow Barracks, when cavalry trained on Hounslow Heath. The Underground Railway as much as anything else had helped London to spread so far. Bulldozers are designed for heavy site work, not for long-distance road hauling, and its blade got in the way in close manoeuvring and with its mechanism was extra weight for the motor to carry, and its tracks were noisy in the night on hard roads. As they entered Hounslow High Street someone hailed them and waved him down; it was three men who he knew who ran two market gardens backside of Heston (on land which has since been built over), on a two-horse wagon. The three had planned to sell at Brentford market, but prices there were less than at Covent Garden, and a ride would be useful. Again there was transshipping under the moon; two of the men stayed with the load and one took their wagon home. Frederick, during this, saw that during transshipping at Harlington Corner someone had come out and chalked at length on the large steel blade: "Heathrow's back and digging for victory again! Hitler & airports won't stop us. & from Harlington, Cranford, Hatton Road. Get the food to Covent Garden Mkt by any means or bust". Frederick took a piece of chalk from a pocket, added "Heston", mounted, restarted, and set off again on the long road east. He found himself by habit looking for places where horses could drink on the way; not needed with a diesel engine, unless its radiator boiled, but much needed with coal-fired steam-powered traction engines and old-type steam-powered lorries, and several of both were on the road with him as he went on towards Isleworth and Brentford, ever east towards where the sun would eventually rise. The road went near many London tourist spots, but he had to pass them and ignore them. He reflected that his father Josiah had at least once watered his horses in the fountain pool in the middle of Piccadilly Circus and fetched buckets of water from the Serpentine while passing Hyde Park.

Plenty more market traffic was on the road, anxious to reach the market when it opened at 4 a.m. in time for shopkeepers to stock up and reach their shops at shop opening time. Other traffic joined at Hounslow, much of it from Hatton and Bedfont and Feltham and Stanwell and places to the south and away west, and in better times some from Cain's Lane through Hatton, and more came in at road junctions on the long road; sometimes two horses recognized each other and whinnied in greeting.

People remarked about his unusual choice of tow. After a mile and a half more his tracks and vertical exhaust and the wagons' iron tyres echoed loudly under Isleworth station bridge. Around there most buildings were two-storey terrace houses. Each house had a back garden about 140 square yards, and in the general shortage many of them were cultivated for what vegetables they would yield; droppings from passing horses did not lie long. To the south, out of sight but not always out of smell, was the Mogden main sewage works: when he was born it was a farm in a clear gap of countryside between towns. (Its sludge was piped to west of Perry Oaks to settle, and the foul water was piped back; the compacted sludge was plenty useful as field manure.) A mile further on the right was the next good-sized gap in the endless houses - Syon Park, where the Duke of Northumberland's River ended, and across it and the Thames a distant view of Kew Gardens and exotic trees dark under the moon. Next over the Brent, the big river of west London, and canal-type locks and wharfage for canal narrow-boats just north of the bridge, and onto Brentford High Street, where is a small-scale waterfront for craft that can get so far
up the Thames. On he went with the rest of the market traffic, endlessly east, this time watching the traffic over a big steel blade instead of over the heads and ears of horses.

At the road junction at the north end of Kew Bridge much more market traffic joined, including a big tall trailer pulled by a large steam traction engine with an address near Guildford. Onto Chiswick High Road, past a busy railway marshalling yard, past Gunnersbury, and away east. Once Chiswick was a village with pasture around, known for cheese making, and thus came its name. Buildings went on endlessly. In Queen Elizabeth I's time all London was country and villages, except the old centre called the City of London. To men used to open acres and wide views, the endless buildings seemed to press them in. They came to Hammersmith Broadway, more big shops, three miles from the Brent bridge, seven miles from Hounslow, and eleven miles from home. A mile and a half further through Kensington brought them and the other market traffic to the next open green land, Kensington Gardens and then Hyde Park on the left. It was hard to believe that all this land was once farmland and villages. Nearer the city centre there were many bombsites, some cleared of rubble and used for growing vegetables as people tried to recapture the green fertility that this land had long ago. (Hackney in the East End was once well known as an asparagus growing area, before it was built over.) Between these two parks is the lake called the Serpentine, made by damming a now-lost river called the Westbourne, and with all park railings removed for wartime scrap likely a temptation for men driving steam vehicles whose boiler water was getting low. Through Hyde Park Corner and onto the road called Piccadilly, and across Green Park a distant right view of Buckingham Palace. Past the Ritz Hotel on the left, now growing lettuces and tomatoes instead of flowers in its window boxes, to him merely a thankful landmark that he had only one more mile to go, this time without having to endlessly urge on increasingly tired horses. North of Hyde Park is Soho, an area which from its reputation he had no intention whatsoever of visiting. He reflected that before the war a tenant of Heathrow Farm had a relative who ran a greengrocer's shop in Soho, and contact between the two was necessary. He carried on along Shaftesbury Avenue. Long Acre, and at last into Covent Garden Market as it opened, after fourteen miles; the early-coming sellers got the best prices. Once Covent Garden was Westminster Abbey's herb garden, thus its name, but now it was all built over.

He parked next to a big lorry loaded with potatoes from near Spalding in the Fens, among the miscellaneous other vehicles from much of southeast England. They dismounted and got ready to check what the market porters were doing and what was being carried to where. One of Sidney Whittington's men unloaded the three fat lambs and put them on neck leads of thin rope and led them the half mile further east to the big livestock market at Smithfield just outside the northwest edge of the City of London. Some other delivery men remarked on Frederick's unusual choice of tow, and he explained why. Shouts and blows from across the parking area proved to be market security losing their temper with two local men who they had caught with fuel siphoning equipment looking for what they could find and telling lies when challenged. Men around fed and watered and groomed horses and let them rest to recover for journeys back. The two men from Heston stayed to guard Frederick's bulldozer and its un-securable fuel filler cap and ignition switch.

Although some Heathrow growers had written explaining to the market's management, it needed argument and persistence to get their usual market stall area back. They set up and displayed; around them men from much of south England did the same. The produce sold well. He had no difficulty buying diesel fuel. As often, hotel staff came to the market to buy vegetables and fruit, among the shopkeepers and suchlike. Ministry of Food men checked what happened to rationable vegetables such as onions. Many who came had read about the Heathrow airport plan events and wanted a first-hand account of what had happened there. News was exchanged. Sidney Whittington's man came back from Smithfield. In the wartime shortages they made sure that they brought back all their vegetable trays and crates and their
market hampers woven from osiers cut from the willows along the Duke of Northumberland's River, and had to remind people that containers were not sold along with their contents. They banked most of the money which they had been paid, for safety, although a few days would pass before their own branches got the money: back then, accessing a bank account from a remote branch needed prior arrangement, and modern plastic electronic cards were unheard-of.

They got a fair-sized return load: vegetable waste from the market and from around, as compost or to feed hens or hutch rabbits; horse manure including some from nearby royal stables. Sellers' and buyers' vehicles started. Petrol and diesel engine noise, and chuffing steam and coal smoke, and horse hooves and iron-tyred wheels, went out into roads and faded into the distance, and smells blew away, and market porters started to clean up horse droppings and other litter. When other vehicles had left space, they boarded, started, turned, and set off on the fourteen miles back home in sunlight, leaving the daytime traders to their businesses. The men riding caught up with some sleep, except Frederick.

In Piccadilly, Ritz Hotel staff heard them coming and waved them down and brought out a big load of vegetable waste and stable manure, to save carting it to a collection point. Among it Frederick saw and kept aside a bag of about twenty peach stones: no point asking where the hotel got the peaches, but the stones could be germinated, as they had not been cooked. Then back on the long journey home among daytime traffic, fortunately much less traffic than in peacetime. Back west through inner London and across the Brent.

A bit east of Isleworth station Frederick saw a horse being ridden eastwards; he kept his engine as quiet as possible until it passed. He saw that the rider was sidesaddle and that the horse was dancing about somewhat, and then over his engine noise a young woman's voice, in as strong language as her polite manner allowed, telling a dog to go away and leave her horse alone. The dog ignored and kept on baiting her horse, jumping about its front feet barking, seeing that her short riding crop could nowhere near reach the ground, and that Frederick's mount, although big and impressive with a big front curved blade, was still a motor vehicle and therefore would not be able to whip. Another dog came out of an entry and joined in. Her horse got more restless and started shaking its head and treading about more. Frederick after many encounters had long lost any patience with town street curs harassing his wagon's horses and risking making them rear or bolt or try to break out of their harness; uncontrolled dogs have caused many serious traffic accidents, and falling from a rearing horse onto tarmac might injure her seriously. His two track speed levers stayed put when left; he unfolded his cart-whip, which until then he had seen no use for on that run, waited for the moment, and whipped across the dogs' backs. Her horse jerked at the new noise, but, rid of the feeling of imminent danger by seeing its two tormenters fleeing ki-yi-ing, started to settle down. The owner of one of the dogs came out, and the inevitable argument started. The dog's owner threatened to bring the RSPCA into it. The woman supported Frederick's action, for her horse had been near the edge of rearing and throwing her onto the hard tarmac road. Frederick said something about "letting a dog run at large causing risk to traffic. All our dogs at home have been taught to leave horses alone.", and told him to keep it on a lead. Someone came out of another house and complained "And letting those dogs keep on shitting on the pavement and on people's fronts." The argument had become routine, and traffic backing up behind Frederick got impatient and started to hoot, and he had to drive on, back west home, feeling that things were starting to get back to normal after his first market run after the Return.

At Hounslow West station they dropped off the two Heston men; they had phoned home from the market, and a one-horse wagonette was waiting for them, and they took their share of the return load. The rest rode back west across the Crane river into their own area at last; some of them had not been east of the Crane since the Return. At Harlington Corner he stopped again. The Cranford and Harlington
man got off, and a man was there with horses for his wagon; they unhitched it and horse- hauled it home. Frederick drove on and thankfully turned left into Heathrow Road and home to Heathrow Hall with the other three wagons, past his house gate in a small triangular recess in the road hedge by a small gate-lodge, and in his farmyard gate to the main enclosed area between several old brick barns and another in the middle. Horses were there to take the Perry Oaks and Cain's Farm wagons home. Frederick backed his wagon into its usual place, unhitched, put 'Smaug' back in Stephen's Barn, and went in to sleep. Later that day he rode a horse across country to Hatton Road Farm with the money from selling its produce. A photograph of their equipage passing the small waterfront in Brentford High Street got into a newspaper article about unusual ways to get food to market, alongside a photograph of surplus allotment produce from a hilly area in Yorkshire being carried to a collection point on five pack-ponies.

Three days later in the post Frederick received a letter from the horse rider, who had read his name and address on his vehicle's side; she thanked him for seeing the dogs off and promised her support in case of repercussions from the dogs' owners. 

She had been brought up in the country north of Yiewsley and on that day was visiting relatives who had moved to town; petrol was tightly rationed and buses were crowded, so she went on a horse. One of Frederick's sons took over the correspondence, which continued, and romance blossomed, and she visited, and later there was a wedding in Harmondsworth church, and the next generation of the Philips was assured in Heathrow Hall.

Soon after, the workshop in Rotherhithe delivered the replacement parts for tractors and other farm machinery (and, some say, took back with them a large fat lamb), and more of their horses came back, and their next market run was made more usually.

The Air Ministry's Heathrow scheme's committee ended along with its funding, but the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) proved also to be involved. In September 1944 they sent men to Heathrow to see the situation. Official reports of what work had been done did not match reality that they saw, and they blamed false reporting, before they found that the returning farming population had undone much of the work and restored the land for farming and the houses for habitation. Sidney Whittington met them, and an angry discussion started. Each accused the other of doing damage, the one by scraping up the land, and the other by repairing it. They found some of the site huts being used as farm storerooms and milking shelters and overnight security for poultry. A few smelled strongly of sheep, as they had been used as bad-weather shelter for lambing ewes. At a small market garden east of Cain's Lane they found men hardening a muddy farmyard by crazy-paving it with broken pieces of a bombed dockland school's concrete playground; after the blitz rubble was cleared, people seeking land for bombsite vegetable allotments were sent to the school's site, and found less exposed soil than they were wanting, so some of them took sledgehammer and pickaxe to the playground to expose the soil underneath and had the broken concrete taken away.

They examined a large ploughed field where they had hoped to find a start to foundations for an airport building. It looked unusual, with several furrows turned one way, then several turned the other way, and so alternating. The "headlands" at the ends of the field had been ploughed across, as is usual. In the corners they found an untidy mixture of steel track marks and portions of curved multiple furrows, and places where the end of a large steel blade had snagged on hedges and scraped bark off a tree while turning.

The dragline was then in the south of the area, near High Tree Lane, and someone brought a transporter lorry and loaded it and took the dragline to the address on its side. They realized that given wartime rules about food production the two big concrete mixers would have to stay there until the surrounding crops were harvested. But the bulldozer was safely in its new lair in the back of Stephen's Barn.
at Heathrow Hall, and no instruction came about what to do with it, as the hunt for
the bankrupt firm's men dragged on. The grass for hay grew well and promised a
good crop, given dry weather at the right time.

THE VISIT

News spread that Lord Woolton was coming in person through Heathrow as part of
a general fact-finding tour and public relations exercise, and the date, and how many
with him. Preparations were made to welcome them. The official cars came, from
Windsor where he had met other Ministers and King George VI, through Staines
and Stanwell and up Oaks Road to Perry Oaks, and turned right through the village
past cheering people. Nearly everybody in the village was there, and many from
places around: north of the Bath Road, south of the two rivers, and around Hatton
Road, areas that had been threatened by the airport plan. Some came from Cranford,
which had been planned to be obliterated by a pre-war plan to enlarge RAF Heston
into a big airport; men had started to demolish houses and cut down fruit trees there,
but when the war started the plan was called off and never restarted. He stopped at
Fairey Aviation's gate, where Fairey's site manager thanked him and others for
getting his airfield back and repaired. They drove to Heathrow Hall past more
cheering people, and stopped. He got out, and his wife with him, escorted for safety
following usual rules, and asked how things were, and discussion with Frederick
Philp and others started. Lady Woolton, who had been looking round on her own,
suddenly ran back and exclaimed: "They've made dinner for us!, ready in about 20
minutes, just like you said. It smells lovely.". There was a smell of roasting chicken:
at that time roast chicken was for most people an occasional treat, not an everyday
food, and chickens raised for roasting for formal dinners were often much bigger
than those commonly seen nowadays in supermarkets. When Woolton's secretary
had phoned Mr. Philp to say that Woolton was coming, Mr. Philp offered dinner,
and it fitted into that day's schedule.

Lord Woolton looked round their outbuildings to see what was left of the airport
site contractors' damage. Patches of new-looking bricks, and of new mortar between
old bricks, and roof slates replaced by split wood or tarpaulin, and scaffolding taken
from contractors' demolition sites, told their tale. The site perimeter barbed wire was
gone: the returnees had use for it filling gaps in hedges.

"Oh, there's that bulldozer that you've got," he said looking in Stephen's Barn,
saw that its blade was raised propped by a length of tree trunk, looked underneath,
and in the oily mechanical recess saw five hens sitting clutches of eggs.

"We've got to breed our hens back to numbers," Frederick Philp said, "If a hen
goes broody, we give her a clutch of eggs to hatch. Lucky that quarry's stopped: if it
had been left to keep spreading, goodness knows how big it'd be by year 2000.
Under the gravel around here there's London Clay, and you likely know what that's
like to farm."

Woolton saw something else, that he decided to check up on: ten duck's eggs in a
shallow wood tray tucked in the bulldozer's foot well by its control pedals. But he
got an answer soon enough: one of the farm's hens ran across the barn floor, and (as
he described it afterwards) "scrambled like a Spitfire" and flew over his left
shoulder; its thrashing right wingtip knocked his hat askew. The hen landed on the
driver's seat, jumped down, and settled on the eggs, looking and sounding annoyed.
"She's one of the four we found gone wild like pheasants when we came back,"
Frederick said, "They were roosting in the big cedar tree out front. A man came
from Sipson and gave us the setting of duck's eggs."
"Why don't people let ducks sit their own eggs?"

"Most domestic ducks are no good at sitting eggs, they won't stick to the job like a hen."

"Dinner's about ready" Mrs. Philp called.

They went in the house and into its dining room and sat down. The table had been laid with the best tableware which they had. There was a wood fire in the fireplace. Mrs. Philp apologized for the look of the room, but redecorating would have to wait until after the war. There was an empty seat; Mr. Philp asked the armed policeman at the door if he wanted to come in and join in, rather than being yet again left outside while others ate; but he said that he was ordered to stay at his post.

Frederick Philp and his wife brought in two big roast chickens duly stuffed, plenty of vegetables, roast potato properly browned with its outside crisp, gravy - and unexpectedly, asparagus. The guests could see that it was "out of the back garden" asparagus that had not been traded or graded: thin and middling and thick stems, straight and curved stems, mixed in random assortment. "We used to grow a lot of it. With the war on we had to change the land to other crops, but we've still got a patch of it in our back garden to keep the stock going. I started roasting the chickens back-up and turned them after a while: that doesn't let the breast get so dry. Here they are fresh hot from the oven: I don't hold with 'resting' the meat, that means letting it go half cold first." Mrs. Philp said as she carved and served, "Perry Oaks and Eglantine Cottage gave us one each of these roasting chickens, when they heard you were coming, and they said to me to pass on their thanks to you and Winston Churchill for holding out against the airport plan until the truth leaked: they weren't in the Occupied Zone [an expression copied from war news], but Perry Oaks lost land and they were next in line: the planners were going to make another triangle of runways the other way round, and its bottom corners would have taken out Perry Oaks and more of Cain's Lane and the land around, and after that there was talk of a big goods terminal later where Eglantine Cottage is. The broad beans are ours: we sowed them by habit and hoping that the landgirls could salvage the crop, but with your great help we were let back in, and by then the contractors' men had been ordered not to pick at crops, and we could harvest the beans. Perry Oaks lost a lot of crop and a few livestock from contractors' men coming over the wire at night to take stuff to add to their rations. Mayfields gave us a sack of potatoes a while ago, that's away south in Stanwell land between the two rivers, but likely not far enough to have been safe from the airport, with that north triangle of runways they'd planned wiping out Sipson and much of Harlington, and it could have spread that far the other way as easily. And some of our own potato crop survived the Occupation, they took too long to dig out for the contractors' men to take them all."

Lord Woolton's aide ate a few mouthfuls, then quickly said "Excuse. Some paperwork." and stood and went out into the passage. Lady Woolton quickly followed him.

Through the open door the diners heard a telephone receiver being restrained hard down into its cradle as if to stop someone from using it, the aide's urgent-sounding voice saying something about Nottingham, and Lady Woolton's voice, quiet but remonstrating, saying something which the diners caught some of: "... more respect for the Philips and their good food, after all they've been through ... you hardly took any, and left that to go cold on the plate while you slipped off to make more of your furtive phone calls despite what my husband said ... table manners ... ten days ago at that dinner ... long trunk call on their bill without asking them ...". He shuffled about, then reappeared looking put-out, and Lady Woolton followed him close as if shepherding him back to his seat. He sat down, muttered "Sorry about that," and a makeshift excuse including "couldn't get through", took three more pieces of roast potato, accepted Mrs. Philp's offer of more chicken, and continued his meal. (In Britain, "trunk call" formerly meant "long-distance telephone call".)
The first course finished. Mrs. Philp took what was left of the chicken and roast potato on a plate to the door policeman. Dessert was a large apple crumble - fruit crumbles started as a World War II wartime substitute for fruit pies and tarts because of the shortage of flour to make pastry. "Thank God, the contractors didn't find where we kept last year's apples, they were too much load for us to take away with us." Mrs. Philp said, "When we came back they'd bulldozed out most of our house hedges and were about to start on our orchard. We look like Flanders with all the barbed wire we've had to put up to keep livestock where they belong, they'd made so many gaps in hedges. Luckily cut hawthorn sticks root and grow well, that's why some call it quickthorn, but it'll take time to grow into a proper hedge again. They took nearly everything else that wasn't nailed down, and some things that were. Luckily we took our good wall clock away with us."

"Lucky they were under orders to save all possible building materials, else the whole village'd be rubble like a bombsite by now." Frederick Philp said.

The meal finished. Mr. Philp looked at his clock. "The Plough and Harrow'll still be open if we hurry." he said - restricted pub opening hours were a tiresome ever-present background to working-class life and did not need to be apologized for. Only in the legendary past before World War I did pubs stay open through the day in Britain.

The official party recognized the nearest country equivalent of calling the butler to bring the wine in, but said "Thanks, but no thankyou, it's good of you, but we're on duty, and some of us'll be driving." Woolton led his aide into another room and shut its door.

But internal walls in old houses without wall cavities are often not as soundproof as thought, and the Philps overheard Woolton turning at his aide quietly:

"What was that display at the meal, and my wife had to go after you!? It was a big treat and a major effort of the Philps providing that dinner in their circumstances, not a 'tiresome routine business dinner'. What was that at Nottingham that was so urgent?"

"Nothing, only a bit of tidying-up of something earlier today."

"And thus not needing walking out on an invited meal for it. And you still haven't told me what was that matter at that hotel that was so important?, that you commandeered the front desk switch phone to talk about it on in that furtive cryptic manner, and nobody else could phone in or out until you finished."

"Confirming arrangements about accommodation."

"No it wasn't." Woolton said, "There was a fault in the hotel's switchboard, 'crosstalk', and I overheard your call. It was arranging a game of golf near Uxbridge, and about bits of finance trading to be discussed at the game, nothing to do with your job or mine. I told you to resign from all those bits and pieces that were distracting you from your job. There won't be any golf played at that golf course for a while: part of it's now vegetable allotments, and the rest's got a crop of wheat on, one of my men found a farmer to take it over. And what did I tell you about using people's phones, particularly with people as short of everything as them here having to repair after those airport site contractors?"

"Er - ask the householder - "no" or him not being available to ask means "no" - ask for reverse charges [= get the operator to ask the person being called to accept the cost of the call], else ask the operator to ring back and say how much the call cost, then pay the householder in full at once in cash and no excuses. Sorry. Sorry.".

"I made one of my rabbit pies to take away for you to take away for later." Mrs. Philp said as the two came back in; he thanked her and accepted it.

The previous day, as arranged, Lord Woolton had sent an empty lorry; this now had been loaded with 1400 new bricks that local men had made in a brick clamp from local brickearth; each was stamped "HEATHROW" and "1944", each brick in a somewhat different place, as two men had gone round them with a hand-held stamp each before baking. They gave the bricks to Lord Woolton in thanks for his
help against the airport plan; he passed them on to a depot that stored building materials for emergency repair of bomb-damaged houses.

John Wild ran in from Cain's Lane, wanting Frederick Philp. "It's about that whipround for Colin Shrigley's rent, that small market garden." he started, "They've got 5 days to pay, or the bailiff's coming and they're out, and this year's rent's breathing down their necks, and it's nearly a quarter more than last year's.". Shrigley's small market garden was owned by a group living out of the area.

"Excuse, sorry." Frederick said to Woolton, and then to John Wild, "I know, I've phoned and written pleading with that rent agency over and over again about the circumstances and that there's a war on, and they won't listen, or they say that the man wanted is at a meeting or out."

John Harrison, a farm worker for F.W.Longhurst who had land on the east side of Cain's Lane opposite the airfield, ran up, and said, "Oh, you've got important people here, sorry ..." and stopped and backed off a little. "Carry on." said Lord Woolton.

"Those bailiffs are here now!" he said alarmed, "They said 'in 5 days' time'."

A taxi drove up and stopped. Two men in smart city suits got out of it, a bailiff and a writ-server. Woolton asked what was happening.

"The Right Honourable Gentleman need not trouble himself." one of them said, guessing correct formal address mode from newspaper and radio reports of events in Parliament, and showed some documents, "It's only a persistent rent defaulter. We can handle it. Us coming early is a good way to stop the defaulter from squirrelling goods away at accomplices' houses and in lockups."

Woolton asked for Colin Shrigley to come. While he was coming, Frederick Philp explained what had happened: "Apart from the difficult time while we were setting up after the return, which their landlord should know of, and his land was badly damaged early by a contractors' site depot, the amount of times it's been explained to them, they've put up the rent nearly a quarter this year, and they got an eviction order in the tenant's absence without telling him what court to go to and when, that's surely an irregularity, they should know there's a limit on what land can be made to yield, plus wartime conditions."

By now Colin Shrigley had arrived, and said, "Lord Woolton and the people round here have been very good to us when we were setting up again, and I don't want to have to go round cap in hand again so soon after just for some absentee landlord's rent. I also have pleaded with that rent agency enough times in letters, never an answer; I phoned once, he was in conference, and trunk calls cost."

John Wild said: "If you ask me, likely that landlord's trying to get the tenant out so they can build houses or a hotel on the land after the war, or hold out for the biggest price if the airport scheme restarts after the war and the airport firm's got to buy the land, or something like that, and land or a house sells for more with 'vacant possession' than with a sitting tenant. I know that the local planning won't allow suburban stuff in Heathrow area, but big firms with fancy lawyers can often bypass such rules or appeal over their heads."

Lord Woolton spoke: "For what you are trying to describe, the correct term is 'speculating in real estate'. I won't let food production in wartime be hostage to that sort of thing. My Ministry has power to take control of farmland which is being neglected. Shrigley's land is being farmed properly now, but it won't be if that landlord has his way and evicts the tenant without replacing him at once, and Colin Shrigley defaulting on rent is certainly none of his fault. You two, who are you acting as agents for?"

"We are not at liberty to say." said one of the two, "Our client has lost many rented properties through bomb damage and requisitioning, and that has caused our client a severe cash flow problem, and so those who still rent anything from him must pay in full and promptly."
"Sounds like an East End of London slum landlord that I heard of when I took crop to Covent Garden market a bit ago." William Howell, market gardener at Bathurst, said, "He demanded full rent for badly damaged houses, plus a surcharge for subletting from anyone who sheltered anyone who was completely bombed out. It ended when five dockers coming off shift who lived in the next street went past, heard him, and 'sorted him out'. He won't be in a fit state to collect any rents for a while. Likely those two came today hoping you'd back them up. Grab and search their briefcases and have done with it. And they look quite young and fit, why aren't they in the army or a munitions factory?"

The two looked unsure, looked about like cornered foxes, lost their confidence, and handed their briefcases over, better without a scuffle that may damage their office suits, which would be difficult to replace in wartime clothes rationing.

Lord Woolton looked through the contents. "Oh, that rich family -" he said, "Right. I'm signing an order putting Colin Shrigley's smallholding, Heathrow, Harmondsworth parish, Middlesex, under Ministry of Food control, with Mr. Colin Shrigley, current tenant, same address, in charge of farming it, to safeguard food production on that land. Also, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939 is still in power, and maintaining food production is part of defending the realm."

"Our client won't be pleased getting the land back from the airport and losing it again so soon." one of the two said, "OK, we're going before the taxi's waiting time bill gets any bigger. If the country was properly run, reputable firms' agents who have to call about a lot and in out-of-the-way places would be given a petrol ration, each of us drives half the way while the other sorts out papers and we can discuss in privacy. The train was disgracefully overcrowded and stopped at every petty suburban station and I couldn't get a seat and I needed to sit so I could sort out paperwork. Taxi from the station, taxis cost, we can't discuss freely else the taxi driver overhears and warns people or chatters about it, else it's bus to the Three Magpies stopping at every stop and not often enough and too crowded for us to catch up with work and then walk here wasting our valuable time; there were never many buses a day through Heathrow and still none after the airport builders went. No wonder there's so much black marketing in petrol."

"You should know that there's a war on. Your names and addresses?" the policeman asked.

They gave their particulars, knowing that Woolton could check if it matched what was in their briefcases, and were given their briefcases back, and got in the taxi, which three-point-turned in Cain's Lane junction and was gone, back towards the Bath Road and away.

"Thanks." Colin Shrigley said, "How my land came to be owned out of the area was: its last owner-occupier died and his widow took over. She got old and neighbours helped her run the land. She died and the land went to her sons. But both her sons had moved to town and wouldn't come back to the land; and both her daughters had married and moved away. The sons sold the land to the highest bidder and it ended up with a property company."

John Harrison said: "The local M.P.'s trying to get compensation for damage for the people here. For example, most of Longhurst's orchard's gone and his house is a mess. We've written and phoned to the Air Ministry and they won't answer. He said he's trying to get us on the list of people who need emergency repairs after air-raids. We can dig sand and gravel and brickearth here, and the contractors felled and left a lot of our trees, and we can cut those up for wood, but that wood's fresh felled and not seasoned, and some things must be bought in."

"One day when I went to market," said Frederick, "I went into the City to see what it was like there. Among the least likely things I thought I'd ever see, was 'primary production' on Threadneedle Street, but there were bombsite vegetable allotments there. I bought three young buck rabbits there for breeding, our hutch rabbits here were getting to need some 'fresh blood'. One of the men running it was
staying there on guard camping in a room in a bomb ruin that hadn't been cleared away. He said it was strange being there at night when the City types have gone home, where all that high-stakes business and finance had gone on, and now in the wilderness which the Luftwaffe made and that big firestorm brewed up around Fore Street, super-expensive City of London land is open ground growing potatoes and cabbages and onions and carrots for the first time since Anglo-Saxon times and perhaps since Roman times. Ragwort and rosebay willowherb are real right pests seeding in there. Ragwort's poisonous and mustn't let anything eat it. Hutch rabbits are mighty useful turning old brassica stems and suchlike into meat."

"How did your family get this land" Lord Woolton asked Frederick.

Frederick said: "Nobility had owned this land for a long time. When the commons were enclosed here in 1819, George Byng, 2nd Earl of Strafford was lord of its manor, and likely of many other manors. In the enclosing he was assigned a lot of the land as his own instead of his old feudal rights, across the north where the soil and brick earth over the gravel are deepest, as would be expected. He died in October 1886, and his son George inherited. For a long time the Tillyers lived here, In 1894 death duty came. That left him with not enough time to save up to pay his death duty before he died in March 1898. He had no children, and his property went to his brother Henry, who also was old, and he died in May 1899. That was two death duties in 14 months and no time to save up to pay them. Selling off land and stuff to pay that lot, absolutely butchered his family estate. In the financial wreck of the old Earl Strafford squirearchy bits of land and property were sold all over the place. Much of his land in Heathrow and Sipson was bought by Jonathan Smith, who moved to Heathrow Hall. Jonathan Smith seems to have got into money trouble, because around 1900 he sold Heathrow Hall and its land to Josiah Philp and moved to Wall Garden Farm in Sipson, which had a lot of orchard around, In September 1905 someone started a bankruptcy case against Jonathan Smith, who however got over it. So much fruit was grown around Sipson that he ran a jam factory in Sipson, and later his son Frederick Smith ran it. West of Perry Oaks before the sewage sludge works came, was an absolute Sherwood Forest of continuous orchard, but cheap fruit shipped in from the colonies gradually spoilt the trade.

Josiah Philp was my father, and I called my son Josiah Frederick William after him." Woolton asked if they knew of any other land which was not growing what it could.

"In the sewage sludge works (that belongs to Middlesex County Council): after some pleading and buying pints for its manager we got permission for Perry Oaks farm to cut the grass between and around the sludge beds for hay, and then to graze stock on the aftermath; that freed other land for farming." said Frederick Philp, "Some land along the Crane and Colne rivers is only used for grazing because it floods too often. There's bits of land with the soil still on round the edge of the Heathrow Brick Company's quarry: the firm went bust in 1943. Most of the quarry's only good for rough grazing, and that lake about a quarter of a mile long. In 1934 the lake was only 5.31 acres, that survey said.

Some angling group have been after the lake for after the war, but they better not put any fish in that'll grow big and eat our ducklings: some pike can swallow a fully grown wild duck. North of the Bath Road those two new factories, Technicolor and Penguin Books, one each side of opposite where Pease Path comes out, have got a fair amount of land that's lawn or flowers or long grass and weeds instead of food crop. If they let grass go long, they should let someone cut it for hay or silage. I could make up a longer written report and post it in. Time was when Harmondsworth and Harlington parishes and around were 40% fruit orchard, an absolute sea of white and pink and red if you went up anything high in blossom time. Cheap imports by ship spoilt that and most of it was changed to market gardening as London grew and more people wanted vegetables. The patch between
Fairey's and Cain's Lane north end used to be all orchard, but when the war started much of it was grubbed out and ground crops grown there instead. This airport coming: time was when the biggest upset round here was Sipson Farm ripping out a big field of strawberry plants and putting in lettuces and spring onions instead, 3 crops a year. Some points that people sometimes query about:

If you see vegetables let run to seed, it's to get the seeds for next year's crop.

If we are slow clearing cut brassica stems away, that's because we are feeding them to hutch rabbits and we pull them only as fast as our rabbits eat them."

('Aftermath' means the grass that grows after the hay has been cut: from "after-mow-th").

"Thanks for the dinner and the information. We'd better be going on."

"Thanks for coming and letting us take up your time." The official party got in their cars and went away north, turned right at the Three Magpies, and away to Westminster, and again became merely high remote names in the newspapers and the radio.

Frederick Philp and others completed a general report on the area and its products and productivity, and a list of expense and loss caused by the airport site coming and going, and posted them to the Ministry. Perry Oaks and Eglantine Cottage, who were outside the damaged area, did not sell their late broad bean and late pea crops, but shared them round as seed for next year.

In Westminster Lord Woolton looked at the report. It was detailed and written in various hands: much of Frederick Philp's writing; Sidney Whittington of Perry Oaks's distinctive hand for some of the western parts; John Wild's hand and others; schoolboy writing where children had been called on to help with copying, as the area had no access to an office photostat machine; and other hands. It divided the land into zones (an idea imitated from war news), mostly divided along roads and rivers, listing each field and whose it was and what it was used for that year and the two years before. Some parts smelled noticeably of leather and horse sweat, showing that (like the engineer Brunel the previous century surveying railway routes) often the author had used a horse's back as his office chair and his horse's saddlebags as his office desk drawers. It seemed to cover everything (except small residential properties) between the Colne and Crane rivers and from the Bath Road down to Stanwell and Feltham and Bedfont. It was duly filed for reference.

They harvested what they could of their badly damaged wheat and oats crops, and wrote to the address that Lord Woolton had given to tell all concerned that there were now no obstacles to someone sending to take away the two big concrete mixers.

Christmas 1944 was rather scanty. 1944-1945 winter passed. Broad beans sowed with the seed from Perry Oaks's and Eglantine Cottage's 1944 crop grew well, with promise of crops to sell. Lettuces and early peas would come ready soon after, and several other sorts of vegetables. The Wilds of Croft House and Shrub End had tomatoes and early saladings coming on well in their rebuilt greenhouses. Frederick Philp felt better and stronger after the Return; he was 69 and he felt that he would not have lasted long at his age exiled for the rest of his life away from his home land.

AFTER THE WAR

The war ended. Heathrow Hall farm provided a big fat wether lamb, which was roasted whole at the Cain's Lane junction as the area celebrated VE Day as surrender of Nazi Germany on 8 May 1945 ended the Nazi threat. RAF war traffic need became much less, except war transports to the Far East, until Japan
surrendered on 14 August 1945. The July 1945 General Election landslide pushed Lord Woolton and many others out of power, leaving the area feeling exposed in the open in worsening political weather as the Cold War started. Even Winston Churchill was no longer in Parliament, for even his seat in supposedly safe suburban Bexleyheath had gone to the Labour Party. There had been plan to close RAF Heston because it would be too near the new big airport at Heathrow; but with (as yet) no Heathrow Airport (although some prewar inch-a-mile Ordnance Survey maps marked Fairey's airfield as "AIRPORT") airliner traffic was distributed across several RAF airfields including Heston that had a heavy-bomber-and-transport-length runway. A few passenger flights of smaller planes used Fairey's grass airfield at Heathrow, sent there as overspill from Heston and Northolt, and later more often. Heathrow airfield's bareness was a surprise to those accustomed to the generously built terminals at Heston and Croydon. One day ended with five Dakotas and a Lancaster bomber parked along southwest of the big hangar and two RAF lorries coming to take their passengers and freight to Heston for checking and Customs; export goods were being loaded from a lorry from Black and Decker's (opened in 1940 on the north side of the Bath Road by the Hatch Lane junction) into the Lancaster through its open bomb-bay; Fairey Aviation complained about this crowding impeding what the airfield had been built for, which was testing new aeroplanes built by Fairey's. (Not the only time that bombers got unintended uses; in 1945 many Allied prisoners of war were flown back from Germany in Lancasters.)

BOAC took over a construction site hut left on the airfield edge, regretting the roomy office block that would have been part of what might have been; an artist's idea of a big modern airport terminal labelled "London Heathrow Airport Terminal 3" and incorporating that office block soon appeared as a large picture on a wall inside; on the picture, behind and beside the terminal, runways and taxiways and airliner parking area stretched into the distance. Some coach and taxi drivers delivering or collecting passengers at Heathrow had trouble finding the place. Heston staying in use longer than planned revived old fears, and some people put up posters: "To the Air Ministry: you didn't get Heathrow, you aren't getting Cranford." Some wished that the 1944 bean-spiller had stayed silent, and complained that what there was was only a piece of the southeast corner of what might have been. "We might have had the north runway ready for use now." a BOAC man said, "For example, look at the size of Berlin Tempelhof's main runway and terminal, and they had that before the war, while we have to go round RAF bomber-and-transport bases asking to be fitted in, and Croydon Airport has got so straitjacketed in by suburbs that there's no way its runways could lengthen: airliners are getting bigger, from the de Havilland Dragon Rapide to the Dakota, and then the Lockheed Constellation at 40 seats and faster than a Japanese Zero fighter, and new big designs adapted from heavy bomber designs, and what after that? A hundred-seater?

Before the war we had plans for RAF Heston to become a new airport, and the Daily Telegraph pointed out that the airport builders better hurry else the place would be built closely around first. And I still can't offer a business colleague a decent game of golf, our golf course is still vegetable allotments and sugar beet, and after all our efforts for the war, what was our first reward for our efforts and sacrifice, only three weeks after Nazi Germany surrendered and no more U-boats about?: Cooking fat ration cut to half."

"I know. Our local golf course also." another said, "Nothing there but a sea of vegetable plots, with here and there a patch of sandy ground that had been a bunker. And the clubhouse turned into a shop selling fertilizer and tools and suchlike and buying surplus crop, and while I was there a lorry came and tipped out a load of sewage sludge to manure the plots."

One large building of old Heathrow was removed, and the people did not regret it much: the quarry's gravel-and-sand-separator building. From it, a raised conveyor ran to a place where lorries drove in straight from the Bath Road well east of the
Three Magpies; this also was removed, leaving a separate access road from the Bath Road to the airfield, and the name Quarry Lane developed for it. It became a staff and emergency access.

So, after the war a visitor on the Bath Road could still "turn down at the Three Magpies" into Heathrow Road and see, not the whole village at once, but as the road curves to the right, one building or farm and then another peeping through trees and orchard and tall hedges, until he passed Heathrow Farm and reached where the road starts to bend slightly the other way. That is why some casual visitors think that Heathrow is only "a few cottages", particularly if he is merely using Cain's Lane as a handy shortcut.

Around, the farms and market gardens grew food as they had for many years, and were filling in the last of the runway drain trenches and runway course scrapes. The area's planning authority, alarmed after the airport plan scare, decided to allow no more digging of brickearth or gravel to sell it (as it was or as bricks) out of the area, as the area was starting to look "moth-eaten" with old and current quarries; someone reckoned that if the war and the Air Ministry had not intervened, a bit of arithmetic showed that by the year 2000 the big Heathrow quarry would have been about as big as Fairey's airfield, making an alarmingly big hole in eastern Heathrow. Westward and southwestward is already as much area of dug-out lakes and reservoirs as all of Heathrow and its land. Also, they planned to allow no more building on brickearth soil areas, except what was needed to help farming and market gardening, and on land already spoiled by quarrying. The Wilds, who had grown largely flowers until the war forced change to growing food, in the general rationing and shortage decided to keep on growing food. Fairey's also sent some local produce to market - caught wild rabbits - rabbits on airfield grass must be cleared out, else taxiing planes run them over, and their droppings attract mice, which attract owls, which cause birdstrike risk for aircraft. The duck's eggs which Lord Woolton saw, all hatched, and the ducklings grew into big ducks. To help to repair airport site contractor damage to land, they unexpectedly had help from a nearby firm who wanted somewhere to train new excavation equipment drivers.

Army units still occupied some houses in Hatton Road, but every security road closure sent displaced north-south through traffic through Heathrow village, inconveniencing Fairey's, who complained back and suggested that a new main road from Longford to Stanwellmoor would be useful. The Air Ministry bought the Heathrow Brick Company's quarry from bankruptcy liquidators. Further attempts to restart the big Heathrow Airport plan wallowed through need to save money after the war, and demands to preserve listed buildings, and protests by public weary of food rationing and knowing that land taken off farming means less food, and the area not wanting the extra road traffic resulting, and planning procedure delays. It was realized that, as airliners got bigger and more frequent and so needed longer runways, of the big Heathrow plan, only the two west-to-east runways could be easily lengthened, aiming aircraft landing and takeoff din pointblank at the Windsor and Eton area including where the King often lived, and at the west of inner London.

Fairey Aviation started to move aircraft assembly from Hayes in Middlesex to what space could be found in hangars and spare airport plan site huts and on the quarry land, and started to run buses for its workmen between its airfield and places around. The quarry was much bigger than at the survey in 1934, because of wartime needs for sand and gravel. The quarry company had called itself the Heathrow Brick Campany, seeing farm buildings made of brick baked on site; but enough brickearth to build a house or barn now and then is not the same as enough for a commercial quarry, and to make a living they had to go under the brickearth for the sand and gravel mixture. Three men from Palmer's Farm went onto the quarry land and marked out land along its edges that still had good soil on, and Fairey's earmarked this land to be shared among its on-site workmen as vegetable allotments, plus some
land in its last acquisition at the north edge of its airfield land towards Heathrow Road.

A newspaper political cartoon showed a crashed fullsized airliner marked "Heathrow Airport Scheme 1944" written along its fuselage, and Air Ministry men baling out of it, and one of them saying "Well, that was a waste of time and money, and it's left us in a wrong place." Nearby in the drawing was Heathrow Hall farmhouse and its cedar tree, now fairly well known from a newspaper photograph.

After the plan collapse which it described, airport status came to Heathrow slowly and small-scale. More landings and takeoffs of small or smallish planes overspilled from Heston and Northolt became flights scheduled to Heathrow in the first place. After one morning landing, three passengers who had missed breakfast at home for an early start, not satisfied by what was on show in the airfield snack stand, knew where to go, as one of them had seen it well as the plane was landing; he led the three out into the village and to Perrott's Farm, and pleaded, and secured two fried eggs and a large thick fried slice of rough-cut bacon and two large sandwiches each for a fair price in an outbuilding; thus started the first of the village's farm cafes.

Fairey's talked of restarting its yearly airshows: there had been one each May from 1935 to 1939, and they had attracted more visitors to Heathrow than in all the rest of the year: for example, at the May 1935 airshow about 200 cars were parked along the edge of the airfield northwest of Gamble's Farm. The local people, and Fairey's, celebrated Christmas 1945 more abundantly and with more hope than for some time, and the corrugated iron chapel near the Cain's Lane junction rang with festive singing and promise of a good 1946. One of the hymns was "We plough the fields and scatter / the good seed on the land", which put people in mind of restarting the yearly Middlesex ploughing competitions, in recent years (up to 1937) near Tithe Barn Lane on Heathrow Hall land which was under stubble after harvest.

But the weather did not intend to help them to recover. In 1946 "summer fell on a Wednesday", as the saying went: Britain had only one good hot complete sunny day that year. The rest of the so-called summer of 1946 was rain, more rain, long heavy showers, wind-driven rain, endless weather depressions and fronts of every description dropping the contents of the western ocean on the land with nothing to do except run back to the sea. The hay was ruined. This experience drove many British farmers to later change from haymaking to silage-making to feed livestock. But horses cannot eat silage. Britain's wheat crop was badly damaged, and bread rationing came, which had not come during the war. The rain drenched Heathrow the same as everywhere else in Britain. In former centuries this weather would have caused famine; importing wheat from Canada kept the population alive, but it cost foreign exchange and rationing was still needed. Some approached Fairey's to try to get them to let them spread cut hay or wheat or oats on hangar floors to dry out of the rain, or used spare uncollected airport site huts for this. Flu running through the area put most of them off work for a few days each, and floored some old people and sometimes went to pneumonia, and in the still-running tight petrol rationing several of their horses well learned the way north to Hillingdon Hospital, and to their riders the noise of hooves and iron-tyred carriage wheels echoing under West Drayton station bridge had an ominous tone.

During this, a market gardener opposite Fairey's entrance dreamed yet again that the airport site contractors were back devastating the area. Something on site set off an alarm siren. But the siren changed into one of his cockerels crowing as he woke. There were a few contractor's men there, but he had been told of it: the endless wet had driven Fairey's to put in new field drains in their airfield, and the main drains were run south-southwestwards and emptied into the Duke of Northumberland's River. The job was finished. The airfield dried well.

After six missed years Fairey's restarted its annual airshow, in May 1946. Its catering staff did not have to go far to buy plenty of strawberries and saladings for
the food served at the event: Croft House and Shrub End's greenhouses could be seen from the field opposite the airfield entrance, and Heathrow Farm had built greenhouses where there had been farm buildings whose sites had been scraped out to below their foundations by airport site contractors. The show aircraft flew in and parked and were refuelled and if necessary were sheeted down. In later years Quarry Lane was used as airshow access, avoiding choking the village lanes with airshow traffic. Overnight rain stopped and the clouds tattered and partly cleared an hour after it got light; the airshow looked like about fitting between the passage of two weather fronts; people started to set up.

The foxhunting horn called the hounds to keep on hunting and chasing. But there was no foxhunt around, and there had been none when that call sounded somewhat over a year before for the confrontation with invading gypsies a bit south of the two far farms on Cain's Lane during the difficult time. By now all the local men and Fairey Aviation's men knew what it meant. It came from roughly opposite Bathurst market garden house on the north part of Heathrow Road, north of Heathrow Hall. Men ran to the signal and saw Sir Charles Richard Fairey's car and a few men on foot in the middle of the road trying to block a convoy of miscellaneous vehicles. They heard an argument. Sir Fairey was shouting:

"I didn't book you and you can't come in! Even though you asked four offices in my firm saying you were different people each time. My airshow can support itself: I don't want showmen. I don't want my airshow announcements drowned out by fairground music or silly noises. I don't want people blaming my firm for your dishonest game stalls, or the tone lowered, or your excuses and delays paying for site usage. Back off to the main road and get out."

"Please! We had a bad time through the war, no petrol or diesel ration, can only buy each sort of rationed goods at one shop in one town and never mind we've got to travel about for a living, our men getting conscripted, cops stopped us and hauled seven men off and sent them to be conscripted, said they'd "evaded conscription" by travelling about,..."

"No. Armed Forces marching bands are coming to play the music before the flying, and we don't want you drowning them out either. And there's no spare space for you. And people don't like callup-dodgers."

"Look at all that space at the back by the river. We could go there."

"That's needed to park private or company planes that some people come in. Get out! The police are coming."

"That's bluff. Just drive past him on the verge. He can't keep us off the farmland."

By now Frederick Philp had seen and heard and run back. Soon after, a large diesel-powered noise started behind the two-roofed bulk of Heathrow Hall, and got louder as its source approached. Sir Fairey backed his car sideways and parked along the verge, leaving space for Frederick Philp to stop the bulldozer beside him.

"All of us agreed a while ago: no showmen on our land. They leave litter and make noise and a mess, and get in the way, and as Sir Fairey said."

"Gah. Leave the #@%$£, try the other road."

"Phone the sludge works to put their sewage tanker to block Tithe Barn Lane north entry."

"Let's set up in that field."

"No you don't." said Frederick, and revved his engine, "He helped to see off the plan to obliterate Heathrow including his firm's airfield which was developing warplanes for the war, merely to start a big civil airport in wartime and never mind how much it was robbing money and men's work off the war effort, and he gave other help, and we'll see you off.", and worked out police car and police van travel time from Hounslow.

Soon after, police came, a few, then in force. The showmen claimed to be ordinary traffic cutting through Heathrow to avoid traffic jam on Hatton Road, but
names on the sides of their vehicles showed that that was not so. There followed the usual name and address and vehicle details taking, and the showmen admitted defeat.

Everybody dispersed and went about their ordinary work, as the police had ordered. The police kept the showmen moving along through the village, made sure they did not turn into Cain's Lane or High Tree Lane or stop or set up anywhere, directed them past Perry Oaks and through Stanwell, and away, and into disused quarry land, where they were thoroughly checked for vehicle tax, driving licences, motor insurance, where they had got fuel from, illegal gambling machines, and ownership of secondhand property found on them. Delayed legitimate traffic was allowed through after the showmen had gone. The airshow went without a hitch. Coaches and buses and a few cars came and parked in the appointed place in the quarry land. Four of the area's market wagons ferried people from Three Magpies road junction (where the bus stop was) to the airfield gate; the towing horses attracted admiration. Marching armed forces bands played. Three men from one of the cottages spaced out between Heathrow Farm and Perry Oaks sang a somewhat sea-shanty-like song describing a typical 14-mile 6-hour journey around 1880 by horsedrawn market wagon to Covent Garden market to sell produce, starting at 10 pm to reach the market when it opened at 4 am. Some of the farmers and market gardeners showed exhibits of what they grew, and a big map showing what was growing in what field. A short rain shower went over a bit before the flying started.

Planes, many of types famed in war news, flew aerobatics or were looked at on the ground. One plane looked very odd: its engine had a big hole front and rear and blasted backwards like a giant blowtorch, and it had no propeller, but it flew very fast. The milk churn lorry collected and delivered as usual through the dense traffic of visitors. Before the flying started, people strayed from the airfield and bought vegetables and strawberries and lettuces and saladings at market gardeners' gates; that food would not have existed if it had not been for the 1944 bean-spiller. The airshow finished and flying visitors flew away in the dry, but invading ranks of "mare's tails" cirrus clouds had thickened to solid overcast, and the next rain started a bit before sunset.

The months that should been 1946 summer ran their soaked dripping course to autumn and winter and two routine winter cold spells. Vegetable and fruit growers had it easier, but drying out onions for storage was a problem. The 100th Middlesex horse-ploughing competition was held in September 1946 on the northwestern fields after seven missed years.

1947 WINTER

Then 21 January 1947 came, and the land was under snow for seven weeks, and the long frost, and echoes of the Canadian Arctic as ferries from Dover to Ostend had to turn back because of pack ice along the coast of Belgium. (For this winter in OTL, see this link.) In the cold, fallen snow did not get wet and stick but stayed powdery and drifted and blew back onto roads and railways that it had been cleared off. Transport of essentials and outdoor work was grossly impeded. 750,000 railway wagons of coal were trapped by snow. Nearly every day it snowed, accumulating and not melting. At Heathrow, as on farmland everywhere else, men brought livestock indoors, and counted stored food and fodder, and shovelled snow, and prepared to wait it out. Frost destroyed 70,000 tons of potatoes in Britain, and brought potato rationing for the first time.

Frederick Philp shovelled out paths to his livestock houses, fed his livestock as he could, and was thankful that he had not clipped his carthorses' winter coats off.
Anything that could shift snow was useful. He dressed in all the warm garments that he could, cleared in front of Stephen's Barn, was thankful that he had plenty of diesel stored, and started the bulldozer that chance and a construction firm bankruptcy had left him with (and Perry Oaks's children had nicknamed it Smaug, after a dragon in a story book that they had, and use of the name spread). It could only push ahead, not to the side like a snowplough, so sometimes he had to turn aside to push one load of snow aside onto a road verge and back up, as he cleared snow, for the first of many times, along the roads between the Heathrow farms and then to the Three Magpies junction, and west along the Bath Road for a while, until he came to a length already cleared by a Middlesex County lorry with a snowplough.

A police car went past, slow and uncertain on the un-gritted white snow pack. Its driver asked him if he could tow out a police vehicle that had skidded into a drift on the south side of the Bath Road a little west of Cranford. Frederick turned on his tracks and went there. The vehicle was a police van, often known as a Black Maria, in a ditch at an angle, and already buried in drifting snow. Windblown snow got in his eyes. He went to the bulldozer's tools compartment and got out two shovels; a policeman guarding the van knew what that meant. Between them they dug down to the van's back towing link.

Frederick ran two thick ropes from it over the top edge of the bulldozer's blade and tied them to support linkages. He got in its driving seat and backed, pulling the van back onto the road. It hesitated, and settled on its wheels rather than on its side. They shovelled the rest of the snow off the van. The van's engine started; they went their ways. He went to Cranford, along Hatton Road past the three notable houses (The Limes and The Cedars and Hatton Gore) and many other houses that the airport plan had threatened, to Hatton, clearing snow as he went, and up Cain's Lane, between the airfield on the left and F.W.Longhurst's land on the right, partly market garden land and part orchard.

Some of F.W.Longhurst's land had been a field called Lord's Field, a name not referring to God as some thought, but because at the Enclosure of the Commons in 1819 when Harmondsworth parish's open fields and heath land were split into personally-owned fields, that field was given to the Lord of the Manor instead of a right to tithes; in 1898 it was sold. The parish had had duties to the area's poor, and instead of that, some smallish fields nearby were given to the local poor, in theory, which in actuality meant to a committee called the Commissioners of the Poor, who some time after 1898 sold it. (Longhurst had also had 12 acres on the other side of Cain's Lane, but on 5 January 1939 he told it to Fairey's, and it is now part of the airfield.)

All this land was now deep under snow. Longhurst and his men had shovelled what snow they could off the road and cart tracks, aided by his tractor, which now had a snow plough which they had made out of oddments of thick wood. Frederick passing called to him: "Last time I saw the snow emergency committee I told them that you and some others need more diesel because of the amount used clearing snow.". Frederick drove on, and went in Fairey's gate to the big hangar as it started to snow heavily again. An airfield maintenance man thanked him and gave him a pair of pilot's goggles to keep driven snow out of his eyes. He drove home.

Horses were useful: a horse can wade through snow too deep for a man, but not if the snow is over the horse's belly. Some made sledges for a man or a horse (or in one case, two yoked cows) to pull, to move supplies. Frederick had plenty of work clearing snow in those weeks, in and around his home area. Drifts became higher as snow accumulated. Fairey's made snowploughs for two of its lorries, and used them to start clearing four runways in "H" pattern in the snow on their airfield, for aeroplanes to land bringing supplies, and then brought to his door something that they had made: a large metal skid for him to tow carrying goods so that he, having a
tracked vehicle, could haul supplies over deep snow, and across country when roads were blocked with stuck vehicles or trees brought down by weight of snow.

After that, the area's snow emergency organizers knew of him and his telephone number and could coordinate him in with others willing to help, and had fuel and engine oil for him, and he hoped that his telephone line striding on many poles across the frigid snowbound distances of Heathrow and Sipson and beyond to the exchange at West Drayton would not come down, and that the exchange's telephone operators could get in to work, for all calls on his telephone line were through the operator. He made a log of all these jobs in an old exercise book. There were radio reports of sea freezing hindering shipping. All night it plastered with hard powder snow and a strong wind blew it about, and next day he had to clear the village's roads again. Deep snow and extreme cold made easy routine journeys long and risky.

Another day, other calls. Left at the Three Magpies, help to clear snow on the Bath Road west to the Wraybury River bridge; on the north side the Technicolor and Penguin Books factories, and Black and Decker further west, were dark and silent, for the Government allowed no coal to be supplied to industry, as giving people the heating fuel to stay alive was more important. At Black and Decker turn right into Hatch Lane, and soon after, help to straighten a jackknifed articulated lorry blocking traffic. Clear snow off the road to Harmondsworth, then to Sipson; around there suburban streets had started to appear and there were more people to shovel snow within their walking reach. And then home. And many days similar. He had a call from Eglantine Cottage to uncover deep-buried turnip clamps and break them open with his back ripper, as the ground was frozen hard deep. He had calls to the three northern villages (Harmondsworth, Sipson, Harlington), and was thankful that his mount was being used to flatten snowdrifts, and not by some airport contractor's man to flatten the houses, and he again wondered what would happened if it had not been for the 1944 bean-spiller. In mid-February the weather pattern wriggled around but settled back as it had been, and the cold and deep snow went on, and the silence as snow absorbed sound and kept people indoors and traffic off the roads, and the Arctic howl of wind over snow, and endless snow-shovelling.

He well remembered his long run. His telephone rang, with a call to go to Sipson, with his towed goods skid. In Sipson village the snow was shallow and often cleared, and he was told to clear snow to the cottage hospital on the road to Harlington, with two ambulances following him; rescue helicopters were unheard-of back then. The convoy assembled at the crossroads, where are the King William IV pub, dark and out of beer, and Sipson Farm farmhouse where Thomas Wild ran the area, and north and east several acres of greenhouses, and people on the long job of brushing snow off their roofs to prevent breakages from weight of snow. Then a man ski-ed in saying that that hospital was full, and its power was out, and it had to be Hillingdon. He knew the way - easy in summer on his bicycle or on or behind a horse to visit a sick relative, but not now. A delay while police queried someone who they suspected of social visiting rather than being on a necessary journey. During this a man saw him sitting in the open with no cab and ran out of a house and handed him a woman's fur coat, saying "This was my aunt's, but she died. As long as you bring it back when it's got warm.": its fur was thick and it had long tails, and he eagerly put it on. Other traffic followed him. Then they went out of the north exit from Sipson, and the Antarctic expedition began. (Some of this open country has since been built over.) A snowdrift higher than his house stood across the road. He pushed a way up and over it, backed, then had to do this twice more before there was a way through at road level. And several times more further on. Cold like normally found in north Norway bit in to his bones. His engine blasted black smoke upwards as he shifted aside a roadside pine tree brought down by weight of snow. Drifting snow stung his cheeks, and he was thankful for his pilot's goggles. He had to rescue a snowplough lorry buried in a drift.
At last he came to West Drayton, where the post sorting office and the telephone exchange were, under a grey sky darkening with threat of more snow, and through suburb to its railway station bridge, and supplies unloaded from trains being sorted. Men there knew where he was going and loaded hospital supplies on his goods skid. They set off again, through the deep snow and sun nearing the western horizon, and more drifts to break through. A few flakes started to fall. He got to Hillingdon at last, and a delay - an Army man told him that an articulated lorry had jackknifed across the road ahead: his second so far. The patients were getting urgent, so they had to be put on his goods skid, wrapped in all the bedding that was in the ambulances; he threw the fur coat to them. He set off across country, as his tracks allowed. He uprooted a gap in a hedge to make a way - "like the airport site contractors did all too often, sorry", he thought - and two fences, trampling through a crop that looked like January King cabbages but would certainly be useless after the long intense frost, and onto a road near the hospital - and a baby cried on his towed goods skid. One of the patients was childbirth with a complication, but the bumping had done the trick and the baby was safely out. "It's taxi drivers that get babies born on board - bulldozer drivers don't." he thought. He got to the hospital casualty entrance. Staff came out and took the patients and the supplies; he went in with them. He recovered the coat, and the ambulancemen recovered their bedding, in the warm at last. He asked a doctor how the mother and the baby were, and was told that they were doing well.

"It's a boy. The mother wants to know your name." the doctor asked him.

"Frederick Philp, Heathrow Hall, Heathrow, mail via West Drayton, Middlesex. Between main roads, a bit hard to find. It's in the country: one man trying to find us by the postal address wasted most of a day wandering round West Drayton on a pushbike looking in vain for a backstreet called Heath Row, didn't think to ask someone. That's why I put "via" or "near" in addresses on letters and never mind what the Post Office says."

"I better take your temperature."

"I'm all right. I'm needed at West Drayton station. I better go. I don't need nursing, and likely you're busy." Frederick said. But the doctor insisted, and Frederick agreed.

"93.3 degrees [Fahrenheit]. You've got hypothermia, what people used to call 'exposure', sitting out on top of that thing all that way. You better stay the night here and get warm, or you'll be found dead on that thing."

"I don't want to tie up a bed. I can sleep in any odd corner."

"OK, the boiler room should be warm. By the way, from what you said, next time don't sling that coat. Keep it. You were driving, and if the driver gets incapacitated by hypothermia and can't drive on, you and your vehicle could quite easily get snowed and drifted over, and everybody riding on it, and not found till it's too late. We've had too many in here that have parted with warm clothing like that, more charitableness than sense, and been rescued unconscious from hypothermia, and likely some not found."

"If you refuel the bulldozer, it must be diesel. For Christ's sake don't put petrol in it: there's a big difference. If it tried to run on petrol it'd likely catch fire."

Frederick slept in the boiler room on an old mattress that the boilerman sat on sometimes. In the morning he felt warm, went back to casualty, and asked for the visitors' snack counter. A nurse brought him breakfast on a tray: a fried egg, three rashers of bacon, and two big pieces of toast. He thanked her, ate it, went out, and found the bulldozer: someone had refuelled it. He started it, cleared snow in larger open spaces in the hospital grounds, and went back to West Drayton station in a blizzard re-clearing the road; he reflected that the road would soon be snowed up again behind him.

At West Drayton station he was told to stay there at nights and help to clear snow and deliver goods cross-country that had come on the railway. Haul food and
animal fodder on his skid to a farm whose drive was blocked with a parked tractor and a gate chained with a padlock full of rust and hard ice: he broke a fence twice to make a new route past the tractor, and flattened the gate, and delivered the supplies. The farmer complained about the gate, but a few squirts of oil into the keyhole and then working the lock a few times in time two months before would have helped. On the way back he started to shift a drift, saw wool, backed off, and so the farmer rescued eleven sheep. Go to another farm and tow out a doctor's car which had got trapped in when it snowed while the doctor was attending to a patient. Ditto, but this time it was an over-venturous milk churn lorry driver. As often as not in yet another snowstorm. Wait while curious children in a roadside house were brought indoors. Help to clear the road to Hillingdon Hospital again; they told him that the mother had called her baby Frederick. And more of the same, until after seven nights at West Drayton he got a haulage job south. Load up his towed goods skid. Wait while an innkeeper was arrested for starting a fight because the emergency men made his beer barrels wait behind the food and coal and medicine. South to Sipson, and the old job again because new drifting had already undone the previous day's clearing; with the goods rode a Ministry of Food man (to supervise distributing rationed goods) and a soldier (ordered to guard some sorts of supplies in transit). Sipson Farm's men were still busy clearing weight of snow off greenhouse roofs. Right turn to Harmondsworth, switchbacking over many high drifts in the endless flat white, and into a field to get past a stuck broken-down lorry: a wheeled vehicle could not have done that. They reached Harmondsworth's shops, and trouble.

Two men came up, saying that they were the butcher's assistants collecting the meat. Their accents sounded wrong for the area, and Frederick refused. The two got persistent. Frederick clicked his shotgun's mechanism at them. The soldier unslung his rifle and ordered the two to lie down. One of the two said that the coal merchant would not like it. The inconsistency was noticed. The soldier called out to someone on the pavement: "Never mind looking scared: go fetch the butcher and the coal merchant to see who these two are!" The two pleaded other business, but Frederick told them to stay there, and two customers in the street helped to restrain the two. The soldier, whose hands were full helping in this, told a customer the place in his kit to get a handcuff and to help to handcuff the pair right hand to right hand so they could not run away side by side. "I think we caught ourselves a couple of spivs." Frederick said as the butcher and the coal merchant came.

"They are not either of us's assistants. They kept trying to collect customers' orders for them over the last week, but they're not from around here." said the butcher, "This snow's made enough shortage without that sort of #@%$ making bad worse." After the delay while police came and took the two prisoners and everybody's personal details and evidence, Frederick Philp and his two passengers distributed the supplies to the correct recipients and carried on through a blinding plastering blizzard making gaps in more drifts to Longford, across fields to Stanwell, and through or over yet more deep snow, and shifting a large spruce tree brought down by weight of snow, to Hatton, where they delivered the last of the supplies. Then at last up Cain's Lane, clearing yet more snow, and thankfully back to Heathrow Hall at last, where Frederick stopped. His wife came out.

"Irene, make up two of the spare beds, will you?" he asked her.

Something of an argument started. The soldier was under orders to get back to West Drayton, and also to escort the Ministry man. The Ministry man badly wanted a meal and warm, and Frederick agreed, too sleepy to want to drive further without a night's sleep. Mrs. Philp got them dinner. Frederick telephoned West Drayton station to tell the emergency men where the three were. They stayed the night in Heathrow Hall, warm with a wood fire. Outside, the snow got thicker and blew about, and Frederick expected a big snow-clearing job the next day, and realized that there could easily have been no shelter there but only bits of foundations under the south edge of an enormous concrete runway.
They woke, feeling warmer than they had expected. They looked out of windows. Frederick quickly noted and dated the eight days' events in the old exercise book, and below it wrote, plainly, 'THANK GOD, THE THAW'.

It was 10 March 1947. Most of the snow melted that day, and there were great floods in many places. The soldier and the Ministry man thanked Frederick, and his wife for the dinner and the breakfast.

Frederick took them on a cart to the Three Magpies through slush and drip and melt; part way up the road from there to Sipson they came across an army lorry, which the two transferred to. He went home and put the cart and its horse and the bulldozer and its towed goods skid away, and restarted his farm and market garden routine as Heathrow's land reappeared from under the smothering white; he reflected that it would not have reappeared as easily from under airport concrete. Recovering from frost damage took longer. The land could not drain properly until the soil had thawed as deep as it had frozen. Autumn-sown broad beans were only a memory of work and money lost keeping the seeds back from sale to plant them. Frost had got into store sheds and taken many root crops, and many treasured dahlia roots kept as a relic of long-ago abundant peacetime garden flowers. A quarter of Britain's sheep had died, particularly on big infertile moor areas such as in Wales and the Pennines; in fertile farm areas such as Heathrow there were plenty of men to check on the sheep, and less snow because the land was low and flat, but getting through cold weather needs food, and 1946 summer had left next to no hay, so sheep had had to be let out to graze on fields where wind had blown the snow off, piling it into drifts elsewhere, all too often over sheep which had sheltered against hedges, and had to be searched for by a man with a shovel and a long thin stick for probing. Lambing started before the thaw. Fortunately their area did not lose as badly as some areas, and only a few livestock had to go on the unreturning journey south, down High Tree Lane to the knackers' at the place with the fate- sounding name, Court Farm west of West Bedfont.

Many of the horses were in a thin poor condition after the long cold after the hay-less summer and low wheat and oats harvest, and had to be left to stuff themselves all day on the thankful spring grass while he caught up with delayed ploughing in the same way as he had to before most of the horses came back; its steel tracks trod flat the withered brown frosted remains of winter cabbages and winter cauliflowers, and of Brussels sprouts only half way through their cropping season, no use for men or pigs or hutch rabbits, and the plough buried them, along with their opinion of Emmanuel Shinwell the current Fuel Minister's gamble in 1946 for a mild winter instead of him properly attending to the nation's coal supply. Growing cut flowers would have to take several years to restart. A cold February before an early Easter can put a pickaxe handle through hopes of a Mothering Sunday daffodil trade; people growing flowers to get some colour back into their gardens had to be reminded that wallflowers are related to brassicas and like them can carry the very harmful clubroot disease, which some call "finger and toe" from its appearance. Before 1819 when the land southeast of Heathrow Road was part of "The Heath", used as common grazing, men would be waiting for the first chance in late winter to set fire to the heath to burn off the dead grass which had long ago lost its food value and to encourage the roots to send up the badly needed "early bite" of fresh young green grass.

The trouble was not over: that March was the wettest for 300 years. Early on 16 March 1947 the horn signal called, and the assembled men rushed with carthorses to Fairey's and helped to pull all exposed aeroplanes into the hangars, and then could do little but shelter and watch furiously waving treetops and flying branches and listen to the screech of a gale and wood ripping and the endless thumping of trees being blown down, only two and a part years after the airport site contractors had felled many. Heathrow Hall's big cedar survived undamaged; Frederick Philp had parked the bulldozer and his tractor over its roots on the upwind side to try to stop it
from being blown down. Next day and after came the long job of clearing fallen trees and branches off the roads, and chainsaws were not commonly available then; and the rain went on. But at last the rain stopped, and Fairey's held their 1947 airshow undisturbed, and 1947 summer was very hot and dry. Again some of the village's market wagons ferried people between the airshow and the Three Magpies bus stop, and one of the horses used was the filly foal born during the difficult time, now two and a bit years old and ready to start work.

But by the time the land was dry enough for heavy vehicles to get on the land to remove fallen trees, the young wheat and oats had grown well up, and at 1947 harvest there was much scythe and sickle work cutting where reaper-binders could not get in among fallen trunks and branches, which had to wait until after harvest to be removed without damaging crops.

The two arrested men's case came up. Frederick sold his produce as usual, went from Covent Garden market to the Old Bailey, was not needed as a witness because the two pleaded guilty, went on the Underground to Hounslow West, bus to the Three Magpies, and walked home.

In May 1947 Frederick Philp, and others, were called to a meeting in Harmondsworth. He said: "We in Heathrow owe many in other areas nearby a lot for the help you gave us in the difficult time after the return. We will have to look for a way to pay back. Not in the enforceable moneylender sense, but we still feel that we owe it back some time to thank you: you were generous in seed and stock and many things."

A man from Mayfields said "I reckon you've paid it back, in clearing snow endlessly, at great personal risk, for seven weeks, to help to let supplies be moved and brought in, and livestock rescued."

"I just had a job to do." said Frederick, "I don't know about 'personal risk', except I was in a fight near here helping to arrest those two thieves."

"Risk, yes, from hypothermia!, as that doctor in Hillingdon Hospital said, that means your blood temperature getting too low for life, sitting out open on that bulldozer without a cab shifting snow off roads and dragging supplies across country on that towed skid. Lucky that man in Sipson lent you that fur coat."

"Thanks, I took it back to him on the way here. At school I read about a bad winter in the Hiawatha poem near its end: I never thought we'd get a real winter like that here in England."

So the commendation was announced. Plans for a dinner afterwards threatened to be grossly hindered by the endlessly prolonged food rationing, which people could see no end to; it was seven more years before the last type of food came off ration: meat on 4 July 1954. "I'm sick of this." said someone, "We can't provide a decent dinner to honour and thank these people without cutting into our rations which never seem to get bigger, and the war's over, and now bread and potatoes are rationed and that's the end of the last two last-resort belly-fillers; and that idiot telling people not to buy their onion rations if they grow onions; that's why people grow onions in their back gardens and allotments, to add to their rations. Going to a hotel costs and runs into every sort of catering trade dishonesty and small portions and plain common bad practice such as meat kept standing hot in gravy and vegetables for the day all cooked at once and kept standing and served grossly overcooked.". But this time, as happened from time to time, in face of wanting to give the people involved a proper appreciation, patience at rationing even tighter than in wartime dragging on endless weary years after the war ended, snapped, and a big fat lamb quietly throat-cut somewhere around provided the meat. In a food-growing area with market gardens all around, getting extra vegetables of rationable types was no problem. Eggs and milk could always be got hold of, with plenty of hens and cows around. Someone had a small home wheat-grinder to make flour. The dinner was cooked and served. The rest of the lamb was given to local people who it was felt needed it.
Back home, there was more work, on Heathrow Hall's south-facing sunny side. A carthorse pulled on a rope as old clinging thick-stemmed ivy was stripped off. A tall hedge was cut-and-laid to let sun shine over it. Ornamental shrubs were uprooted, and replaced with peach saplings grown from some of the peach stones found in vegetable waste which the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly had dumped on them as they passed coming home during the Reconstruction after their first desperate market run after the Return. The other peach saplings were given to other farms in the area that had a suitable south-facing sunny wall. Over the years the trees grew and fruited well.

THE OLD PLAN LEFT SOMETHING

In late summer 1947 as scheduled transatlantic airliner services were gradually restarting, a Lockheed Constellation airliner from Ottawa in Canada to Croydon had run into adverse wind and was short of fuel and had to land where it could, and radioed to say so. Air traffic control technology was not what it is now. As it descended over Windsor and the Staines reservoirs its pilot, Henry Sutton, radioed that it was coming in to land on Heathrow runway 09. To most that message would not seem amiss, but Paul Whitton, current duty air traffic control man at RAF Northolt, noticed the wrongness. "If it hadn't been for that bean-spiller in 1944 ... except in the big snow ..." briefly crossed his mind as he radioed back in alarm, "Pull up! There's no runways at Heathrow, only a small grass airfield! Pull up!" But Sutton had seen in time that across the supposed runway the gaps in hedges were closed with wire fences and small young hedge plants, and that much of it was under crop. The plane's engines revved to maximum as Sutton fought for height and succeeded, skimmed through a gap left treeless by the airport contractors and the gale between Heathrow Hall and Palmer's Farm, rattled windows in both, woke three babies, set every dog in the village barking, nearly scooped up a line of washing on his undercarriage, gained height over the lake, turned left, and landed safe at RAF Northolt. He was called in about what he had done; reports were taken, and there was a somewhat angry conference about the near miss, during which he had been expected to quickly admit full guilt and let them quickly go back to their work, but instead complained at length that his boss had repeatedly hijacked his rest periods for complaints and queries and issues and desires for information, and long periods without food because of being being telephoned long before his alarm clock had been set to to come to work too quick for him to have breakfast, and being called off a meal which he had just sat down to in the airfield cafe, and being ordered to throw a packed lunch away and come at once, and not put it in his locker or his pack for later, digging up some rule against employees storing personal food in the building or letting them be seen eating by visitors, and that his co-pilot had had the same and the day before went home after a very long full day's turn and in sight of his wife and in smell of his dinner being cooked he was fetched back in a staff car for another local flight and did not get back home until after midnight, and still had to start work the usual time in the morning. During this a male nurse, who was the firm's first aid and minor ailments man, found an excuse to intrude on the meeting and pointed out that the alleged negligence was not his fault but due to chronic lack of sleep and low blood sugar level from being too long without a meal; resulting in a reprimand for "chatterboxing about, risking the firm's good name". Sutton slept there that night. Something in an archaeology report that Whitton had seen in a newspaper gave him an idea of what Sutton had seen. Next day Whitton put in a flight slot for a local low-altitude light aircraft flight, got a relief man for his post, and got in a de Havilland Tiger Moth, with Sutton as passenger, and set off
southwest, and turned east over Staines. The cool wind over his head was a thankful relief in the endless incinerator-like weather. As he came over the reservoirs and neared Heathrow, he saw what Sutton had seen. He saw Heathrow grass airfield, and Heathrow village with its curved main street and house pattern, and the easy-to-recognize sewage sludge works west of Perry Oaks. And around and through the village was a ghost of a far larger airfield, with three long wide runways in a triangle. Its 'Runway 09/27' (west to east) was the best marked, the other two less so. The southeast side of the triangle went through the Fairey airfield past the big hangar with 'FAIREY' repainted on each half of its roof in white on slate grey replacing wartime camouflage. What Sutton, tired after a long flight, had thought were runways were marked out in grass and crop which was more or less green or brown or taller or shorter according to how buried objects and old diggings affected how deep roots had managed to grow in search of water ever retreating as the long dry sun heat dried the land. Archaeologists call this effect 'cropmarks'. (Such marks can also show when thin lying snow melts at varying speed.) He knew that the big Heathrow Airport scheme had been started and aborted, but he did not know that it would leave lasting traces like that. He photographed it and flew back to Northolt and landed and went in and explained. The matter was heard several times being angrily talked about by airfield men when they thought they were not being overheard. It got into lists of pilot fatigue incidents and, more seriously, into newspapers, and caused a big enquiry about pilots' working hours and sanctity of pilots' rest periods. The firm's manager was summoned by cablegram to London, "... yourself comma not send agent or lawyer ...", and realized that attempt to enforce secrecy would likely send men to the Press despite Company rules, and that in rear in the undergrowth lurked the dreaded words "strike over pay and conditions". In the next issue of pilots' maps of the area the pseudo-runways were marked in red with beside them a note in red warning and telling the reader to see Note 5. Heathrow village still showed the scars of what it had been through.

AIRPORT

In April 1949 Paul Whitton went to Heathrow again, this time on his motorcycle. He turned down at the Three Magpies and reached the village, as soon as he could see it past fruit orchards. By the road 20 feet length of runway drain trench had been kept as a memory of what had happened and of still current risk, well fenced off; someone had dug a ramp down into it so ducks could get in and out. The patched-up damage to Heathrow Hall's roofs had been replaced by proper slates. New hawthorn plants in hedge gaps were well grown up. The outside world could not be completely kept out - growing car use would soon force changing the old quiet Cain's Lane junction with its kerbstoneless grass triangle in the middle into a traffic-lighted crossroads; the fourth road ran into what had been the Heathrow Brick Company's quarry, but its sign said genuinely 'HEATHROW AIRPORT'; but 'airport expansion' had taken up only the land already spoiled by the quarrying before Harold Balfour's scheme started; some prewar inch/mile Ordnance Survey maps called the airfield an airport.

In May 1949 clothes rationing at last and thank-God ended: some said that it was because the government "threw the towel in" in the face of a massive unstoppable black market in new clothes and in loose extra clothing coupons (many of them forged, or from large batches of unissued ration books stolen from printers' warehouses, or got by people falsely claiming to have lost ration books, and the ration books of the dead kept and used by the living).
The 23 February 1950 general election kept Attlee's Labour government in power, but with its Parliamentary majority so badly slashed because of Conservative promises to end rationing quickly that on 26 May 1950 it abandoned the endless losing battle against the petrol black-market and at last and thankfully stopped rationing petrol. In 1951 it called another general election and the Conservatives came into power, and over the years took more goods off ration, for example sweets and sugar in 1953, and last of all meat on 4 July 1954.

About this time as peacetime conditions slowly came back, they started to set up pedigree herds and register their cattle and sheep and carthorses as pedigree stock. Perry Oaks had stayed in use through the crisis year 1944 and was a source of pedigreable stock for the area where the people had been ordered out and had returned. For cattle they registered one herd name "Heathrow", kept partly at Perry Oaks and partly at Heathrow Hall, and as time passed including house cows at various market-gardeners' houses in the area.

Road traffic gradually increased, and more and more of it used Heathrow as a handy cut-through. This was no new thing: in 1898 some market garden and fruit land in southeast Heathrow was auctioned and the auction lot description called Cain's Lane "the main road from West Drayton to Bedfont".

Increasingly vocal demands for a bypass by Heathrow and Hatton Road residents started a plan to make a new road from Stanwellmoor to Longford, to be called Stanwellmoor Road. It was built, but disposal of the excavation spoil caused argument: the contractors wanted to sell the topsoil for the best price, but neighbouring farmers and market gardeners demanded this topsoil and subsoil to fill the least necessary and most nuisance-causing of the many wet hollows caused by old casual diggings for brickearth and gravel and sand.

A reduced version of the big Heathrow Airport plan got in some newspapers, with the north runway only, and terminal and service areas strung out along the Bath Road. It would have used much land, but spared most of the village, except Tithe Barn Farm and probably Heathrow Hall, and the north end of Hatton Road and its three listed houses. But the rest of the village would have been in all-too-close din reach of the runway, and there was no safeguard against later southward expansion.

Some airline companies, such as freight companies using old Dakotas, started using Heathrow as cheaper than big airports. For landing aircrew crew, bringing a packed lunch from home often clashed with the wife's reluctance to invade the bread and other rations for what could be bought without ration coupons at a cafe, and on Heathrow landings some of them went off-airfield and bought food at the temptingly near farms and market gardens. A Dakota, finding the airfield busy, landed on one of the northern fields which was in grass that year to rest the soil, safely, as the land was hard from the hot drought. A "stray-landing convoy" went there: a lorry to unload cargo, a customs man as the flight was from abroad, an immigration man for two human passengers from abroad, a fuel tanker, airport security, and eight of the local carthorses to tow the plane back to take off to fly to the airfield for loading. Someone joking called the place "Heathrow Terminal 4" and remarked that the planned big north runway had been used at last. Others complained that that expedition across farmland should have been an easy routine journey across the planned big airport.

Plans for a big Heathrow Airport still smouldered on, like an old volcano still emitting gas to show that there is still power deep underground there, but opinion had turned towards Foulness on the Essex coast; Dutch land-reclamation engineers, thankful for Britain's help freeing them from Nazi Germany, offered to help design the sea-dike needed to turn a large area of salt-marsh and tidal mud and sand into airport, and no farmers would lose out, except for some (rather risky) sheep grazing on saltmarsh. A problem was the name; as a placename it is pronounced (and means) "Fowl Ness", i.e. "bird headland", but "foulness" has another meaning; work had started and the airport would be named London (Maplin). Some guessed that if
the big Heathrow Airport plan had gone ahead, to the next generation "Heathrow" would mean airport and next to nobody would know that the village had ever existed.

Archaeologists, who had been hoping to be allowed to dig the sites of the village houses, were still waiting. They only got to dig one site: Palmer's Farm and two of its outbuildings had got so riddled with dry rot and death watch beetle (including due to wartime shortages preventing proper treatment with wood preservatives, and contractor damage during the Occupation) that they had to be completely gutted and re-timbered. Much of the replacement wood came from trees that had been blown down in the area by the March 1947 gale. While the buildings were roofless and floor-less, the archaeologists had a chance to dig inside and around; they found foundations of mediaeval wooden or wattle-and-daub huts that had been there before the people of the area learned to make bricks, and in old rubbish pits the usual old pottery to give dates. And inevitable oddments such as three Old Stone Age arrowheads left by men hunting when the area was still all thick wild oak-dominated high forest; and a Roman coin of the emperor Vespasian, which served largely for someone to remark that "look's like some legionary found in the taberna that he couldn't stand his round after all.". They left and wrote up; and the last word on the subject came from Frederick Philp: "I thought I'd seen the last of backfilling trenches after people from outside." as he brought his old bulldozer round and used it to re-level the garden ground around to allow cultivation.

Paul Whitton rode in. Bits of the former quarry land along the edges that still had good soil were used, or earmarked, as vegetable allotment plots for airfield workers; so also was some of the land in the south angle of the junction. Exposed brick-earth, if broken up and well manured, might gradually turn into soil. Much of the quarry area was exposed gravel - might as well try to farm Hounslow Heath, and no loss if built on, except as poor-quality rough grazing. The quarry lake was about a quarter of a mile long and was becoming reedy-edged. Work had been started on an airport hotel, to be called Heathrow Lakeview, with Terminal 2 in its bottom two floors, and a control room on top, on stilts in case of flooding, as it was down in the old quarry; the space below would be used for car parking if the lake was low enough after dry weather. (Terminal 1 was one end of the big hangar, as was sometimes done in airports before the war.) But Heathrow was clearly going to remain small and quiet and local and countrified, and not like in the wartime Air Ministry's secret plan. And a multi-storey car park: this had caused argument over non-matching appearance, but it would fit several times as many cars in the same area. Gamble's Farm along Cain's Lane was still used as airfield buildings and radio station; after long hot dry weather, cropmarks on the airfield opposite Heathrow Farm showed where Lowe's Farm's buildings had been.

A large roadside airport map now included the village, and showed that Fairey's, and the local BOAC office in an old contractors' site hut, had given up trying to persuade passengers to stick to the airfield snack bar instead of wandering round the village for the cafes and snack stalls that some of the farms were now running. Inside BOAC's hut on a wall was an artist's idea of the big office block that BOAC had hoped to get as part of the new big airport. Rationing authority men came occasionally to query about food taken straight from field or hen run or milking room to cafe without getting into the Ministry of Food's statistics. Flight time announcement started as a man bicycling round the farm cafes pinning up schedules, and crossing out flights which had departed, progressing to intercom-and-announcement lines slung to telephone poles and trees along Heathrow Road and Cain's Lane to the farm cafes high enough above joining roads and lanes not to impede high loads. Heathrow Hall's cafe was in the front of Stephen's Barn, with the old bulldozer still lurking at the back; its blade was a handy surface to stick notices and advertisements on. (The bankruptcy court had finally written it off and let some of the Heathrow farmers club together to buy it at about twice scrap price.) There
was a plan to run electric vehicles around the area to ferry people and luggage between airfield and terminals and the cafes in the village; the farms' horse-drawn wagons used for this purpose were useful - but something messy tends to happen when a horse lifts its tail - including in inconvenient places. He saw the crew of a cargo Dakota, ordered to get all their food each from different sources at whatever airfield they land on, extracting ace 2 3 4 5 from a pack of cards and naming them "Hall, Palmer's, Perrott's, Farm, Wild's" and shuffling and dealing them to choose who was to get his lunch where.

The airport now was on a telephone line run across from Hounslow exchange, and so people could dial in and out. Soon after that, West Drayton telephone exchange was converted to dial-through, but as a side-effect all its subscribers' telephone numbers changed.

There was talk of widening Cain's Lane so it could be used as an emergency runway, either full airliner width (which would use too much land), or wide enough for fuselage and undercarriage with the wings overhanging the fields, but this plan also would cause too many complications, and the idea came to nothing.

"That new big airport scheme at Gatwick:" said someone, "we at Heathrow are thankful that our farm names, Heathrow Hall, Perry Oaks, Perrott's Farm, and so on, are still on maps and the places still grow food; but surely as precious to some people are Westfield Farm, Hydecroft, The Homestead, Charlwood Park, Cotland Farm, Gatwick Manor, the places threatened by the Gatwick plan? Still, they are having the planning stage and the public enquiry, which we didn't; the plan'll have a fight on its hands to get through, the war's over, they can't plead war emergency for a civilian plan."

The current Ministry of Agriculture sold Colin Shrigley's land to him, its current tenant, who was getting old but was still active, as quickly as he could find the money; land prices there were still depressed by lingering 'planning blight' fears that the big airport plan would restart. The property company who owned it up to 1944 objected and made a fuss in Parliament, but no Crichel Down type scandal started, and the inhabitants of the area sent a petition to Parliament supporting the Ministry's action.

The people of the area, like most others, had wished King George VI a long healthy life after the stresses of the war, but his tobacco smoking habit shortened his years; in September 1951 his left lung was removed for cancer; and on 6 February 1952 he was found in Sandringham in the morning dead in bed of a coronary thrombosis aged 56, after 15 years reign; but his widow Elizabeth (later titled the Queen Mother) lived until 30 March 2002 and age 101. His older daughter Elizabeth, now queen, had to be brought back from a safari in Kenya in a hurry. As the plane came in towards landing, it passed Croydon Airport (becoming too small, and too hemmed in by suburbs to expand) and Heathrow, where the land was too wet to show the cropmark ghost outlines of the three international-length wide runways that had been started and abandoned in 1944 after the plan leak and the massive row in Parliament. "If it wasn't for that #@%$ bean-spiller, we'd have landed here easily, handily by a main road from Windsor to Buckingham Palace ..." the pilot, like many before and after, thought, and carried on to RAF Northolt. Its passengers went to Westminster and picked up the reins of government, and many watched her father's funeral. Later the King's Flight, now become the Queen's Flight, looked around for a plane with plenty capacity that could fit the comforts and communications that royalty needed and light enough to safely land and take off on half a mile of grass, and bought three of them.

This caused discussion in the airline trade. A bit later an airport man was annoyed to find a copy of an airline-trade-only periodical being passed round and discussed in the Plough and Harrow pub in the village, after it had been carelessly thrown away in a public-access waste bin, and passages in it such as "... Another job that we can't get on with ... big airport plan still not decided on ... Harold Balfour
was right, he knew that if the job was left until after the war, we'd have had endless planning delays and people can't find the money ... had to buy those three small planes to get in here ... annoying flying over in 1947 hot dry spell and seeing cropmarks where those three useful big runways were started and left ... all we've got at Heathrow is that itsy-bitsy prewar airfield and what terminal can be fitted into that old quarry, real right "outpost in the wilderness" little place instead of a big modern airport ... smoke goes up from expensive cigars and not from excavators' exhaust pipes or workmen burning demolition waste ... food is delivered to expense-account hotel kitchens and not to workmen's site canteens ... bulks of duplicated collated reports are shovelled about, not building site earth...

Meanwhile the village farmers are investing in the future as if they know that they will be here long-term: Perry Oaks and Heathrow Hall have installed modern milking parlours; they complain about people wanting to cover their land with concrete, but they are willing to cover it with glass: along Oaks Road enough land for the best part of a fair-sided airport terminal is being covered with greenhouses, even figs being grown there ... untidy mixture of airport and non-airport ... short of space and passengers must go out into the village to find cafe space ... radio beacons in hedges at corners of fields ...

"...", a photograph of a radio beacon mast in a field corner at Cain's Farm with its lower five feet draped in runner bean and outdoor tomato plants, "... night-landing guide lights in field-edge hedges ... cucumbers and marrows and tomatoes trained up the new tall airfield-edge security fencing ... vegetable patches along the edges inside the wire, that USA airforce habit to help feed their bases that got copied here ... USA travel agent booked three passengers into a penthouse suite in the Heathrow Lakeview, did not check first, it has no penthouse, its top floor is the control room, money back and had to apologize...".

MAPLIN

On 12 January 1953 the airport contractors announced closure of the last gap in the new high sea-dike walling off Maplin Sands and the River Crouch estuary, with tidal sluices to let drainage water out at low tide.

Overnight 31 January to 1 February 1953 showed that this airport scheme had helped the farmers inland, not harmed them; the storm surge wave rose high against the dike, and did not overtop or break it, shielding the farmland inland as well as the airport site, which had at least twice as much space to grow as the big Heathrow plan; and much tidal marsh along the Crouch had become good farmland.

Not the only place: over the North Sea men in Holland said that the Afsluitdijk cutting off the Zuiderzee had in one night paid back the cost of building it.

But for centuries after, the scars left on Heathrow village's land by the runway works would show from the air after a long hot dry spell.

In 1953 the myxomatosis disease came to England, putting an almost complete end to rabbit damage to crops for many years after. But it also broke continuity of the old country traditional skill of catching rabbits in bulk by long-netting.

A new place to sell produce to callers developed, on the grass around the big pond with the small wooded island just south of the Three Magpies. By then Shepherd's Pool by the north end of Tithe Barn Lane was as it should be again; replanted willows were growing well, and reeds were spreading, and waterbirds were back.

The movements of royalty did not concern them, rushing by along the Bath Road a bit less than a mile to the north; a crown does not give immunity to traffic jam delays, but the M4 motorway being built from 1965 onwards eased matters; royal
access to a long-range airliner meant usually RAF Northolt, away north beyond Hillingdon. At Heathrow, Lockheed Constellations and similar, and later Comets, sometimes flew over high and remote, and their pilots sometimes regretted what the 1944 whistleblowing had prevented, but the radio beacon LHR-HH near Heathrow Hall helped to tell them where they were. But Northolt's main runway gradually got to need resurfacing. So it came that a wet windy night in early September 1953 kept most people indoors. One of Frederick Philp's sons to pass the time was carving the white men of set of chessmen out of a long piece of cedar branchwood, got from their big cedar tree having a very overdue big clearout of dead and dying branches and dead snags; for the black men he would look for a dark piece of oak heartwood, perhaps bog oak. The not-much-used floodlights came on round the airfield, lighting the area for two and a part hours like the whole area would have been lit all the time if things had been otherwise; the light shone brightly in through farmhouse windows. Two lines of approach lights came on where the edges of the safe northeast approach route crossed field hedges. As two middle-sized planes came near, about the biggest that could safely land on half a mile of grass, some knew why that day some aircraft had been moved out of the big hangar. The two landed and taxied into the hangar so their passengers and luggage could be unloaded in the dry, as was sometimes done long before modern airliner boarding tubes were invented. Rolls-Royces and police cars came from Windsor, had been told about roadworks outside Technicolor's factory, so turned off into Tithe Barn Lane, and through Perry Oaks to the old airfield gate, and in, and about twenty minutes later came out and went back where they had come from. The floodlights were switched off. A man who was outside feeding and mucking out his carthorse recognized who the arrivers were, and he had been in the army, so he saluted as they passed. The night went back to normal.

Two days later, the return journey. Sunlight twinkled off raindrops beading leaves and twigs. Again the official cars came through Perry Oaks. This time many local people lined the road, some riding or leading work horses groomed to special-occasion best, and harness and horse-brasses well polished.

Sidney Whittington of Perry Oaks was there, showing his years, but looking his best on his Shire stallion; but horses were slowly getting fewer as farm tractors took over. Children offered flowers. Two wagonettes, one from Wild's Farm and one from Perry Oaks, well loaded with fresh local produce, and fresh bread and cakes and scones baked in the area, were on the verge at Cain's Lane end. High Tree Farm gave a big loaf of milk bread. A man from Black and Decker's by the Hatch Lane junction standing by his motorcycle gave a batch of fruit buns. All dogs were taken inside and tethered. A man with a shovel and a broom in a wheelbarrow went at the last minute along the line, checking in case wherever there were horses. Then the cars came. Men held bridles firmly. The cars slowed. The Queen was interested in the horses, although she knew more about saddle horses and racehorses than heavy haulage horses; she spoke with some of the horses' handlers. The cars went on, and in through the old airfield gate, and the two wagonettes followed, and their loads were loaded into the two planes as their passengers and their luggage boarded. Some of the local fruit and bakeries were eaten onboard as the planes took off west and turned north and flew to the nearest airfield to Balmoral, where the rest of the produce was sent to the kitchen; and for all involved normal life resumed.

September 1953 brought a thank-God-at-last end to sugar rationing, which for 14 years had grossly handcuffed home jam making and ornamental cake icing-work and many other cooking recipes. Some in the area grew sugar beet on the good land which had been narrowly rescued from disappearing under an enormous airport; but getting white sugar from it needed a sugar refinery and could not be done in a farmhouse like making butter and cheese. Next year would bring the tenth anniversary of what some called "Leak Day", when the Air Ministry's plan was leaked out and in a violent row in Parliament the big airport scheme was stopped.
(On that day in 1952 some Air Ministry men had come looking round, and ordered dinner in Heathrow Farm's cafe, keeping their ears well open: as often on that day in the area, the vegetables served included large steamed leeks (here, grown three fields away), and the pun and the point were noticed.) 1953 grain harvest was got in; after older tools had harvested the odd corners that the reaper-binders could not get into (they did not hold with leaving edges and ends to the weeds and the rabbits), there was time for a post-harvest dinner. Over half a century separated them from risk of a noble-titled landowner coming with a large entourage and commandeering the event and the food. The weather stayed hot and dry, and the event was held in the open on a field by the north end of Cain's Lane. A 1944 contractors' site hut was still there, used sometimes for crop storage, and in it the food was kept safely away from dogs and cats and chickens until served. Later some of the harvested land would be used for the Middlesex-and-around horse ploughing competition, with fewer entrants each year as spreading suburbs steadily ate up farmland; over the years sideshows developed and the event gradually changed into a general-purpose agricultural and market-gardening show.

This year, unexpected callers came: two men in a van from a farm at Thorney, a bit over a mile roughly southwest of West Drayton station. "We should have made this and brought it at the event at Harmondsworth in 1947, your Fred Philp's work in the seven weeks' snow, but the sugar rationing and the dried fruit shortage ... " one of them said. They brought out something in a large box, and put it on a table. It was a big rectangular cake, actually two square cakes stuck together with icing. The top showed a country snow scene: on it, with a suitable-sized toy bulldozer as a prop, had been represented Frederick Philp on one of his expeditions clearing a deeply drift-choked country road. The track marks, well represented, turned aside where he had pushed snow aside onto a verge. The wind had blown the snow off the fields onto the road: clearly the icer had seen real severe snow, including the small hard snow ridges (some call them 'sastrugi') that develop where powder snow has lain long being blown about. It was towing a copy of his goods skid, made in thin sheets of icing hardened with egg white mixed in, here loaded with small sweets. Alongside, (miniature) ski marks and ski stick pokes showed that someone else had also dared the white wilderness to get through with help or supplies. There was a small road sign at each end, one marked "Sipson, Heathrow" and the other "West Drayton, Hillingdon". Frederick said: "That was just like it, and hundreds more times of land like that. Never again: where that happened is being built over, and soon it'll look like any other part of outer London, and I'm starting to get on in years. The road junction by West Drayton police station where the shops are: I saw a photo taken there about 1900, and it was two country lanes joining and great tall trees all along them, and no traffic except a horse and cart. We'll likely end up as a green island with town all around. Thanks for your work." At the chosen time the inedible decorations were removed and the cake was cut and shared out.

Christmas is various things. It is a time to meet relatives. It is a time to overeat and be happy and swop presents. Sometimes it is guests bringing uninvited extras, and the host should be firm and offer the extras tea and biscuits in another room during dinner, and thus they learn not to try to freeload next year. Sometimes it is petty disasters such as a guest of honour proving to be vegetarian or on a strict medical diet. Sometimes when it is drinks, it is guests, or the main guest, proving to be teetotal or "Sorry, I'm driving", and wondering whether to watch those guests getting through the evening on water or lemonade, or (particularly if accompanying nuts and crisps (USA: potato chips) disappear like up an industrial vacuum cleaner, or if the conversation keeps drifting towards food) whether to clear the drinks away and frantically strip the kitchen stores to scratch together a dinner or tea. Sometimes it is children, given comic annuals, having to watch them being passed between a succession of adult guests, until a parent rescues the annuals and points out who they are for. And sometimes it is a too- familiar query from children at present-
opening time, and the host must leave friends and fireside to rush frantically to the nearest airport for the only place likely to have a shop such as a W.H.Smith's open selling batteries on Christmas Day. If that is a big airport such as Gatwick or Maplin, or Ringway on the south edge of Manchester, then well. But sometimes the place of hope is Heathrow, and callers finding a small airport and village farm cafes all dark and shut for the day, and birds the only thing landing and refuelling on an airfield about half a mile long and wide between Cain's Lane and High Tree Lane.

One such man in Reading tried his chances eastwards, found that all roadside petrol stations were closed or batteryless, and no newsagents open, passed Longford, and "Heathrow" started to appear on road signs. "Yet another village with nothing open" he thought from the size and style of the text, but a small airliner symbol was beside the name; he was too young to well remember the 1944 big airport plan leak and crisis and what might have been. He passed and routinely ignored a right turn to some place called Perry Oaks; opposite on the left, seeing Black and Decker's factory reminded him to buy some tools, but that would have to wait a few days. In the dull light under heavy raincloud tall strong roadside hedges, and gates set into wire fence arches, and a new vehicle track along the inside of the hedge all the way, looked likeliest to be airport edge fencing: near somewhere useful at last. As he passed the Three Magpies pub, he saw a sign pointing right to Heathrow and turned off. He found that the tall fences and hedges that he had seen were to stop theft of crop from market garden land, and was surprised at how small the airport was, and nothing open; the new "perimeter road" that he had seen was to appease complaints from police and others about livestock and horse-drawn vehicles and tractors causing obstruction on the Bath Road. But the man in the security guardhouse at Cain's Lane north end remembered from previous years and had a good stock of batteries to sell to such callers.

Around him country families got ready for Christmas dinner, and cows had to be milked and stabled horses and cattle had to be fed and mucked out after on that day like on any day. He bought what his family needed, and 6 eggs (the guardhouse kept hens in a run in back), waited drumming his fingers on his steering wheel while sheep were driven across Heathrow Road in front of him, drove out, turned left, and went home as fast as he felt was safe, back from rain and distance to his family and fireside.

NIGHT ON THE NORTHERN FIELDS

In 1955 a man called John Newton who had recently started working for Perry Oaks farm came in for work one morning, looking frightened. When asked why, he said:

"I was told to listen about at night: things have been happening, including the dog barking and chasing someone away. It got late. I was in the fields a bit east of the Tithe Barn. Nothing much at first. Then a man prowled in along Title Barn Lane from the main road. Then it got a lot colder, and a ground mist formed. But then the mist disappeared, except where the north runway in that old scheme would have been, and a bit of the northwest to southeast runway in the distance. The rest of the ground mist got thicker. My feet started to stick in it. I first thought my boots were sticking in the soil, but that happens on London Clay land, not around here. So I trod about to free my feet and I found I was standing on the top of the mist, it felt like concrete. The village and the trees and the hedges seemed to vanish, or something hid them. It was a complete runway. Markers. Faint landing lights that lit nothing else. Over south was a big flat building like I have never seen before.

"Then an airliner came in and landed. It made no noise. It had nothing that looked like an engine. It had no words or letters or symbols. My God, the look on its
pilot's face through the cockpit window stuck in my mind, that helpless look as he
looked around. I stood quite still. What looked like people came in from around, but
I could see things through them. The plane opened doors and put ladders down.

Some of the people got on, others got off. The real man ran at me, then he saw
that I'd seen him and he ran at the plane. God help his soul and mine, he got on
board! He struggled but the others kept him inside. He called for help: he sounded
like some rough character from the East End in London, not from around here. The
plane pulled its ladders in and shut its doors.

"A bit after, he sat in the cockpit beside its pilot, looking scared. The plane ran
and took off east and out of sight. I don't want to know where else that plane goes. I
don't think we'll see that man again. Then my mind felt freer. I called on God the
Father and Jesus and the Holy Ghost, and then, although I am not a Catholic, on
Mary and Joseph and all the saints and crossed myself. The runway turned back into
ground mist and I fell a few inches onto natural farm earth. The mist spread about
and went. The land was back to crop and grass on soil. I could see the village and
the trees and the hedges again, and a barn owl flying about looking for mice."

"Domine libera nos!" someone exclaimed, "The Lost Airport came and you went
on it! You're God-help-us lucky to get away to tell of it. They say that pilot's
someone that was in on the big airport plan. When the airport scheme was found out
and called off, he went off in his official car. It was found on Tithe Barn Lane.
Police called a tracker dog to look for him. It tracked onto a field and onto where
that runway would have been, then the dog got terrified and ran off dragging its
handler by its lead. It takes a lot to scare that sort of police dog. It wouldn't track
again till a month after.

"Same night that he vanished, a night watchman on the airport construction site
said that he saw it, and that was the first time. That time, the airliner didn't fly in but
appeared there and there was nobody in its cockpit. Then a man, a real man, came
out of some bushes by the Shepherd's Pool and went towards the airliner to look
closer, and he walked up to it as if hypnotized, and he boarded it, and sat in its
cockpit, and the plane flew away, and the airport vanished. I guess he'd felt so bad
about the airport plan falling through that while he was there he said something he
shouldn't have and something heard him and obeyed in a way that he wasn't
wanting. There've been odd goings-on here before. Such as, near here those
archaeologists found that Stanwell Cursus, that prehistoric religious procession way,
and some people say all sorts of things about those old religions."

TIME PASSES

Time passed. As hutch animals to turn old cabbage stems and suchlike market
garden waste into meat, they gradually replaced their captured wild rabbits by a
domestic rabbit breed called 'chinchilla', which also has fur-coat-quality fur. The
preserved length of runway drain trench gradually eroded into merely one of the
many old wet hollows where their ducks caught worms and slugs and frogs when it
was too dry elsewhere. Heathrow Lakeview and the multi-storey car park were built;
Terminal 2's first customers were 29 naval men flying chartered to Kirkwall in the
Orkneys for Scapa Flow for a naval event, as Gatwick Airport (not long reopened
after being much enlarged from a small prewar airport) charged more and Croydon
Airport (which closed permanently soon after) was fogged out. A one-level bus was
kept there to transfer checked-in security-cleared departing passengers securely past
Wild's farm and along Cain's Lane to the airfield and not-yet-custom-cleared
arriving passengers to the terminal area: offers to buy part of Wild's farm to link up
land got nowhere. A falconer was called in at intervals to fly a trained peregrine falcon to chase birds away to avoid birdstrikes (i.e. damage from planes hitting birds). The airfield workers' vegetable allotments flourished round the edges of the old quarry land. A float-plane landed on the quarry lake. Television-type screens (not complete television sets, and a notice on each said so, to discourage thefts) in the cafes relayed flight information from a television camera looking at a master display in the airport, and some people wondered which area was airport and which area wasn't. Isleworth Brewery's delivery driver had a serious battle of wills with his horses before they would turn off the Bath Road into the new airport staff entry without a man leading each by the head.

A market gardener's house cow developed blisters, starting a foot-and-mouth disease scare, but it turned out to be only cowpox caught from a human who had recently been vaccinated against smallpox.

The yearly farm and market garden routine went on. As people drove along Cain's Lane, the vibratory noise of tyres on the airport contractors' rippled concrete resurfacing reminded people of what had been escaped from.

John Wild's poem's "wayside flowerets fair" regretfully got fewer as ever-growing traffic load forced Cain's Lane to be widened from about 12 feet wide to about 18 feet: there was plenty of room for this, as the roadway was about 40 feet wide including its grass verges and edge-ditches.

Someone in BOAC again complained about what was lost because of the 1944 whistleblower, and annoyedly said: "We'd planned three terminals at Heathrow, and we've got them: one end of the big hangar; the terminal in the hotel; and our hut there is sometimes used as a terminal for small flights. We'd planned six runways in star-of-David layout, so there's always two within 30 degrees of facing into the current wind, and we've got them, much smaller than we'd planned, marked out on the airfield with end lights and poles, made of not concrete but white edge lines like on a football field but thicker. Oh, and a seventh: some people nickname that lake "Runway H2O" after that seaplane landed on it.

People call this a busy little place: I'd rather have had the busy big place that we'd planned but that bloody telltale in 1944 spoilt it.".

An airport shuttle battery-electric-powered vehicle service developed, going between the farm cafes and the Three Magpies bus stop and places in the airport. This caused some arguing, such as when a man in an airfield uniform came into the shuttle, surveying its usage. The first two who he asked proved to be from Bracknell flying to Nice on the French Riviera refuelling at an airbase near Paris, and he noted this in a table on a form on a clipboard. The next was from Reading and getting a lift in someone's private plane to somewhere near Arnhem in Holland, and he noted this down. He turned to an old woman with a large full basket and asked her where she was coming from.

"Harmondsworth" she said, and he noted this down. "Oh, a local customer. And where to, madam?"

"The houses round the small green along here [150 yards east of Pease Path]."

He started to note this down by habit, stopped while his brain 'changed wavelength', and realized. "Oh, not an airport customer." he said and under "Airline" noted "nau" (= 'not airport user'), "Sorry. We aren't a public local bus service. We get enough crowding with children joyriding about in it".

"Please, wait while I get up, I've just settled. I'm not as young as I was. It takes time to get my legs going."

The driver heard and interrupted: "Please, it's only old Mrs. Wilkins back from the Magpies bus stop from Harmondsworth post office and shops with her pension and her shopping. Every year her legs get worse. Once she could shop in Hounslow and walk there and back for the exercise. You'll know why when you're her age. I live in Cranford, if I slung her off it'd soon come back to my neighbours."
During this, the family at High Tree Farm's daughter led their house cow past to Perry Oaks to be served, to get her in calf to keep her in milk, and people had to shift aside to let them pass.

"Thanks. I've got no family with me. My husband died in the garden of a stroke. My oldest died on the Somme, the other got a job in town and moved away. My daughter married and moved away.

Sometimes someone takes me to Hatton and back on his cart, if he's going that way, but I can't rely on it. There's a post office in the Lakeview in the airport, but no shops there selling the sort of things that I want. I once asked Fred Philp: 'That bulldozer of yours, please don't dig out that tree stump opposite Perrott's, I need it to sit on to get my strength back, it's got such a long way to get anywhere.', and that Jack Hobson, that new man in the Plough and Harrow asking me what I want to drink in that way that really means 'This bench is only for my customers.' The first time, I took him at his word and asked him for a cup of tea. Old Edgar Basham didn't act like that, but he got old and had to sell up, and his son got a job in town and moved away. It was bad enough losing that handy thick low branch stub to sit on when someone trimmed that hedge opposite Bathurst. And children getting to and from school in it in bad weather isn't 'joyriding'.", and remembered accusations when she was found to be furtively nipping leader buds with her fingernails off a bush behind a low front wall in Harmondsworth to stop it from growing so far out that she would not be able to sit on the wall while waiting for the queue in the post office to get less. "I don't get this accusation at Hatton." she said, "The man in the post office there brings a chair out for me."

(A bit later Frederick Philp of Heathrow Hall decided to do something with an elm trunk that had been lying along an edge of one of his fields since the March 1947 gale; he had it sawn into planks and with his sons made part of its wood into two park-type benches, which he set up by the road with strong anchoring concrete end-supports, one instead of the stump and the other on the south side where the road starts to curve the other way.)

Paul Whittington of Perry Oaks came back to work from the airport with much to say after his first two flights, in a small private aeroplane. "When I was delivering saladings and soft fruit to the airfield cafe, I met someone who was going to fly to Manchester Airport (used to be called Ringway) in his own plane and back the next day. He gave me a lift each way. It saved me some time and train and bus fares. I'd been thinking I'd have to wear an oxygen mask all the way, but we didn't: that's only in airforce planes. We took off southwestwards over Stanwell. On the way back we came in over Hatton. Seeing the land drop down so far below me: the only view I saw before like that was off the top of the Chilterns when I helped in a school visit to Whipsnade Zoo. Ringway's a few houses and a church and a pub at a country crossroads by the back of the airport: it's still there, and the airport was named after it. A bit east of Manchester Airport is its own little settlement that the airport wants to obliterate: a little place called Heyhead: that's a row of terrace houses and a shop and a chapel. And two old cottages, and a haulage firm where the man who runs it lives in. And a small fertile lowland peat land area called Shadow Moss, a bit under a mile long by about half a mile wide. Some nurserymen and market gardeners have big greenhouses on it: we met in one of them. The airport wants the area for runway lengthening and yet more car park. For many centuries Shadow Moss was used to dig peat for fuel like in Ireland: the people round there called peat 'turf'. I went to try to set up a link between us. The new bit of Manchester south of the Mersey is called Wythenshawe. Some of the soil there's mixed ice-age glacier melt outwash, somewhat like what we've got here. A middle-aged woman there's set up a bit of a protest movement, but they needed outside contact to help coordinate. I called it PHASMA, Preserve Heyhead And Shadow Moss Area.

"When I came back I saw airport security men out in the village: a row about use of Perrott's Farm's cafe's front table had nearly gone to violence.".
"I know." another said, "Four businessmen didn't like the Lakeview's prices for discussion room hire, so went to Perrott's and took over their front table and spread papers all over it and their luggage all over the table's other seats, tried to keep everybody else further than 6 feet away. Too many other people there. Someone moved a suitcase off a seat and sat in and pushed papers aside and put a meal down. One of the businessmen told him that a supposed Mr. Brown was sitting there and got the answer that "I'll get up when he comes." During this argument two other people shifted luggage off seats at the opposite corner of the table and put meals down on top of papers. The businessmen demanded privacy and threatened to sling the meals onto the grass verge. A man who worked at Perrott's Farm came out and said that that table was for cafe customers and that empty seats were free for taking. Someone called for help; police were too far away so airport security came out. The businessmen gave up and marched off. Only one of them was an air passenger, the rest came in to meet him.

"Last Christmas we were rather besieged by parents driving in a panic from half of west London thinking that, like a big airport, we'd be the only place in miles with a shop such as a W H Smith's open selling batteries. Trouble is, it shuts on Christmas and only security's there. That's why the Cain's Lane end guardhouse keeps a stock of batteries to sell."

Soon after, Jack Hobson's attitude caused serious trouble. The day was unusually difficult for him: the beer delivery driver was on holiday and his relief man delivered short and wrong again (the usual man mostly got it right); landing passengers found him outside his pub and demanded to be served out of licensing hours, causing him to remark angrily about "bones for Fido travellers" (the correct legal term is "bona fide traveller"); during midday serving time a policeman and an airport security man pushed past his queue and interrogated him at length about something that they would not properly explain, and lectured him about the drink-driving laws; and after all that, while he was closing for the afternoon, Mrs. Wilkins struggled past back from the Three Magpies bus stop and sat on his outside bench, and he curtly told her to move on, but she pleaded and stayed sat. In an impulse which he was to regret, he snatched up her shopping basket and ordered her "Fiver [=£5] for it back for keepin' on blockin' my bench without buyin'.".

"I'll need my purse and my pension book back to get the money. They're in my basket." she pleaded. "Cash first." he said.

"I haven't got that much without going to the post office for it. And you don't need your bench right now, you're closed for the afternoon. Some time you'll be my age."

"Yes, I know, @%$£ short hours they allow us, @%$£ keep off my bench. Cash first." Paul Whittington of Perry Oaks farm was in hearing range checking a field for weeds, and could not stand that sort of thing. He had been running towards the place: now he jumped over a gate, ran across the road, showed a large knife that he used at work, and ordered Hobson to "Give her that back and say you're sorry!".

"Why should I, all over my @%$£ bench every time. And I suppose you want me to #@$ 'elp 'er 'ome with it and up her #@$ apples with it."

That again was more than Whittington could stand. He knew that "apples [and pears]" is slang for "stairs" in some parts of inner London, but not out in the country in Middlesex. "The word is stairs," he said angrily and punched Hobson in the solar plexus, "Don't you give me your dirty veiled backstreet slang out here! I can tell by your accent ...", and saw something fall out of the bottom of Hobson's jacket in the scuffle. It was a packet of bacon, and Mrs. Wilkins recognized it and said so. Paul picked it up and put it back in her basket. The next punch was to Hobson's nose, hard, with a loud "That's for stealing! I should have known things'd lead up to something like this! Basham gets old and has to retire, his son leaves home, and instead some sharp type from the East End comes in, and we get this sort of mean
little theft from you got into a habit of picking up unguarded oddments. And try serving drinks honest: I've already seen in a newspaper a complaint about you working the fake gin and orange trick here. It'll get like being at market all the time, having to watch everything like a hawk and listen to everything all the time like I was the airport's radar dish. My father taught me your private jargon well, on market trips. And in future you will let her sit and not demand anything off her. And anyone else who gets old and infirm."

There was a large turning radar scope on top of the Heathrow Lakeview, and the older radar put up in March 1945 beside Gamble's Farm (now airfield buildings) on the airfield edge. Mrs. Wilkins sat a while longer, getting her energy and nerves back, picked up her basket, walked on, sat a while on the other new bench, and thankfully went home, and resumed her knitting; she did a lot of knitting, to pass the time: at the last sheep shearing time she had bought three fleeces from Perry Oaks with money that she had saved, and span it herself as she needed it. One of the fleeces was a ram's fleece, with wool much longer than a ewe's fleece, and she left the sheep grease in it, to make the garments made from it waterproof for outdoor work in bad weather.

Hobson knew by too much experience what to do with a bloody nose. Sit or stand upright. Breathe through the mouth. Do not blow the nose, but let the blood clot form and set hard. A bunch of cold metal keys dropped down the back of the neck is said to help. "All right, all right, m'lud, I'd had a bad day, things coming up, I won't do it again, honest." Hobson said miserably.

"M'lud". The word was as obviously out of place as a selfset tomato plant in a field of young wheat. There is one reason why panic would bring that word out as a "courtroom escape" in a totally wrong place in a village street argument, and Hobson knew that Whittington knew that it meant that Hobson was too familiar with being the accused in court. Hobson went inside and locked his door, and sat, in shock. Heaving barrels about would have to wait. He thought that he had got right away from the old cycle back home, offences, trials, demands by so-called mates to attend at drinking sessions although he had other uses for the money used, court fines which could be paid only by committing other offences, as work was hard to get, trial for those other offences, and so on, out away here where he was not known. Lucky that this latest matter had been sorted privately, else his current alias name Hobson and his real name side by side in a newspaper report of a court case might have set certain men on his trail. Poaching field game to get spare money was not an option, had not been an option since long-ago when London was far smaller and much of the East End was villages and farmland and riverside marshes. Way back over a thousand years ago, familiar Stepney where he was born was Stybbanhýð, 'Stubby's landing-place', a farming and inshore small-boat fishing and perhaps small-scale ship trading village with land by the river, with fields and marsh around. A map made in 1745 shows Stepney still a village among fields, between main roads and not on one, but waterfront east London spreading near. How things had changed. The only memory of the old times was the once-familiar Thames lightermen's company whistle calls, still repeating fragments of song of country birds which had long ago fled many miles away, but still sang round him in the country quiet of Heathrow.

His money difficulty had escalated to a spell in Pentonville Prison for unpaid fines. It was not so easy to let a bloody nose settle that time when he was beaten up because a cold-in-the-head with temperature stopped him from behaving appropriately to a "cell boss" type, dare not tell the warders, but had to lie in his cell shivering, enduring head pain, and endlessly violently sneezing blood and mucus about, until a warden saw the mess and his illness, and in the prison hospital a part dose of anaesthetic acted like drink and loosened his tongue and the truth came out, and he was transferred to Strangeways in Manchester for his safety.
When let out, he was given the clothes that he had been arrested in, and a railway travel warrant to London Euston. Time to draw on his last reserve of money - never mind how he had got hold of it and where he kept it. A pub-trade-only circular found in a pub's back waste skip showed him a chance to get away from it all and start new clean: a pub tenancy was vacant in that little out-of-the-way place called Heathrow that had been in the news, out in the country away from all his backstreet upbringing, and a small local airport as another exotic touch taking his mind away from his old surroundings and his old mates and his mind's bugs and impulses that had got him in trouble so much. And he got the tenancy, never mind how. For a while he had managed to keep clean and straight, out in the clean country wind and tall trees and green hedges and wild flowers, and knowing that food does not appear by magic on the shop shelf overnight, until that day's incident, and the old bugs, the habit of automatically taking oddments, and backstreet evasiveness, surfaced again, risking all that he had there, and fear that he would end up in court again, and his new clean-start career would "go south" and end up "in Court Farm" (the knacker's yard, west of West Bedfont, here used figuratively). Of course people would object to his attitude to Mrs. Wilkins! in a little place like this where everybody knew everybody. A fool thing to do. What did he need that bit of bacon for? Here there was food all around sold at much less than town shop prices over market gardeners' and fruit growers' front gates, and he could (but so far did not) grow food on his back patch of the good Heathrow-and-around silt and clay mixture called "brickearth", well drained by the gravel layer below, and not the mixture of rubble and dock dredgings that his father had to struggle with when "digging for victory" in the war, or the horrible sticky London Clay that much of London has to garden on. And usually no need to buy eggs, as Basham retiring had left a good flock of hens there. And about half the chicks that the hens hatched would be cockerels, and he even could have roast chicken once in a while, but not as big as shop chickens. And he had risked losing all that for £5 and a packet of bacon and a bout of bad temper, and by now it would be the talk of the village, and soon afterward the talk of Cranford and Hatton and Stanwell. He shuddered, and started to get ready for the evening. Someone had left a suitcase in a corner under a seat. Was it locked? He jerked his mind's reins back hard from that old dishonest impulse surfacing yet again so soon. Leave it!! One right place to get it out of temptation's reach. He picked it up, went out, locked up, was thankful that many unwalkable fare-expensive miles separated him from pawnshops and backstreet general dealers, turned left out, went round the curve of Heathrow Road, its curve often hiding the next building along behind trees and tall hedges, reached the junction, and handed the case over as lost property to the man in the airport entry checkpoint at the end of Cain's Lane, and felt much better for doing that. When back home, he went round his hens' nestboxes, put six eggs in a bag, and took them round to Mrs. Wilkins as an apology, and she accepted them, and his old bad habits never surfaced again.

There were other journeys between Heathrow and Heyhead. This time Paul Whittington went in an old car which Perry Oaks farm had bought, and he took his niece Janice with him for the ride. He came off the M6 onto the Chester Road, got through Altrincham, and got lost in the mazes of the Wythenshawe housing estates. A road called Hall Lane went in the right direction, but it stopped at a T-junction with a modern church opposite. Dull overcast stopped him from going south by the sun, and he had no compass. He turned left into a road called Blackcarr Road, but it went in half a circle to the left, back to Hall Lane. Back at the same T-junction, he turned right, onto Bowland Road, which after a bit curved right, so to compensate he turned left twice, and found a large hospital, but nothing about an airport. He asked for directions at reception, and was sent to the hospital shop, where he asked for directions and bought a road atlas of Manchester, and finally reached Manchester (Ringway) Airport, and a meeting in the same greenhouse as before. There was a
large hand-lettered poster saying "Heyhead & Shadow Moss, twinned with Heathrow, the village that was rescued from the airport." News was exchanged.

And people met people, and romance blossomed, and continued by many letters.

Later, the same light plane owner had business that took him to Ringway and back, and in his plane Janice Whittington went to Heyhead, and Susan Shenton of Heyhead came to Heathrow. (The surname Shenton was frequent in the country where Wythenshawe is now.) Soon after, there were two weddings, one in the chapel by the Ringway lane crossing behind Manchester Airport, and one in Harmondsworth church.

Perry Oaks's delivery lorry driver came back from an 8-miles-each-way delivery westwards with a decided opinion of Eton College: "Getting produce to Covent Garden Market's getting more and more difficult as the London "rush hour" gets longer, from people setting off earlier to avoid the rush: getting there at night's still fairly easy, but coming back's by day and takes longer and longer when there's other work to do, so Whittington's trying selling elsewhere straight to bulk customers. Now it's Eton College, and they say I must deliver to many addresses within that fancy expensive posh place, not just leave it all at one central stores. And know when it's term time there. If I use the M4 I must first go north past Sipson when the customer is west, and at the other end I must go on a long tour of Slough in all traffic conditions round three sides of a square the best part of a mile each way and back under the M4 before I get to Eton. The direct Eton slip faces the wrong way: I'd have to go all the way to Windsor to find a roundabout to U-turn at and come back north, and then that'd leave me right by the M4 again at the back of Agars Plough, that's one of their playing fields. So I use the old road: Tithe Barn Lane to the Bath Road, west past Colnbrook, along north of the Queen Mother Reservoir, Majors Farm Lane, through Datchet (used to be a village but it's now an area of suburb getting bigger, more streets and traffic), Eton Road, Pococks Lane, left at the end among a lot of school playing fields, and at last get to Eton. The town's south of the school inside a bend of the Thames. Its old bridge to Windsor's pedestrians only, has been for a long time. Eton didn't concern me before: the Sipson and Heathrow School was enough for me. They call their school terms "halves" although there's three of them each year. First I tried to find the college's goods entrance, and nobody that I asked in the street seemed to know. Too busy with learned stuff and school sport to bother with some delivery lorry driver calling, likely. At last some teacher asked me what I wanted going up and down making Eton High Street smell of diesel exhaust. He gave me a map of the school and town area. The internal arrangements of Eton were something that I didn't need to learn about before. As hard for me as for a scholar there. Eton's school Houses are real houses where the boarding boys live, and I had to deliver to some of them separately, and some of their goods entrances were designed for a horse and cart.

Many of the school's servants don't know much English: no English girl wants to be a servant anymore, so they get them from abroad, and soon as the new servants pick up enough English to get by, they're off to get a job in some factory in Slough for more than the school can afford to pay. I'm under order to say "I'll come back with the goods when you've made the cheque out." if anyone comes out with "Cheque's in the post": that avoids trouble for later. My last call was Durnford House's kitchen door: vegetables and eggs and a fat lamb, and I had to park in the road. After that I could go back into Slough Road and go home. After that I know the way and it'll be easier next time. What with Slough and Windsor and Datchet spreading, and that Eton Wick in what used to be fields, they've lost farms nearer that they used to buy from. How long until Eton is hemmed in with suburb like Harrow School is?"

One of the Eton boys mentioned this in a letter to his father, who showed the relevant matter in the letter to a Ministry man who he knew. The Ministry man was not interested in polished literary style in English or Latin, but commented: "Oh. Yet
another monkey's selling direct instead of through the system. Same as, every so often some inshore fisherman is found out selling his catch straight to a fishmonger instead of to an approved wholesaler. I know the area. Not only Eton: one of Black and Decker's vans has been going the rounds of farms and market gardens around there, both sides of the Bath Road, to stock its works canteen direct. I've seen it sneaking across from Hatch Lane into Long Lane (Heathrow) after dark, or north to other farms. And Wall Garden Farm in Sipson's cart coming empty out of Technicolor's. And Smith's Jams in Sipson selling direct to places around. Let's read this he's written: ... deposuerunt ova et lac allata a Perry Oaks latifundio in Heathrow vico...: The Egg Marketing Board and the Milk Marketing Board need to know this. Wild's Farm's had its own egg stamp made: it shows the village lane layout, and 'Wild's Farm, Heathrow, Middx' and the date. The scare that the people in Heathrow had with the big airport plan: it pushed them together and made them wary about what authority plans, and if the official price paid for produce starts getting less in real terms, then they sell elsewhere. Same as, all sugar beet's supposed to be sold to the sugar trade, but farmers short of cattle feed have been known to furtively feed their sugar beet to their cattle. I found some of this when I went to that little airport tucked in behind the village, to ask about flights."

"Call that little place an airport!?!" someone said, "Airfield about half a mile wide each way, and have to go along a public road through farmland to get to most of the terminal area. The Wilds stonewall refuse to sell land between so the two can join. So cramped that not enough room for refreshments, and passengers have to go out into the village for meals. BOAC still in that 1944 workmen's site hut.

At Wild's Farm John Wild, local poet and hardy veteran of the Exile and Return and Reconstruction, was getting on in years, and it was his son David Wild's turn to get through his version of a "first day at Eton". The Wilds still used horses sometimes for deliveries; David harnessed a horse to the carriage that they sometimes used for smallish loads. Sadly to him, the horse was not Captain; as the years passed, as with horses and all mammals, arthritis came on Captain, and he got slower, and his heart became doubtful, and other ill-health, until John had to make the often-postponed, dreaded, at last inevitable, telephone call to Court Farm west of West Bedfont, away south along High Tree Lane and further. John, after a long last goodbye, had waited outside until he heard the shot, and knew at least that Captain was out of reach of some unknown cheap buyer who might try to whip a few last desperate bits of work out of him, as in the old times had happened far too often to an aged horse sold alive at an open horse fair.

This had gone back in memory, and his son David loaded with fresh strawberries from his greenhouses, and saladings, including radishes collected from Dance's Farm the evening before, and set off. This time a mare named Suzette trotted pulling the carriage, daughter of a half-sister of old Captain, bay-coloured, and with promise of foals to come. He called at Heathrow Hall and collected some fresh cream made from that morning's first milking there, with aid of a hand-powered centrifuge. A map showed him the way: away west, past Colnbrook, and a surprisingly cold early morning wind off the wide empty greyeness of the Queen Mother Reservoir, and through Datchet. He sorted out his way from his map, and got in sight of Eton College. He asked for directions and came at last to a marquee and a parents versus older pupils cricket match starting on a school playing field called Mesopotamia because it is between two streams. It was nine miles. He unharnessed Suzette, and his son fed her and led her to graze on uncut grass along the edges of the field.

Inside, he unloaded. A teacher raised query about the cream and said that they had bought from the school's usual milkman. But the serving staff heard him say that the Heathrow Hall cream was fresh that morning and had not travelled to a big
town dairy and back, and took it and started serving it. After some discussion, they paid him, including deposit for the cream bottles: glassware costs. His son wanted to stay and watch the cricket, but David had to get back home to do more work, after Suzette had rested and been fed. He got back, gave Suzette some oats, had dinner, and started the rest of a day thinning and transplanting cauliflower and cabbage seedlings.

(In 11 November 1974 the New Covent Garden Market was opened in Nine Elms between Vauxhall and Battersea, away from financial stuff and so the roads to it were less choked with commuters.)

HEATHROW HALL GATE BEND

The local council zoning Heathrow village and around as "countryside area" could not stop ever more through traffic as the west edge of Greater London spread past to north and south. "We're going to have two days at least of the 'Heathrow Crawl', likelier three." someone said to David Wild, son of John Wild, early one day as he was checking a celery crop for ripeness on their land east of the north end of Cain's Lane, "The phone's dug up Hatton Road, east side, a bit south of Hatton Gore, crossed lines or something, they found the soil was wet, may be a water main leak, and the water's going to join in." "Yes, I know, as usual southbound traffic diverted down Cranford Lane, northbound traffic diverted up Cain's Lane and through here. Can't move in the rush hour. What happened to plans for a bypass?". "They say: either widen Hatton Road to four lanes, two each way, and everybody along there lose their front gardens; or a new bypass away east, better be through some of the "moor" land [along the river Crane, only used for grazing, because it floods too much], not through good land."

"Last time, some business type from Uxbridge blowing off as much importance as Perry Oaks's lorry blows off diesel exhaust and leaves it at road level instead of blowing it upwards away from people, missed one of the little shuttle planes that go from here to Maplin and Gatwick, accused us of causing the jams, important meeting missed in Frankfurt am Main, and so on as they do, and said that there should be a big airport here like they started in 1944 but someone telltale in parliament and the plan collapsed."

"Last month, those shuttles, one flight from here to Gatwick was two planes flying and landing in formation, air traffic control at Gatwick didn't like it, real right breach of the rules. And here, passengers'll have to be bussed from the terminal across into Heathrow Road and into the airfield from High Tree Lane from the back through a fire-and-crash gate, Cain's Lane'll be so choked up."

By now one of Wild's Farm's cart tracks had been extended along edges of fields to Hatton Road Farm, to avoid having to go across fields or on ever busier main roads to get to Hatton Road; sometimes outsiders ventured along it, such as a suburban family who had lunch in Perry Oaks's farm cafe and then took the shortest route to look round Hatton Gore and The Cedars and their gardens. The faulty telephone lines were mended quickly, but the Water Board took longer and dug their hole wider, and the diversions went on. After three days northbound traffic was let back onto Hatton Road, and Heathrow country life went back to normal, but not for long.

As usual, next morning at Heathrow Hall and the other farms started as soon as there was enough light to see to work. By now the cows knew milking time and nobody had to send a dog after them. Milking went much faster with a powered suction milker than by hand-squeezing the teats. The usual early queue was waiting to buy fresh milk: people from the village, people from Hatton Road and the south
ends of Sipson Way and Sipson Lane, and the woman from the Old Magpies, which by now was mostly a cafe.

The household and the live-in farm men sat to breakfast, but this time were interrupted by noises which they had been expecting some time: a big vehicle's brakes squealing agonizedly, a horn blaring, a loud crash, and large objects being scattered about. They ran out to a scene of all-too-well-expected havoc. A big articulated lorry on its side and its strewn load were sprawled across the road and its west verge and hedge at the sharp angle at the house gate. Split kitchen appliances filled the ditch and were littered across the lawn and the road. Cries for help came from trapped people. Backed-up through traffic both ways choked the road more. The small airport's night security had unlocked the High Tree Lane crash- and-fire gate to let people in and out, including Nicholas Curbishley, a male nurse who was the airport's first aid and minor ailments man cycling in from his home, and now he came out to see what he could do at the crash. A man from Bathurst market garden ran to the Three Magpies junction with a demonstrator-type placard saying "Road closed: accident", until police took over. Traffic coming in from Cain's Lane, still not trusting Hatton Road to be clear enough, could only be diverted left through the village to Perry Oaks and there turn right. Car drivers demanded right and need and urgency to go through and had to be told that "Not my fault, there's a @$%£ great artic on its side across the road, took the bend much too fast." Diversion notices telling people to use Stanwellmoor Road were often ignored as "too far round"; but what would have happened if the big airport had been built and there was no north-south way through or past it between Stanwellmoor Road and east of the river Crane? Someone climbed Heathrow Hall's big cedar tree to get a high view of what was happening around. Blocked traffic between the Three Magpies and Cain's Lane end were told to back out back to the junctions and find another way round, clearing the area for emergency vehicles. People stopping to watch were sent about their businesses.

A northbound car stopped at Cain's Lane end and its driver asked: "I'm Dr.Annersley: could I possibly go through the airport and out of its north staff gate? I'm needed at a conference in Hayes."

"No, there's at least three people trapped here, plus the lorry's driver, there's patients for you right here."

Annersley said: "No, I'm a Ph.D in aeronautics, not a medical doctor." and explained the difference, was dratted for raising their hopes falsely, and had to go via Perry Oaks to reach the Bath Road. "Looks like I better get 'Smaug' out, quicker than waiting for heavy lifting gear to come through all this traffic." said Josiah, son of Frederick Philp, named after his father's father, who had bought Heathrow Hall and its land from Jonathan Smith in the wave of sellings and resellings of land and houses around 1900 when the Earl Strafford (surname Byng) squirearchy over the area was shattered by two landed nobility family death duties in 14 months soon after death duty in its modern form was brought in. He meant the old bulldozer which was left there in 1944 by an airport site contractor bankruptcy when the big airport plan was called off. He drove it out of its spider-web-ridden lair in the back of one of his barns and out of the farmyard gate and stopped it on the east verge opposite the crash. Manoeuvring it was impeded by a big pond by the east side of the road at the bend, left by digging breccearth and sand when the Hall and its barns were being built. Its blade could be raised a few feet: not the best sort of excavator to use as a crane at need, but better than nothing. He reached up with a long stick and knocked down a refrigerator and a washing machine which were lodged unstably in the hedge's top branches, ran some ropes from the linkages down behind its blade across to places on the lorry, and backed a bit, stopping the lorry, which was partly leaning on the hedge, from falling onto firemen trying to reach people who were trapped underneath. Fire and rescue men gave orders. Axes and hacksaws and heavy pruners hacked into Heathrow Hall's tall front garden hedge as men
fought to reach trapped people; thick hawthorn is much harder than willow and takes an abominably long time to cut through by hand. One of the men was carried out through a gap in the hedge, and the other through an end of the 'tunnel' between the leaning lorry and the hedge.

Curbishley treated the two on site: they were local men who had been going from Doghurst Cottages to their work on Palmer's Farm, for cuts and bruises and thorn pricks, and one had had to be disentangled from his crumpled bicycle. He told them to go to airport first aid if signs of infection started.

Meanwhile firemen were extricating the third pedestrian casualty from under spilt refrigerators and washing machines: she was from Sipson Lane, and had been in the milk queue. She was seriously injured including broken pelvis. Her skirt was soaked in spilt fresh milk which she had been bringing back to her family. The lorry's driver was extricated, with broken right humerus and three broken ribs. That was everybody accounted for, and Josiah went back to pull the lorry onto level ground and onto its wheels, helped by his and John Wild's farm tractors which by now had arrived. A large red car followed by two vans, and an articulated lorry with the same logo as the crashed lorry, came and stopped at the "road closed" barrier by the small airport's main gate at Cain's Lane end, and the red car's driver demanded to be let in.

"Turn left here, then right at Perry Oaks, that's the big farm at the end."

"I'm John Prees, that lorry that's crashed is my firm's property, and its load belongs to a valued client of mine, and my men'll reload it. I won't let some JCB shovel its load up like it was rubble, or everybody around take it as if it was washed-up shipwreck cargo."

"If you want to see your driver, he's about to be taken to Hillingdon Hospital in that ambulance. The man who treated him's there."

Prees went to the ambulance, and Nicholas Curbishley was there, in a medical white coat, and was not pleased, when he found who Prees was. "Don't you do that sort of thing again," Nicholas said angrily, "him with 4 children to look after, getting him terrified for his job to drive that fast and dangerously. I'm not a &^%$ interested in your punctuality and tight schedules. If you'd let him drive at his own rate, your precious load'd've got there safe a few hours late and not strewn all over the bend here trapping and injuring three people. Several vehicles have come a cropper here down the years, starting with an army staff car in 1944 soon after the people were allowed back here. That bend's well enough signposted and signs for a 20 mph limit through it."

"Then you should have set off sooner." Prees said angrily into the ambulance to the lorry driver, and "Oi, this is a private discussion." aside to a group of anxious relatives.

"The two men are over there by the pond edge, they aren't seriously injured." Nicholas said to the relatives, "The woman and the lorry driver are here in the back of this ambulance. Mrs. Philp'll get you some tea and biscuits in Heathrow Hall's gate lodge, it's in the corner just left of the Hall's house gate."

Prees fumed impatiently at not being given absolute priority, and then back to Mr. Prees: "And set off short of sleep and then go to sleep while driving and go faint mid-morning from low blood sugar from missing breakfast for an early start. That's caused many road accidents down the years. Leave him! He's under a sedative and he's shocked and in pain. I gave him Entonox for the pain, that's a gas, half oxygen and half nitrous oxide. One word of sacking him and I'll make sure he gets legal help to sue for wrongful dismissal. I know the delay'll cause other delays, and so on, etc etc, and I don't - give - a - toss for your fancy efficient tight business schedules leaving no rest or slack, or for bosses who chop half off the time the doctor tells the patient to rest. You got him so scared for his job that he had to go over the speed limit to keep up, a bit this side of Sunbury he was stopped for speeding, fifteen minutes of 'yes sir yes sir three bags full sir' before he was allowed
to go on, the more he looked at his watch the longer the cop kept him, had to go
even faster to catch up, got to Hatton, Hatton Road northbound looked too busy to
risk getting in a jam, including two buses, and they're bad news for traffic behind
them in a hurry stopping at every bus stop, go left and through Heathrow, pedal to
the floor down Cain's Lane straight, didn't know the road properly, came off here.
"My employees are ordered not to chatter about about their work." said Prees. "That
is company confidential matter that he spouted out, likely under one of your
medications that acted as a truth drug, nitrous oxide, that's 'laughing gas', likely it
made him drunk and loosened his tongue, and he sounded off when he shouldn't
have, and you will not pass it on further."

"I and he'll give evidence as we want to if there's a trial or an enquiry, and the
ambulance has to pick up the pieces." said Nicholas, "Next time let your drivers go
at a safe speed. I rang your consignee to tell them what happened and they told me
to tell you that your contract's off, and I gave him a piece of my mind about tight
schedules forcing drivers to go too fast."

"The load was needed at 9 a.m. this morning, later was no use, would have
proved that my firm can deliver promptly, that big contract depended on it. If the
law was as it should be, he'd better've been well insured, as he'd have to compensate
for all my firm's losses, the damaged goods and the lost contract."

"But the law isn't like that and you can't dock wages like that. Someone'll have to
wait his hurry and get his load later, and the same his other deliveries today that
he'd've made. The world isn't like it was 40 years ago, and whoever's in that
precious contract of yours'll have to realise that there's so much traffic on the roads
that journeys take longer, expecting the impossible, routine straight fast delivery by
road as if all roads were wide open clear and no such thing as speed limits and
traffic jams, as the local newspaper'll likely make it clear tomorrow. When little
places like Heathrow get in the news, it's usually for wrong reasons. For example, a
few months ago some businessman came to the airport in a panic at nearly a
hundred, went on the verge at Perry Oaks east gate corner and missed a small boy
playing on the verge by a few inches, 30-foot skid mark in the grass, said he'd been
cought in a traffic jam at roadworks in Slough, offered all sorts of money to try to
get aircraft traffic control to call back a plane that he'd just missed, airport gate man
held him and called the police to him, he lost his driving licence for a year."

The ambulance set off west, turned right at Perry Oaks, past Black and Decker's,
through Harmondsworth and West Drayton to Hillingdon Hospital, about three
miles from where the lorry's load had been due to be delivered.

By now the lorry had been righted, proved driveable, and was driven away.
Traffic was allowed to proceed, but soon stopped again, and a wall of hairy backs
and patterning of unshod cloven hooves showed why, this time a more tediously
routine country-type obstruction: Heathrow Hall's cows bring driven in from east of
the road to be milked. Picking up the spilt load took all the rest of the day, as they
had to work on the verge, as the road was too narrow to close one side of it for non-
emergency reasons. Night forced an end, and they had to finish the job in the
morning, and were thankful to leave the empty dark rural distances of Heathrow
behind them and get back to well-lit streets and buildings. When they counted and
listed what was salvaged and how damaged it was, they suspected that there had
been some "wrecking", as people in fishing villages call it when shipwrecked cargo
washes ashore; 3 Doghurst Cottages after this had a somewhat dented new fridge,
allegedly bought in a second-hand shop. The Water Board finally left Hatton Road,
and traffic and life in the area went back to normal.
By now Frederick Philp of Heathrow Hall was getting on in years, and his son Josiah Frederick handled much of his affairs. They were accustomed to being on the small airport's internal mail system, and some wondered what was part of the airport and what wasn't. Such letters were often about buying in food for the airport's staff and customers: delivering letters that way saved on time and postage stamps; they saw no need for e.g. a message from the staff canteen in the main terminal (under the Heathrow Lakeview Hotel in the old quarry land) to Wild's Farm asking about saladings and eggs to take most of a day going to West Drayton and back, or for good fresh milk from Heathrow Hall or Perry Oaks to become expensive and lose the edge of its freshness going to a big bottling dairy in Hounslow and back.

A man in a slate-grey business suit drove in from central London, unnoticed among many, turned off at the Three Magpies, and stopped and got out at the small airport's main public gate at Cain's Lane end. A few people were there, to ask about flights, or to meet or pick up people, among people passing to buy vegetables or other produce in the village in the country peace and quiet. Two young men who were learning to fly went past and in. Pressured by several things to do, he forgot where he was and took some papers out of his briefcase and started to look through them. Two men nearby saw over his shoulder that the papers were Air Ministry internal matter. He realized and quickly put the papers away, but it was too late: his employment and purpose were now known.

Someone standing by him said, as if talking to someone else: "He was far gone with pancreas cancer and too ill to be moved, and the arrest squad burst in and grabbed him off his sickbed and slung him handcuffed in a police van. Two relatives who were nursing him pleaded with them and tried to stop them and were arrested for obstruction. At the police station they slung him in a cell like some common drunk left to sober up overnight. In the morning he was dead, so they still didn't get their trial."

"Oh, that rumour's got here, has it?" the Ministry man said as annoyance overcame his intention not to comment, "There is no substance to it, and I will thank everybody here not to spread rumours and gossip."

"The Daily Telegraph [a British newspaper] and the BBC television news seem to think that it is true, and those photographed papers that they showed, and we'll see what's in tomorrow's editions."

An argument started, ended by a cantering horse arriving and stopping, and its rider calling: "Mr. Peter Chadderton here? Phone for you in Heathrow Hall, phone in their front passage."

"What now!?" the Ministry man exclaimed. He had thought that this business about the long-delayed arrest of the 1944 whistleblower had been secured, but too many people had seen it happen. At much trouble he had got quickly a special injunction that stopped all revealing of the events, and stopped from revealing that the injunction existed, even to members of parliament - and someone had decided to as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, and for the whole flock as for one sheep, and told everything to the public media, who decided that 'the public need to know'. Putting the culprit and a few editors in prison may stop it happening again, unless it brews up into another noisy public row. He said to the horse rider: "Why the hell did he ring me there? I told them what number to contact me at."

"She said she rang that number and got engaged tone [USA: busy tone]."

"Then she likely rang the first Heathrow-anything she found in the phone book, too lazy to go down the passage and look at the big wall map of Heathrow that we have. Tell her to hang up and I'll ring him from the gateman's office here. Who was he?", and losing his temper with the petty hindrances, "Thanks to that bloody telltale back in 1944, business has lost billions of pounds profit that the big airport would
have made!, much nearer London than Maplin beyond Southend, and Gatwick beyond the North Downs. No more point keeping secrecy, it's out. Last time I sent someone here, a stupid delay because Perry Oaks's boar escaped and everybody was chasing it. Never mind someone with me commenting 'Ipse ruit dentesque Sabellicus exacuit sus' [from Virgil, Georgics III 255, = "Also the Sabellian boar rushes on and sharpens its tusks."]: in the end they got that load of hyperactive overfed pork back in its sty, but this matter won't be got back into secrecy. All that contractors' work that was started and stopped in 1944, and nothing's left of it, except that old bulldozer that Fred Philp got hold of, and he's still got it at the last I heard. Instead, what have we got here? Small-airport small stuff, half a mile each way, all grass. Short flights by small planes. People's private Cessnas and suchlike. People learning to fly. Vegetables and fruit and cows and sheep and wheat where the big runways and terminals should be. The mechanics would have a proper big work building and not that old farm called Gamble's Farm on the airfield's northeast edge - like that Firtree Farm that used to be on the north edge of Ringway Airport at Manchester. There should be posters all about advertising transatlantic flights in the latest fastest biggest airliners, nonstop to Chicago and suchlike, but instead what do I find? "The Heathrow pedigree herd of Dairy Shorthorns". Fiddly little prewar-sized airport. Call it 'Heathrow International Airport'?; huh!! a Channel-hop now and then such as that old Dakota to Beauvais and back. OK, before the war this place was big for its time, that's why they called it the Great West Aerodrome. Hard to believe until 1956 Gatwick was smaller than this, it started in the late 1920's as an airfield for rich people flying to the horse races there. Messenger on a horse instead of phoning. And that 1944 telltale surfaces from hiding at last and expects to avoid due process of law. -- Never mind, by the time you've got back at horse pace, I could drive there."

"The airfield here started in 1929." someone said, "If you fly over the airfield when the land's dry in summer, you can see old field boundaries, and marks in the grass where Lowe's Farm was."

"Hang on," said a man coming out of the airport gatehouse, and handed an unstamped buff envelope to the horse rider.

During this a pickup truck came out of the airport gate, driven by a mechanic from their spider-ridden den in Gamble's Farm, going for milk; the time and a smell of diesel exhaust told him that the milk churn lorry had recently passed and so there would be no milk at the two big farms, so it hooted them out of the way and went straight across, through the village past High Tree Lane end, and a bit further opposite Heathrow Farm turned left down the entry through fields of vegetables to High Tree Farm, where they bought fresh milk from the house cow Amaryllis (in full on her pedigree form Heathrow Amaryllis II), and some eggs and vegetables and farm-made butter. Amaryllis's latest calf had been recently weaned, and time would show whether the calf grew well enough to be sold as a breeding bull. Mr. Chadderton got back in his car and followed the horse, the canter sometimes lengthening into a gallop, but impatiently slow to a car driver. The two passed Palmer's Farm and its short terrace of farmhands' cottages, reached Heathrow Hall's house gate at the lane bend, turned in left past a small gate lodge, went past a big tree-shaded lawn under the south edge of the big cedar tree's branches, and stopped. Well-grown peach trees were backed against the house's south wall. From southwest came a shrill chorus from pigs impatient for their feed, and a noticeable smell of pigsty and cowhouse. The rider tethered his horse to a thick creeper stem growing up the house. They went in.

"The phone's there."

He answered it. "Before you put him on the line, this is Heathrow Hall, it isn't an airport building, it's a farm, best part of half a mile from the public airport gate. Right where the south edge of the big airport's north runway should be. Next time go look at the map."
The Minister came on the line, and his message was short: "This one's got out. Let it go. Same as those secret naval oxygen-and-nitrogen mixture diving research results, all that secret work starting during the last war, and civilian sport and work divers independently rediscovered the whole lot and published it for the world to copy. If we prosecute the injunction-breaker, likeliest any court fine, however big, 'll be paid several times over by sympathetic public. Leave it."

"And please no delay releasing the body for funeral, else that'll make yet more for the newspapers to get emotive about." The horse rider went into a back room and handed the buff envelope to Josiah. It was marked ominously "In case of non-delivery, send this letter to the Department of Transport.", and old fears arose again in their minds; but inside they found merely a within-the-office-type memo from the small airport's manager saying "This looks like your responsibility.", and an already-opened letter addressed to "The Lord of the Manor for Heathrow, Middlesex"; judging by guessing messages on the envelope around the address this oddly-addressed letter had travelled via Hayes and West Drayton sorting offices and Hatton police station to the airport.

Josiah looked at it and said "It's from someone in that foxhunt that came in past Bedfont. He carries on rather." and read it out:-

"Sir, I am writing to you about disgraceful behaviour towards my foxhunt by some of the local people in the area round Heathrow village south of the Bath Road four miles west of Hounslow. Town authorities do not respect their betters any more; police sent us away with an excuse. Since you seem to be the last remnant of local good order in the countryside around, I would be thankful if you could sort his matter out. Some important people were guests with my hunt, and they were treated disgracefully, a good hunt was ruined and I had to apologise to important guests. Hounds found a fox near West Bedfont and ran north. The land is becoming more and more cluttered with suburb obstructing the hunt. The fox soon swam the Longford River into the open land around Eglantine Cottage and Mayfields.

The riders had to use the bridge. Hounds were two fields behind the fox, but it swam over the Duke of Northumberland's River into Heathrow land and the riders had to go round by the High Tree Lane ford. I heard a shotgun shot from across the river. When we reached the area, in a field off High Tree Lane some of your village's men were working. Hounds had caught the fox all too soon and suspiciously quickly, and it is clear that one of your field workers had shot the running fox in front of hounds, a disgraceful cad's trick. When I challenged the fellows about it, they complained about us riding through damaging vegetable crops, but if people plant unusual crops that stand during the foxhunting season, they should accept the risk; we lose too much hunting time already waiting from spring until after wheat and oats harvest. They had big lunch bags, but offered us no sustenance. They told us to try the cafes in the village and to go there by road, with insubordinate language which I will not quote here.

On the way along High Tree Lane two men were tucking into big bags of sandwiches, which they quickly stowed out of sight inside their boilersuits and looked annoyed. When we reached the village, we chose Heathrow Farm's front cafe. It was full and they made us wait in a queue behind a lot of hoi polloi. Nobody stood aside for us. Nobody offered the ladies seats or let us go to the front; those sitting looked at us once and carried on eating and chattering; one of them told us: "Like she said, back of the queue and wait your turn.". A shower came and nobody offered to lend us waterproofs. The woman serving told us to pay before we got the food. I am not accustomed to carry a lot of money about routinely and I expect proper deference. More and more land has got into the hands of insubordinate owner-occupiers. In the old days any land which became lordless was re-granted to another lord. On top of that, someone learning to fly in a small two-seater aeroplane buzzed the area and made our horses restive. I demand proper disciplinary measures to make them respect their betters. They would not have got away with it when the
Earls Strafford owned the area, but that Welsh workman's son Lloyd George became Prime Minister and brought in the confounded death duty and that put paid to that when two Earls Strafford died in 14 months soon after that; bits of his land and property were sold about by more hands than Briareus had."

"And more of the like. I see no point answering it, except to tell him that he has no authority over the population like he thinks he has, and certainly not to try to cadge or requisition workmen's packed lunches like a gang of beggars or to march into the village like an army officer in wartime demanding stuff for his men."

Mr. Chadderton saw no point staying there any more, as his plan to listen around quietly was spoilt, but through a door left ajar he overheard the letter being read out. "Someone I know was on that hunt!" he exclaimed, "a quite important man. It ruined his day. The hunt didn't flush another fox all that day.

Likely that insubordinate lordless bunch had killed them all."

"What about John Theddingworth's last day on earth being ruined!?" someone there answered, "He was the bean-spiller who saved Heathrow for us in 1944. Instead of letting him die attended and nursed in comfort in his bed, he died alone in a police cell, if he hadn't already died in the police van, thanks to some official's old grievance not forgotten after so many years. At least release his body promptly and intact for funeral. And, the way that fox was running, that lot of destructive invading cavalry 'd've trampled through a lot more crop."

"I wasn't part of whoever decided to arrest him." Mr. Chadderton said, "Likely they didn't know how ill he was.", and saw no point staying there longer, but went out to his car and drove back away north, turned right at the Three Magpies, and back to his office in central London.

The matter, as expected, brewed up into another noisy public row, and the Air Ministry had to endure until it finished. There were more comments in the public media about insensitiveness when John Theddingworth was brought in a body bag in a police van instead of in a coffin in a hearse. He lay in Heathrow Hall for people to pay their respects overnight, and then was carried behind two local horses to the chapel on the east side of Cain's Lane opposite the airfield, and there was his funeral, and he was buried near the chapel, in the quiet southwest Middlesex countryside which he had saved from vanishing under hundreds of acres of concrete and terminals and endless noise. Ministry men kept away. Some of his relatives were put up in bed and breakfast in spare rooms in the village for the night before and after; some of them bought not only necessary meals but large amounts of local country produce. They went home, and normal life resumed.

**MEETING**

A meeting of all interested parties was held in the Spitfire Suite, Heathrow Lakeview. When it started, a clamour of voices started, and the chairman (an assistant airfield manager at Fairey's) called "Quiet, whoa whoa. Cool your jets. I'll make a list of the matters and make an agenda and we can discuss the matters one at a time. We didn't expect that so many would come."

The topics were the usual assortment.

"With more and more people getting cars, we're sick of being treated as 'He throw' away everything imaginable and we get sick of clearing up fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles." said someone from Doghurst Cottages, "The back country round Manchester Airport gets the same, with Manchester spreading south over the Mersey so much, including a new housing estate called Woodhouse Park only a mile from the airport, with two main roads curved-then-straight like Heathrow Road but the other way round - Portway and Cornishway they're called - at least they're
useful landmarks for pilots. Back to the point. Someone must speak to the scrapyards to get them to stop charging to accept scrap metal: if scrap is effectively worth a minus amount of money to its owner, then of course he'll likely dump it somewhere. Talking about vehicles, at least they've put a 40 mph speed limit in the Heathrow lanes after that bad lorry crash. Widening Cain's Lane made it even more an evening racetrack. Before that, three cars "lost it" at Heathrow Hall gate bend, and the hedge there's starting to look as if those old big airport contractors have been at it. One of them scared Cain's Farm's cart's horse and it bolted halfway to Hounslow before he could rein it in. At least the car-destroyers have about settled on one usual 'burning ground' off Oaks Road well away from anything that'll catch fire. Talking about stolen stuff, it's starting to cost us in feeding big fierce dogs guarding livestock and farm stuff, and then each dog's got to be taught to guard and not attack livestock and poultry. That's why Alsatians are called "German shepherds": they weren't bred to round up sheep but to guard them. Two months ago Mayfield's guard dog killed a town mongrel that had been chasing their sheep. The mongrel's owner made a fuss, but he shouldn't have let it run loose in fields."

Another said: "I'm the innkeeper at the Three Magpies. Whenever a biggish plane - as big as can land here, it'd be worse if you could handle big planes like at Gatwick - lands in my opening time, and it's a big group going off west to somewhere like Reading or Maidenhead, its passengers after checkout go en masse to the bus stop outside my pub and make a long bus queue which blockades my front. I've given up putting seats out front for my customers, it's one man against an army trying to keep people who are only waiting for the bus off them, even if they're waiting for a bus going east. And I get all the stick from usual bus passengers crowded out by plane passengers: people keep using me as a bus and plane enquiries desk - any chance of me getting one of those plane time screens like in your farm cafes? - also the Old Magpies, it seems to be gradually turning into a cafe like the Cyclist's Rest in Hatton Road did. It would help if you could coordinate with the bus company, and the Hounslow West underground branch, if it ever extends further this way, to run extra passenger space to meet big planes, like the railway used to run boat trains to meet big ocean liners, since many of your flights seem to be charters and not scheduled."

"About your noncooperation in letting people get into contact with passengers," said a business firm manager, "Example: a group of 31 from my firm and nearby firms decided to swan off for a week to Beauvais in northern France to look at scenery and a cathedral. They were allowed the time off. Then something arose and I needed three of them back for a business trip. I sent a taxi here to pick them up. It got stuck in traffic. I rang in here to tell them where to be for the taxi, and they weren't here: they'd gone out into the village. I phoned round the farm cafes: Heathrow Hall no answer. Perrott's Farm no answer. Heathrow Farm answered after nearly two minutes. I asked after the men and said the names.

'We're a busy working farm: this time of day they'll be in the fields.'
'They aren't farmhands, they're air passengers. Are they in your cafe?'
'This is the farmhouse. The cafe's another building."

'Well, please tell them to come to this phone.'

'Sorry, I can't let people hang on to this phone, we're expecting the vet to ring about a cow gone ill. If you tell him the number, he could ring it at one of the village's public callboxes.'

But she couldn't find any of them, or she said she couldn't. Similar everywhere else I rang. Then while I was going through papers my firm's phone operator switched off and locked up and went home.

While I was getting home, they checked in and flew before I got to my home phone, and they were incomunicado until they finished their holiday and came back home, and my firm lost a most valuable consultancy and investment because of yet another case of awkwardness about letting people use phones, and I demand full
compensation. You have a public-address system to the farm cafes: why not use it? That's what it's for."

"It's for emergency only. If we keep using it for routine stuff, people'll complain about the annoyance, and then start ignoring them and real emergencies get missed. Getting to business meetings is routine travel, not an emergency. And it's not certain that you'd've won, any more than with horse races or football matches, if other people offered also. And if he's out in the village on the road it'd need the big loudspeakers, and they definitely are for emergency only. According to weather and wind direction, they can be heard easily out at Eglantine and Mayfield and on the Bath Road. People complaining about aircraft noise is bad enough, without us misusing loudspeakers also. God knows how much aircraft noise the big airport plan'd've made: it'd be like having two Gatwicks on top of us, here right next to suburbs - or three if that other plan came. Last time they were used was when a plane came in from Bordeaux in France and a woman had gone into labour on board. The call went out for a doctor or a midwife. There was the usual first aid room staff in including that male nurse who runs it, but nobody who knew about birth, so we called round for a midwife. Staff need home and sleep sometimes, plus the relief man was ill with flu. None in the airport, none in the village cafes, so it had to be the loudspeakers."

(None were found in Heathrow, but an obstetrician heard it, right away in West Bedfont, in a relative's back garden where he had stopped on his way to work. He came haring up High Tree Lane on his motorcycle, across the ford in a quacking scatter of scared wild ducks splashing a family picnicking by the ford, went on the verge to get past a horse-and-cart, turned right at the end, stopped at the crossroads, asked the airport gateman where the casualty was, and was directed down Cain's Lane to the big hangar. She was about entering second stage. He checked her and got them to phone Hillingdon Hospital to say that he would be late in for evening shift and why. The birth went normally, and it was a boy.)

"Another thing about phones:" said a local man from Harmondsworth, "Businessmen abuse phone privileges. Let him receive a call on someone's phone, and he then makes several expensive outgoing calls, unless you stand over him with a tommygun. And that sort of thing's why directory enquiries costs now. The old free directory enquiries was a courtesy for someone who wanted a few phone numbers in a year, but it was quite routine for some businessman to ask directory enquiries for 40 phone numbers one after another. I was on holiday by the sea in Devon once, and I saw a man in an oilskin had to throw a businessman by force out of a callbox so he could ring the coastguard about a missing boat. The businessman had just made six long calls and he was starting a seventh. A missing boat at sea could be men's lives. Finance and share prices are not."

"Security at night is complicated by amateur astronomers coming in to get away from city light glare." said someone from Perry Oaks, "Mostly at Perry Oaks end and around Eglantine Cottage, after the council put road lighting all along Cain's Lane. Astronomers were wanting it to be old-type lights, or, if it must be sodium lights, then low-pressure sodium lights. I've had officious gamekeeper types coming in from outside telling me that there's poachers in this or that field. If they only want game, they can have it. Until myxomatosis, rabbits were a %$%£&# and the more get taken away the better; and we don't really want pheasants around when the wheat's sprouting, pheasants soon learn to go round pulling up wheat seedlings to eat what's left of the seed. As long as they don't start stealing. Two months ago a bunch came in for pheasants and rabbits, and one of them woke Whittington at Perry Oaks to tell him that another bunch they didn't like the look of, was on site: we went after that other lot, and that other lot were thieves, they had chickens and vegetables and a dead sheep on them, they were some gang from the city, they told some sob story about being in debt and out of work, we held them till the police came."
"I'm from an astronomy society. Low-pressure sodium light is mostly the one wavelength (5890 and 5896 angstroms), fairly easy to filter out. High-pressure sodium light glares the whole visible spectrum out. It was bad enough with that "Aurora Hattonensis" as we nickname it, further east, since they put new lights in along Hatton Road."

Someone from the airport again raised query about Heathrow village's schoolchildren using the airport passenger shuttle vehicles as a school bus to get to and from the Three Magpies and an easy short walk between there and the (Sipson and) Heathrow School nearly opposite the Old Magpies, rather than walking the whole distance as before, and sometimes local adults including those whose walking was weakened by age going to the Bath Road to catch buses. The driver complained that he found it morally difficult to bring himself to order such people and small children out into cold and rain.

"The plan for a flyover or an underpass at the Magpies." someone said, "People say 'No, it'd deface the area.', but even with the M4 taking a lot of the through traffic it's getting harder and harder for farm traffic and other local traffic to cross the Bath Road for more and more of the day. Particularly for Sipson Farm to get to its land south of the Bath Road. They're having to hire space at Tithe Barn Farm and Heathrow Hall to work from, and wait till ungodly hours of the night to get crop across to Sipson or fertilizer etc across the other way."

As 1960 approached, amateur scuba divers (then usually called skindivers) got interested in the Heathrow Lake as a "first open water" training water, and sometimes called it more exotic names in (then usually unfulfillable) longing for bright corals and warm seas far away. And all around, the Heathrow farmers and market gardeners (apart from getting tractors or other mechanical aid) carried on work using the good brickearth soil for what it was best for, as before the war and as since the previous big upset in 1819 when the Enclosure of the Commons commissioners came to Harmondsworth parish and split the three big 'open fields' (Sipson Field, Harmondsworth Field, Heathrow Field) and the common grazing land into ordinary-sized individually-owned fields, and the Vicar of Harmondsworth was assigned a big field in place of traditional tithes; and in 1929 his successor sold it to Fairey Aviation, and that got flying involved in the area. And still birds sang in hedges and trees; songthrushes, singing each phrase two or three times, kept the area largely free of snails; larks sang overhead; and the descendants of the ten duck's eggs brought from Sipson became many.

(see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosure#Parliamentary_Enclosure_and_open_fields )

Less welcome bits of the outside world intruded on their lives. Four men from the East End in a car went to an address in Hammersmith and picked up a man who had caused them trouble. They set off back to base - and a police car got interested in them. When they were stopped by traffic lights, two policemen got out and came up to them. In the car were things that they did not want police to see. They swore and bolted off, against the lights. A chase developed, westwards into areas which they did not know well and thus were less able to lose police among back streets. After several miles the houses started to get gappy as country approached. The police car stayed with them through various twists and turns. They cursed the recent arrival of two-way radios in police cars - things were more certain when police calling for help had to rely on a special whistle or stop at one of those old dark blue police telephone boxes. After various dodgings about they turned right off an unknown main road into what looked like a suburban street, and hope of more dodging about. But the road suddenly came to a crossroads, and as they shot across it, narrowly missing crossing traffic, the houses stopped, and they were on a country lane, with fear of being blocked by a farm tractor or a herd of cows on the road. The land about was mostly market gardening, with low hedges and few trees. (Market gardeners do not like the shading and root competition that trees and tall hedges cause.) It was too open, letting them be seen them from far, except for buildings and
fruit orchards. One of them who knew such things looked at his watch and where the sun was and so worked out that they were going roughly northwest. The lane was straight and narrow: a chance to floor the accelerator and keep to the middle to stop the police car from passing, and hope that some plodding Dobbin pulling a farm cart would have chosen another time or place. The only horses that they wanted to know about were in the racing lists and results. On the left they came to wide open ground with a few aeroplanes and a big hangar: yet another ex-RAF base and someone was using it as a private airfield, likeliest. At a quick look none of the aeroplanes had POLICE on, and they hoped that none ever would: police spotting them from the air was a theme of nightmares. After the airfield they shot across a skew crossroads against its traffic lights, thankfully too fast for a man in a uniform hat in a gatehouse by the right turn to note their car's number. Two things now filled their minds: fear of the consequences of bungling a job, and instinct to run before the hounds until they dropped.

Another police car came in from the left at the junction: thankfully behind them. 500 yards further, by a large farm, the road bent right. It was not a proper smooth curve. The narrow road changed direction 35 degrees suddenly at a sharp kink. They were going far too fast. Their car went out of control, skid- turned left, cartwheeled over a hedge, landed, rolled over, and ended on its right side wrecked and leaking petrol on Heathrow Hall's front lawn, adding more damage to the damage done to the hedge and front grass by the lorry crash and the men salvaging it. A woman and a farmhand came out of the buildings, each with a shotgun at the ready, as they knew what sort of people are sometimes chased by police, but put the guns down in bushes when they saw police arrive. The police got one of their cars in and with a towline pulled the crashed car upright, got the four men out, and then had a struggle to handcuff them, and took various weapons off them. One of the policemen got a jemmy out and forced and emptied the car's boot (USA: trunk) and glove compartments; one of the others told him off for going after property when lives were at risk, but he found the fifth man gagged and handcuffed and leg-tied in the boot. The farmhand and a farm dog helped to catch one who tried to run away. The woman offered use of the farm's telephone, and was told thanks, sorry, but police cars now have two-way radios. The car fireballed before the fire brigade could get there. Two ambulances came from Hillingdon. The police took the five men away, and sent a towtruck for the car wreck. The matter disastrously interrupted several London underworld gang schemes and led to several more arrests and a big trial, but the results of that are irrelevant here. Someone in the house had a camera loaded in quick reach, and caught the car in the air over the hedge; the result appeared inside a local newspaper captioned "Takeoff at Heathrow" and what was meant to be a jocular reference to the failed plan for a big airport there. Jack Hobson in the Plough and Harrow was nervous for two days after the five men's names came out in a newspaper, as he had bad memories of enforced meetings with three of them.

On the trial day, the woman and the farm man helped to sell produce at Covent Garden market and then went to the Old Bailey as ordered by the witness-summonses, and this time were needed, as the defendants refused to plead. A defending lawyer queried about them coming out armed.

"Sorry." she said, "The sort of men who cops sometimes have to chase, we didn't want to risk them pulling a gun out each and demanding us to hide them and find them another car. We don't want to be in a hostage siege. I've read about that sort of thing. We plead 'self defence'".

He asked them if they had been involved in anything like that before.

The farm man answered: "July 1947 a Black Maria chased a car up High Tree Lane much too fast and shot across and Fred Philp had to get his old bulldozer out and tow them both out of Heathrow Farm's west orchard. I heard afterwards that it was some spiv who'd been black-marketing, petrol and offering new made-to-measure business suits without clothing coupons, and then cheating on it. They
made a real right mess in there. Most of it had been re-sown as crab-apple seeds in 1945 after the airport site contractors and they were about ready to be top-grafted with Bramley Seedling and Cox's Orange Pippin. April next year a cop car chased a stolen van too fast through Stanwell and they got into Oaks Road and the van flew out at Perry Oaks farm east gate corner on manure on the road and ended up wrapped round a tree. The cop car managed to get round the corner and stopped a bit up the road and backed back to the place. Some Irish tinker type was cut out of the van with his neck broken and died in hospital the next day from other injuries. No I.D. on him. Nobody ever claimed the body. In the end he was buried 'on the parish' in a pauper's grave in Harmondsworth churchyard. Church record lists him as "a stranger known only to God" and a cross-reference to a police incident number."

The judge called him back to topic, and the trial continued and finished. Soon after, Heathrow and around's highways maintenance replaced the combination "sharp bend" and "concealed entry" roadside sign on both approaches to Heathrow Hall gate bend, by much bigger signs intended to be more obvious. What to do with the roads round there had been a 'hardy perennial' at council meetings, and now, re-activated by this matter, plans were restarted: Move the south exit of Sipson Road about 200 feet to the west, to opposite Heathrow Road, and make a proper crossroads with traffic lights there, and an underpass from inside the new fork of Sipson Road southwest under the Three Magpies and surfacing east of the lake with the small wooded island and joining Heathrow Road. And what to do with that bend.

"Leave it as it is." said someone at a village meeting, "It makes the traffic slow down. Cain's Lane's like a racetrack sometimes already, speed limit signs or not."

"I saw a plan to carry on straight northwards and swing to the right back to the road, Heathrow Hall loses a slice of its front lawn and that lovely big cedar tree gets cut down and the road goes right under the Hall's eaves."

"Push the road east at the bend, and that big pond'll have to be filled in and Heathrow Hall loses its ducks' feeding area and an important livestock drinking place. I reckon much of Heathrow Hall came out of that pond hole, when they dug brickearth for the bricks to build it."

"If so, all the topsoil that's dug out better stay in the area. The bit of land between the old and new roads where the pond was, could become enough pond area for the Hall's livestock to drink there.". After WWII, war aircraft development shifted to jets, which often needed longer runways, and moved to places such as Warton in Lancashire and Woodford near Stockport; and little Heathrow was left to helicopter developers, and private flyers, and developers of planes such as private flyers used, an amateur flying club, and small-plane short airline flights, and people learning to fly, and shuttle flights for wealthier people living around to and from the big airports at Maplin and Gatwick avoiding land travel across London, and those who daydreamed about or wrote stories about what might have happened if it had not been for the 1944 whistleblower.

From 30 December 1962 to 5 March 1963 was another severe winter with harder frost, but this time there were more snowploughs about, and many road gritters to spread salt and sand; by now Frederick Philp was 87, and it was his son Josiah Frederick William Philp's turn to help to clear snow off roads; his mount was 16 years older and suffering the effects of the years. He found himself praying with a changed form of two lines that he remembered from a hymn: "Ridge of the mountain-drift, lower your crest; howl of the blizzard-wind, be you at rest. Please God end this.". Snow radiates heat to space at wavelengths which there is not much of in sunlight, and made intense frost, and again killed crops that are usually winter-hardy. The sea froze in many places round the coast of Britain, and froze 4 miles out to sea off Dunkirk, and the BBC television news stated a fear that the Strait of Dover might freeze across. Like Frederick in 1947, he had to use his back ripper to break open concrete-hard-frozen turnip clamps and use his towed goods skid to drag
the turnips to somewhere they could be stored away from frost; away southwest he heard someone digging out carrots with a pneumatic drill (USA: jackhammer); that night he dreamed of driving Perry Oaks's market lorry from Dover to Calais on the ice. But in early March came at last the snow that turned to rain, and a warm wind from the Azores, and a fast thaw, and the cold had run over 9 weeks, leaving people in fields and allotments and gardens to clear away the rotting remains of brussels sprouts and winter cauliflower and winter cabbage; their autumn-sown broad beans were only a memory.

With westward urban spread the Hounslow West underground railway branch ventured to extend to Hatton, which caused something unintended: London street flower and fruit sellers getting a London Underground season ticket to Hatton to buy stock from around, and the more strong-legged of them venturing from there to all parts of Heathrow and some further such as to Sipson Farm at the north end of Sipson, adding to those who were willing to pedal cycle the distance from London and back.

In 1971 the M4 motorway came past along the north edges of Harmondsworth and Sipson and Harlington. On 31 March 1974 BOAC merged into British Airways (BA).

One sort of "night-haunter" was still amateur astronomers: for them the Heathrow country area was a valuable dark hole in west London's ocean of street lighting hiding the stars, without having to go far away. Their usual gathering area was off High Tree Lane, away from through traffic headlights and street lighting on Cain's Lane and security lights round farms.

1975 and 1976 summers were very hot and dry, and the cropmark traces of the three uncompleted big runways round Heathrow village reappeared, and a young man on a trial flight, knowing little of older history, saw them and asked what they were.

"The National Trust are looking to buy Hatton Gore and The Cedars and The Limes, they're those three big houses on Hatton Road" John Wild's son said to him one day.

"The old airport scheme was going to pull them down and the rest of Hatton Road and spread all the way to the Crane river, and never mind that they're listed. Not even keep them as airport hotels or offices. Hard to believe, but airport plans say so."

"I know. Nine of the farm buildings in Heathrow are listed buildings also. The planning are getting to send letters, 'all due sympathies, but could you possibly see your way to sometime possibly restoring Heathrow Farm to a bit more like what it was before?' Charles Dickens visited The Cedars sometimes, and Mary Ann Cooper lived there, she inspired his character Amy in his book Little Dorrit. That Himalayan plant collector Frank Kingdon-Ward lived in Hatton Gore for a while. Hatton Gore was built out of York stone got when an old Bank of England building was pulled down."

"It'll need plenty extra bricks to make deep foundations down to the bottoms of those runway drain trenches across the sites. It's no sense building house walls resting on that sort of not-properly-packed hole fill."

"What happened gory there?"

"Nothing. "Gore" in place names often came from an Anglo-Saxon word for 'spear', and meant a spearhead-shaped piece of land. There it's where the east border of Harlington parish crosses Hatton Road at a sharp angle."

"Coming here I saw Paul Whittington of Perry Oaks and his wife going with a sickle and a roll of binder twine to cut wheat. What happened to their combine harvester?"

"Nothing happened to it. Likely they need a few old-type sheaves of wheat for church Harvest Festival decoration. And to keep in practice with old skills. There's
always a bit of sickle or scythe work to cut oddments of hay or corn in corners that machines can't get into."

END OF AN ERA

In April 1977 Frederick Philp, slowly and leaning on a stick, went out between Heathrow Hall's farm buildings. Time had taken his hair and the last two furnace-hot summers had drained his energy.

"Is that bulldozer of yours free for a day next week?" asked a man who called. "You won't get much use out of it." Frederick said, "Like me, it's got old, its bearings are worn out. Repairing it needs more workshop than we've got. Sorry. It's my son drives it now." The enquirer went away. Frederick opened Stephen's Barn's door, went inside, went up to the bulldozer's front, threw some chicken food to four hens who were sitting on eggs underneath it, and slowly climbed onto its driver's seat to eat some sandwiches, letting his mind go back to the past, exile in Heston, the return, finding his house a wreck with no doors or windowframes, finding and first starting what he was now sitting on and afterwards often drove until he got too old, Perry Oaks's children (now grown up and with their own children) nicknaming it Smaug after a fictional dragon, the ordeal of rebuilding and repairing land and buildings after the airport contractors left, late July 1944 when it was the only usable way to tow four market wagons to Covent Garden Market on their first market run after the Return, the abominably wet 1946 summer - and the seven weeks' snow in early 1947 and nine weeks' in early 1963. He thought back to endless views of white, snowdrifts as high as his house, earth frozen as hard as concrete, the courses of the Two Rivers filled top-level with drifted snow, cold miles shifting snow, and going out of the back of Sipson pushing away snow on endless white distance past West Drayton station to Hillingdon Hospital clearing ahead of two ambulances. And in Harmondsworth helping to arrest two thieves who were after coal and meat to resell for profit when he was helping to deliver rations across country with his towed goods skid, and from time to time seeing a lorry with a snowplough to show him that he did not have to do the job alone; and at last the thaw. And Palmer's Farm's two carthorses pulling a de Havilland Dragon Rapide aeroplane into the big hangar for shelter while two men held the ends of its lower wings to steady it in the gusty wind which was blowing up into the big gale.

He remembered overhearing a row over a pilot's guide to landing in places in southeast Asia, that sometimes mentioned prangs as landmarks; its author's mentality was doubted, until someone found that in some parts of southeast Asia the word 'prang' means a type of ornate native temple tower (see this link). And someone at the main gate asking in a Canadian accent where Heathrow Airport was, despite the sign above his head: he had been too busy at home to keep much track of news from abroad, and he had to be told in detail about the 1944 leak and cancellation. He reflected that the hens faithfully sitting their eggs somewhere below him were about 20th-generation descendants of the four who, strong of wing, roosted well up in his cedar tree away from foxes and contractors' men during the airport-building Occupation; one of them gave Lord Woolton a surprise - good of him paying personal attention to Heathrow - and now dead these 13 years. And his contacts with Sir Charles Richard Fairey, dead these twenty and a half years, founder of Fairey Aviation, and running it until heart trouble took him aged 69 in the early morning of 30 September 1956. He thought of Irene, the loved find of his long-lost young years, mother of his children, at last taken by a stroke. Those and other things passed through his mind, until he slept.
In late afternoon one of his sons went to call him in for 6 p.m. dinner, and could not wake him, for his heart had given out at last. A doctor came and filled and signed the forms that he had to. Afterwards Frederick Philp went on his last journey, behind two strong carthorses on his old market wagon, as was often still custom there, with flowers around him, and more flowers growing on the roadsides to the Magpies junction and to Sipson, turning left, and to Harmondsworth church (once threatened by the airport plan, although so far from Heathrow), and funeral.

Four days later one of his sons started 'Smaug' for its last and non-returning job. Badly-worn bearings made noises painful to a mechanically-skilled ear as he drove it onto a transporter. The four hens sat tight and were unhurt. At the other end he drove it off the transporter to its assigned place in a construction and excavation equipment museum among its improved after-comers with front scoops, long digging arms, and everything that such as JCB had invented. He stopped its engine for the last time. A museum man drained its fuel tank and oil sump and catalogued it and started to clean it. He went by train to Hatton underground station, found that there was a bus soon to Harmondsworth, got off it at Heathrow, put up on two large hardboard sheets the posters that had been on 'Smaug''s blade, went in for dinner, and so that ended.

JANET WILKINS

Janet Wilkins, old widow, of one of the houses round the small green Heathrow Road in Heathrow village, well knew the places where she could sit, or failing that, lean, to rest her old legs on her increasingly long slow journeys to and from the Three Magpies bus stop when she had to go to Harmondsworth to collect her pension and buy necessary supplies. She had lost the handy projecting low branch stub opposite Bathurst market garden to someone with an over-tidy mind and a saw and room in his firewood store. Next pension day after that, she had nearly reached the Bath Road when something loud and diesel-powered came near from behind; it was Josiah Frederick William Philp, son of Frederick Josiah Philp of Heathrow Hall, on the old bulldozer left by an airport site contractor when in 1944 a whistleblower caused a violent row in Parliament and forced stop to the big Heathrow Airport scheme; when a Heathrow Airport came, it was merely the prewar Fairey Aviation's airfield plus what buildings could be fitted into land already spoiled by the Heathrow Brick Company's quarrying, and a big airport using all the village's land was left to daydreamers and model builders. He was off to a local contracting job - as far as he could go on its tracks, as he never had a transporter for it - ridge-and-trenching the roadside border of some land in Harlington to keep unwelcome travellers off, and helping council workmen to remove vehicles and shacks left by the last lot of travellers to be cleared off the land; and then helping to pull a big oak tree down near Harlington's West End - its trunk was sound, but would not be much longer as rot spread in from two broken branches: time to harvest its wood. In old times its wood would have likely become parts of the area's houses or carts and horse-drawn market wagons, and branchwood would have become furniture, or small oddments such as chessmen. A boatbuilder bought the stump: later in his boatyard by the Thames near Staines he split it and other big oak stumps into wedges, one for each big root, and carved each wedge into a rib for a small boat, with the grain going naturally round the curve from the trunk into the root; and perhaps when the boat was finished, schoolboys of the rich at nearby Eton would row about in it. The previous callout was a plea from a nearby school: "Our sports day: this rain's turned our field into a hippopotamus wallow and there's cars and two coaches need towing out.".
She had called out as he was passing then and asked him - successfully - not to grub out the old tree stump opposite Perrott's Farm which she sat on sometimes. That drove her to pray to God to preserve the rest of her sitting and leaning places, listing them as she prayed: someone overheard, and made it a theme of a sermon in the iron-sheet chapel a bit southeast of Wild's farm on Cain's Lane next Sunday; there it pricked someone's conscience, and next pension day opposite Bathurst she found that someone had built a brick pillar by the hedge, 2 by 1½ brick lengths area, and the right height for someone to sit on; and another a bit south of Heathrow Hall house gate, more comfortable and convenient than having to lean on the gate hoping that nobody would need to open or shut it, and so that prayer was answered. Thus she struggled through life, remembering that long ago she was much fitter and more active during the Reconstruction after the airport site contractors left. Her son Kenneth visited from Southampton sometimes. Local opinion had taught the new publican at the Plough and Harrow the hard way to let her sit if she sat on his pub's front bench. She remembered the time when she was accused of "frequenting public houses on public funds", and it needed a major row and Curtis of Heathrow Farm threatening to bring a solicitor in, to make pension officialdom amend its records and admit that "at/to the Three Magpies" here meant the bus stop, not the pub, and that "to the West End" here meant the West End of Harlington, not of London. The driver of the airport shuttle vehicle, ferrying passengers between the Heathrow Lakeview and the airfield and the farm cafes and the Three Magpies bus stop, and when needed, Hatton Underground station, was willing to carry her between home and the bus stop, if she was there to meet it. But one day its driver remarked that he had not seen her anywhere that day, and guessed that one of the Wilds or someone had given her a lift to Hatton post office and shops and back instead.

"Not so sure!" someone called out, and looked over a hedge. He saw her, on her garden seat, knitting (part of a cardigan) fallen out of her left hand on the grass, knitting pattern on her garden table flapping in the wind still paperweighted by a piece of brick, sandwiches partly eaten and left. He pushed through into her garden. "She's just breathing!" he called out, "Get airport first aid! Oxygen!". A visitor got in his car and drove it to the small airport's public gate at the north end of Cain's Lane, asked the gateman there, and was put on his phone on a line to the first aid room.

"Resuscitator? I knew we'd need it again. One of us took that heart attack passenger to Hillingdon with it 4 days ago, they took him inside still on it instead of bringing one of their own out, all that hurry and emergency, and we never got it back, they're always busy when we phone to get it back." came the answer. "Well, who's got oxygen in this one-horse little place? At Gatwick and Maplin there's emergency rooms all over the place. Maplin's even got a small casualty ward with beds."

"There's some skindivers in the lake." someone said, and pointed, "Those great oxygen cylinders of theirs." "No good!" a male nurse answered (he was in charge of first aid just then), "It's not oxygen, only compressed air. Skindivers' aqualungs have only got ordinary air like we're breathing now. Newspapers keep getting it wrong." "Well, hurry!!! Old woman with probable heart attack, in village, cottage on Miss Harbour's green. Oxygen needed."

The alarm went round. The first on scene at the cottage was a mechanic in a van with an oxyacetylene torch dragged out of the dim spider and cobweb ridden recesses of a workmen's storeroom in (what had been) Gamble's Farm on the airfield's northeast edge. It had a welder head on at the time, thankfully less threatening than a cutter head, and its head was unused and cold. "Agh, passengers. Arrivals is over there." he thought annoyedly, brushing two spiders off its cylinders. Enough was happening without treatment being delayed by silly arachnophobia. He had already turned the oxygen on and set it to a gentle flow. "Leave the other
cylinder, that's acetylene, she won't want that." as he carefully put the nozzle end in Janet's mouth; she started to rally. He explained to an alarmed onlooker that there was not one gas named 'oxyacetylene'.

"Now to get her to hospital". the car driver said.

"No good." said an airport security man who came up on a motorcycle, "Harmondsworth cottage hospital's shut, it'll have to be Hillingdon, and getting there's rush hour and two lots of roadworks." "I heard on local radio!" the mechanic said, and swore, "And again a life is hostage to the gas and the phone deciding to dig the road up just where it jams up the traffic the worst. There is an airport here: fly her there? The flying club's little trainer planes: how's their wingspans fit the roads round the hospital, width 'tween trees and lampposts?"

"No need for that." the security man said as his walkietalkie started to chatter, "Man in with a small helicopter, that's coming." The helicopter rose above trees and landed on a field across from the cottage; a human life is more important than a few squashed broad bean plants. Its pilot brought out a fighter pilot's oxygen set, complete with leather helmet to clip the oxygen mask to. "This was in the small hangar, we keep it full in case it's needed." he said.

"OK, OK, put it on her." the male nurse said, "She'll look like a Spitfire pilot, can't be helped. Boss is 'reading the riot act' to Hillingdon Hospital to get our resuscitator back."

That was done. The mechanic loaded the oxyacetylene torch into the van and took it back to Gamble's Farm as they loaded Janet Wilkins into the back seats of the helicopter. The male nurse rode with her. Its pilot took off northwards, over the ghost cropmark traces of the 1944 stopped start to building the planned big north Heathrow runway, over the Bath Road, over Sipson, and sun glints from Sipson Farm's acreage of greenhouses. Further on, streets and houses were taking over where in early 1947 Frederick Philp had fought against house-high snowdrifts in countryside. They came to suburb and then a west-to-east railway.

"@#$%& gas!! Just look where it is!" the pilot swore, and pointed out and down. Below they saw the all-too-familiar embodiment of road delay: workmen's barricading shutting off half the width of the road including the pavement, a compressor, a van, a dumper, a double-ended JCB excavator, and Gas Board workmen digging for a gas main, and one of them bent over a pneumatic drill (USA: jackhammer), heeding nothing except the job in hand, and a policeman struggling in vain to disentangle snarled-up traffic. All this in the worst possible place on a main south-to-north road just north of West Drayton station bridge.

They flew straight to Hillingdon Hospital. "Phone." said the pilot, pointing out and down to where a telephone cable was being worked on in another welter of roadworks clutter and jammed traffic. They landed on a lawn near casualty entrance. An ambulance came out to them. Its crew brought out a resuscitator, and then another. "OK, here it is, sorry for holding onto it, things arise." said one of the ambulancemen: it had 'HEATHROW' in clear large white paint letters on its cylinder and regulator valve, voiding Hillingdon's earlier telephoned excuse about trouble distinguishing it from their own resuscitators. Hillingdon had complained about starting a 'hue and cry' for one resuscitator when they were busy, but Heathrow only had one resuscitator and needed it back. The ambulancemen put the other resuscitator on Janet Wilkins and took her inside. The pilot and the male nurse put the retrieved resuscitator and the pilot's oxygen set in the helicopter and flew back from spreading towns to small rural Heathrow village and its small airfield. The male nurse went to a cottage next to Janet's and told Janet's neighbour what had happened. Perry Oaks farm promised to keep their phone always attended and open in case of news from Hillingdon, that place away north which from time to time and again now was a centre of hopes and fears. The neighbour felt guilty about rummaging in Janet's property, but he had to, to find her address and telephone book, to contact her son Kenneth.
The first incoming news was good, and Janet had rallied enough from the heart attack to dictate various wishes and requests and information to the nurses. As he was going away after that news, Perry Oaks's phone rang again, but Paul Whittington's voice answering it changed into distressed foul language telling a persistent salesman to get off his line and stay off it.

But a little later Perry Oaks's phone rang again, and they were told that she had had another heart attack, and that her first flight was her last. By now the address book and in it Kenneth's addresses and phone numbers (work and home) had been found, and now to tell the sad news. He rang Kenneth's work phone.

"He's in conference. I'll take a message." was the answer.

"I'd rather speak to him in person. I won't be long."

"Sorry, I can't disturb them. I'll take a message."

"And pass it on when the meeting breaks for coffee or finishes, I suppose, or forget to pass it on. It's his mother's died, for all decency's sake please will you put him on the line now!"

After a bit, another voice came on the line and said that he was Kenneth. and was told the bad news and said that he would come as soon as he could.

"That wasn't Kenneth Wilkins!" Paul Whittington said, "Not his voice, not his manner. They're holding the news back till a time convenient to their cold-blooded business schedule. - Hang on, I know what to do., and frantically pushbiked to the airport gate and in and to Heathrow Airport's small security staff office. He explained. One of them contacted Southampton Airport security and explained and put Wilkins's neighbour on the line. He explained and pleaded. Away in Southampton Airport, one of their security staff had a motorcycle and was due to go off shift soon; he tried at Kenneth's work address and was told to leave a message. He said that Kenneth was wanted in connection with an incident. Fearing the results of obstructing police, a secretary showed him to Kenneth Wilkins's office. Inside, he checked Kenneth's identity in case of another trick, found that he was the right man, and told him the sad news. Kenneth, angry at finding that this urgent personal message that his old mother was dangerously ill had been "filtered" out and delayed for business efficiency, left a message in the manager's mailbox, threw leave permission procedure in the bin and went to his car. He drove the 70 or so miles, a familiar journey, but feeling different from every time before. On the way, historic Winchester (the capital of England before London ever was) and Basingstoke meant little to him. He got on the M4 motorway a little before Reading, went faster along the motorway, little heeding the countryside around, got off at the junction north of Sipson, despite his grief and loss was kept waiting by the usual traffic lights delay crossing the Bath Road, and got to her cottage in Heathrow. He waited there until, following her last wishes, she was brought back from Hillingdon (by road: the traffic had slackened off) and laid out on her bed, with all necessary relevant official documents.

For centuries, country villagers had had to be their own undertakers, and some still preferred this way. The usual routine of human mortality had to be gone through. A locally-made pinewood coffin was brought; in it was a piece of paper, which proved to be an information sheet with date and its maker's name and address; someone had written a prayer on it: "Please God, may it be a long time before this is needed." in English and church Latin. Front gardens and rose bushes provided funeral flowers. Kenneth was found a spare bed in Perry Oaks, and the funeral was arranged for the next day.

Next morning in Southampton, the manager noticed Kenneth's absence and found what had happened, and his feelings were otherwise. The manager telephoned bookings, assembled a briefcaseful of papers for Kenneth Wilkins, and drove to Staines, and after some trouble found where Heathrow village was. He got to Janet's cottage, did not find Kenneth, asked nearly half the village before trying Perry Oaks, and found that the funeral procession had gone and which way. He followed it, and
saw the tail of it turning off the Bath Road to Sipson, going very slow. He had orders to collect Kenneth wherever he was, give him the briefcase of papers and instructions, take him back to the ex-BOAC hut in Heathrow, and tell him to collect a flight ticket there, fly to Gatwick, collect flight tickets at a ticket counter there, fly to Amsterdam, and thus catch up with his schedule. He saw another row of houses to the west, and guessed rightly that it was a road (Sipson Way) that would let him get ahead of the funeral procession. The procession finally came, headed not by an exhausty motor hearse but with the slow measured tread of two big carthorses pulling the coffin on a two-axled market wagon, as was often done there. It approached, and he got ready to look out for where Kenneth was riding - and had doubts. The solemnity of the occasion gave him second thoughts. He could not find Kenneth's car there, as it was parked among farm buildings at Perry Oaks. He joined the tail of the procession. It turned left at Sipson Farm crossroads and at last stopped at Harmondsworth's old church. There he finally decided not to interrupt Kenneth Wilkins from his day of mourning. He accepted the 'order of service' sheet which a verger handed to him, attended the funeral service with the rest, and the eulogy describing her long life and deeds, and watched Janet Wilkins being laid to rest next along from Frederick Philp.

"There's a fair number not come." said someone, "Too many town people got cars or vans can drive about taking stuff, this dishonest modern age, and we've got to leave men back to guard property. And where's the Dances?"

"Dancing? That doesn't belong at funerals!" the manager queried.

"No, Dance is his surname, that man Richard Dance, in that small market garden house on the south side of Heathrow Road nearly opposite the Plough and Harrow, his father was George Dance."

"We'll find when we get back."

The manager went with the rest back to a buffet meal in one of Perry Oaks's front fields, there found Kenneth, and the two discussed. The manager could see how Kenneth was, and did not press him to do any more business until the next day.

As some of them passed the Dances' house, they knew by the noise that the cause of absence was not casual lazy absenteeism, but far more serious. The ancient crisis and ordeal of womankind had, as often, chosen an unsuitable time to arise. "That helicopter yesterday scared her, she's my son's wife, and the chasing about after that started her off." said Richard Dance coming to the door. "Sorry we couldn't come. The midwife had to come from Staines."

They now knew what had happened. Soon after, the noises inside changed into a newborn baby's first cry. So came renewal after an ending. It was a boy: Edmund.

The manager drove back to work. Kenneth drove home and went to work next morning, and got back to schedule, but with several contacts and meetings missed. The firm's director had to accept the result, or risk losing goodwill due to emotive newspaper descriptions.

So passed another living memory of the untroubled times before the war, and of the Air Ministry takeover and the exile and Occupation, and the Return and the ordeal of the Reconstruction after the airport site contractors had damaged much. The children who saw the funeral would only know of those events as stories by parents and grandparents and old photographs. There remained only the inevitable tidying-ups of matters: her will left her cottage to someone in the village's younger son, as she had been wary of the end-results of letting ownership of houses or land go outside the village. Her son Kenneth was left her savings and much of her movable property. Her neighbour's wife finished knitting the cardigan and Kenneth let her keep it. Janet had saved quite an amount down the years: Kenneth spent some of it on a second oxygen resuscitator for the airport's first-aid room. The cottage's new owner moved in.

In the next few months Paul Whittington heard that his niece Janice had born a second child (a boy) to her husband in Heyhead beside Manchester Airport, and that
Susan Shenton of Heyhead, now become Susan Whittington of Perry Oaks, was expecting again. So again came renewal after ending. Life carried on.

LIFE GOES ON

Time passed. The airport management gradually forgot dreams of great expansion and settled down to a local role, somewhat like Barton Airfield west of Manchester. A few seaplanes landed on the lake. A scuba diving club from Barnet on the north edge of London helped to make a pier in the lake for seaplanes to tie up to: cheaper than commercial divers. A big sudden security takeover and cordoning-off raised old fears got from their fathers, but it was only investigating iron objects that scuba divers and magnetic scans had found in the lake; three large German wartime bombs and a shot-down Messerschmidt were found and removed. Fish were put in the lake and gradually grew and bred, but any that started eating ducklings tended to somehow disappear. Farmers and market gardeners had to mechanize as their workforce got fewer and older as men's sons got jobs in town: the "drift to the towns" came to Heathrow village like to anywhere else. The airport attracted planespotters: nothing like as many flights as at a big airport, but an interesting assortment: small commercial flights, private flights, testing new planes. Nobody on site was really pleased when a regular group of planespotters too familiar with Tolkien chose their own names for big patches of orchard that sometimes blocked view of parts of the sky or ground: "Mirkwood the Great" for the big patch of orchard at Fairey's north corner, "Lothlorien" for a patch east of Cain's Lane, "Old Forest" for a bigger patch further east, "Fangorn Forest" for orchards and a natural wood around Hatton. Perrot's Farm shop/cafe started to sell newspapers and stationery.

Talk of global warming had the farmers worried about that nightmare of farmers further south in warmer parts of France, routine risk of a thunderstorm bringing cherry-sized or golf-ball-sized hail that can beat a productive vineyard to pulp just before grape harvest or break every pane in an area of greenhouses.

Henry Curtis's son, who had inherited from his father, drove a market wagon to Fairey's, as routine, with eggs and milk and vegetables for its passenger cafe and works canteen. While there, he read a model aircraft magazine, and saw in it that a big Heathrow Airport had been built at last - as a 1/400 scale model in an big attic in Hounslow, and several large photographs of it. It was about 20 meters long between the Crane and Colne rivers. It was realistic enough to get attention from a film company. It had two big long parallel west-to-east runways; it seemed to have been extended from the postwar "one runway" version, as it had no trace of diagonal runways current or disused as in the triangular and star-of-David-shaped runway arrangements in early plans. Some of the listed farm buildings were preserved round the south and east edges of the central terminals area, perhaps used by live-in airport staff and/or as maintenance depots; all thatched roofs were replaced by slates. Parts of the country lanes were kept as airport internal roads. Perry Oaks was largely still there, partly airfield maintenance depot and partly a security base. The model had three central terminals, an old smallish north edge terminal now used for engineering, and two more terminals pushing southwards over Eglantine Cottage and Mayfields: one of them was a goods terminal, judging by the amount of lorries and vans round it. It has its own motorway branch coming off the M4, with a big spreading junction with looping slip roads obliterating much of Sipson Farm. At the east end airliner maintenance hangars had overridden Hatton Road; The Limes and The Cedars were gone, but Hatton Gore remained, with radar and radio masts in its garden. The model was in sections for transport. It had exchangeable sections to
swop between the Perry Oaks sludge works and a new western passenger terminal. In the model, Fairey's big hangar was now an airport fire station.

A film company visited and wanted to dress Heathrow airfield up as Croydon Airport to make a fiction film set in 1952; Croydon Airport could not be so used, as it had closed on 30 September 1959 and since then much of it had been built over with suburban streets (some named after makes of aeroplanes). This was allowed. Actors in preserved or reproduction 1950-period clothes enacted a romance intermeshed with international business and finance intrigue, the sort of scenario of many routine cinema films. A props department printing press equipped the actors with copies of 1950's ration books and newspapers and suchlike. Enough Croydon Airport signs and notices were put up to make it as realistic as most of the film's viewers needed. Cain's Lane was used as the road to the airport, presuming that by then most viewers would not have flown through the real Croydon Airport or seen it in news and so would not notice the differences. A preserved Lockheed Constellation was used as the departure airliner, and boarding it was filmed at Northolt. Takeoff was only seen from inside the plane; a studio miniature of Croydon Airport provided some from-the-air shots. During shooting an air-freight company's old Dakota landed and loaded-up and took off, giving some suitable period airfield sequence, but on its descent the film crew on top of the Heathrow Lakeview had to aim carefully to avoid giveaways in shot such as the now well-known double-humped form of Heathrow Hall or the characteristic 'curved then straight' Heathrow Road through the village. (In another fiction film (and in OTL: Author) with events set at Croydon Airport, Barton Airfield's distinctive control tower showed clearly.) They got hold of an old stock from-cockpit shot of the descent to Zurich, and managed to fudge events on arrival there without airfield shots but only in studio sets. The villains were caught and duly imprisoned for trial. The couple married [in a studio set which was described as being] in Zermatt. Their flight home was shown as the inside of the plane, and descent to the Croydon Airport studio miniature, and where Fairey's big hangar's 80-foot-wide concrete surround seen through a plane door from inside would look enough like Zurich runway concrete. The film company finished its location shots and cleared up after itself and went back to its studio. Replacing airfield grass by runway concrete where advisable through the film would have to wait until computer image processing became cheap and plentiful enough, if the film would be still worth it after so long. The film sold in cinemas as well as the average of routine fiction films.

The pressure group PHASMA (Preserve Heyhead And Shadow Moss Area) in the end, despite help from Heathrow village, could not stop Manchester Airport and its level car parking from spreading over the area, and Janice came back to Heathrow, the place of her birth, and her husband and their children came with her. A market garden owner who was getting elderly and had no younger generation on site with him, let them live there, if they helped to run the place. Janice's husband, and Susan (née Shenton), found Middlesex confusing: the city on the east instead of on the north; the totally flat land with no eastern distant view of the Pennines; but they were thankful that the airport was much smaller and quieter than Manchester Airport - thanks to the 1944 whistleblower, else the village and much around would have been obliterated by twice as much airport as at Gatwick.

So life went on unremarkably like at many small airports and airfields, and the farms and market gardens around grew and sold food as they always had. Those who remember the exile and return and Reconstruction became older and fewer as the years inevitably passed, and their sons and grandsons have replaced them. They have more tractors and fewer horses now. The Wilds still keep a carthorse, a fifth generation descendant of a half-sister of old Captain who did much hardy work after the Return and towing supplies on a sledge in the seven weeks' snow in 1947. Around 30 generations have passed between the domestic ducks that now dredge about in the wet hollow across the road from Heathrow Hall and the ducks' eggs
brought from Sipson in 1944 during the Reconstruction. The old bulldozer was stripped and cleaned and worn parts repaired or replaced, and reassembled, and does occasional work in and near the museum grounds, but it never came back to Heathrow. Global warming let grapevines and fig trees and peach trees fruit usefully in the open in gardens. Heathrow Hall's big cedar is still there. Suburban expansion of London has largely left the area alone, but has spread past it to north and south. Shortage of temporary labour at fruit-picking times brought "pick it yourself", as in many other places. Life goes on.