

# Maplin – the battle over London's third airport in the 1970s

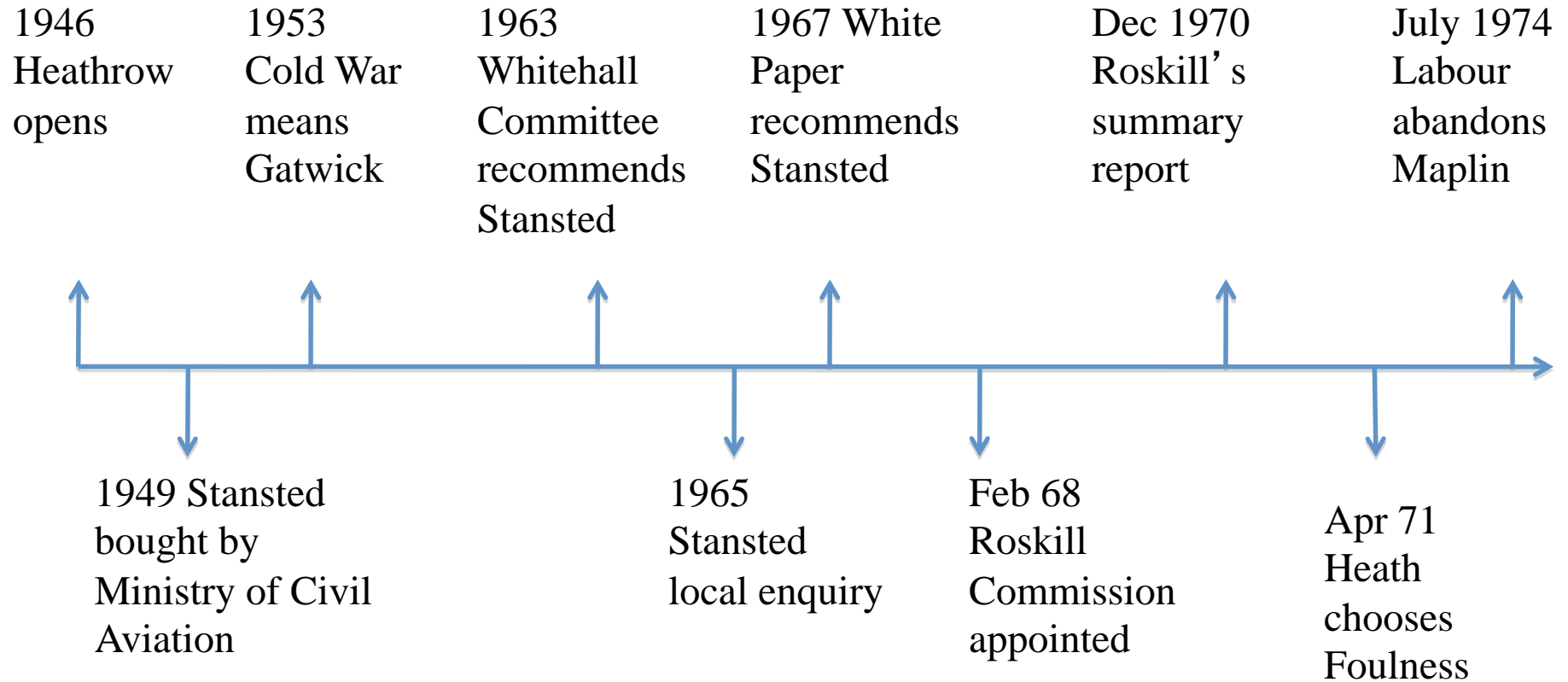


Duncan Needham, Centre for Financial History, Cambridge - [djn33@cam.ac.uk](mailto:djn33@cam.ac.uk)

# Agenda

- The post-war debate over London's third airport
- The Roskill Commission, 1968-70
  - When shall we need it?
  - Where shall we put it?
- The rise and fall of Maplin airport, 1971-74
  - Did Whitehall 'fail' ?
- Lessons for today

# Timeline for London's third airport



# The Roskill Commission

- ‘to enquire into the timing of the need for a four-runway airport to cater for the growth of traffic at existing airports servicing the London area, to consider the various alternative sites, and to recommend which site should be selected’



Milton Keynes

Luton

Bishop's Stortford

Stansted

Colchester

Harwich

Esbjerg-Hamburg

Hoek van Holland

Clacton-on-Sea

Chelmsford

**LONDON**

WATERLOO (Eurostar)

KINGS CROSS

VICTORIA

LONDON BRIDGE

City

Southend

Southend-On-sea

Maidenhead

Reading

Windsor

Dartford

Sheerness

Margate

Whitstable

Ramsgate

Kent International

Canterbury

Deal

Aldershot

Guildford

Reigate

Tonbridge

Tunbridge Wells

Ashford

Dover

Dover - Dunkerque

Dover - Calais

Channel Tunnel

Horsham

Petersfield

Petworth

Haywards Heath

Uckfield

Rye

Winchelsea

Lydd/Ashford

Chichester

Arundel

Worthing

**Brighton & Hove**

Newhaven

Eastbourne

Portsmouth

Bognor Regis

Littlehampton

Portsmouth - Caen & Le Havre  
Portsmouth - Bilbao, St Malo & Cherbourg  
Portsmouth - Guernsey & Jersey

Newhaven - Dieppe



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# The Roskill Commission

- Cost-benefit analysis
  - Cublington (Stansted not short-listed)
- Colin Buchanan's dissent
  - *Any* inland site 'an environmental disaster'
- The official machinery
  - Ministerial Committee
  - Official Team

# Key individuals

- Downing St
  - Ted Heath, Francis Pym (Chief Whip), Burke Trend (Cab. Sec)
- HM Treasury
  - Tony Barber (Chancellor), Sir Samuel Goldman (2<sup>nd</sup> Perm. Sec), Raymond Gedling (Official Team), Leo Pliatzky (Dep. Sec.), Gordon Downey (Under-Sec), Peter Lazarus, Margaret Elliot-Binns.
- Home Office
  - Reggie Maudling (Home Sec. and chair of Min. Committee)
- Department of the Environment
  - Peter Walker (Minister), Michael Heseltine (junior Minister)
- Department of Trade and Industry
  - John Davies (Minister), Peter Masefield (BAA)

# First breakout session

- HM Treasury reaction to Roskill
- Ted Heath's reaction to Roskill
- Press reaction to Roskill
- British Airports Authority reaction to Roskill



# Heath chooses Maplin

- Official Team

- ‘I know that you take the view that Ministers will not in the event be prepared to consider an inland site, but this does not necessarily mean that the Official Committee, which has been charged with looking at the facts, should go out of its way to make it easy for Ministers to reach such a decision’

- Ministerial Committee

- ‘the recent debates in both Houses of Parliament have shown that we have no chance of obtaining the necessary Parliamentary approval for the building of the [Third London Airport] if Cublington were chosen as the site’

- Prime Minister

- ‘the pressures on the environment which would be created by a site inland, such as the one at Cublington, would be so outrageous that they must be allowed to outweigh any small financial advantage of a more central site’

# Maplin – the issues

- Private Sector involvement
  - Airport/seaport/industrial complex
- The Maplin Development Bill
  - Parliamentary ‘expediency’
- The new town and transport links
  - A six-lane motorway

# Second breakout session

- Civil Aviation Authority, May 1973 traffic forecasts and 1973 *Times* editorial.
- Peter Jay, ‘The boom that must go bust’, May 1973.
- Letter from local MP to chief whip and from Tony Crosland to Harold Wilson.
- HM Treasury advice to Ministers in June 1973.

# Maplin grinds to a halt

- CAA traffic forecasts
  - Existing runway capacity sufficient until 1990
  - Channel Tunnel and bigger, quieter aircraft
- Environmental impact
  - New town and transport links
- The ‘dash for growth’ and the ‘oil shock’
  - The three-day week

# London air traffic forecasts (1980)

	Passengers (million)		Air transport movements	
	Demand	Capacity	Demand	Capacity
Roskill Commission (1971)	56.6	61	482,000	478,000
CAA Report (1973)	58	57	488,000	502,000
Maplin Review (1974)	51.2 <sup>a</sup>	61 <sup>b</sup>	450,000 <sup>b</sup>	620,000 <sup>b</sup>
Outcome	40		441,173	

<sup>a</sup> 'Assessment figure' derived from interpolated range.

<sup>b</sup> Estimates for 1990.

# Labour scraps Maplin

- Lower air traffic forecasts
- No new runway capacity required until 1990
- Existing terminal capacity sufficient
- Bigger, quieter aircraft
- Heathrow and Gatwick development required
- Regional airports could be used more
- Cost estimates have doubled

# Lessons for today

- Listen to transport stakeholders
  - ‘An airport has to work as an airport’
- ‘Play it long’
  - Create the gap for opposition to build or a change of government
- Solution probably involves existing infrastructure
  - Davies Commission