

HEATHROW AIRPORT CELEBRATES 70TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2016

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Heathrow was originally built for military purposes during the Second World War and was handed over by the Air Ministry to the Minister of Civil Aviation on January 1st, 1946

Today marks 70 years since Heathrow officially became a commercial airport.

Over the course of 2016, Heathrow will be celebrating a number of key moments with colleagues, passengers and the local community to mark this significant anniversary.

May 31st is the official date of Heathrow's birthday – marking 70 years since the then newly named London Airport officially opened for civilian aviation.

The first commercial flight to depart that day was a British South American Airlines Lancastrian 'Star Light' which flew to Buenos Aires.

Since its opening, the UK's only hub airport has grown significantly to handle over 73 million passengers annually and is now one of the best major airports in the world.

In 1946 passenger terminals were made from ex-military marquees that formed a 'tented village' along the Bath Road.

Each was equipped with floral-patterned armchairs, settees and small tables containing vases of fresh flowers.

To reach aircraft parked on the apron, passengers walked over wooden duckboards to protect their footwear from the muddy airfield.

By the close of Heathrow's first operational year in 1946, 63,000 passengers had travelled through London's new airport.

By 1951 this had risen to 796,000 and British architect Frederick Gibberd was appointed to design permanent buildings for the airport.

Long standing employee and local resident Keith Haywood, 87, has worked at the airport for over 70 years and pushed one of the first flights back aged 17.

He said: "I feel very privileged to have seen Heathrow develop and grow from its first day in 1946."

Since 2003, Heathrow has invested £12 billion in transforming Heathrow.

As a result, over 60 per cent of Heathrow passengers now experience modern, world class facilities in Terminal 5 and Terminal 2.

In June 2015, Terminal 1 closed to make way for newer and improved facilities.

Eventually an extension of the new Terminal 2 will take its place.

If the Government supports a third runway at Heathrow in the summer then Terminal 2 will be extended and a new terminal will be built adjacent to Terminal 5, providing enough capacity to connect Britain to the world for the 21st century.

Heathrow chief executive John Holland Kaye said: "This is a significant milestone which marks the incredible transformation of Heathrow.

"Heathrow has come a long way from being a military airfield to a national asset which is now a globally recognised brand.

"I am very proud to be a part of 'Team Heathrow' and the 75,000 colleagues helping to make every passenger's journey better.

"I'm looking forward to celebrating the history of this amazing airport this year but I'm also looking forward to the next 70 years as Heathrow aims to be the best connected and most environmentally responsible airport in the world."

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