

## Manchester Airport - History

### - from a mid 1980's report of the Competition Commission

The story of Manchester International Airport (MIA) is one of almost continuous growth, as can be seen from the following table:

**Table 2.1: MIA: traffic statistics by year**

	<i>Total terminal passengers ('000)</i>	<i>Freight/mail (tonnes)</i>	<i>Total aircraft movements</i>
1950	98	1,800	21,300
1960	752	14,900	34,000
1970	1,927	45,700*	55,500
1980	4,427	27,650	83,280
1982	5,156	27,210	89,000
1984	6,035	31,950	92,090
1986	7,508	42,480	111,600

\* Freight increased due to industrial action in the docks.

Source: MA plc.

In 1929 Manchester became the first municipality in the country with its own licensed 'aerodrome'. In 1930 a new site was opened, but this was soon found to be too small and after a long struggle the city council succeeded in establishing the present airport on a site then known as Ringway. Scheduled airline operations started in 1938 and passengers in the 14 months to August 1939 totalled 7,600. The Royal Air Force also began to use Ringway at this time for flying out locally-built aircraft.

Throughout the war the airport remained under the control of Manchester Corporation, although facilities were very considerably expanded for RAF use. Several thousand aircraft made by Fairey and A V Roe were delivered from Ringway and aircraft of many types were serviced and repaired. The airport's most unusual role came with the establishment there of the training centre for parachute troops. The first drops were made in the summer of 1940 and by the time the Parachute Training School closed in 1946 some 60,000 men had made over 400,000 jumps.

Civilian air traffic re-started at Ringway in January 1946 and flights to Paris later in that year signalled the re-introduction of scheduled services. In 1951 an extended runway was ready and the first Ground Controlled Approach radar was installed. Twenty-four hour-a-day operations commenced in the following year, when a total of 163,000 passengers were handled, and the first transatlantic departure was made from Ringway.

Under an agreement reached in 1952 with the then Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ringway was accepted as a major international airport. The ownership remained with Manchester Corporation and the name Ringway was changed to Manchester Airport. By 1954, the number of passengers handled had risen to 265,000 and a decision was taken to build a new terminal.

The first jet airliner services out of Manchester started in 1960, by which time inclusive tour services —better known now as charter flights — and cargo services had become significant

factors in the traffic mix. Since then there has also been a growth in flying training, private aircraft and air taxi work. The new terminal and control tower block opened at the end of 1962, by which time the airport was handling over 1 million passengers. Later a new airport hotel was built and a further extension was made to the main runway, which carried it across the A538 road. In 1974 the new inter-continental pier was opened together with a multi-storey car park.

The airport was formally renamed Manchester International Airport in 1975. Development of the premises and facilities has since been almost continuous and MIA is now the third busiest airport in the United Kingdom and handles more passengers than a number of capital city airports in Western Europe, as can be seen from Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: MIA: comparisons with other airports, 1986**

	<i>Total passengers (‘000)</i>	<i>Freight (tonnes) (‘000)</i>	<i>Air Transport movements</i>
Heathrow	31,310	537	293,914
Gatwick	16,309	164	157,712
MIA	7,508	39	85,037
Glasgow	3,101	13	56,472
Birmingham	2,091	7	44,841
Belfast	1,854	23	32,592
Stansted	546	13	46,000
Oslo	6,286	43	94,300**
Brussels	5,739	192	90,000**
Helsinki	4,649	40	57,700**
Vienna	3,430	41	59,800**
Lisbon	3,313	61	38,100**
Dublin	2,898	38	54,600**

\* An air transport movement, or ATM, is a landing or take-off by an aircraft operating a scheduled or charter service. The number of ATMs at an airport will therefore be less than the total of all aircraft movements at the airport, of which there were over 111,000 at MIA in 1986.

\*\* To the nearest hundred.

Source: CAA, ICAO, BAA.

The 1985 White Paper on Airports Policy said that 'The Government will encourage the development of Manchester as a regional hub airport'. A survey conducted in 1984 by the International Passenger Survey Division of the Department of Employment indicated that less than 75 percent of international air passengers flying to or from the London airports originate or terminate their journey in the south-east of the country. As well as this, MA plc estimates that the airport has a catchment area of some 20 million passengers stretching from southern Scotland to the Midlands and from parts of Wales to Yorkshire and Humberside. Although this area contains other airports, MIA's access to the motorway network, its passenger- and cargo-handling

facilities, and a runway long enough to permit the take-off of transatlantic flights without penalty to maximum payload, all attract international services to it. This in turn increases the opportunity for connecting flights, either with the same carrier, or with a different airline. A list of current scheduled and other services operating out of MIA is given in Appendix 2.1.

Aircraft movements during 1986 totalled 111,576. These consisted of 48,535 scheduled services, 30,319 inclusive tours, 6,634 charters, 13,072 private flights, 7,160 empty positioning movements and 5,856 miscellaneous aircraft movements including pleasure and military flights. To cope with forecast traffic, MA plc plans to double the airport's capacity by the end of the century and within the next few years it is hoped to construct a rail link into the airport and a second international terminal.

MIA's local authority owners anticipated the passing of the Airports Bill into law in July 1986 by establishing a public company called Manchester Airport plc, which commenced business on 1 April 1986. In its Memorandum of Association, the company has as its first object 'To acquire, own, operate, control, manage, develop, administer and maintain the aerodrome known as Manchester International Airport, and any extension thereof . . .'. Until March 1986, MIA was owned as to 50 per cent by Manchester City Council (MCC) and as to the other 50 per cent by the Greater Manchester County Council. That county council no longer exists and the shares of the company are now held as to 55 per cent by MCC and as to the remainder by Bury, Bolton, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan District Councils equally between them. The land of the airport is held by MCC on behalf of itself and the other nine local authorities in Greater Manchester and MCC has granted a 125 year lease of the land to MA plc. The Chairman of the company told us that the ten local authorities in Greater Manchester were always prepared to transfer on an open market basis the freehold in the land, should this prove important for the viability of the company.