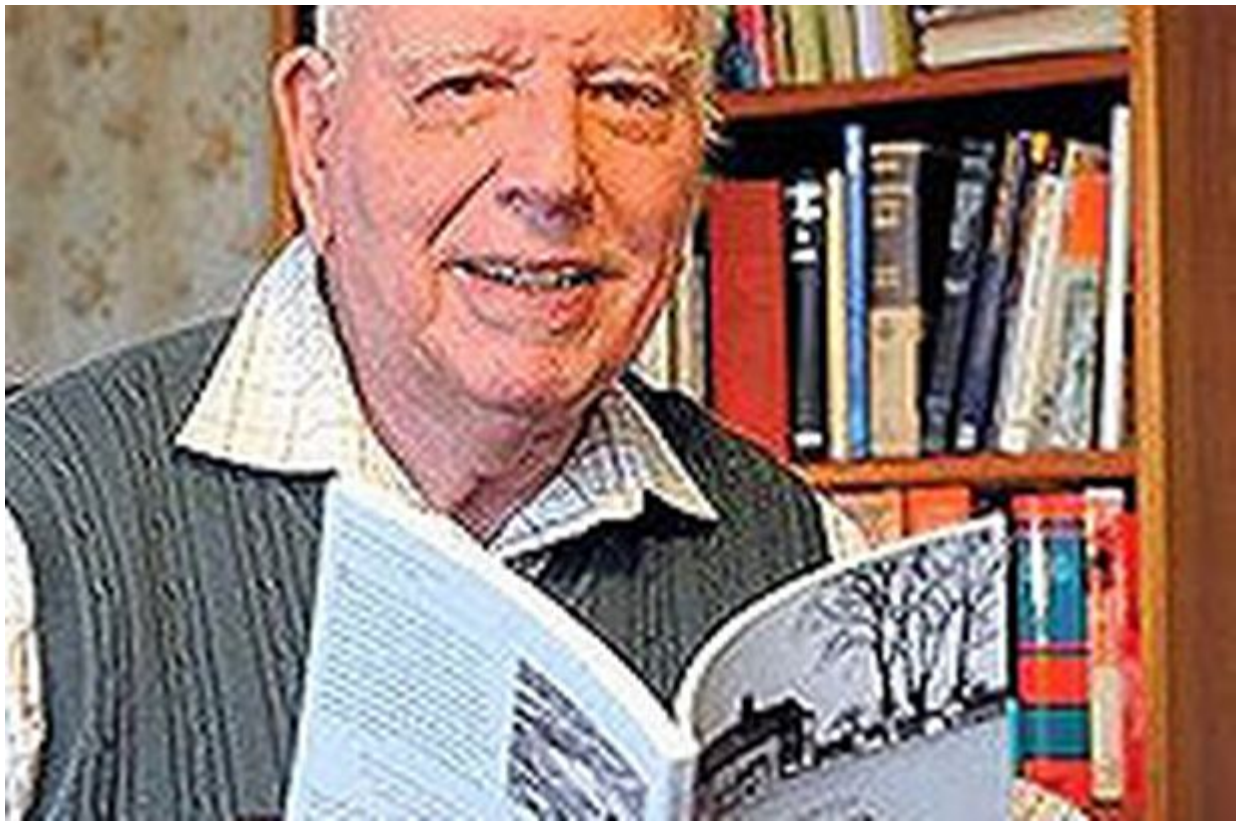


Heathrow was 'built on a fraud' claims author

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philip sherwood

Author Philip Sherwood was just a teenager living in Sipson when it was announced that a new airport was going to be built on his doorstep.

Nearly 70 years on, Heathrow is one of the busiest airports in the world. Mr Sherwood (pictured) is now 83 and lives in Harlington, and in his new book, *Around Heathrow Through Time*, he documents how Heathrow and the villages nearby – Harlington, Cranford, Sipson, Harmondsworth and Longford – have been developed almost beyond recognition over the course of the 20th century, using archive pictures from his personal collection and drawing on his unique perspective as a lifelong resident of the area.

“I was about 15 when they were building the airport, and like my parents and everyone else who lived in the area I was horrified. It is still fresh in many people’s memories,” said Mr Sherwood.

“The airport was developed by fraud during the war,” he claims.

“The land was seized using wartime powers so the RAF could use it as a base, but it was always going to be a civil airport. It was madness to put it there.

“I’ve seen the area change from the very pleasant area it once was to the concrete jungle it is now.”

It is hard for this generation to separate Heathrow from the airport which now defines it, but before the war, Heathrow – or Heath Row as it appears on some maps – was a sleepy hamlet in the parish of Harmondsworth dominated by agricultural land.

Because of its fertile soil, it was largely given over to market gardens growing fruit and vegetables for London.

In 1929, aircraft manufacturer Fairey Aviation of Hayes developed an airfield for test flights on land that would later be acquired from the company to form the basis of the new airport.

Heathrow of old was effectively bulldozed into the ground.

Construction of the airport started in 1944. It was completed two years later with just a single runway and temporary marquees acting as terminals.

As passenger numbers and flights increased, so did the rate of development, and it is now the country’s main hub airport.

The lack of airport capacity in the south-east is again high on the political agenda, and many see expanding Heathrow further as a solution.

There are fears a third runway would come at the expense of the Heathrow villages as we know them, and Mr Sherwood has voiced his opposition to further expansion.

“This business about a third runway has been going on for years and years,” he said.

“The aviation mafia will keep pushing for it and they’ll never give up, but the environmental effects, the noise and air pollution would just be horrific.

“They should make do with what they have got, because there is simply no room.”

Sipson, Harmondsworth and the other villages north of Bath Road remain largely intact today, and the tight-knit communities have withstood the threat of extinction, which continues to blight them.

The fascinating images in the book date back more than 100 years, and show what has become of the villages’ historic buildings.

You will read about local landmarks such as The Forge blacksmiths in Harlington High Street and The Vineries in Sipson Road, both demolished for housing, and the medieval Great Barn in Harmondsworth, which remains upstanding today and is a treasured relic.