



A no-man's land of cargo sheds, car parks and dual carriageways

32 miles of London's mighty orbital motorway have been built, but Gatwick has access to the biggest single chunk of it: the 17 miles linking the M23 at Reigate with the M26 at Sevenoaks. Next year, the Transport Department plans to add another 13 miles to this portion. Neither Heathrow nor Stansted will have anything like as extensive a distributor.

This is good for Gatwick. But what about the Gatwick area? The airport has always had an uneasy relationship with its hinterland. Generally, the smaller local authorities are hostile, while the bigger ones are resigned. Gatwick might have been stopped earlier if West Sussex county council and Crawley new town had opposed it.

Now Crawley and the airport interpenetrate. One third of the airport's workforce live in the new town. The second terminal promises to generate 20,000 extra jobs (11,000 of them airport jobs). But Crawley has less need of them than other areas. It has only 3 per cent unemployment. This is no thanks to the airport, which accounts for less than 20 per cent of jobs. Rather it is because the town has a broad spectrum of employment, private and public.

As for the people who commute to central London but live in the countryside round Gatwick, they are unremittingly hostile. Gatwick had the first airport protest society in 1954, and the Gatwick Aircraft Noise Executive (1964) was the first to protest about airport noise. GANE now survives as the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign; still active, still fighting.

Local pressure has had results. The noise problem is bad, the Gatwick Airport Con-

sultative Committee says, but it is likely to get better as quieter aircraft arrive. The go-ahead for the second terminal has some tough anti-noise conditions attached. Gatwick can expand but not (as the inspector at the Terminal Two inquiry emphasised) at the expense of people living nearby.

The government has also increased noise insulation grants and kept the restriction on night flying. Night flights have been a sore point at Gatwick since the days when Gatwick took excess flights from Heathrow. For a time, there were no restrictions on night flying at Gatwick.

This has changed, along with Gatwick's role. Since 1954, Gatwick has been primarily a bucket-and-spade airport for charter flights, which occasionally acts as an overflow for scheduled flights from Heathrow. Today, the picture is different. Scheduled traffic is growing five times as fast as charter. Two years ago, a third of Gatwick's throughput was scheduled. Now it is nearly a half.

Some of this is overflow from big airlines like SAS, TWA and British Airways. But it is also a sign that small independent operators like Air Europe (run by Harry Goodman, a soulmate of Freddie Laker) are switching from charter to scheduled operation.

Gatwick's metamorphosis is a triumph for private enterprise. If Heathrow is British Airways' home airport, Gatwick is British Caledonian's home. And as British Airways' sun sets, B-Cal's has been rising. British Airways is jettisoning routes. B-Cal is picking them up.

At the same time, B-Cal is attempting to "poach" passengers from Heathrow. It has introduced a scheme which makes Gatwick

a connecting point for passengers from regional airports. The BAA likes to think Gatwick is not competing with Heathrow, merely complementing it. British Caledonian thinks otherwise.

Heathrow's advantage over Gatwick is crudely simple. Heathrow has two runways. Gatwick has only one (which is why, in the BAA's view, a second terminal at Gatwick in no way diminishes the need for an expanded Stansted). The original plan for Gatwick included a second runway. But proposals to build it, ten years ago, were howled down. Then, gradually, the second runway lost importance. As airliners became longer and wider, it became possible to move more people in the same number of aircraft movements. Another terminal, rather than another runway was needed.

There is a limit, however, to the business of packing people into progressively large aircraft. With only one runway, 25 million passengers a year is the maximum that Gatwick can handle. Any more, and it needs a second runway. So 25 mpa is both a ceiling and a threshold.

The BAA have a "contract" with the local authorities not to build a second runway for 40 years. But that did not stop the government reconsidering a second runway two years ago, before rejecting it again.

But what happens to the BAA's contract if the BAA itself disappears. A highly political (anti-state control) paper from the Centre for Policy Studies, *Airport UK*, recommends scrapping the BAA, and selling off London's airports to private enterprise.

Whatever happens, Gatwick has lost its hand-me-down image. The Secondhand Rose of Britain's airports has got some new clothes of her own.

Richard Hoggart and the waning of the working classes

Jeremy Seabrook looks back at 'The Uses of Literacy.' The first of an occasional series of reappraisals

Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* is, among other things, a poem—an elegy to the relationships between him and the grandmother who brought him up when he was orphaned at the age of nine. Through it runs the loving transmission of lore and wisdom, some of it rooted in the countryside from where Hoggart's family had migrated into Hunslet in Leeds, some of it the harsh and bitter lessons working people learnt through their struggle against poverty and work.

It is a celebration of all that was best in that old working class culture: its resourcefulness and resistance, its sense of community "which arises chiefly from a knowledge, born of living close together, that one is inescapably part of a group, from the warmth and security that knowledge can give, from the lack of change in the group, from the frequent need to turn to a neighbour, since services often cannot be bought."

But the book is much more than this. It is also a protest at the way in which those older working class values were being systematically distorted in the 1950s, in order to

accommodate a new culture, a disruptive culture of commodities which, though it seemed to alleviate the worst of that old poverty, was nevertheless felt as an alien and disturbing experience by many of those brought up in that older tradition.

To a generation from the working class who went through grammar school and university in the years after the war, *The Uses of Literacy* (first published in 1957) faithfully reflected all our ambiguous feelings—the excitement at the prospect of our new mobility, as well as the sadness at leaving behind a way of life evoked with such loving and recognisable detail by Hoggart. The book became something of a keepsake for those of us leaving the working class, something touching and tangible that would remind us, help us to keep faith; even though, at another level, we felt that the real point of our departure from the council estates and the terraced streets was the sense of escape, the opportunity, the limitless horizons that were opening up to us.

That others had trodden this uncertain but exciting way was a great comfort. And

as we went to university, we found, partly thanks to Hoggart, that our social origins had become a sort of desirable personal attribute, a passport to a certain kind of social success, if we were prepared to use them in the right way.

From university we went into teaching, administration, higher education, the media, social work. It didn't occur to us that our departure could possibly be part of a process of impoverishment and loss to those we left behind. The fact that we were entering what came, briefly, to be called "the caring professions" was evidence enough of that—though we should perhaps have reflected that we were being quite substantially rewarded for what we saw as our altruism.

Perhaps if we had been less selective in what we took from *The Uses of Literacy*, we might have noticed this other element in our journey. "They" have tempted, without difficulty, some of the brighter minds in the *What happened to Hoggart's Hunslet. The old back-to-backs were replaced by 1960s blocks. This man is one of the few still living in them. They are to be demolished in their turn.*



Daniel Meadows

working class into a kind of weakening of their own class—partly for money, partly for the best of inadequately examined reasons. But we were aware only of the poignancy of our own experience, the exalted sense of our individual destiny.

We preferred to listen to the Hoggart who spoke of the resilience of the working class, the resistance against the coming of the new culture. And it is precisely the balanced and tentative quality of the argument in the book that permitted us to interpret it in our own way: the new culture may be debilitating, but some old strengths remain.

We were reassured; and we looked back on that part of the working class that seemed stable and enduring. We could not understand then how our own exodus from the working class was connected with the coming of the new culture, was only part of far deeper convulsions that were going to alter its shape and direction. What we were looking for was something to console us, and something to assuage our guilt at what always seemed, at one level, a defection.

Looked at more closely now, *The Uses of Literacy* is the powerful and moving testimony of a lone child, absorbing the values and response of a culture already in decay. There is a sense of affectionate estrangement from it, a feeling of loving and helpless discontinuity.

Car culture outside Hunslet flats



We paid more attention to what he was saying about those "liberated" from the working class; but what he was essentially describing was what had happened within the mainstream of working class life. And it is here that the deepest unease runs through the whole book.

It isn't surprising that Hoggart came to be accused of being cosy or romantic about the past. In the 1950s, it seemed inconceivable that anyone would be foolish enough to assert that there could be anything wrong with the kind of material comfort that was being brought to working people, the consolations they had never known. Whatever had achieved such changes must be wholly and unambiguously benign. And yet Hoggart was daring to criticise what was to become one of the great taboos of the mid-20th century: the implications for the working class of the improvements granted on the terms of capital.

Even though his criticism was qualified and cautious, he was warning quite clearly about a different sort of impoverishment to the working class which these processes seemed to have set in train. He was careful to anticipate many of the criticisms that were made of him as the proponent of nostalgia and romanticism; but it was the fate of the book, especially in later years, to be seen in this way.

His analysis was always sharper than that.

And it is this second strand of *The Uses of Literacy* that comes on you with the force of a different kind of revelation 25 years later. Those aspects which we chose to disregard or play down when we seized on it as a reflection of our experience then; those aspects which gained Hoggart the undeserved reputation of being sentimental about the past. I mean, the destructive power of those influences, so carefully monitored by him then, which have only grown and become more pervasive and inescapable with time.

Scepticism becomes cynicism

Hoggart's real achievement is the accuracy with which he shows how so many of the strengths and defences in working class life were subtly changed, deformed, to accommodate the new culture, the culture of the marketplace. What he is describing is not so much the imposition of this alien culture upon those old working class communities, as the way in which living attitudes were moulded, re-shaped and modified until they fitted the consumer economy.

He refers to "good instincts pulled out of shape." It was, at base, a violent process. He shows how a traditional scepticism becomes cynicism; how "I dissent" becomes "It's all baloney," a mockery of all principles and a willingness to destroy them. Even "the new tolerance," which he detects, "is weak and unwilling, a fear and resentment of challenge." "The debilitating invitations are successful," he wrote, "because they appeal to established attitudes." It is the exact relationship between the older defensive working class values and the values of the new commercial culture which he so minutely analyses.

The grafting of the new onto that older culture—evoked with such passionate restraint in the first part of the book—involved a deforming, a misshaping of working class hopes and values and relationships, until these became a caricature of themselves. How could it be otherwise, when these had to be made compatible with, made subordinate to, the process of selling things to the previously poor? Hoggart's objection to the cultural manifestations of this process, to the trivialisation of popular entertainments and newspapers, was "not that they prevented working people from becoming highbrow, but that they prevented them from becoming wise in their own way."

More recently, Hoggart's critics have objected that he didn't deal with work, or to any significant degree with the Labour and trade union movements. Such criticisms misunderstood not only the intensely autobiographical nature of the work, but also the significance of its appearance in the mid-1950s. It was, after all, in the domestic and non-work area that the capitalist marketplace was making its greatest inroads into working class life at that time. Working people had long ago accommodated themselves to the idea that their labour was simply a commodity. What was happening in the fifties was a vast extension of market relationships into domestic and social life—a process that was to turn over so many