

East Midlands Airport - Past, Present and Future

by John Froggatt, Cargo & Commercial Bid Director, East Midlands Airport

1. Introduction

John has been employed at East Midlands Airport for the last 29 years. Prior to that date he was an estate agent.

The airport was purchased by the Manchester Airports Group in 2001 and John's responsibilities now extend across both airports. John's lecture concentrated on East Midlands Airport and in particular the air freight and air mail business.

2. The History of East Midlands Airport (EMA)

The land at Castle Donnington was first used for aviation purposes by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in 1916 but it reverted to farmland in 1918. During WWII it became RAF Castle Donnington and acted as a satellite airfield for RAF Wymeswold. During that time it had the typical three runway layout of RAF airfields (Fig. 1). It closed again in 1945 and today very little remains of the RAF base.

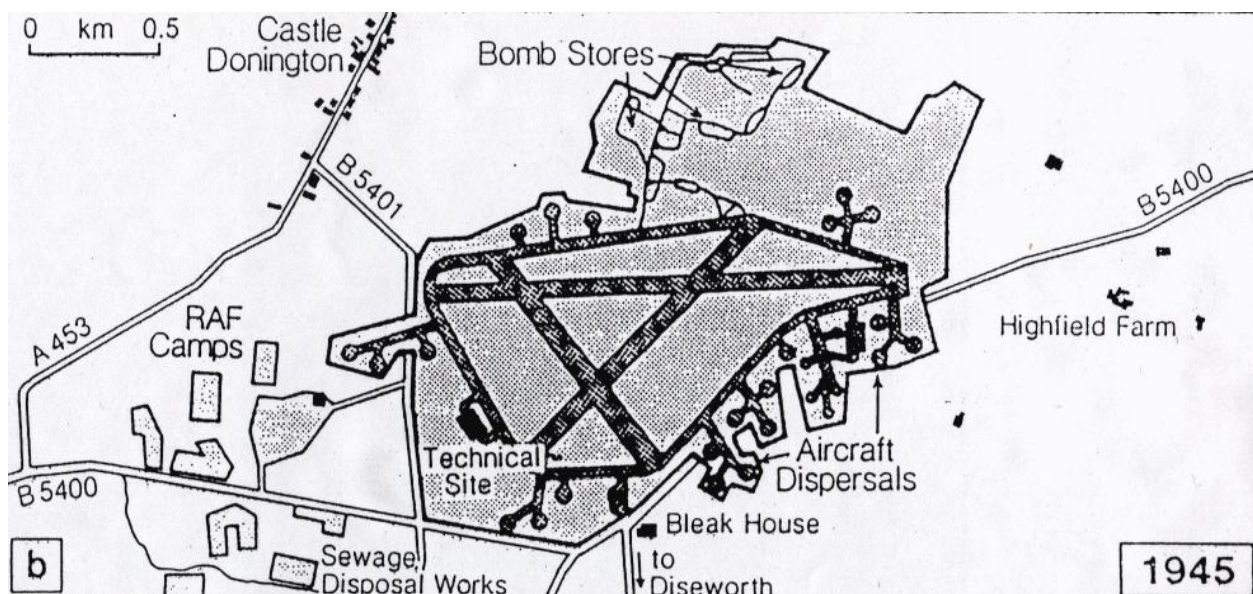


Fig. 1 - RAF Castle Donnington Layout -1945

By the 1950s Derby Airways were operating at Burnaston Airfield but were finding operations at that airfield increasingly difficult. They therefore approached Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Country Councils with a view to finding an alternative airfield. Later Leicestershire Country Council also became involved in the discussions. Both Wymeswold and Castle Donnington were considered but Castle Donnington was chosen because the route being proposed for the M1 Motorway ran close to Castle Donnington and therefore offered the potential of a good adjacent road infrastructure. Building permission for a new airfield at Castle Donnington was granted in 1960.

The new airport, called East Midlands Airport (EMA), opened on 2nd April 1965 (Fig. 2 and 3). By that time Derby Airways had become British Midland Airways. Later they were to become BMI and later still to split into BMI and BMI Baby. Over subsequent years the airport expanded dramatically with the runway being extended twice.

In 2008 EMA employed 7,000 people. Today it employs 6,500.

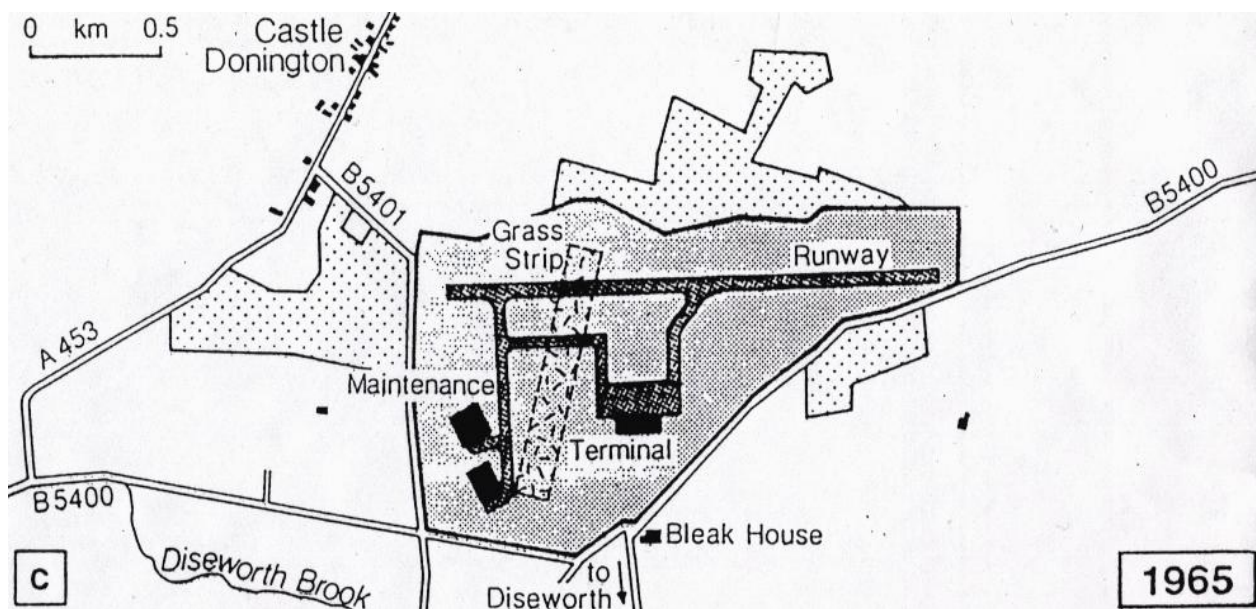


Fig. 2 - East Midlands Airport - Layout 1965



Note the single east-west runway with airport infrastructure located to the south of the runway.

Fig. 3 - Aerial Photograph of East Midlands Airport - Approx. 2008

3. Passenger Traffic

By the early years of the 21st century the airport was handling 4.25 million passengers per annum and they were flying to over 100 destinations. This expansion was due in part to the fact that the airport lies with a 90 minutes car driving range for over 10.6 million people.

Over the years the passenger business has changed dramatically. Initially it was predominantly inclusive tour and charter traffic. Today it is low cost/scheduled traffic. One exception is BMI who have recently

reinstated a prime passenger scheduled service to Frankfurt. This has allowed EMA to become an important feeder airport.

Most passenger customers regard EMA as being their local, friendly and convenient airport. In the 1960s most of them flew on charter flights to Spain. Today it is more likely that those flights will be to places like Egypt or North America. Further changes to passenger traffic are anticipated because of the current economic recession, changes to taxation, changes to the structure of the airline industry and increased security.

4. Freight Traffic

4.1 General

Only 1% by weight of the UK's exports and imports are carried by air, but this rises to 38% when it is considered by value.

Refer to Fig. 4 below. From 1965 up until the late 1980s EMA had little freight traffic but today it is the biggest handler of dedicated freight aircraft in the country. Large transit sheds are necessary for handling this freight. At EMA these are located mainly at the western end of the airport. Today the freight aircraft tend to be much newer than they were a generation ago.

Little belly freight is carried by passenger aircraft using the airport because of potential delays that this might cause.

In 1992 EMA handled 20,000 tonnes of air freight. This increased to 300,000 tonnes of air cargo per annum prior to the economic recession in 2007. Most of this freight uses the surrounding roads in late evening and early morning and neither of these times corresponds with periods of peak usage by other users of these roads. The downside of this is that most cargo flight operations are at night which means that EMA has to operate 24 hours each day with the result that there is overnight aircraft noise.

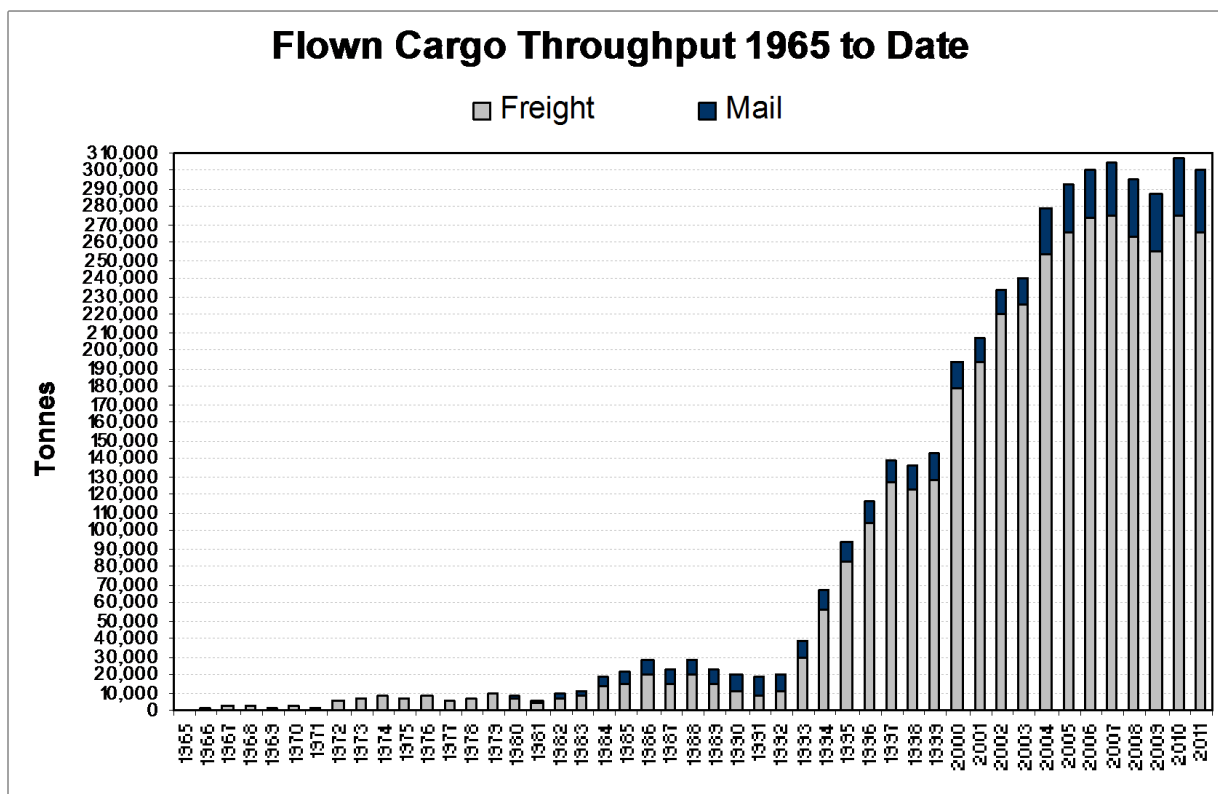


Fig. 4 - East Midlands Airport Freight Traffic - 1965 to 2011

Part of EMA's success as a freight airport is because 90% of England and Wales lies within 4 hours lorry drive of EMA. Other advantages that EMA offers to freight operators include a long runway (currently 2893 m), CAT III instrumented landing system, simple taxiway layout and an excellent weather record.

Since 2007 there has been a downturn in freight traffic. It is known, however, that freight traffic tends to decline before passenger traffic in an economic recession but the subsequent uplift in freight traffic occurs before that for passenger traffic. The drivers for this growth will be an increase in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and increased trade. Predictions made by Boeing suggest that the current world economic recession will impose little more than one year's delay to the overall rate of expansion of the world's freight traffic (Fig. 5). EMA will be part of this expansion and, partly because of its location, will continue to be an excellent express freight hub.

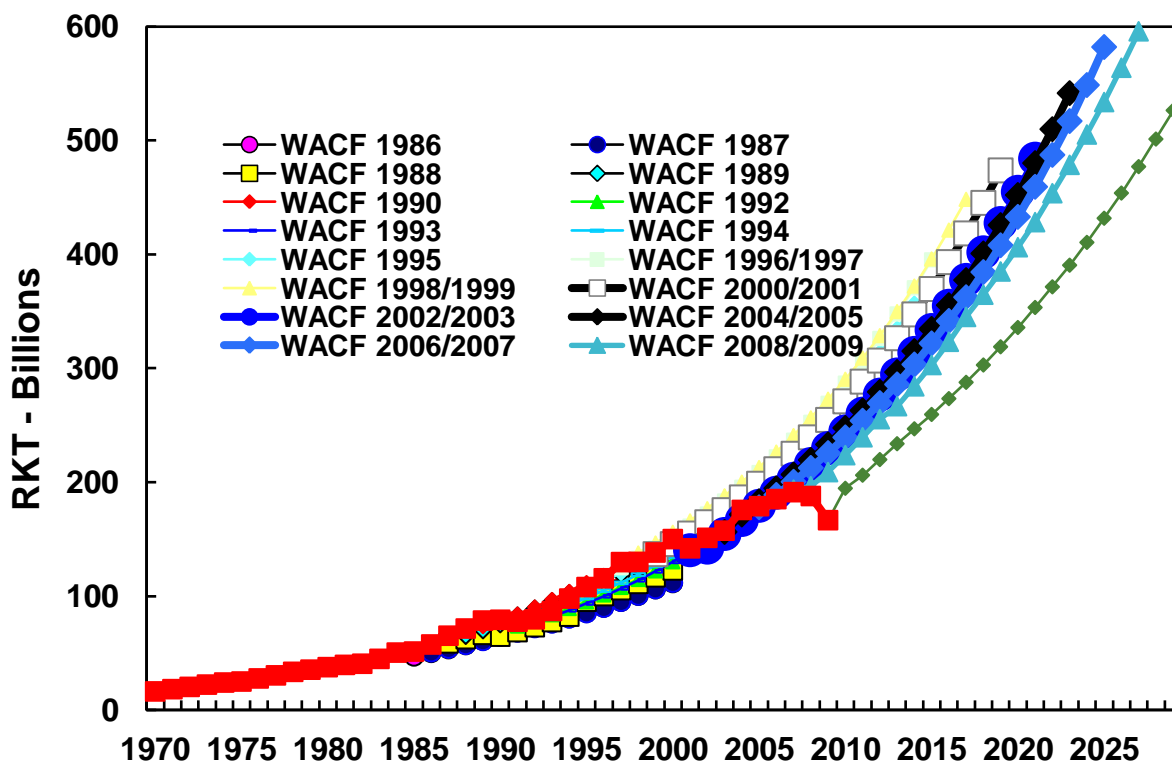


Fig. 5 - Predicted Expansion of World Freight Business (in Route Kilo Tonnes) (Boeing Data)

4.2 Integrated Freight Carriers

The bulk of the EMA freight traffic will continue to be with "integrated freight" carriers (Fig. 6), that is to say carriers who pick up parcels at source and deliver them to their final destination. DHL, as a major freight operator at EMA, is as prime example of such a carrier.

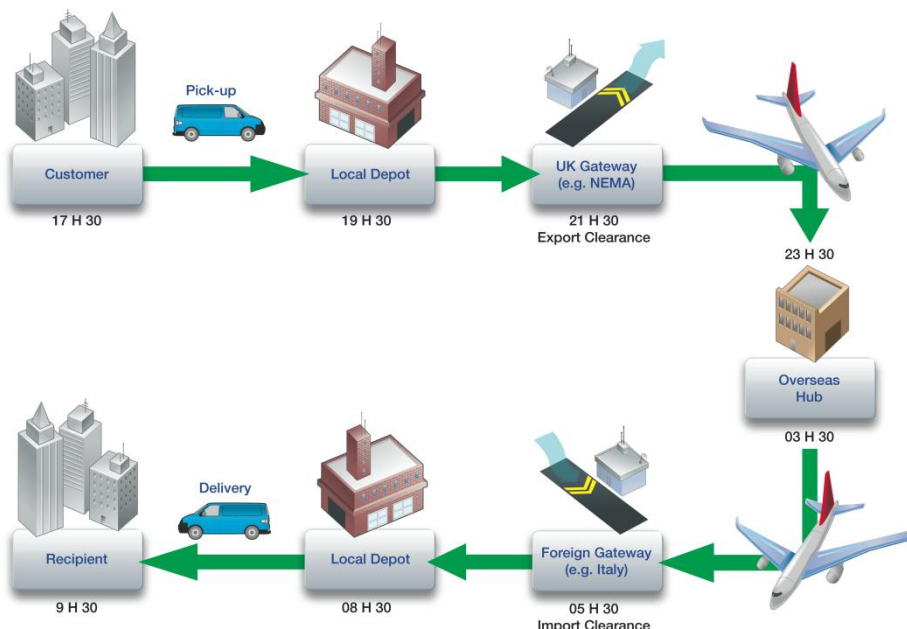


Fig. 6 - Integrated Freight Process

Certain companies may choose to locate in relatively close proximity to EMA because it offers them the commercial advantages of late pickups and early drops by integrated freight carriers.

The Royal Mail is an example of a specialist integrated carrier. They transport 140 tonnes of domestic first class mail via their EMA hub every night (Fig. 4). This translates into 1.9 million letters each night. They employ 190 staff at EMA.

4.3 Pure Freight Carriers

"Pure freight" carriers, that is to say carriers who are concerned purely with carrying goods from airport to airport, will be a niche market within the overall expansion in the air freight business. These carriers will be concerned predominantly with transporting heavy and/or bulky loads.

5. The Future

The UK government Future of Air Transport White Paper of December 2003 supported the continued expansion of the EMA passenger and freight business and forecast considerable growth for the airport. It did not support a second runway and none is currently under consideration. The White Paper called for an EMA Master Plan, although this was not mandatory. EMA duly produced a Master Plan in 2006. They also produced a Noise Action Plan as this was a mandatory requirement.

It is understood that the UK government will produce an Air Transport Consultation Document in March 2012 and a Substantive Document in March 2013. In view of this EMA will not issue a new Master Plan in 2011 but has instead decided to await the UK government's document of 2013. At that time EMA will carry out a consultancy process to decide the plans for EMA's future.

The challenges for the future will be:

- Other UK airports;
- Continental European airports which may expand their air freight operations;
- Other modes of transport, e.g. Euro star;
- Changes in customer behaviour;
- Changes in customers.

Other challenges include noise, especially night noise, air quality and congestion. Other factors which require consideration include carbon dioxide emissions and the associated global warming, Air Passenger Departure (APD) Tax and the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

Within Europe there is an overall requirement to reduce the impact of night flights and to keep the overall levels of night noise down to 1996 levels until at least 2016. In addition all aircraft must be Chapter 4 compliant by 2012.

Notes by Colin Moss