Looking northward over Gatwick Airport. In the foreground are the circular terminal building, the hangars and the railway station.

GATWICK
A Possible Diversionary Airfield for London

The prospects of Gatwick as the major southern diversionary airfield for traffic to London Airport are at present the subject of some speculation. Although the facilities now offered are sufficient for the seven charter companies whose operations comprise most of the flying there, an extensive development plan would no doubt be necessary in order to equip the airfield for the reception of numerous scheduled air services in adverse weather. Use of the airfield, which is closed at dusk, is at present restricted to aircraft not exceeding 10,500 lb a.u.w.

Owned by Airports, Ltd., and controlled by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Gatwick airport is situated fourteen miles south of Croydon. It has been found that, when conditions in the London Control Zone have deteriorated below the permissible limits for instrument approaches, Gatwick is usually still open. Three runways are provided, two being covered with steel mesh; the other is a grass strip. The dimensions are 1,400yd in the S.W.-N.E. direction and 1,200yd in the E.W. and S.E.-N.W. directions.

A concrete perimeter track with hard-standings surrounds the whole airfield and taxiways lead to the terminal building and hangars. Safety height within 25 nautical miles is 2,500ft, and the only major obstruction is the small range of hills approximately 500ft high, 34 miles to the south. The airport has Customs and meteorological facilities, together with a modern terminal building which provides restaurant and refreshment amenities. A most important feature is its excellent railway communication with London, provided by an electrified line running through a station connected by subway to the airport terminal building. All these facilities, of course, are a legacy of Gatwick's busier pre-war days.

Plan of Gatwick Airport, showing configuration of runways and perimeter track. Obstruction lighting is denoted by stars.