

A stylized illustration of the first Croydon Airport. In the upper right, a biplane flies against a blue sky with a halftone dot pattern. A tall, striped windsock pole stands on the left. The central building is a two-story structure with a balcony and a sign that reads 'HMCUSTOMS DOUANE'. In the foreground, two people with luggage stand near a bench, and a vintage truck is parked. The ground is covered in a textured, grass-like pattern.

THE FIRST CROYDON AIRPORT 1915-1928

BOB LEARMONTH
JOANNA NASH
DOUGLAS CLUETT editor

ILLUSTRATIONS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FOREWORD

by Wing Commander R. H. McIntosh
D.F.C., A.F.C., R.A.F. (Ret'd.)
("All-Weather Mac")

IT IS WITH considerable pleasure that I write these few remarks as a foreword to this book on Croydon Aerodrome so ably written by Joanna Nash and Bob Learmonth, and edited by Douglas Cluett. As one of the earliest of the Civil Air Line Pilots, it brings back to me memories of more than half a century ago; memories that otherwise might fade into the mists of history. It is right that the early days at Croydon should be recorded, the early adventures, the excitement and the endeavours to bring a new dimension to aviation transport. In 1920 we could but dimly see the future of aviation at Croydon. Indeed some of us felt that long-distance air transport would be by the airship of the future, and that passenger-carrying aircraft would have but a limited development, say to speeds of perhaps 440 m.p.h., with Continental flight stages of no more than 800 or 1,000 miles at the most. Events have proved us wrong. There are some who regret the march of history, but that is the way of it.

This book describes, in fascinating detail, the very earliest days of Waddon and Beddington Aerodromes, and then goes on to detail the rise and development of civil air transport. Although we started civil flying in 1919 at Hounslow and Cricklewood, it has been aptly written of early Croydon that "it was in those makeshift huts, and on that far from level airfield, that Civil Aviation grew up." To the ever-growing numbers of aviation historians, this book will fill a long-empty space in their libraries; that they may read of how a great industry was started, of how it developed at Croydon, and something of the story of those of us who were privileged to have a part in the scheme of things in those far-off days of long ago.

London, 1977.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE ORIGIN OF this book was a series of articles written for the former community newspaper, *The Roundshaw Courier* in 1974/5 by Councillor Joanna Nash and Bob Learmonth, editor of the *Courier*; based mainly on material in the Local Collection of the London Borough of Sutton Libraries.

The work in its present form, however, is a completely rewritten and enlarged version, incorporating much further research and new material.

Important omissions there are bound to be, and errors too, but we have tried to avoid as many as possible of these by consulting, at draft stages, a number of people with personal or specialist knowledge of aspects of our subject.

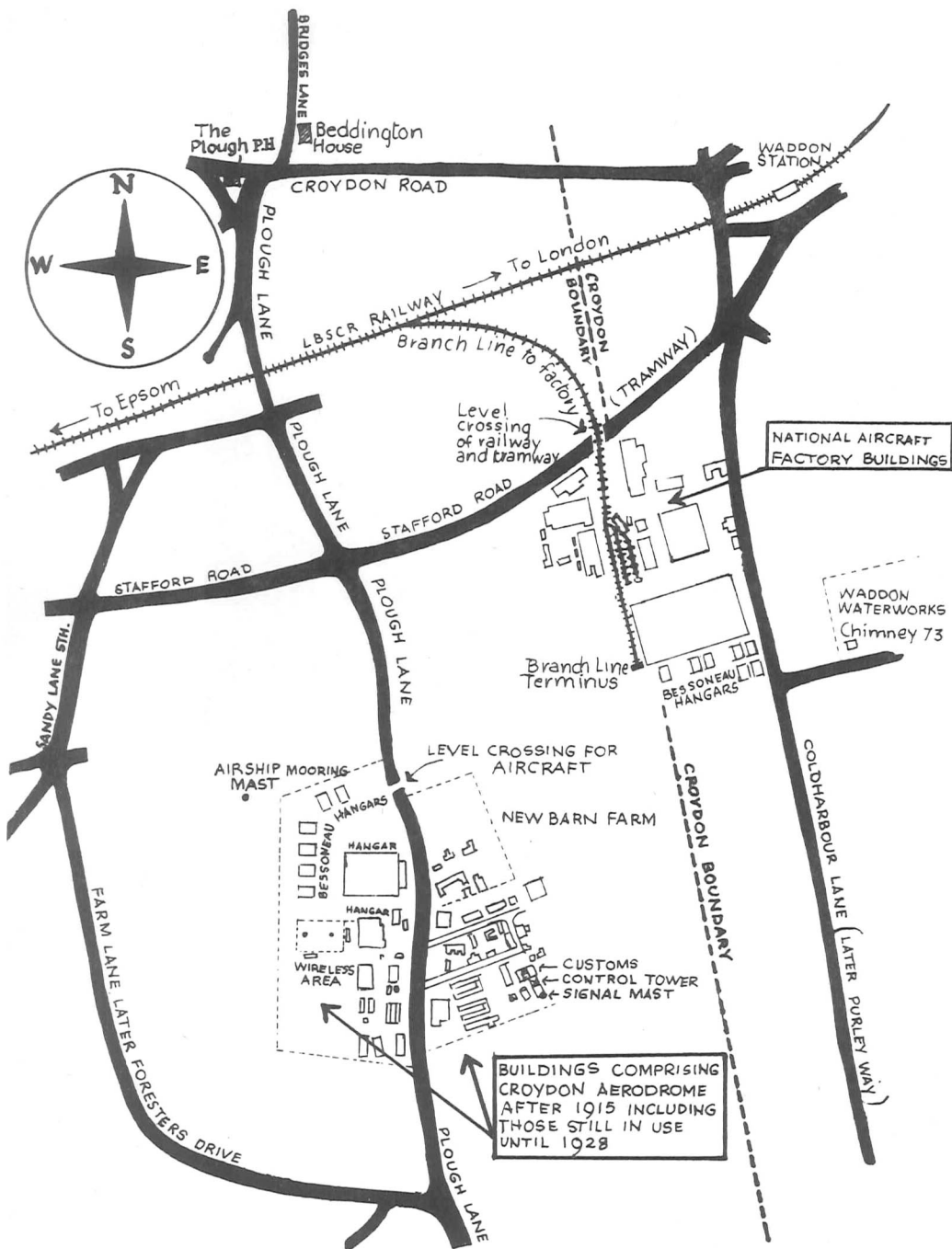
Thanks, therefore, for reading typescript drafts and supplying information and additional material, and correcting errors, are due to Wing Commander R. H. McIntosh, D.F.C., A.F.C. (to whom thanks are also due for writing the foreword); Mr. Jeffrey Spry-Leverson (co-author of *All-Weather Mac*); Mr. Charles V. Lane, M.B.E.; Mr. Peter G. Cooksley; Mr. G. D. H. Linton; and Mr. E. Crawforth.

The many people and institutions who have supplied important material to the Croydon Airport collection, now in Sutton Central Library, both in the course of the writing of this book, and in the ten years or so before, are too numerous to list in full; but especial mention may be made of the above people, and in addition, Mr. Stanley Childs; Mr. Paul Capon; The Science Museum, London; Messrs. Cubitts; and the Royal Aeronautical Society.

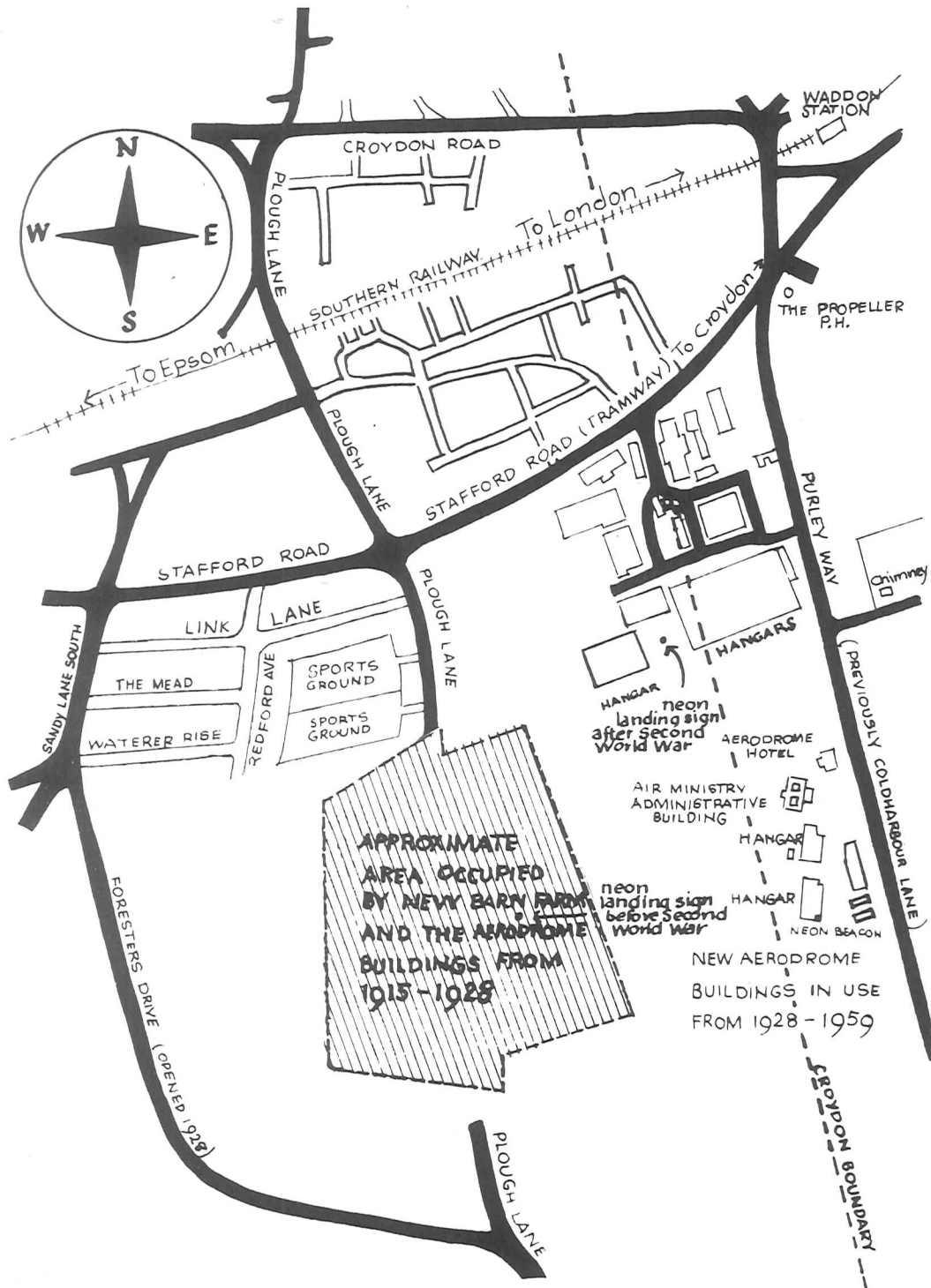
Thanks for help in research, and in the checking of various typed drafts of this book are due to Miss June Broughton, Local Studies Librarian, London Borough of Sutton Libraries.

Thanks are also due to Mr. Roy Smith, Borough Librarian, for making the publication of the book possible; and, finally, grateful thanks are due to Mrs. Valerie Horley for patiently typing successive drafts of the text.

DOUGLAS CLUETT,
Sutton Central Library.



CROYDON AERODROME 1915 - 1928
 (Beddington & Waddon Aerodromes 1915 - 1920)



CROYDON AERODROME 1928-1959