

# MACH 2

Concorde magazine



## Glad confident morning

*The first commercial Concorde flights:  
40 years on*

## Farewell to a legend

*A commemoration of André Turcat*

Issue 2  
January 2016

# INTRODUCTION

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*We begin this issue with a tribute to a giant of global aviation – Commander André Turcat, first test pilot for Concorde, who passed away on 4 January 2016 at the age of 94. We have invited our colleague Frédéric Pinlet, President of Olympus593, to write an obituary for him; we present his words in French and English to commemorate the life of this remarkable aviator.*

*Our main feature is one of the milestones of aviation that Commander Turcat did so much to make possible – the first commercial Concorde flights, on 21 January 1976. On the 40th anniversary of this historic event we follow Concordes G-BOAA and F-BVFA on their inaugural flights, and enjoy personal accounts from those who witnessed the occasion. Our thanks go to all those who shared their memories with us.*

*In addition, we are delighted to include our regular views from Concorde’s flight deck and cabin, courtesy of our contributors Christopher Orlebar, Ian Kirby, and Gilly Pratt. In this issue they recall their experiences of starting work on this superlative service.*

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# OBITUARY: ANDRÉ TURCAT

*André Turcat has departed on his final take-off towards the skies of eternity. The first man to take Concorde into the air, in 1969, he has now passed away at the age of 94 years.*

**Pilote d'essai du premier vol du prototype 001 du célèbre appareil, André Turcat était aussi aux commandes quand le Concorde avait franchi pour la première fois le mur du son, le 1er octobre 1969.**

## Pionnier de l'aéronautique

Géant au crâne chauve, au regard clair, surnommé "le Grand Turc" par ses collaborateurs, ce pionnier de l'aéronautique moderne s'était fait une spécialité de battre les records, notamment en devenant en 1954, à bord de l'avion expérimental "Gerfaut I", le premier pilote européen à franchir le "mur du son" en palier.

## Plus de 6.000 heures de vol

Né le 23 octobre 1921 à Marseille (Bouche-du-Rhône) André Turcat sort de l'Ecole Polytechnique en 1942. Officier de l'Armée de l'air, breveté pilote en 1947, il se retrouve chef d'opérations en Indochine.

Nommé en 1952 directeur de l'Ecole du personnel navigant d'essai de l'Armée de l'air, il entre, l'année suivante, comme chef pilote d'essais de la SFECMAS, absorbée bientôt par Nord-Aviation. C'est alors qu'il met au point les "Gerfaut" et le "Griffon". A Sud-Aviation de 1964 jusqu'à sa retraite en 1976, il devient directeur des essais en vol de "Concorde". Titulaire de plus de 6.000 heures de vol.

## Un avis personnel

Pour Olympus593 et moi-même, André Turcat restera dans nos mémoires pour les merveilleux instants passés à parler de tout sauf de banalités. Il était un puits de science et n'avait, malgré sa hauteur aucune condescendance à l'égard des Français qui l'admirait.

**Test pilot for the first flight of the renowned Concorde prototype 001, André Turcat was also at the controls when this Concorde broke the sound barrier for the first time, on 1 October 1969.**

## An aeronautical pioneer

A giant of a man with a bald head and a clear-sighted gaze, nicknamed "The Grand Turk" by his colleagues, this pioneer of modern aeronautics made it his speciality to break records, notably beginning in 1954, on board the experimental aeroplane Gerfaut I (Gyrfalcon I) – the first European pilot to break the sound barrier in level flight.

## More than 6,000 flying hours

Born on 23 October 1921 at Marceille (Bouche-du-Rhône), André Turcat graduated from the Ecole Polytechnique in 1942. Becoming an officer in the Armée de l'Air, then gaining his pilot's certificate in 1947, he later found himself Operational Chief in Indochina.

In 1952 he was named Director of the school of test flying personnel for the Armée de l'Air; the following year, he became chief test pilot for SFECMAS, later absorbed into Nord-Aviation. It

was during this period that he was involved with the development of the Gerfaut and the Griffon. Then, at Sud-Aviation from 1964 until his retirement in 1976, he became director of test flights for Concorde. He had amassed more than 6,000 flying hours.

## A personal tribute

For Olympus593 and myself, André Turcat will remain in our memories for the wonderful times that we



### The first test pilots

Commander André Turcat (left) and British test pilot Brian Trubshaw (right) collaborated closely to make history as the first test pilots for Concorde.

Artwork: "First Flight", Katie John

Olympus593, vous le savez, est un peu la représentation de la majorité invisible, la représentation des « mécanos », du peuple Français et des navigants modestes. André Turcat était à mes yeux, ce gaulliste qui aimait son peuple, qui aimait la France. Nous regrettons vraiment que la Presse Française n'ait pas parlé de sa disparition. Concorde était la plus grande aventure aéronautique civile de tous les temps et cela aurait mérité un véritable hommage national.

*"a fount of scientific knowledge"*

passed in conversing with him on any subject - apart from small talk! He was a fount of scientific knowledge and, despite his noble bearing, never looked down on the French people who admired him. I'm sure you are aware that Olympus593 is, to a small extent, the representative organisation for the "invisible majority" and of the mechanical engineers, of the French people and of the humble airmen. In my view André Turcat was a Gaullist who loved his people and who loved France. We truly regret that the French press has not commemorated his passing. Concorde was the greatest civil aeronautical adventure of all time and Commander Turcat's death should have merited a true national homage.

**Frédéric PINLET**  
Président d'Olympus593



**Lifelong champion**

To the end, Commander Turcat was a tireless supporter and promoter of Concorde. Having made the first flight with prototype 001, he was on board the final Air France flight by F-BVFC to Toulouse on 27 June 2003.  
*Photo: Right Angle Films / Spirit of Concorde*

**An honoured friend**

Despite his towering stature in the world of aviation, Commander Turcat was a supportive friend to Concorde enthusiasts such as Olympus593. Here he is seen with group President Frédéric Pinlet.  
*Photo: Right Angle Films / Spirit of Concorde*



**André Turcat 1921–2016**  
Grand Officier of the Order of the Légion d'honneur; Commander of the British Empire; twice winner of the Harmon Trophy  
*Requiescat in pace*

# THE FIRST COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS

*At 11.40am on 21 January 1976, exactly 40 years ago, the world witnessed a giant leap forward in aviation. British Airways Concorde G-BOAA and Air France Concorde F-BVFA lifted off at the same instant to inaugurate scheduled commercial Concorde services. Co-Editor Katie John introduces a series of accounts, including eyewitness views, of this epic event.*

It had taken more than 20 years to reach this point. Both the UK and France had been conducting research into supersonic transports (SSTs) since the 1950s; the UK set up its Supersonic Transport Aircraft Committee in 1956. At the end of 1962 France and the UK signed an agreement to work together to design and build an SST. Less than seven years later, on 2 March 1969, Concorde 001 made his first flight from Toulouse, followed on 9 April by his British counterpart, 002. Several years of rigorous flight testing followed, and Concorde finally gained its Certificate of Airworthiness in 1975.

## The aircraft

Both aircraft were the first of their fleets to be fully prepared for commercial service. F-BVFA had made his maiden flight on 27 October 1975 and had been delivered to Air France six weeks later, on 18 December. G-BOAA had made her maiden flight on 5 November 1975; she then underwent a series of test flights

before being delivered to British Airways on 14 January 1976.

## Preparations for take-off

Concorde personnel from the two airlines worked together to co-ordinate the departures so that both aircraft would take off simultaneously. A telephone link was set up between the control towers at Charles de Gaulle and Heathrow, and the air traffic controllers would give a 30-second countdown over a special frequency.

Norman Todd, Captain of G-BOAA (flight BA300), and Pierre Chanoine, commanding F-BVFA (AF085), would release their aircraft's brakes at exactly the same instant to begin their take-off roll and would stay in touch as their aeroplanes were being pushed back. Both take-offs would be filmed and broadcast simultaneously, and interviews would be broadcast from the aeroplanes during the flights. (A full transcript of the BBC news programme featuring the flight is available at



**Brand new** BA Concorde G-BOAA is officially handed over to the airline at the BA Engineering Base, Heathrow, on 14 January 1976. The aeroplane had arrived from Filton just the day before. Photograph © Steve Fitzgerald

[jiscmediahub.ac.uk](http://jiscmediahub.ac.uk); it is sobering to see what else was happening in the world that day, and the thrill of the Concorde flights must have come as a relief to viewers.)

While the flight crews carried out their pre-departure checks, the first passengers assembled in the departure lounge. British Airways had a mixture of fee-paying passengers, press, and VIPs, including Sir Leonard Cheshire VC, Sir George Edwards (head of BAC, the British part of the team that developed and built Concorde), and the Duke of Kent. Outside, the roads around Heathrow were jammed with cars and a crowd of people gathered on the Queen's Building to watch G-BOAA depart.



### Ready for service

The airlines had prepared their Concorde services down to the last detail. Here, visitors gather at the new Concorde check-in desks at Heathrow.

Photograph © Brooklands Museum

### The flights

BA pilot Christopher Orlebar, who would go on to fly Concorde himself, was also one of the spectators, waiting at the end of runway 28L to see G-BOAA lift off. He and his wife were listening to a local radio broadcast. As he recalls in his book *The Concorde Story*, "At 11.40 precisely the commentator announced

that Concorde had begun to roll. Next came the distinctive sound of the four reheated Olympus engines. Then Concorde GBOAA came in view, climbing out over the approach lights of the reciprocal runway, with the undercarriage retracting. Commercial supersonic services had begun." (6th edition, pp.61–62)

Brian Calvert was the First Officer on G-BOAA, with John Lidiard as Flight Engineer. In *Flying Concorde: The Full Story*, Captain Calvert describes the moment of take-off: "The countdown started. A final check around the instruments ... this aeroplane had not even one of the many small defects that can be carried. It was almost as if it were on its best behaviour. As if it knew ..." (3rd ed., p.153)

Both aircraft executed flawless take-offs. According to Captain Calvert, "It was estimated later that 250 million people watched the simultaneous take-off on television sets around the world." (p.153)

G-BOAA went supersonic 1 hour and 20 minutes after take-off, as she flew out over the Adriatic Sea, then reached Mach 2. Passing over the eastern Mediterranean, Captain Calvert relates the local air traffic controllers' bafflement at Concorde's performance: "At each change to a new control authority our reported altitude caused disbelief; our time to the next checkpoint was assumed to be an error." The aeroplane passed over Lebanon, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, then down the Gulf to arrive at Bahrain at 15:17 GMT – 3 hours and 37 minutes after beginning their take-off roll.

Meanwhile, Air France Concorde F-BVFA completed his much longer flight, from Paris to Dakar in Senegal and then across the Atlantic Ocean to Rio de Janeiro, finally arriving at 19:00 to great excitement ([see film here](#)).

As evening fell, the world passed into a new era of speed and style – where perfectly ordinary people, wearing ordinary clothes, could fly faster and higher than most military pilots, while enjoying the best luxury service that Air France and British Airways could provide. The supersonic age had begun.

## The pilots' experiences

Brian Calvert gives a detailed account of G-BOAA's flight in his book *Flying Concorde: The Full Story*, 3rd edition (Airlife Publishing, 2002). The quotation by Christopher Orlebar is taken from his book *The Concorde Story*, 6th edition (Osprey Publishing, 2005). The latest editions of both books are available on Amazon.

## THE EYEWITNESSES

*We are delighted to present three accounts from people who witnessed the start of the Concorde services. Flight Engineer Ian Kirby, who was to become a senior crew member on Concorde, watched from the top of a car park at Heathrow. Even closer was Pan Am flight attendant Kathy Rhodes, on board a Boeing 707 just behind G-BOAA. At the other end of the journey, Bahraini national Ali Janahi recalls the first landings.*



**Close encounter**  
G-BOAA takes off from Heathrow on her inaugural flight to Bahrain. A Boeing 707 waits behind her – possibly carrying our contributor, Kathy Rhodes!  
*Photo: Adrian Meredith*

## Reminiscences of Concorde

*by PanAmer Kathy Rhodes*

I was a member of the Pan Am “family” from 24 February 1969 to the day the airline folded its wings on 4 December 1991. During my career I flew as Stewardess and Purser and served as a Base Instructor for the Boston Base from 1973 to 1976. It was during that era that I experienced the thrill of Concorde on two occasions.

The first was when she was on tour. Our plane was parked right next door, but the Massachusetts State Police had all the gateways to Concorde blocked. We boarded our Boeing 707 but had to wait for our passengers to clear US Customs. With time to spare, I was looking

out the window at that new sleek supersonic transport. What a sight.

It was then that I noticed that if we walked across the tarmac, we could get close. I grabbed my fellow crew members and led them over to Concorde’s door. The crew gave us a warm welcome and a tour. This was the test version and the cabin only had 32 seats, the rest of the space being packed with test equipment. I remember standing in the cabin, so sleek and long, imagining what it’d be like to work and fly on it. We left to board our passengers, and when I looked over the State Police had now manned the tarmac as well.

The next occasion was on her maiden passenger flight. I was the

Senior Purser on PA Flight 55 from London to Boston. It was a routine morning: standard transport to the airport, briefing, boarding, and taxiing for take-off. Close to the end of our taxi, we halted. We sat for a while. I was about to check with the cockpit when the Captain came on the PA and announced the reason for the delay. We were second behind Concorde for take-off and had to wait for clearance. The plan was for the French Concorde to take off from Paris at the same time the British were to take off from London’s Heathrow airport. The French were running late.

I left my jumpseat and looked out both sides of our 707, the

aircraft that brought jet travel to the world. There wasn't any view of the Concorde from either side, but I could see the Royal Family lined up along the tarmac waiting to witness this historic takeoff. I went up to the cockpit and from there had a wonderful view of this sleek modern supersonic jet that was bringing new horizons to the world.

I asked the Captain if he could maneuver our plane so that our passengers could see Concorde. He

obliged, angling our aircraft so the Concorde was visible out the right side. We let our passengers roam the cabin to get a good view, before we had to buckle in for takeoff.

We could not see Concorde take off from the cabin, but the roar of those mighty engines could be felt throughout. What an exhilarating experience – and our passengers were all thrilled to be part of it. Routine to exalting, you just never know what life in the air can bring.

Midway across the Atlantic, the flight engineer noted that if we'd been on Concorde, we'd be there by now. Since this was prior to reasonable duty limits for cabin crew, my response was "if we'd been on Concorde, we might well be on our way back by now."

Now sadly Concorde has folded her wings as well, but Mach 2 is doing much to keep her memory and spirit alive.

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## A glimpse of the future

*by Ian Kirby, former Senior Flight Officer on Concorde, British Airways*

**Let me go back in time to the delivery of the Concorde to British Airways. I was not involved, but some crew training was done in the second half of 1975. By the start of 1976 all was in place to start commercial services.**

G-BOAA was the aircraft destined to inaugurate the BA supersonic service. So on 21st January 1976 I was on the roof of the car park to terminal 3 at Heathrow, ready to watch history being made. I knew two of the crew, Captain Norman Todd and Senior Flight Engineer John Lidiard, who had, like me, both been on the VC-10 fleet. I was to get to know the Co-Pilot, Captain Brian Calvert, later.

I remember there not being much room to move on the top floor, and as take-off time approached there seemed to be just a few cars – the remainder of the floor was packed with people. I watched as 'AA started to accelerate, ini-

tially in near silence. It took a few seconds for the sound to travel from those powerful Olympus engines to my location. When the sound did arrive it was like no other aircraft. Perhaps the nearest was the VC-10, which also had an exhaust that was supersonic.

G-BOAA came past with a very satisfying roar and a faint yellow/brown haze from the exhaust. The rotation seemed fairly slow but 'AA was soon airborne, initially at a fairly gentle angle and then at a much increased angle and a very rapid rate of climb. I noticed the haze of the exhaust change to a much darker colour and saw the glow of the

reheats subside as they were selected off and power reduced. At the same time the aircraft reduced its pitch attitude and continued at a reduced rate of climb. It took a while for the sound reduction to be evident in the car park, but I am sure those living under the flight path appreciated the reduction sooner.

Suddenly it was nearly all over as 'AA merged into the distance. The aircraft turned to the south and then towards the east as it was bound for Bahrain. From the car park we could see and just hear it in the distance, but soon it was gone. So it was back home to watch it all again on the evening news.

### Just another day

Concorde G-BOAA, having settled into her new role, goes about her normal daily activities.

*Photo: Source unknown*





## Concorde's arrival in Bahrain

by Ali Janahi

I remember the first flight for Concorde was to Bahrain, and that made Bahrain well known to the world.

Whenever I spoke to people in Europe, Asia, or anywhere else, and they asked me where I was from, when I said Bahrain, even though most people had no clue where Bahrain was, immediately they recognized the name as the first country where Concorde flew. So in a sense it was great PR for Bahrain.

Also I remember that the airport was new – hence it was able to handle Concorde landing and taking off. All the windows and structures were capable of coping with the noise and vibrations caused by the aircraft; other airports in the region were still too small and were not ready to receive Concorde.



### The eagle has landed

Concorde stands at Manama airport, Bahrain, as passengers disembark.  
*Photo: Ali Janahi*

## Where are they now?

*Below is a short history of each of the aircraft involved in this epic flight. Further details can be found on the website [heritageconcorde.com](http://heritageconcorde.com).*

**Air France Concorde F-BVFA (top right)** continued flying until the end of Concorde services in 2003. He made his last flight, as AF4386, from Charles de Gaulle to Washington Dulles. The aeroplane is now on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C. He has been preserved as carefully as possible, in the condition in which he was delivered.



*Photo: Chris Christner / Wikimedia Commons*

**Concorde G-BOAA (bottom right)** was the centrepiece of several highlights in the fleet's history. She inaugurated the Concorde services to New York on 22 November 1977. In 1990 she performed a display flight with a Spitfire over the White Cliffs of Dover to mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and in 1996 she overflew Heathrow with the Red Arrows to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the airport's opening. Grounded after the Paris crash in 2000, she was never brought back into service. In 2004 she was dismantled and moved by road and sea to the National Museum of Flight in Scotland, where she was reassembled and is now on display.



*Photo: Ad Meskens / Wikimedia Commons*



## Faster than the sun

*Christopher Orlebar, former Concorde pilot with British Airways*

*Despite Concorde's spectacular performance, from the start the aeroplane had her critics – including voices in the media. Christopher Orlebar describes how he decided to take on these nay-sayers, and ended up creating a TV programme about Concorde that can still be enjoyed today.*

One evening in May 1976 I sat down to watch one of my favourite BBC programmes, *Tomorrow's World*; the subject was Concorde.

I had almost completed my conversion course from the VC-10 to Concorde, so I was eager to see what eulogies they would bestow on our supersonic airliner.

Not a bit of it. They praised instead the design of a modification to the wing of a subsonic airliner, whilst deriding the entire Concorde project because it used too much energy. I decided there and then that one day I would persuade the BBC to give us a better press.

In late 1982 I remembered my intention and rang the BBC. I was told that the person to meet was Brian Johnson. He had produced a documentary series called *The Secret War* which I had admired

*"I decided ... that one day I would persuade the BBC to give us a better press."*

very much. It was a study of how the British, under the auspices of a young scientist, RV Jones, had discovered and interfered with various German secret devices like navigation aids for night bombers and at the same time developed British secret weapons.

After our tour of the BBC at White City talking about aeroplanes – Brian was a keen private pilot – he said "go and talk to Mick Rhodes"



### Television appearance

G-BOAD as she appeared in the QED programme – in the original Negus livery, with the abbreviated "British" brand name used in the early 1980s.

*Photo: Maarten Visser / Wikimedia Commons*

(the series producer of *QED*, a half-hour weekly documentary programme). At the end of the meeting Mick Rhodes said: "I think we have a programme here." And so we did.

On 26th January 1983 the scheduled London to New York Concorde BA193 was filmed. Following this Sir Stanley Hooker, Pierre Young of Rolls-Royce, and Brian Trubshaw the British Concorde test pilot were interviewed. They were then edited in at appropriate moments during the film of the flight.

One day during the editing I happened to find myself in a hardware shop in Teddington. By a curious coincidence I saw that one of the customers was none other than Raymond Baxter. Not only had he been one of the frontline broadcasters on *Tomorrow's World*, but he

was also the main commentator for Concorde's maiden flight at Toulouse. How could he have possibly allowed the heresy about Concorde to have been broadcast? He replied that the row that ensued following his complaint had ended up with him being sacked. "You weren't," I protested; "I bloody was," he replied.

"Faster Than The Sun" was broadcast on 13th April 1983. In a feedback programme that followed we were still criticised for not being critical enough about Concorde!

*Editor's note:* This QED programme, featuring a flight with G-BOAD crewed by Captain Brian Walpole, First Officer Christopher Orlebar, and Flight Engineer Bill Johnstone, is available for viewing on YouTube ([link available here](#)).



## A life with Concorde

*Ian Kirby, former Senior Flight Engineer on Concorde, British Airways*

I had bid to join the Concorde fleet as soon as I could and was eventually selected to join the course that started in January 1978.

The Boeing 707 fleet was being run down and it seemed that most of those selected for the early courses were from that fleet. My course, the 5th course, comprised four complete crews who, if I remember correctly, all came from the VC-10 fleet.

### Learning the ropes

As soon as my posting was confirmed I took a far more active interest in the Concorde. British Airways provided us with the manuals we needed a few weeks before the course was due to start. I read them from cover to cover to get a good understanding. I also visited the hangar where the aircraft rested and my ground-engineering colleagues allowed me access, not only to familiarise myself with the flight deck, but also to become acquainted with many aspects of the engineering below the skin. From my days with the British Aircraft Corporation I already had a good idea what

to expect but it was good to see what had remained the same and what had changed, sometimes almost beyond recognition compared to the early design.

Then it was off to the Filton airfield, near Bristol, for the course proper. Initially there was what was termed the “secrets course”, just for flight engineers. We learned in depth the engines and then some of the systems. I think the intention was to let the flight engineer into the secrets that may frighten pilots!

### Delta Golf: the pioneer

It is nice that I am now retired and a volunteer at the Brooklands Museum where we have a complete Concorde, G-BBDG. It is worth noting that more of Concorde was researched, designed and built at Brooklands than any other site either in France or the UK.

‘DG was the first production aircraft on the production line. It never went into service but was retained by the manufacturer for further development flying. It is parked alongside the location of the high-speed wind tunnel, at Wey-

bridge, where much of the development work was done towards the successful introduction into service of the first variable geometry intakes on a commercial aircraft. ‘DG was also used to test and prove the second standard of intake we had that gave an increased airflow, a more advantageous focus of the shock waves and a significant reduction in the fuel burn, particularly when we operated in very low temperatures at high altitude such as regularly on the route to Barbados.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, and the increase in security on board all aircraft, ‘DG was used to test the installation of the more secure flight-deck door. Before that terrorist attack, we normally flew Concorde with the flight deck door open, so that passengers could see what was going on or visit us. Well, that was the publicity – it was really so we could more easily call for and more quickly be served tea.

G-BOAB is still at Heathrow, but much of the interior intended for that aircraft is now in ‘DG at Brooklands. So ‘DG is fairly representative of in-service aircraft but with a good display on board and areas of the structure left uncovered so that visitors can see how it was put together. G-BBDG at Brooklands is the only Concorde in the south-east of England that is open to the public. A good number of the volunteers who work at Brooklands, researched, designed, built, operated or maintained the aircraft in service, so it is unlikely a technical question could be asked that could not be answered by the team.



### A day in the office

Ian at the flight engineer's station during a flight.

*Photo: Ian Kirby*



## The Concorde “family”

*Gilly Pratt, former cabin crew member on Concorde, British Airways*

In 1976 two major events occurred in my life. One was a conscious decision on my part, and the other was, unbeknown to me at that time, something that would enhance my life beyond all expectations.

At the beginning of the year I earned my wings and became a member of British Airways Cabin Crew; and at 11.40 on the 21st January Concorde made her first scheduled flights.

Ten years later I was a proud member of the Concorde “family”, and on that anniversary I operated back from JFK. The previous year all the aircraft on the fleet had had a make-over, and G-BOAG had been brought out of mothballs and was operating as the seventh aircraft. We were so proud of the “new look”. The dark brown cloth seats had been replaced by the light grey leather, and the whole aircraft was so light and bright (even though the windows were so small!). Unfortunately we had also lost the dark blue and gold logo and menus and the Mach meter had also been changed.

### **New look**

G-BOAG in the new Landor livery.

*Photo: Source unknown*



British Airways obviously celebrated the anniversary, and there were many charters organised. In February I was lucky to operate a ten-day trip taking in New York, Trinidad, Rio de Janeiro, Barbados and Antigua. We worked hard but we also had great fun, and I have many treasured photographs of that time. We very rarely had time to take photos on board because we were so busy, but I have a wonderful collection of prints of the crew at leisure. While we were serving, we were aware of cameras flashing, so there must be many photos of us all somewhere in the world.

In the summer I was rostered to operate a charter flight to New York. It was supposed to be just a three-day trip, but unfortunately the aircraft developed a technical fault. Scheduling decided that the whole crew would stay with the aircraft to bring it back to Heathrow. Another aircraft and crew took over the charter (it must have been a nightmare for the ground-staff to arrange). We spent the next few days crossing the Brooklyn Bridge from Manhattan

to JFK, sitting waiting in the offices while the engineers waited for a new part, then returning to yet another hotel when it failed to arrive.

Finally the aircraft was fixed and it was decided it had to be ferried back overnight, but we had to arrive after 06:00 as they did not want to use a night-landing slot. We arrived back over London on 23 July and flew over the Mall where the crowds were gathering for the wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson. I didn't see any coverage of the event as I was sleeping! Oh, the glamorous high life!

### **The perfect passenger**

As I was preparing to send this article I heard of the death of David Bowie. I was privileged to share his kindness and humour when he was commuting from New York. He was the only passenger I asked for an autograph (breaking my own rule) and I now treasure that menu!

My accolade to him is “You were the perfect passenger and a true gentleman”.